

Time to rethink...

I was looking at my calendar and discovered that the competitive year is winding down rather fast. What happened? I went back to my journal and noted trips to Fort Collins, Orlando, San Diego (twice), Los Gatos, Modesto, Sacramento, Ohio, Las Vegas, Phoenix and various Utah competitions. Does competing make the year fly by faster than just sitting around eating chips?

It is time to peak and plan for next year...

Our mission? To teach everyone:

1. The Body is One Piece
2. There are three kinds of strength training:
 - Putting weight overhead
 - Picking it off the ground
 - Carrying it for time or distance
3. All training is *complementary*.

Witt and Wisdom



David Witt
*As a high school thrower, David ended up third in Kentucky's State Meet under the coaching of Marty Mayer and Pep Stidham (God rest his soul, he died young in his 40's of heart problems). Going to college that **didn't** have a track program, David has competed as an open and unattached thrower for years in and around the Kentucky area. Married with two children, David teaches high school math.*

I've got the shotput (stone) blues.

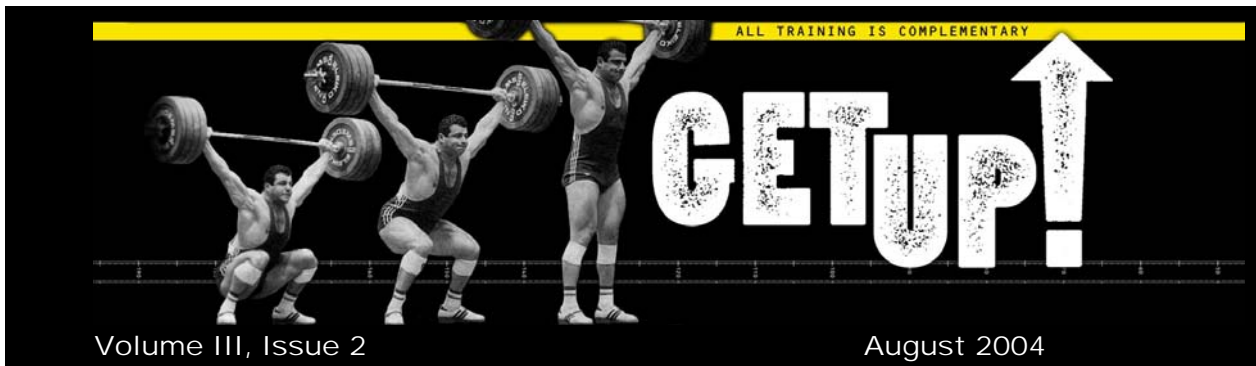
David Witt
*As a high school thrower, David ended up third in Kentucky's State Meet under the coaching of Marty Mayer and Pep Stidham (God rest his soul, he died young in his 40's of heart problems). Going to college that **didn't** have a track program, David has competed as an open and unattached thrower for years in and around the Kentucky area. Married with two children, David teaches high school math.*

A common complaint I hear (probably because for the last two years I've been saying it) in the shot or stone is "I don't get anything out of my technique". This has been my situation, and judging by the number of people I see throwing from the power position in meets or highland games I'm not the only one.

So what can I do? Well, recently I found this to be helpful. Each session, mark your farthest standing throw. Your farthest for that session, not your all-time farthest, since each day is different and you may be capable of more or less on any given day. Then throw with your full technique of choice and don't stop until you throw 10 farther than your standing throw. This provides focus, because you really don't want to have to throw that thing 50 times if you don't have to. (Brian Oldfield coaching Seth...don't ask)



Yes, sometimes you need to do 50 repetitions. The point here is to not be throwing 50 ways willy-nilly. The point is to focus your efforts and concentrate on a goal. Also, this would help condition you to throw farther within the



first few throws so that you don't have to spend an hour warming up in competition.

I've done this. The first day I tried it I only needed about 15 throws to get my 10, and the farthest throw past my stand was about a foot and a half. The second time I did this, I only needed 11 throws. My differential then was over 3 feet, so there was some improvement. As I get better, I'll start counting my throws over a certain distance past my standing throw. So if I get a 35' stand, I'll count throws over say 38'. (Yeah, I know. My best stand was 39' with the 16# shot and my best full throw was 46', but...) And yes, I try to make each throw over my stand easier and easier, so I am using some range or Russian 80% techniques.

Keep at it. I have one good day for every 4 bad days, so if I can keep trying, so can you. If you have any questions or ideas, please email me at

dwitt@campbell.k12.ky.us.

(Steph Benight warming up with the Atomic Ball)



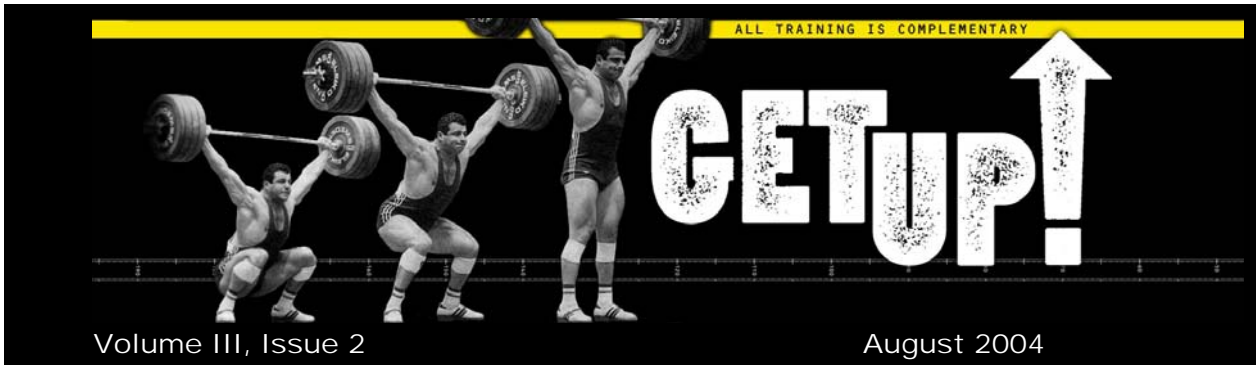
More "Wittdom" from Witt **There are things to learn from figure skating.**

A recent post by our esteemed editor (hey, I can suck up too) on the Tommy Kono Weightlifting Board got me to thinking. Dan mentioned that he learned his warm-up routine for olympic lifting from track and field. Learning things from other sports besides the one you participate in has long been a gem of mine.

What is a good competitor? Someone who doesn't give up? Someone who gives 110%? I don't know. But I do know that I became a great competitor in track and field playing Ping-Pong.

Ping-Pong you ask? What the heck craziness is he talking about now? In my freshman year at college in the basement of the dorm, there were two Ping-Pong tables. A lot of us played. Many of the foreign students had played for their national teams. One fellow from Cameroon, South Africa played against the Chinese for his national team. He later played soccer for his country in the '84 Olympics, I think he scored a couple of goals. Another kid from Puerto Rico was ranked the 4th highest junior in Puerto Rico. In other words, I didn't stand a chance.

Playing against these guys taught me to hang on, to never give up. Many nights I wouldn't even score a point. I remember one night when I came back to our room, and my roommate asked



my how I did. "I scored 2 points" I shouted. "That's great" he replied. "Yeah, it only took me 3 games to score 2 points" I proudly announced. And he understood. It was brutal competition. Some of these guys would slam the ball so hard, that if it hit you, it left a bruise. But I learned to hang in there and keep trying even when I was down 20-1. This really made that last throw clutch performances a lot easier. Gee, all I have to do to win is throw another 4 inches? That's easier than coming back from 20-1 and winning.

Oh, and the figure skating reference? When a skater wants to slow down from a spin their arms go out, and when they want to speed up again their arms come in. That's what I tell my wife. I have to stare at Michelle Qwan, it helps my throwing.



Excellent stuff again, David. Keep up the good work...and watch Beach Volleyball.

Mike Pockoski on...well,



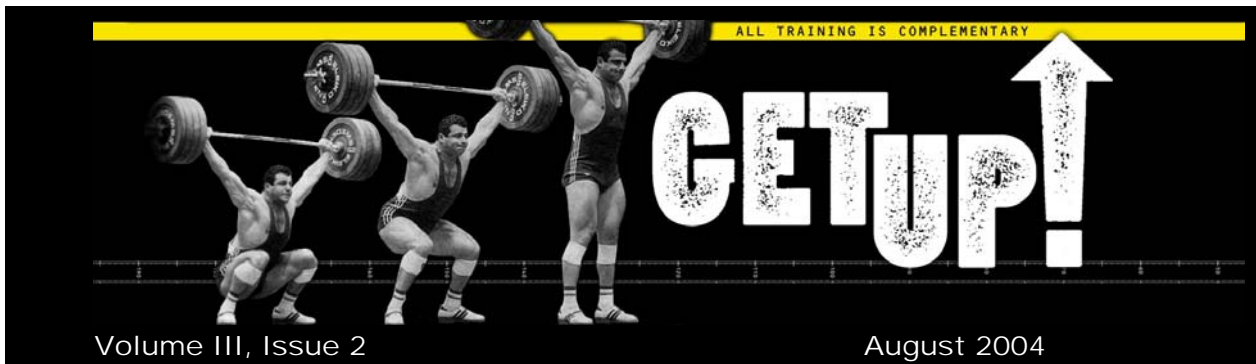
Charles Staley...well, and a whole bunch of others. Listen...learn.

Everything...

Mike Pockoski is one of America's best hammer throwers...and a very good discus thrower...and an outstanding Highland Gamer...and an engineer. He put his "money where his mouth is" last year by moving from New England (someplace east of Utah) and moved to Las Vegas to train with John Powell. He then met up with such notables as

If I knew then what I know now...

This has been the best year of my life. I left the woman I thought I'd marry, quit my job, said good-bye to my family and friends, and moved across the country with all of my belongings in a trailer I built the morning I left. I was chasing after my Olympic dreams and I failed... So how can I still be so happy about life? Because I chased after them with reckless abandon, let nothing stand in my way, trained until I threw up, threw until I bled, and met some of the finest people on this planet. One of them is named Mindy Lincoln. She gave it all up the same way I did. We met up in Ohio at John Powell's throwing camp, and ended up living in Vegas. Mindy didn't make this year's Olympic team either; and in failing to reach our dreams, we've picked up a whole bunch of gems that have changed the way we train, compete, and live. Some are quoted directly from legends like John



Powell, Brain Oldfield, and the legendary Dan John. Some of them are simply observations we've made along the way. We're just going to list them here, in no real order, with a story or explanation tagged onto each as necessary. *Man, I wish I knew some of this stuff years ago...*

The first gem to throw out there - Read **Mind Gym**, by Gary Mack and David Casstevens. Everyone is so concerned about how workout out our bodies. How often do you work out your mind? It's the weakest link in all athletes - to choke or not to choke. Great athletes have tricks or mechanisms to strengthen that link when they need it turned on. This book takes a good look at the power of the mind in sports. It helped me realize how my patterns of self-talk were affecting my performance, and gave me some valuable tools to change this weakness into one of my greatest strengths.

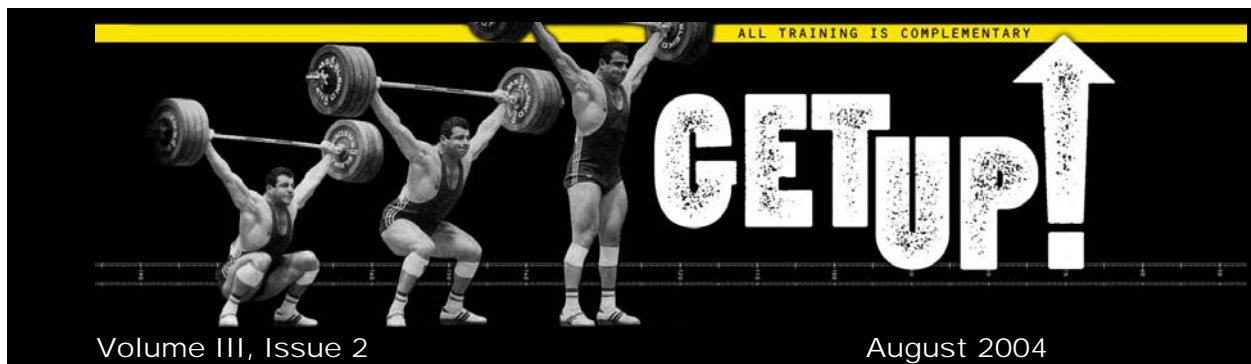
Decide on your goals, commit to your goals, and act on your goals. While this may not seem like so much of a gem, I sure wish someone told me a few years earlier. Mind gym will ask you "if you talk the talk, do you walk the walk?" This stung me every time I read it, because I knew I was telling myself I was an athlete, even though my "walk" didn't reflect that in every way. I was driving 70 miles each way to work, and 40 miles in the other direction back and

forth to train...this wasn't the walk of an athlete. I knew I wanted to be an athlete, and I wasn't as committed as I could be. I wrote a long email to John Powell, asking if I had to move to Vegas to be a serious athlete. John replied with one word - "yes".

Charles Staley has a theory that every person is exactly where he or she wants to be. It makes perfect sense, because he can't even clean 315 pounds. Charles is one of the best strength coaches in the country, has supplement companies at his fingertips, works from his house, has a state of the art gym, and was trained in Olympic lifting in some of the best o-lifters this country has to offer. So what is his reason for not cleaning 315? "Not cleaning 315 isn't enough of a motivator" for him to train and do it right now in his life. So take a look at where you are and where you want to be, and see if you're happy where you are.

You are exactly where you put yourself. If you don't like what you are looking at, it's no one's fault but your own; decide, commit and act. The most successful people in the world all have one thing in common - they started. Smokers, dieters, Donald Trump and Marion Jones - every one of them had a day when they decided upon their goal, and then they started towards it that day.





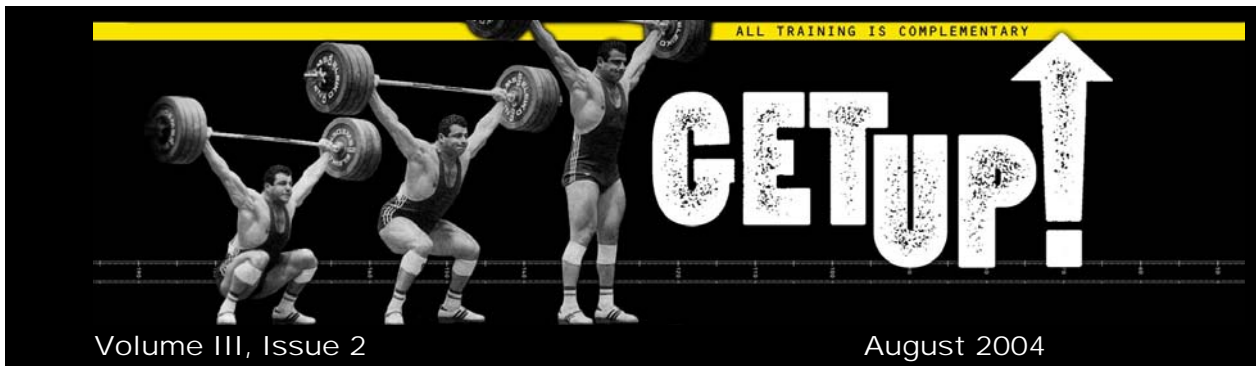
So while we're on goals here, figure out what your goal is - exactly...do you want to be lean and mean, throw far, or lift heavy things? One or two may arrive as a byproduct of the ONE goal, but you can't pursue three at the same time. Dan wrote about this in his article just following the Orlando camp - our conversation at Denny's that night was life changing for Mindy and me. Go back and check out what he said (Go see Get Up, Volume III, Issue 1...it's free so don't email asking for a copy).



(The editor avec 56)

At the beginning of every "GET UP", Dan reminds us that all training is complementary. Think about what this is really saying; there is only one goal, and everything else you do should complement that one thing. When I accepted that I was a thrower who lifted, each clean I pulled had much more meaning. Beach muscles have nothing to do with hammer throwing, and no one cares how much you squat when you win meets by 20 feet.

Lifting and training hard aren't enough. Realize that diet and recovery are as important as lifting and throwing. Mindy and I were expending tremendous effort training, and much of it was lost because we weren't spending as much energy on diet and recovery. After discussing diet with Dan, we tried a Cyclical Ketogenic Diet (check it out at www.ckd.com). We were strict, keeping our carb intake below 10 grams a day. The diet was brutal, made worse because we traveled to meets and highland games every single weekend. Our carb loading days were on Tuesday and Wednesday, so we couldn't take advantage of that during our weekend travels. It was expensive, exhausting, and boring, but it taught me a lot about how I was eating, how I should be eating, and how my body wants fuel...and it made me realize that food is only fuel. You are able to separate food and emotion by eating steak and bratwurst every two hours. It's debatable whether or not a ketogenic diet is best suited for strength athletes, but the experience of such a strict diet teaches a lot. Dan John has been heard to say "if it grows on a tree, or you can kill it with a stick, eat it." Otherwise, there's probably a better choice for FUEL. During John Powell's last years of throwing, he used a rotating diet, where he could monitor his body's reaction to certain groups of food. Food allergies are often subtle, but can affect performance significantly. By rotating through different foods, he was able to



identify allergies and exclude them from his diet.



(Meat for Highland Games...fast cook method)

Quantity versus quality. There are two opposing schools of thought. One says less is more; the other says more is more. Each method has proven successful for different people. Dan loves to tell a story of a shot putter who took 6 throws a day and was NCAA champion. If your 6 throws are perfect, what more do you need? (Dan leaves out the part about how this guy was a gifted athlete with a 600-pound bench press.)

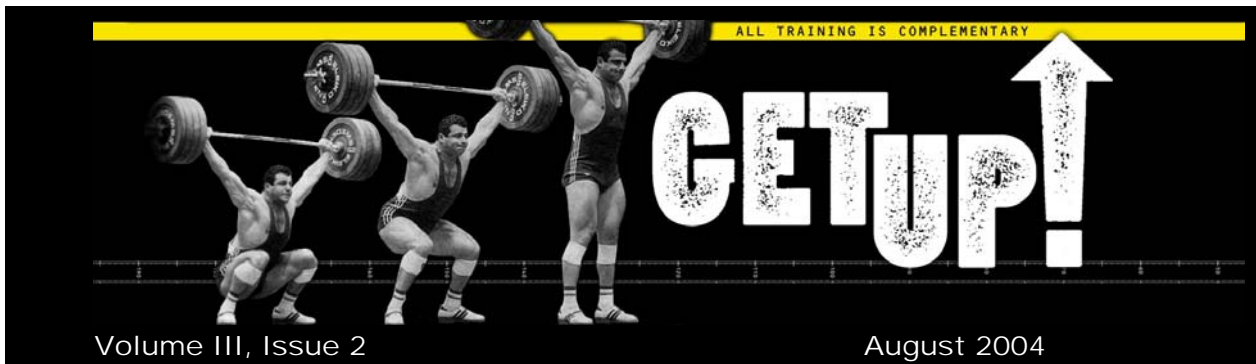
Charles Staley used this “**less is more**” concept in our training program. We performed as many sets as we could, stopping when the performance drops below a measured speed, distance, or power output. Often, my entire workout would consist of less than ten reps. It was fantastic; in the weight room, overtraining is easy. When I really grasped the idea that lifting is only complementary, a few perfect reps made

me stronger, more explosive, and kept me fresh for my one goal - to throw far. It is very easy to lose sight of the one goal and spend a lot of effort performing set after set, training your muscles to contract slower and slower. Remember, the whole idea of lifting is to damage a muscle and let it grow back stronger. Too much damage at one time requires excessive recovery, and takes away from other areas of training.



(Mike with the dreaded “Witt Hammer of Death!”)

When it comes to throwing, I believe that “**more is more**”. To get better, you need to throw. It’s misleading for people to tell them they can get better with only a few throws a week. Obviously there are exceptions-if you are an exceptional athlete with a 600 pound bench press, less is probably more. Consistent, efficient technique isn’t required when you make up for it with Herculean strength. No matter what you look like coming across the ring, the shot still only weighs 16 pounds; it doesn’t have a chance against that 600 bench.



But for the average thrower with average ability and average strength, the less is more philosophy will not work. Telling them they can maximize their potential with 30 throws a week is like telling a fat lady she can be get ready for playboy by only walking a lap around the track each day- as long as she walks it with perfect technique. It takes a lot of work to find the balance, smooth movement, and timing to focus all your strength into one direction. All throws are based on timing, and the nano-second timing adjustments required for really long throws can only be accomplished through thousands of hours of practice...I wish it were more complex or profound, but nothing has been re-invented. We're still doing things the way we have for decades. To do it better, you just have to practice it. A lot.

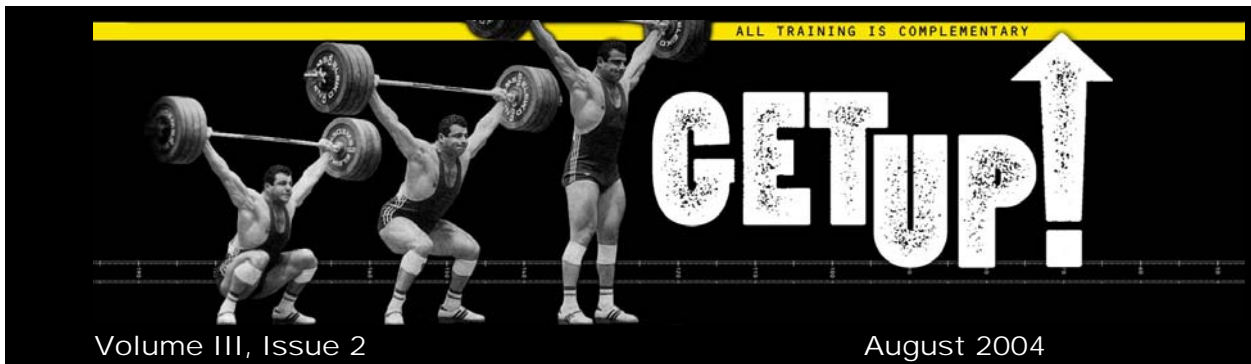


(Mindy shows that girls can play, too)

Practice doesn't have to be hard, damaging, and require excessive

recovery. It only needs to "be". Period. This opens up a whole new world of training. You can't believe the number of reps you'll get in if you do turns during every commercial, or if you do 5 every time you walk to the fridge. You can work on balance and timing anywhere. Often, were are forced (by John) to get up at a restaurant and do turns between the tables. (You can find out what technique will show up under meet pressure this way. The nerves and adrenalin kick feel the same!) This is practice that doesn't require any real recovery, but is still enforcing smooth movement and other concepts. John Powell loves to tell us, "**Smooth goes far**". Big throws come from little people when they can smoothly and efficiently move through the ring. Why squat 700 pounds if your technique only lets you use 200 pounds of it? Why not squat 300 pounds with a technique that lets you use all 300 pounds?

Youri Sedych, world record holder in the hammer, told us that you need to throw and throw and drill and drill some more. Youri's main goal with all of these reps was to get comfortable with the movement. **He said there was no particular reason for each drill he showed us.** This really frustrated me at first. I wanted a drill to use as a prescription to fix my self diagnosed list of errors. A pill that I could take to make it go away, something I could do 30 times a week and be cured. During a



whole week of training, there was never a “right foot drill” or a “left knee bent drill”. Youri only kept repeating “dance with hammer” and “move the ball to the left”. So we were doing drills just to do them. A new concept for me that really hit home the fact that you just have to get out there and do the movement, and many variations of it, to be familiar with your body and the motion. He wanted us to go slow and feel things, if we went too fast, he’d holler to slow down...”come on, come on, too fast, feel hammer, move with hammer, he is boss.”



(This article has a lot of meat in it...get it? Huh, get it? Meat)

This next one is a key concept that let John throw the WR in 1974. Listen to everything people tell you. Try it, and then try the opposite. John says, **“People are either exactly right or exactly wrong”**. Every time he’d get advice from some coach, athlete, or on looking moron, he’d try it, and then the opposite. People would say, wind with your arms really high, so he would, and then he’d try to hold them down and

throw a little farther. People would say, “that right leg has to swing way out”, so he’d try it, and then he’d try to hold it in and throw a little farther...and all of those inches ended up in a World Record.

Use mental imagery (but not too much). The benefits of mental imagery are well documented and this tool is too easy not to use. Just focus your daydreams on your sport and visualize good performance. But be careful to not overdo it. Studies have shown that this form of practice does impart stress (esp. chemical stress, adrenalin) on the body.

There is no right way to throw. The key to good technique is to find the one that fits you. So whenever someone tells you to change your style, give it a try for long enough to evaluate whether or not you like it. And what works one day won’t the next, so keep looking.



Practice form vs. warm up form vs. competition form. We are all familiar with this scenario. You practice alone, or with your friends in a comfortable, enjoyable environment. You are relaxed and focused on the concept of the day with every throw. Control of your mind and thoughts is easy, and you feel great.



You're probably preparing for the next weekend's meet, and are thinking about the 1 or 2 main concepts you are expecting to carry over at the meet from your week of hard work. At the meet, you warm up full of anticipation. You've prepared all week and you can feel your work paying off. You've been thinking of that smooth entry or explosive finish all week and it's really happening now, you're dropping bombs and the rest of the competition is scared. Your self-talk is positive and confident, and your focus and concentration are maximized. And then they call your name. You think, "Yeah baby, it's go time. Now is when it happens". So you enter the ring proceed look so bad on your first throw, your mom is embarrassed. You continue to struggle through the meet, battling with your lack of focus and negative self-talk. We've all seen it happen over and over...so what happened?



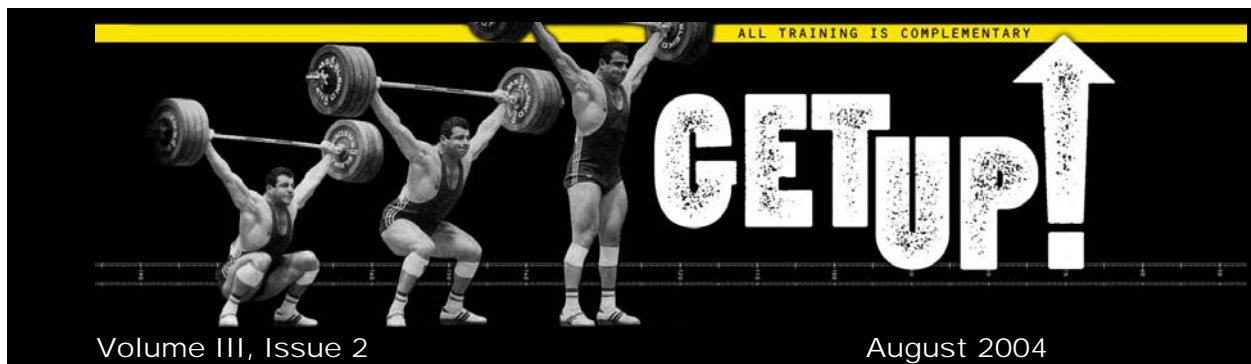
(Our homemade implements for the JP/BO HGs)

Adrenalin and incorrect preparation are what happened. Under the increased stress of a competition situation, you released a little adrenalin for the fight or

flight. Adrenalin is a terrible thing if not used correctly. It can screw up your timing and turn a success into a failure. With correct practice, it can be harnessed for fantastic results. It starts with practicing how to perform under pressure. To do that, you have to compete. A lot. At everything. Have "1 throw competitions" where the loser pays a penalty. We often make the penalty money, dinner, dishes, or a 400m sprint. If you can make the stakes really high, and the competition really close, you'll release some adrenalin and feel that meet nervousness. Spot your training partners 10 or 20 feet if you need to. We have competitions for anything we can think of - distance, accuracy, and time. As you start to compete often, you will learn how your body responds to the adrenalin boost, and you'll be able to anticipate that reaction at meets.

John Powell tells us that you should "**never win warm-ups**" and to take the first throw at 7/8th speed. At 7/8th speed, the throw will feel slow, and you are able to feel the rhythm and timing you've been working on. The adrenalin will make up that last 1/8th (and then some). With a long first mark, your whole self-image will be positive, and the rest of the meet will build upon that.

Three rules - keep it in the ring, keep it in the sector, and throw for a target. In the beginning of his career, John lost a



lot of meets because his long throws snuck out of sector, or he fouled it at the ring. As he would watch other athletes take his medals, he was formulating a plan so simple it had to be wrong. He was going to practice staying in the ring!

What he found was surprising; by practicing staying in the ring, he was learning balance and control, and from balance and control came power. The second two rules are related. Keep it in the sector seemed to John to be a no-brainer. The sector was big enough, just throw it down the middle and you get to measure the throw. This also went along with the advice John got from discus legend Al Oerter. When asked by John how he improved through his career, Al replied that he threw for a towel at practice, and that he moved his towel out further and further until he had long throws. (Too simple, it can't work!) So as John began to throw for a target, he began to learn how to focus that power he was generating.



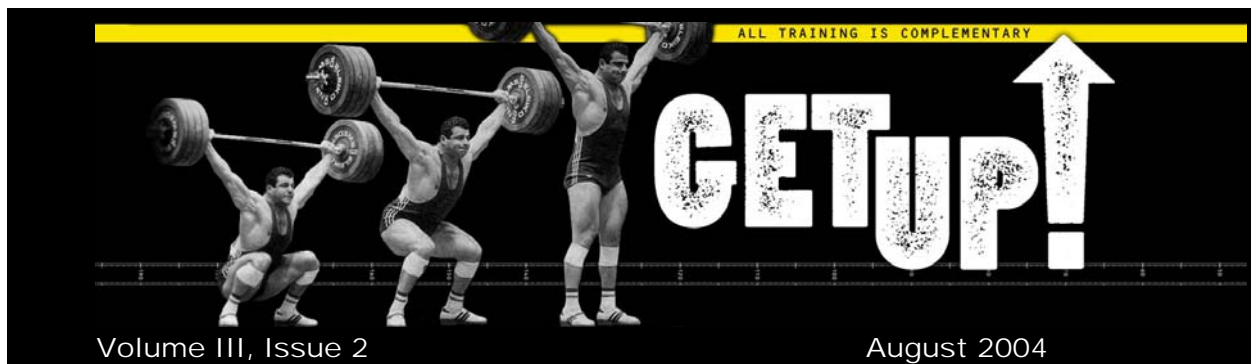
(Greg...a study in ground contact...)

About this time, a big light came on in John's head when a martial artist who

weighed about 100 pounds less than him knocked him across the room with an "inch punch". By focusing all of his energy and power in one direction, this guy was able to generate a huge amount of force over a short amount of time. John saw the comparison, and applied it to the new technique he was developing from his three rules. the rest is history.

Surround yourself with people who support your efforts. Bill Cotter, a famous New England coach and athlete, used to tell me "people are either a plus or a minus. If they add to you, they can stay in your life, if they subtract, they have to go." Harsh words, but there's a lot on the line. Hang out with other athletes, coaches, and fans. Connections these people have can help in ways you wouldn't expect. Tips on where the best meets, hotels, and training facilities are worth their weight in gold.

You don't' need nice stuff. We both made it to the Olympic trial throwing home made implements off of a plywood circle we put down in the desert. Every single ring I threw out of a meet this year was fantastic compared to what I was used to. I would hear people complain about how fast or slow it was - try throwing off of a sun-beaten plywood circle for a while. I was just happy the circle didn't bounce as I turned on it, and no nails were sticking up to rip my throwing shoes. When you go to a meet, watch out for the guy whose gear is



worn and broken. It got that way from use. Practice your mind control games on the guy with the new bag, walkman, chalk, stick-um, matching warm-ups, and no-fear head band. He's usually a tool who takes 6 throws a day and then reads about throwing on the internet as he drinks his power shake and works out his grip strength with a balloon full of sand that he paid 25 dollars for.

Train in all weather. Living in Massachusetts, I had to tape glow-sticks to my hammers every day to find them in the snow, which fell sometime in November, piled up to about 3 feet, and stayed until April. After turning on a icy circle for 6 months, I could turn on anything. Living now in Vegas, it's so hot you get burns on your neck from the shot put. But when people were dropping in the heat this year at the Olympic trial, Mindy and I were cool and comfortable. If it is raining, go out and throw even if it is your day off.

Train at different times of the day. John Powell tells of how he learned early in his career about how performance is affected by the time of day. He could often throw well over 210' in the evening, when he was used to training. But he would struggle to qualify at meets, even though the qualifying distance was typically only 190'. This was because the qualifying was usually in the morning. The finals were usually in the evening, in front of a

full crowd. In preparing for his last world championship, John started training at 8 every morning, knowing that the qualifying time would probably be around 9am. His fist day out, it took him 6 hours to be able to reach the qualifying distance. The next day, it took only 5 hours. He continued train like this until he could reach the qualifying distance by 9 AM. John won the silver at the world championships that year by only taking one throw, in his sneakers.

Mix your weights up. Youri Sedych said American hammer throwers spend too much time working out with the competition weight. Throwing different weight hammers plays with your timing and balance. Ah yes, those two things I keep writing about. John Powell has us spend over half of our training time throwing light and over weight implements. When it's heavy, stay low and learn some patience. When it's light, try to sprint ahead of it.

Do it backwards, do it left handed, and then do it left-handed and backwards. You'll figure where you have to push and pull to get back to the start. When you turn it around, you'll learn more about where the application of power needs to be going forwards. You feel all sorts of new ideas by doing this. Just do it.



Try is a precursor to failure. Do, don't try. You can always do again, and do better. Try implies a correct result, and there's a pass or fail connotation to that. Don't practice failing, practice doing.

Attack potential injuries like it's the end of your life. If you can't train, it might as well be.

On the other hand, suck it up. It's supposed to hurt. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it.

Get qualified people to instruct you. When Charles Staley started training us, it was a remarkable relief. He took the self-doubt I was carrying about my training routine away instantly. He's as good as it gets, and knowing that took that whole quadrant of stress away for me.

Charles Staley's business slogan is a powerful one; **"Exploiting your opponent's weaknesses starts with identifying your own."** Before I met Charles, I didn't know where my weak areas were, so how could I work on them? It's not easy to see yourself objectively. Even a training partner sees you with a pair of eyes that are stale with your technique. A fresh pair of eyes sees things from a new perspective and can identify weak areas you didn't realize were even there.

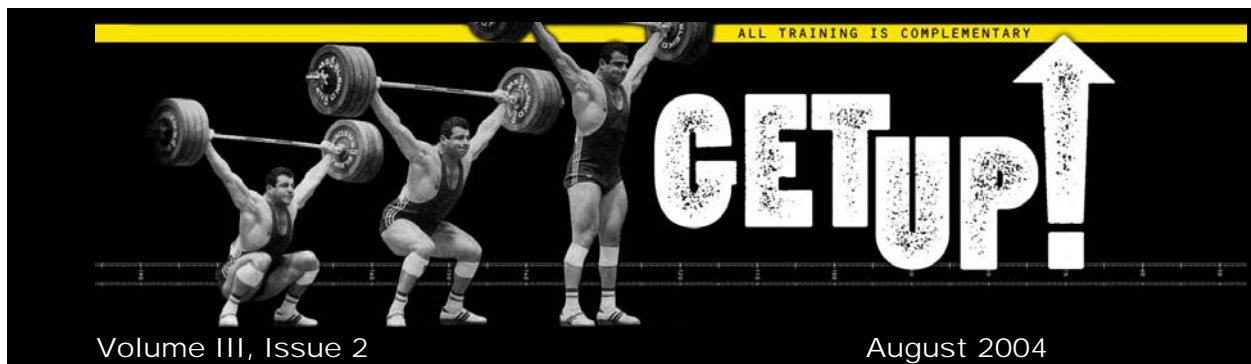
At practice, I would work on the parts of the throw I though needed work.

After training for ten minutes with the hammer throw world record holder (very qualified), I wanted to cry. The concepts I had spent 8 years perfecting were 180 degrees from where I was supposed to be.

I put together a training program that was my best effort, but my best effort wasn't enough. I'm not a trainer who's spent a half a lifetime researching and experimenting on the best ways to get stronger and faster. I'm an engineer who's spent half a lifetime researching the best ways to build stronger and faster. I wouldn't have a trainer design my skyscraper, so why would an engineer design my workouts?

Qualified attention can be expensive. There is a price to pay for their years of effort, but is there a price on your sanity, mental strain, and lack of self-confidence? As far as I'm concerned, it's too much to risk not putting it in someone else's hands. I can't put a price on 8 years of effort in the wrong direction.

Cross train. Dan has all sorts of other training advice littered across this site. Do some of it, but make it competitive. Practicing how you compete is more important than any of the benefit people on the internet like to harp about. What good is all that effort and training if you



crumble at competition? The more practice competing you get, the better you will compete. Most importantly, do some Highland Games. There's nothing like a bunch of sweating men in kilts throwing heavy stuff far. Basically, the crowd at a highland games is entirely different than at a track meet, and the competitors are entirely different too. Go and play, and remember why we are in this frustrating game.

It just doesn't matter, it just doesn't matter... Brain Oldfield knew what he was talking about. I like to apply this to meets. It will rain, you will forget your chair, your cooler will leak, the officials won't know what the hammer looks like before today, and Murphy's law will apply to every possible situation. When this happens, refer to no.8 from the list at the end of Dan's last Get Up (8. *Nothing matters...not warm ups, plane flights, shoes, haircuts, breakfast...when the ring judge calls your name. Step in and throw...editor*).

There's no secret. So stop looking for that "one thing" that's going to change your life. Diet pills don't work, there's no such thing as a free lunch, Vegas isn't the way it is because everyone takes money home, and something you read on the internet isn't going to make you an elite thrower. So turn the damn computer off and go throw, cause that, and a little luck, just might.



'Least that's what I'm hopin' for...

Mike, that has to be one of the best things we have done with this newsletter. Really...awesome. This might be the key to your success next year, you have a roadmap for success...

D

Published by Daniel John
 Daniel John, Editor
 Copyright © Daniel John, 2003
 All Rights Reserved

Any unauthorized reproduction is strictly prohibited.