

Simple and Safe Strength Training

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White Smoke

There appear to be too many "rules," too many "self-evident truths," and too much egotism and close-mindedness in strength training for sport. The fact is, strength training for sport is a rather simple concept-- no, not the training itself (which needs to be brutally hard), but the principles behind the training. I say let the scientists and researchers argue amongst themselves as the disagreements that they have now will be the same disagreements that they'll be having 5 and 10 years from now. For me, I'm too busy training to wait for the "white smoke" to clear and the "final word" on strength training to be known. In all honesty, I don't know if there will never be a final word on strength training for sports.

Differences of Opinion

Which is best and who is right-- machines or free weight, Olympic lifts or not, periodization, one set or multiple sets? What's all the arguing anyway? It's time that we stopped looking for differences in philosophies and start concentrating on the similarities of training principles-- because there are many more similarities than there are differences.

Intensity, Overload, and Progression

The goals have always been the same-- train to stay healthy, get stronger, and perform more effectively on the field. All these can be met and have been met over the years, using machines and free weights, doing one set and multiple sets, and doing a variety of exercises. In fact, there are numerous variables in strength training (sets, reps, equipment, exercises, and others). The factors, however, that are not debatable are components that must be satisfied for a strength program to be successful:

1. **There must be intensity.**
2. **There must be overload.**
3. **There must be progression.**

That's it. Nothing else. If your program doesn't have these elements, there is no philosophy, no equipment, no methodology, and no supplement will make the program effective. The flip side, of course, is that if your program implements progression, overload, and intensity, you will get good results. Don't blame the equipment and don't blame the fact that an exercise is absent. Remember, the same workout given to 10 people will get 10 different results. You must work hard for every rep, every set, and do it every day you train.

Follow these Guidelines

When designing a program, ask the following questions:

1. **Is the program safe?**
2. **Is it effective?**
3. **Is it efficient?**
4. **Is it practical?**

5. **Is it purposeful?**
6. **Is it balanced?**

If you can't answer "yes" to each of these questions, then exclude it from your workout. Make your decision objectively and don't lose sight of what we're doing-building strength. In order to do this you should never feel "comfortable" or "complacent" in a weight room. It is impossible to reach your strength potential if you train within your "comfort zone". If it's comfort you want, go some place else.

No Shortcuts

There are no secrets to success. Choose only productive exercises that are chosen for their functionality to sports performance, and not for "cosmetic" purposes. Always do perfect repetitions with maximum effort, as you should train 'hard but short' and not 'easy and long'. Remember, as the intensity of your workout increases, the duration and frequency of the workouts should decrease. Make sure to adjust your workout accordingly.

Above all, be aggressive during your training sessions. Don't fall in love with rep schemes or particular exercises, and make sure to add variety in your programs when adaptation occurs. If you must, add weight, add reps, and intensify sets, but don't ever, I mean never, be complacent in the weight room.

Keep it Simple and Safe

In summary, there are no gimmicks to successful strength training, just hard work. Keep it simple and safe, that's what I say. In addition, plan all your workouts and be accountable to every training session. Make sure to sleep and eat enough to enhance your growth and strength progress. And finally, have fun and enjoy your workouts and appreciate the opportunity that you have to train hard and to challenge yourself.