What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

1993 John Powell Discus Camp
Spin the disc! The fastest goes the furthest.

Four Step Approach:
1. Standing Throw
2. Step and Turn
3. Modified South African Drill
4. Full Turn

Keep feet and hips moving throughout turn. Left foot turns 180 degrees to begin throw. Each phase is more dynamic; start slow, then go fast.

Good drill to teach this: STRETCH-Twist-Step-Twist.
Carol Cady stated that she spent 90% of her time doing drills.
Bill Witt's explanation of the "settle." Weight on right foot; friction is the same whether full foot or toe. How to release? Settle.

John Powell mentioned squeezing the right tricep to hold the discus in position.

When discussing training, Carol Cady mentioned Front Squats up to 10's (usually 225 although she could go to the low 300's.) She also mentioned using wooden bleachers for stair work and cleans with straps for power. "If you get hunched over; you'll get strong hunched over- and you can't do that when you throw." "In the summer, get flexible again, get healthy again, recover. For two weeks, don't lift at all."

Halfway through camp, these four keys were found to be the best:
1. Drills are so important.
2. Settle into throw.
3. Stretch arms and arch chest.
4. In Power Position:
   Settle
   Twist
   Thighs
   Jump

In South Africans, "Float-Float-Stings," or even Step and Turns, keep the first step short. Rhythm needs to be focused on the "settle."

In an evening discussion with John Powell, John mentioned discovering he was allergic to wheat and milk in 1984. When he eliminated these from his diet, he looked better and felt better. After 1985, he no longer did squats and substituted hills and power cleans. In training, he began throwing the 35 lb. weight and the One Kilo discus (with a best of 291 feet). The idea was to do 10 quick reps in the weight room which is more rhythmic and more aerobic than a typical program. (Try this with Front Squats, Hang Snatches, and Power Cleans.) This idea comes from Steve Backley from Great Britain, Javelin Thrower, who timed lifts and Peter Sarul from Poland, Shot Putter, who benched 100 kilos for 10 reps in 6 seconds.

We did a half hour of "Stretch-1-2-3's" to develop rhythm.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

July 6, 1993
Do more sit-ups!
"Older I got, the more I warmed up. But I didn't throw far in these one hour warm ups."
The three errors of throwing are: Ring fouls, Sector fouls, and Long warm ups.

August 8, 1993
John discussed the advantages of overhead squat work. The focal point? Where does the
arm point in the "3" position? That's the focal point.

August 15, 1993
John explained the idea of little practice meets as a "shakedown cruise." Competition
accesses a different part of the brain. Great pre-meet drills are the "360 drill" and "360
and Go" drill. Keep the weight on the left leg during the swings.

February 23, 1994
Use the 35 lb. weight to warm up and improve "quick feet." Try this series:
1. No turn
2. One turn
3. Two turn
4. Three turn

John Powell Clinic: Salt Lake City, March 19, 1994
Can you do these simple things?
1. Swing arms?
2. Jump?
3. Turn right foot and stay on the toe?
4. Stretch your arms back?
Then you can throw the disc!
The discus is four simple moves:
1. Stretch (The "Stretch" Position)
2. Twist (The "One" Position)
3. Step (The "Two" Position)
4. Twist (The "Three" Position)
"Work backwards" in your thinking in the discus throw. You want to be in a solid power
position, so one must ask the question, "how do I get there?" I want to have speed in the
ring, so ask the question, "how do I get speed?"
This is my (John Powell's) answer. Begin with the weight on the left leg. The
Stretch Reflex is the most powerful way of using your muscles, like a rubber band, it
snaps away after you stretch and release it. To get the body to do this in the discus, hold
the stretch position and keep the discus back. An easy way to keep the discus back is to
"flex triceps," locking out the triceps to hold the discus back.
The wind or swing is simple. Hold the weight over the left, swing your arm and
go. John experimented with no winds, just looking at the focal point, flexing the triceps
and go!
The sprint across the ring needs to be developed. First walk, then jog, then sprint.
The concept of "Sprint down" helps many throwers. The key is to keep the right foot
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

turning. As you drive, hold the stretch of the arm. If you push/sprint/drive with the left leg, the discus will pop up to the power position. Don't be anxious, wait for the power position. The goal is to get into a good power position.

The rhythm of the feet in the discus is "1 . . . 2-3." Sound it out warm ups and training.

Three keys at the back of the ring:
1. Weight flexed on left leg
2. Arch the back (Stretch)
3. Focal Point

Hammer and Weight

These are excellent crosstraining tools. Arms in a "V," twist both feet, and push off right foot. Fall back across ring. (In the discus, fall across the ring.) Block is twist. John quoted bowler, Dick Webber, "You either found the line, or you're looking for it."

Warm ups

Take only two warm up throws. Danek, before Munich Olympics, went into the weight room and did light power cleans, bench presses, and snatches. Think 80% in warm ups.

Wobbling Discus Problem

Keep pushing your feet and stay long. Don't forget release drills (Bowling for Dollars and Throw for height).

*Rhythm is the key to the long throws.

Advanced Advice

1. Try throwing the one kilo discus for distance in training.
2. 25 pound weight throws
3. Sound out "1 . . .2-3"
4. Know the start

John Powell Discus Camp 1994

Brian Oldfield returned and explained what he believed were the two best drills: Vertical Cartwheels with the powerball and 2-3-2-3-2-3-2-3-2-3 Throws. He spent a lot of time explaining "over the top" throwing to use the left side post. Some key terms: "Climb up the left side post" and "lock in the left side." In nutrition, minerals provide the "biggest bang for the buck." In addition, spend time turning, do not devote much energy to standing throws.

John Powell Discus Camp 1995

Pendulum Swing: Feet together. Let powerball swing and step forward. When ball hits top of arc, left foot should hit.

Circular Orbit: Right foot turns and turns.

Elliptical Orbit: Faster than circular.

Swing is only twisting the shoulders.

Carol Cady pointed out three keys to training: in the morning, do drills in the morning to get going, do stuff that doesn't hurt, and focus on your strengths. Be sure to pendulum swing and not let the disc drift out, then lean in to compensate. Try circuit training to achieve your strength goals.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

John Powell Discus Camp 1996

The keys to throwing:
1. Snap Reflex (Stretch Reflex)
2. Sweep of Right Foot and keep it rotating
3. "X" Position. (From above, Shoulder axis forms an "X" in relation to hip axis)
4. Pendulum Swing

A good code word and check for correct position of discus in relationship to body is "Spanking."

The positions of the Nickerson 360 degree and Go drill are:
   - Step (with Left)
   - Whirl (to Stretch Position)
   - Pivot (360 degrees)
   - 1-2-3

If using a powerball, just toss that thing back and it will pull you through a Nickerson.

Carol Cady pointed out the keys to nutrition: Eat well, sleep well and worry about basic health before you try anything new.

This year, we experimented with playing music while we threw. This seemed to help quite a bit. Other ideas from this camp:
   1. Using lighter implements
   2. Train in the morning, perhaps just drills, to get going
   3. Power Curls and Clean and Presses are worth considering.
   4. Try left handed throwing and Nickersons

Conversation with John Powell in Airport, June 21, 1996

In 1977, John cut out red meat. He began this after feeling bloated in Montreal (his word). To get in shape, he made a goal of 4 by 800's under 3:00 minutes. He believes that in the discus, fit equals far. He believes that Weight Man Relays would help make better throwers.

Within ten years, he really believed in this concept. No real squats, rather he chose to do more hills. He felt distance came from sprinting with the disc. He would continue to do light squats to keep the movement, but never more than 225 for ten.

"Snap and quickness" are the keys. He began to believe in more and more variety in the weightroom, focusing on the Twenty Minute Drill. In 1987, when John won the Silver Medal at the World Championships, John was as strong as Carol Cady. Before Rome, he cleaned 286 and snatched 220 which felt heavy. But he felt it was "strong for me" which led to a new personal record.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Twenty Minute Drill
Alternate sets while doing each group. In Group 1, for example, you would do 10 repetitions in the bench followed by 10 repetitions in the Bent Over Row. This process would be repeated three times before moving on to Group 2.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Exercise</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td>Bench Press</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bent Over Row</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<td>Group 2</td>
<td>Hamstring Curls</td>
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<td>Leg Extension</td>
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<td>Group 3</td>
<td>Curls</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tricep Extension</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 4</td>
<td>Overhead Dumbell</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lat Pulldowns</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Side bends, right</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Back Extensions</td>
<td>3 by 10</td>
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</tbody>
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John Powell Discus Camp 1997

I drove Brian Oldfield from the airport. He mentioned that in his best year, he trained twice a week on partials doing 5 sets of 10 in the Partial Front Squat, the Partial Pull and the Behind the Neck Press. He did this for two months and got very strong and healthy. Brian's dietary insight, while living with John was: "No meat, no wheat."

The key to this camp was the "flamingo" drill. Right knee up, (Upper thigh parallel to ground) and leap into "three." The torque is incredible. Strive for both feet landing at the same time.

Before the Rome World Championships, John discovered that running 3 by 200 meters to be a great workout that satisfied his needs for working the cardiovascular system, sprinting, and injury avoidance. He also focused on light, fast squats this same year. He found protein drinks to be very helpful, his brand of choice was Twinlabs Diet Fuel mixed with berries. He realized that if one throws a distance at a certain strength level, getting stronger should make one throw farther.

The theme of camp was "Pick-Three," the flamingo drill. This really allows drive out of the back. One handy preworkout idea was using Exedrine, which mixes aspirin with caffeine.

Nick Hristou learned from Brian about "throwing over the eyes." Doing the "Pick-Three," then "throwing over the eyes" gave Nick the sensation of "Super Whip," one of Dan's key words in high school to throw over 170 feet (weighing 162 pounds). It combines Brian's "Vertical Cartwheel" with basic throwing concepts.

Summary of Most Recent Research on Throwing
1. Technique and abilities are two sides of one complex athletic movement.
2. Heavy implements create a greater power level than the competition implement. What? Throwing 'somewhat' heavier implements helps one throw farther.
3. Focusing on hip flexors leads to a decrease in throwing performance. What? Letting your hips and thighs get really strong is a problem if your ankles, feet, and
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

waist can handle or transfer the energy. What? Squatting (and benching) has limited long term benefits.

4. Clearly three factors should be focused on: more throws, lifting should be more "throwlike," and one should emphasize the quality of throws.

5. Standing throws have little value.

6. Developing the left leg block or brace is done best by hills, or something similar.

Visiting John Powell in Las Vegas, February 6, 1998

After John gave a tour of the house, he showed me his extensive scrapbook collection.

John let me flip through his diary. He ran before lifting, usually an 880 which he kept the splits for the 440's. He began each workout with chins, bench dips, and sit ups. In his weights, he would try to slowly get the 5 sets of 10 with a particular weight. So, if he benched 285 pounds, he might go 5, 6, 7, 5, and 3. In the next workout, he might add a rep or two and slowly get to his goal. He only push pressed and cleaned 135 pounds for reps! His weight workouts were not impressive and he really took his time getting his distance up.

John considers Clean Grip Snatches to be "Push Presses." He did multiples sets of 5 with 135 in this exercise. In 1974, he threw 223'. According to John, this was the strongest year in his career, yet, by most standards, he was not very strong. He felt his keys were the measured run before, followed by chins, bench dips and sit ups. The work in the weight room was always focused on two things: getting a little stronger and throwing the discus farther.

Question: You work with Brian Oldfield and John Powell. Can you tell us all their secrets?

Brian's breakthrough year came after he got serious with Dave Davis and actually lifted for more than a few weeks. He simply did Power Cleans followed by Jerks off the Rack. He did a single heavy pyramid of both exercises, two days a week.

He told me in Ohio that his "Best" training program was doing rack lifts of 15 reps of partial front squats, partial pulls and partial presses (short top end movements only) for about five heavy sets twice a week. "That's all you need to throw far."

He was a real fan of sprinting and sprinting on your toes. He told me the same thing, many, many times, Fred, (the guy who asked the question) that plyos are BS. Now, I have to agree with him: if you are a thrower or O lifter...what the hell are you doing leaping off boxes?

He also introduced shot throws, too. He started every workout with underhand throws, overhead throws, one arm throws, over the shoulder throws and tricks with the 16 pound shot. You could call this "upper body plyos" or you could call it "throwing," depending on your audience, I guess.

The other great Oldfield insight is overweight throwing. This "revolutionized" my coaching, I wish I would have done it sooner. (Actually, I did. The summer after I threw 190, I experimented with a 7 1/2 pound plate. I could really throw it far. When I went
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

back to the disc after three weeks I tossed my lifetime best and lifetime goal in a good wind. Since this worked so well...of course, I stopped doing it)

At the John Powell Discus Camp in Granville, Ohio, we give everyone a "powerball" a handled medicine ball. All week long, the athletes relearn to throw from the ground up. After doing this, my athletes return to Utah and then throw well beyond their best. This, along with Overhead Squats, is the reason we were able to get Paul Northway to throw 214'9" in high school. Brian learned this from Highland Games' events, then applied it to his rotational throw.

Again, you could call some of these drills "plyos," it all depends on your audience.

The great insights of Brian:
1. Lift twice a week, but do full body, explosive, heavy stuff
2. Train with overweight implements
3. Take your minerals
4. Sprint training or hills is very important
5. Become a true student of your event and try to think through every single aspect of what you do
6. Discover what foods you are allergic to
7. Complicate the movement with drills to simplify it in the ring
8. Enjoy yourself...have some fun!

I think the reason people think that Brian, John Powell, and just about every other quality thrower or lifter "hide" their training is that, usually, it is so damn simple.

John let me look at his training diaries and I was shocked to see that he did run an 880 (800 meters) before each practice and recorded the splits for each lap. He then did situps, dips and pull ups. And recorded his numbers. He did clean grip snatches, he calls them "push presses," with 135 for sets of five, then did a very simple three day a week program.

Then, he worked on the disc. If he got bored, he did drills, if he found a problem, he spent a lot of time thinking about it and fixing it. He hung around quality people who could help him fix his lifts and throws.

So, Fred, those are the secrets. I bet you knew them already.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

A Post by Shaun Pickering at "The Ring"

Some people have been talking about John Powell recently, and some posts were mentioning that it was impressive that he was able to throw so far without a "block" as he was an active reverse thrower.

I think that John had one of the most effective blocks of any discus thrower, but the secret to his throwing was timing, and he reversed very quickly after the block, but his delivery position was as good as anybody's.

On many of his best throws he would actually "Block the throw" that is to say that his left foot would land at the front of the circle in a position that would prevent the right hip from coming through, but it was important for John to have his left foot down at the front as quickly as possible.

I do not believe that John was that strong, at least compared to his peers at that period, and I was lucky enough to have spent quite a few years with him in the early 80's, when he was coaching at Stanford. What separated him from the others, I believe, was his work ethic, and the amount of time that he spent throwing and doing drills to perfect his technique.

He was not the most athletic, and certainly not at physically talented as Mac or Ben, but he did work really hard and would make the most of his opportunities. He was very competitive at anything, even turning to professional Bowling for a while after his Discus career.

John would do thousands of drills, and they were very thoroughly thought out for their greatest application and benefit. He would work very hard on the rhythm of the throw, and his technique was built around this. I am still convinced that his technique and the way that he teaches it is the easiest way to throw far.

He would throw with four Discs at every practice, and would average around 150-200 throws a session, including stands, half turns and south-Africans, and he always had to finish on his best throw!

In 1987, following the World Champs in Rome, he stayed with me in England for a few days. He had won a Medal at those Championships by out-thinking the opposition at the age of 40+, making the most of his opportunity against the "Young Bucks" like Schult.

It had started to rain, and the circle was getting slippery. Rather than struggle with the others during warm-ups as they were trying to come to terms with the conditions, he instead did lots of drills in the adjacent Hammer circle. He chose not to put on his throwing shoes, as everyone else was slipping badly in the conditions. He took his first throw, knowing that the others were struggling to throw far in the
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

conditions, and knowing that his best chance was to put them under pressure from
the beginning, in the bad conditions.

He put everything he had into that one throw..all the years of training and
experience...throwing in his running shoes, and put out a mark at 66m+ that
everyone else would have to chase. He attempted only one more throw as he knew he
could not throw any further that day in those conditions, and sat back to see if the
mark would hold up. I believe that Schult finally passed the mark in the last round,
but John held on for the silver medal.

The following week, we were training together in England, at least I was collecting
his disc's for him. After his warm up and 20 throws each of Stands, Half turns and
South-Africans, he started his full turns. After about 12 throws he launched one out
to 68.20m, which he marked with a shoe. He kept throwing for about another hour,
most of them over 65m, and every throw was hard. When I suggested that we should
leave, as my mother was preparing dinner for us, he told me that he could not leave
until he had beaten the mark! After about 15 minutes he catches one which goes
past the shoe (measured at 68.62m), and turns to me and suggests that we get back
for dinner.

At Stanford, John was always challenging us to strange competitions, like the
famous "Float, Float, Sting" drill around the dirt 400m track, against the clock, and
throwing through the Soccer goal from the half way line. John could also throw into
a Trash Can from 180ft...he loved these challenges that made training more fun for
him.

We would always be running relays, sometimes against other throwers, or the other
athletes on the team. At a combine weight of 920lbs, we ran 43.8secs for 4x100m. He
once challenged me to a Dead Lift competition, three lifts, rising bar, with no warm
up! We both managed over 600lbs, but John always made sure that he had the final
lift, and added 5lbs to my third attempt!

Carol Cady is also a testament to the effectiveness of John's Technique, as she did
not have great athletic talent, like Connie Price or some of the others, but, like John,
she worked really hard at all the little aspects of her technique, and I am very proud
that her American Record still stands.

I must conclude by saying that John hated me, as I was the complete antithesis of his
type of thrower, as I was quite naturally gifted. He even dedicated a Trophy in my
name: The Golden Jock Award, for the best performance for the least amount of
effort. He loved to beat me at anything he could. My sophomore year he beat me in a
Weight Pentathlon by three points, even though I beat him in four of the five events.
He would never do another Pentathlon after that, as he would never give me the
satisfaction of beating him!

He sure was a stubborn S.O.B. but that is what made him the great athlete that he
was. I still think that he throws at least three times a week!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

A great competitor, and to my mind the greatest Technician that there has ever been in the Disc.

Shaun P

Dennison, 1998

Great pre-camp meeting with Bill Witt and John Powell.
Basic disc thinking:
Hold Stretch
Lock Triceps
Grind Left Foot
Grind Right Foot
And, most important: BE PATIENT!
Or, another way to explain this is: “Lock, Twist, Up, Wait.
John opened camp with an overview of “Can you do four things?” Simply, stretch, step, (Editor’s note: we now teach the word “lift” instead of “step”) twist and jump. It seems that the discus can be broken down in four parts very easily. For some athletes, this way or that way is easier to understand. Use the same concepts with different terms to explain the throws.
The most common error I found at camp was that most athletes lose the “X” and ‘lean in’ or ‘lead with the right shoulder’ rather than struggling to keep the “X.” One of the last points I relearned from camp was that you need to focus on turning the left foot at the start to get around the left side.

Dennison, 1999

Good first workout, emphasizing these four terms: Stretch, Twist, Up and Crank.

By Wednesday of this camp, I came to a realization: there are only two keys: Hold the “X” and the “Two” position. Nothing else matters. A short two holding the X.

A nice learning progression:
On knees, multiple styles of throws with powerball, focus on learning X
“Push Car” Position: Twist Feet, Get X, Twist!
Step forward with Right Foot, Get X, Twist-Twist!
Step forward with Left Foot, Get X, Step, Twist-Twist

Dennison, 2000

One thing I liked about this camp was watching the Sedyck video from Springco. I was amazed at how much John’s thinking paralleled Sedych’s.

John emphasized the arch in the lower back is the same for all lifting movements as well as throwing movements. John’s last lecture focused on:
V, X, 1, 2, 3, or Stretch, Turn Left, Turn, Turn Jump
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

One thing I liked about this camp was the refocus on high protein, some running, hard abs, and passion. Great camp, maybe the all-time best.

Camp 2001: Two Weeks!
A couple of things helped me: my kids were here for two weeks and Tiffini arrived for the second week. I learned a lot, I hope the campers did, too.

John and I had an interesting talk about his first world record. For one thing, he was exhausted and didn’t expect to throw all that well. But, as so often happens, good conditions and a long nap meant more than preparation.

John explained his 200 meter program to me. As many people know, he backed off on lifting and became more “fit” after 1976. His running program was simple: three to five 200 meter sprints (best of 25 seconds), in a pattern of “Slow-Medium-Fast” or “Slow-Medium-Fast-Fast.” As always, simple stuff. His lifting soon evolved entirely to the “Two minute drill” after his conversations with Sarul and the British Javelin throwers.

He strived to incorporate one new “concept” a year to his throw. Examples:

- Slow-Fast
- Triceps lock
- Big Circle-Little Circle
- Drive off Left Leg

In the car on the final trek to the airport, he explained why he stopped using the word “step” with the right foot and shifted to the word “lift.” If you step across, the left leg may or may not be pushing and if it is, you might not get the right foot rotation. Simply falling back, twisting the feet, and lifting the right foot will demand a left leg push leading to the right foot rotation.

I saw the results of this in a contest we had at camp with Bill Witt, Dr. Tom Fahey, and myself. I cranked a huge one kilo disc throw by simply locking the tricep, lifting the right foot and focusing on rotating the right foot. If it were not for the humidity, the disc would still be flying…it dropped, according to John, at 252 plus. Not bad for a 43 year old geezer.

The "Long" Position I learned from John...look at the right foot!

I took the book “Dinosaur Training” with me to camp and decided to try, again, two day a week lifting. Mike Rosenberg, an old schooler and neophyte Highland Gamer, brought me two thick bars weighing 55 pounds. I will add Thick Bar Clean Pulls (2 and ½ inch grips) as well as Farmer Walks to my training. I also decided to keep my real reps to two sets of five, or three sets of three, or six singles.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

The great achievement of this camp was the invention, by me (well, and Bill Witt) of the “Two stick” Drill. Explaining the “X” position is nearly impossible, so we hooked a ‘bungee’ cord to a broomstick and had the athlete step into this. This stick would slide up to the belt line…sticking a stick through the belt loops works the same. The stick is on the butt side making a “T” with the butt crack. (Scientific names only here) Another broomstick was held across the shoulders. Now…do your drills. Do you hold the “X”? We found that if we put some bright tape on the discus side of the waist stick, the athlete could instantly tell whether or not they held the “X.” The athletes also stopping twisting and bending to the sides…it really is amazingly simple. So simple, most people will ignore it!

John made us teach the disc with this language…
Stretch-Twist-Lift-Twist (into the Three or Power Position)-Jump!

The only thing that matters in throwing is “settling,” I discovered. Short Two, Big Three, and Twist around the LONG AXIS. The disc doesn’t come down!

Pond/Pool...whatever.

Mike Rosenberg’s Excellent review of Camp!
At the invitation of Dan John (the strongest man in Utah) I trekked to scenic Granville, OH for a day and a half of fun and throwing at John Powell's discus and shot camp.

The cast of characters:
Dan John: Utah's finest thrower and Oly lifter.
John Powell: Discus master.
Brian Oldfield: Shot put master.
Ben T: Camp counselor and discus thrower @ Delaware
Allison M: Camp counselor and high school discus thrower from PA.
Me: grunt rookie.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Coach Pain: keeps you informed as to what you are doing wrong.
Coach Gravity: Typically shows up just before Coach Pain to let you know you are about
to do something wrong.

Friday:
I showed up just after lunch and met Ben, John and Brian. Dan was shuttling a group of
campers back to the airport so that they may go home and heal up. Caught up with Dan
about a half an hour later. It was nice to meet an Internet persona in the flesh. We
commented on how much BS occurs on the net and thought it was great that some of us
get together to actually learn and do.

I took Dan out to my van to show him the array of toys I had brought down for our
throwing pleasure. I have the good fortune to work for a metals manufacturing firm &
had some goodies made during some recent slack time.

I brought:
56# weight (actually about 58.5 with shackle and ring)
24# training weight
A pair of 2.5" diameter farmers bars (4' long x 54.5# each)
A bottle of Glenlivet (Dan is low carbing it!)
A variety of stout beers (Guinness for strength)

The farmers bars, 56# and scotch were offered to Dan as gifts so that he would show
some mercy on my pitiful sole and guide me on the path to enlightenment. He picked up
one of the bars and started to laugh out b/c it was so heavy. He held it on center (for
balance) and commented on how much fun these would be. I noticed he held it in a "J"
grip and told him to use an overhand grip and squeeze - squeeze - squeeze. He changed
grips and burst into an evil laugh. He carried them up and down the sidewalk then
proceeded to make some of the other coaches come outside and talk them for a spin. The
coaches then decided that those students who required special attention would be
introduced to the bars.

What next, well at throwing camp - you throw!

As a note, I have NEVER thrown any type of HG implement or shot before today. That
was both good and bad. The good was, they didn't have to "untrain" any bad habits. The
bad was my ego was about to endure a horrible beating for the next day and a half.
Another note, according to Dan, I am a "left handed freak" - ALL DISCUSSION IS
FROM MY PERSPECTIVE AS A LEFTY and as a rookie (this is ALL new to me).

Ben and Allision escorted me down to the throwing area to teach me the South African
spin technique (or however they modified it to get me going - I really wouldn't know the
difference) as a prelude for throwing the implements. Major take aways: Make the first
step short!! If the first step into the spin is long you don't rotate fast enough to get the job
done. So, short step, turn the foot and plant it, spin, 2nd step - let it fly. I spent 20 minutes
or so just walking through the ring practicing. Point your foot at the target, point your off
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

hand at the target, align your lead knee and hip with the target and go. About then Dan showed up and said you learn by throwing - we will "fix" you as we go along. So thus my first HG implement toss was with the 24# training weight.

First mistake, I over analyse freaking everything. I thought about it too much and was swiftly reminded by Coach Gravity that Coach Pain was soon arriving. Dan said just do it and don’t worry about it. So, I was off and on my way.

Next was an introduction to Braemer style (no-spin) style shot putting. I used a 13# shot for most of the practice sessions. Push the truck – pivot – lock & load – tap your lead foot – tuck – toss. What does that all mean?!? Push the truck – set up your feet as though you were doing a truck push. Too narrow a stance, both front to back and side to side – you can’t generate enough power. Too wide, the same thing. Dan told me to imagine I am pushing a truck to find my initial foot position. Pivot back to the take off position. Get down on your base foot (lock & load). Tap your lead foot so that you know have your balance correct and have your weight on your back foot. Tuck the shot under your jaw and let ‘em rip.

The “X” factor. After several tosses of the shot, Dan introduced me to the “X” factor. The X is a relative positioning of the shoulders to the hips such that if viewing the thrower from overhead with a line through the hips and through the shoulders, one would see an “X”. What does the “X” do? It creates the ability to generate additional rotational force as opposed to just “cocking the hips” so to speak. Working with engineers and having roomed with numerous engineers in college, it made perfect sense to me. What was really innovative was that Dan developed a simple tool to help you visualize the "X" so that you can maintain it as long as possible while throwing. I was outfitted with the “X” trainer and was put through a few rotation drills. It lets you know if you are maintaining the “X” while rotating.

After the “X” drills, back to the shot. Same as before but holding the “X”. Boom! Several more feet of distance. At this time I heard the first of many “Man, can I coach!” statements from Dan. And yes it is true, he can coach. Thus ends session 1.

Session 2 begin like session 1, WFD and shot put. Worked on technique and learning to think less and just explode through it. I was beat up for over analyzing by Coach Pain. He is a good trainer.

Then my first ever WFH throwing. Dan and Ben lined up 25#, 35# and 56# implements and training began. Off hand on the thigh – skin on skin for good contact. Hand on the shorts leads to slipping. Tight back, big chest, shoulders back. Pick it up and start priming the pump by swinging the weight. This was my first real visit from Coach Gravity. He let himself be known by causing the weight to make a clinking noise between the shackle and ring. My rhythm was off. Dan then instructed me to “reach through” when the weight was as far back between my legs as possible and let my hips float up – don’t stay tight in the hips. Then “belly buck” it keeping my arm straight and on my stomach while pushing my hips forward. Build up momentum for a couple of swings and go into a giant 2nd pull
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

with a release. I was getting between 8.5’ – 9’ as best as we can estimate with the 56# first time out. This was done both left and right handed alternating. Thus ends session 2.

Session 3: What do you after you throw – O-lift of course. Off to the Dennison gym for some O-training Utah style. We pushed a couple of rubber mats together to make a platform area. A whole freaking room full of Hammer equipment and not one platform – grrrrr. Dan and Ben power snatched what I power cleaned – very humbling. Anyhow, no room for ego when training. After my first clean, Dan pointed out that the bar needed to start touching my socks. I rolled it in an inch or so and blamo, the next rep was much more solid. “Man, can I coach!” was heard in the background. Add some more weight then Dan begin his patented 1 second drill. Lift at an inch a second then when in the high hang – JUMP!. So, I did as told – Dan would say lift, lift, lift then stop (in the low hang) – I then did a “systems check” – he would shout out – big chest – wiggle your toes (balance check) – tight back. Then onto another inch a second into the high hang and another stop command followed by a systems check. Another inch or so then the jump command. Seemed like an eternity. Did that for a few reps then on to adding more weight. Dan promised a PR for me in the power clean if I was willing. My best to this point was 77.5KG (about 171# - I only started O-lifting in November ’00). Soon we were at 191# and they were going up nicely. Then Dan said, “I’d put 196 on the bar but we all know that is like kissing your sister” – so the bar was set to 201#. I bombed 3 times. Bummer. My pulls were on cue but my elbows were not fast enough getting around the bar and my jump under was slow. I thought about the Chermerkin series of photos (C&J @ 272.5kg) from the current Milo. I was that last couple of pictures. I now have a new weakness to wring out – faster elbows and getting under.

We then did dumbbell snatches and I did some power snatches to finish up the session. Dan was impressive performing 100 pound dumbbell snatches. We actually had an incident of a gym twit while Dan was dumbbell snatching with the 100’s. Some goof was standing right behind him looking for a pair of 40’s to curl while he was dumbbell snatching a 100 pounder with his “left” hand. During the third rep, this guy slides in behind Dan as he is working to stabilize the lift. I wished Dan would have dropped it on his foot. Grrrrrrrr.

After dinner, Dan & I walked the farmers bars in the dorm halls for a few laps. Another camper who was going out on a late flight decided to give them a walk. He got a case of bravado and walked them right out the door and onto the quad. When he came back, his biceps and forearms seized up and he couldn’t extend his arms for a good 20 minutes. Dan named the bars after him – “the Eli bars”.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Eli Dawson, Weber State thrower, with John before the "incident."

That evening was spent enjoying scotch and stout and listening to stories by Brian and John about their exploits as well as getting training tips. I would tell you what was said but I honor the rule of “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas”.

Next installment to come….Day 2…

As requested by Dan John, here is the second installment of my visit to John Powell's throwing camp to do some HG training.

Day 2

I was woken to the sound of perky little cheerleaders skipping off to their morning session @ 7:30AM on day 2. Yes, Dennison hosts Cheer Ohio at the same time as throwing camp. Annoying to me at 7:30AM, but exciting for the HS boy throwers who had just left – I heard a few interesting stories. Anyway – sore traps, sore delts, sore joints, but no hangover!

Session 1 – The wind up

Dan had me throw a couple WFD to warm up. Then, Dan introduced me to the windmill style windup prior to starting the South African. Coach Gravity was kept in check – no clinking! I gave it a wind up – short step and pivot into the 2nd step and flung it will all my might. I added at least another 10’ onto my throw as Dan shouts “Man, can I coach or what!” The joy of the throw was just enough to overcome the pain of just having donated a half-inch square of skin to the throwing gods. Damn that hurt. Poured water on it, taped it up and threw 5 more times. At this time, Dan introduced a new concept – he set a marker at 80% of my throwing distance and said to throw concentrating on being smooth and technically correct. Do not go at it full bore! Try to hit the mark – not longer – not shorter but doing it as easy and as fluid as possible. Dan explained that this is a Russian technique to get you to focus on form and not the explosive elements. At the same time Ben is throwing the discus using the same training technique. Dan shouts over to him –
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

“See your throwing it only 20’ shorter than before and using a fraction of the effort.” The additional power doesn’t offset the damage you can cause by using poor technique.

Mike lifting, while Ben does the "Soviet" Drill

Then onto more Braemer style shot practice. I did my drills and then Dan moved me over to a soccer goal on the other side of the field. My job was to throw over the top bar – using proper form. Each time I cleared the bar – I took another step back until I couldn’t clear the bar anymore. Then at that distance I worked on clearing the bar. Caused me to focus on torso position and my release point.

Session 2 – WFH circuit

After having raided Bob Evans for vast quantities of breakfast food we set up the 25, 35 and 56 pound weights and added an Oly bar (which I brought too) and loaded to 95 pounds. Throw each weight for height once with each hand and then hit the bar with a power clean w/ 3 front squats and a clean grip snatch. Dan then explained the applicability of the clean grip snatch to the caber toss – he indicated that they are similar movements. We did a few of circuits of that then I threw the shot a few more times.

Dan headed off to the airport to pick up his wife while I chilled out in the dorm for a while with Brian O. and John P. Brian took a look at my hand and said “If you tell me where you hurt – I’ll tell you what you did wrong.” He then proceeded to break down in specific detail what I did wrong and explained ways to correct it. The amazing part is he was giving me the exact same feedback as Dan who was on-site with me. I attribute this to making classic rookie mistakes as well as his great skill and experience. He then asked me to take him through what Dan was teaching me and proceeded to add to it. Brian gave me a few drills to assist with the windmill windup. He was very concerned that if you windmill with poor body and shoulder alignment – you will screw something up. He then taught me body position for the hammer throw. He had me hook my feet under a couch and proceeded to teach me how to lean back and move my arms for the hammer.

Dan returned from the airport & I met the lovely Tiffany. Truly wonderful people.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Ben and Mike...note the 56, 28, 25 pounds weights lurking around...YOU NEED GOOD STUFF!!

Session 3 – Shot

Allison & I went down to the throwing area and on the way down, I could see Brian seated under a shade tree leaning on his cane and smoking a cig. He looks up the hill at us and throws a towel over his head to accumulate the smoke and then lets it loose in a billowing cloud – he did that a couple times. Now I know what Custer felt like on that fateful day.

Allison set up for the discus and I set up for the shot. Brian tells me to give him 3 throws and I comply. He then “fixes me” from the ground up. Foot position, the lock & load, torso alignment, hand position and initial shot placement. With each tweak – I get I bit more distance. Half way through this process he yells at me – you’re thinking too much! “You can’t think through a ballistic movement!” Feel it and go! This comment tied in well with Dan’s training methods from the morning. One of the insights he gave me is not only do you explode up with your base leg (left in my case), you pull down with your right side. Raise your right hand (remember I am a lefty) and point to the sky – as you explode up – pull your right arm down as hard as you can. Boom – more distance. “Your right side is a post!” he shouted.

At this time John Powell and Ben joined us. John focused his attention on Allison’s discus throwing and Brian took Ben and myself to task. He next had me wrap the shot in his towel – grab the towel right next to the shot – windmill - pivot and let it rip. He kept saying when you pivot – your pivot leg is a post – move about the leg or you lose power. We did this drill over and over.

At this time an interesting thing happened. Allison is doing the 80% drill with the discus – trying to hit a mark 80% of all out effort distance by trying to be a fluid and smooth as possible. John is off changing the music so Brian gives her some pointers regarding his noticing that she let the discus float up about 6” too high during a portion the final rotation. Powell sees Brian correcting one of his throwers and says what are you doing. Brian gets up and moves over to Allison’s ring and proceeds in graphic detail to explain what is going on. John tells him that his adjustment isn’t necessary – it isn’t a full speed drill. Brian insists that it is and for the next 10 minutes the two of them are standing in the
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

ring going through the discus movements arguing how Brian’s tweak either would or would not effect Allison’s throw. Whether or not Brian’s adjustment was right or not – I’ll never know, I don’t have the qualifications to assess it one way or the other. What was exciting was watching two of the best engage in a passionate discussion of the potential effects of a minor tweak in form. They are talking about plane of movement, centrifugal forces, rotational velocity, etc. They love what they do and it shows. They agree to disagree and as Brian passes by me on his way to his seat he says that “I am right – she’ll get a couple more feet my way.”

Brian then shows Ben and myself why he is the master and we are students. “I challenge you to a contest”, he yells.” Ben & I will throw the 35 pound weight and you can throw the 13 pound shot, get you’re a$$ up their and throw don’t think.” I give it my all. Ben gives it his all. Brian cleans our clocks. He hobbled up to the ring, threw his cane down, turned his back to the field and with a half rotation let it fly. Again and again. After he tired with the 35, he moved to the 25 and proceeded to best me every time. Ben was catching up and surpassed him, but Brian kept going. He truly epitomizes the word “fearless”. Then he picks up a discus, looks over at Allison and says, your next. He, on a half rotation puts the discus out well over 120’ in what looks like effortless motion. He psychs Allison out by saying, “give it your best – you’ll lose.” She shanks it out to the right for something in the high 80’s. Mind power at work.

After this he has me work on technique with his cane. First a demonstration – he throws it 100+ feet on the first go. I’m hitting in the 80’s and 90’s.

It is time for me to go, Dan is carrying the farmer’s bars zipping all over the place. Brian is still taking on Ben and Allison in various contests. I go shower up and return to the throwing rings to say good by. Brian has Ben doing hammer throws with a tire hooked at the end of his cane. I ask Dan what is up with that. Dan says – we make the drills overly complex so you don’t have to think through the throw when you do it in the ring. Complex drills – easy events. The light bulb gets a bit brighter.

Much iron was thrown and a good time was had by all.

I now have to go turn off my brain and throw.

What I Learned on My Summer Vacation: John Powell Discus Camp 2002

Before we even get started, this was the best camp of all time…I know, I know…I say that every year. But, it was. A couple of side notes to start the week:

First, John handed me a little article about Al Oerter. Al was “Old School.” His only coach was a towel; he would mark his first throw then try to beat it on the next throw. Then, move the towel. Keep moving the towel over your whole career and you win four Olympic Gold Medals!

Second, one of the Dads at camp, Michael, found that Dennison had all the back issues of Track Technique. I have been searching for an article in one of the
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

first editions by Coach Ralph Maughan, my coach at Utah State, and “nobody” has it. Well, I finally found it. I will be adding it to my site soon. I also found Rink Babka’s training program, as well as Bob Humphries’ and L. Jay Silvester’s, although I had them in other forms.

Third, Bill Witt takes me aside and defines my problem. If you have read the other entries in this series, you will know that I blow past the middle which shortens my levers and, although it seems like I use my legs, makes me NOT use my legs. He tried to explain it to me with “settle” but that didn’t ring a bell. Bill tells me “screw.”

The lights flashed on for me. In the middle of the ring, as a right hander, I focus on screwing (like a screwdriver screws a screw) the right foot in the ground. Since this discovery, my throws have gone…really far.

Tom Fahey and New Research

Tom Fahey, one of the editors of Muscular Development, and a former team mate of my brother shared a lot of information with me about current research in the areas of nutrition and training.

Tom on Shopping at GNC:
1. Creatine works—for some people
2. HMB works—in much bigger doses than people think
3. The ECA stack burns fat
4. Fish Oil is Number One for HEALTH

Tom on training:
Forget transfer from the weight room to the field of play. Get really strong, but don’t do weird exercises that mimic your training motions. Tom told me that the Russian throwers are now just basically doing two lifts a day, five days a week, then switch to another two exercises. I mentioned the book, “Power to the People,” and he reminded me that he is quoted throughout the book. So, one idea for throwers is to pick two exercises at a time, push them in a two week cycle, then pick two others.

The Big One
An interesting thing that actually works, really well, to practically quote Tom, is to take 10 grams of protein (he told me to take 20, for my size) just before lifting. It can be eggs, tuna, a protein shake or bar, or really whatever, but the research shows (some radioactive tracing) that the protein actually goes to the muscle, just like people have always intuitively believed.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Overweight Implements

Overweight throwing still seems to be the best way to teach throwers to throw better. Many campers hate this… “I spent good money to learn to throw the disc”…yet, each time they get their competition implement, all the training goes out the window and they go back to exactly what they did during the season. To learn the “Screw,” toss tires.

It takes a few days of literally hundreds of reps, but you soon learn to screw the right foot and “spring” off of both legs.

To teach athletes to “Hold the Stretch” and “Move your Feet,” multiple turns with 56 weights for men, 35 for women, seems to help. Nickersons will take care of any non-believer.

“Keep your chest up!”

“Move your feet” “Chest up”.... “See what I mean?”

Return of “Spanky”
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

When I was returning campers to the airport, I would quiz them on what was the single best thing they learned at camp. We had sleds, tires, powerballs, movies, books, lectures, you name it. The overwhelming choice for “single best thing?” Spanky. Hold the throwing hand on your buttcheek.

This simple image still reigns!

Circuit Training for Discus

Our Camp Circuit

Four Step Approach in Ring
1. Standing Throw
2. Step and Turn
3. South African
4. Full Throw…all four throws must be fair and in the sector
5. Nickerson Drill
6. Hammer Turn

Later in week, do a Nickerson Drill to a Hammer Turn to a Full Throw
Rotate!

Tire Drill (Catch!)
1. Standing Throw
2. Step and Turn
3. South African
4. Full Throw…repeat throughout entire rotation

Rotate!

X-Sticks…and a chance to rest!
Rotate!

Work with Brian!

Rotate!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Rosenberg Death Medley

1. Sled Drag
2. Ball Sprint
3. Farmer Walk

Rotate!

Hill Drills

Either:
1. Flying South Africans
2. Float-Float-Stings
3. Step and Turns…all with Powerballs

Rotate!

Weights for Distance

20 lbs for women (over 30 feet to pass)
35 lbs for men (over 30 feet to pass)

Rotate!!!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Memoirs of a Happy Camper
Mike Rosenberg’s Diary of Camp II

There was this one time at discus camp...

The saga continues. This is my second year trekking to Granville, OH to participate in John Powell’s discus and shot camp as a guest of Dan John – Strongest Man in Utah. I successfully made the 4 ½ hour drive and arrived late Wednesday afternoon. Last year I was there over the weekend between the two sessions, this year there will be students of the disc and shot everywhere – I was looking forward to it.

Like before, I brought a 28# throwing weight along with a 56 pounder so Dan, Ben and I can practice the Highland Games heavy events. In addition to those two items, I brought a variety of toys for all to enjoy:

- **60# granite ball from Atomic Athletic**
- **105# dragging sled and harness – the sled was home made, the harness is from Atomic Athletic**
- **A home made pair of 65# farmer’s bars with the patented Joe Garcia handles**
- **A home made pair of 55# fat farmer’s bars (2.5” diameter) with no handles**
- **One half dozen 17# shots**
- **A “wrench” from PDA (for Dan’s wrist rehab)**

The wrench is four segments of 4” long round bar of differing diameters welded together.

It requires a fair amount of strength to hold it level at any point on the device and is an amazingly effective leverage based piece of exercise equipment.

As usual gifts were offered to Dan so he would take pity on my poor soul. I gave him the “wrench” so he can rehab his recently broken wrist and a bottle of Johnny Walker Blue so he may cleanse his soul. Dan told me the catch phrase for camp is “Screw Spring”. I would be told later what that means.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

The other toys were taken down to the shot put sector and unloaded. Some of the kids were asked to help unload my car. You could hear both joy and faint comprehension of impending doom in their voices as they hauled the stuff out of my trunk and back seat. More than one camper mumbled under his breath, “how much does that thing weigh?” and “what is that for?” Dan picked up on this and said, “This is Rosenberg, you will learn to hate him and these implements are the reason why.”

Brian Oldfield, resident shot put master had a group at the shot sector going through a series of drills. He immediately had the campers put down whatever they were throwing and line up to throw one of the 55# fat farmers bars. Brian likes to have the campers practice with heavy implements, the reason for which will be explained later. He told the kids to pick up the bar, perform the rotation drill and push it with everything you have. If you try to rotate the bar it will probably “smack you in the jaw and you will never make that mistake again”, he told the kids. “The weight of the bar will keep you from hopping through the ring like a bunch of %$&*$ $%$$#s” he shouted, “don’t fight the bar – flow with it!”

Not here 20 minutes and the toys are hard at work.

Session 1:

Throwing with Ben.

Ben and I went down to the ring to work on my weight for distance (WFD) for a while. I had a refresher course in footwork and the “X”. Ben had me walk through the throw several times and corrected my footwork as we went alone. Like the other instructors, Ben fixes from the ground up. Start cleaning up the base of power and work on the fine points later (if you make it that far). What I learned is that acceleration needs to come from the feet not the torso. By pivoting on your feet correctly (in the final stage of the throw) while maintaining the “X”, you can generate the most speed to throw the implement. For you physics types, please excuse me if I mix up velocity, speed, power, momentum, etc… I never was much good at dynamics.

Ben took me through the pivot again and again until I got a feel for how my body should behave. Then I took a 20# throwing implement and gave it a go. I completely ignored the pivot and tried to “armstrong” the implement with my torso and shoulders. Ben was not amused. I threw again, all torso again. So Ben took me through the movement very slow and deliberately. I threw again – no meaningful pivot.

He then indicated that I am not holding the “X”. (For an explanation of the “X”, read last year’s write up). This was my first introduction to the “X” trainer. Coach Bill Witt prepared a number of X-Trainers for use by the students – quite an innovative approach if I must say. I worked with the X-Trainer for a few passes through the ring. I was quite impressed by the information it conveys and the simple manner in which you can get one heck-uva lot of quality feedback.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Threw again…no pivot, but I held the “X” better. As Brian likes to point out, I have two right feet – it is showing. I threw several times more and tried to focus on the footwork. Something to work on…

Session 1A:

After dinner, some of the campers meandered down the field for an extra session – got to admire their dedication. So they started throwing the 17# shots under the tutelage of Brian, back to more of that overweight implement stuff.

The fat farmers’ bars were introduced to some of the campers. Greg “Coach Pain” set up cones in a triangle and asked campers to do laps around the outside. The fat farmers (2.5” diameter) is an exercise in grip and mental toughness. There is only one thing you can do – squeeze. Nothing else works. There is a bit of technique used when cornering with farmers bars to overcome their inertia, but you really just have to squeeze. Dan, Ben & I all feel that grip strength is something that many athletes ignore.

Greg “Coach Pain” H. and I set up a medley course comprised of the farmers bars, sled, rock and fat bars with approximately 75’ for each leg. We ran the course for time and gained a greater appreciation of the conditioning benefits this type of training yields. Bill Witt and Dan John joined us as well for a run at the course. Well, what do you do after you have tested it and recovered, you inflict it upon the campers. The first group of campers were recruited (don’t stand around looking bored – Coach Pain is watching and waiting) to run it. An interesting phenomenon took place at this point. The medley became instantly competitive. The campers who ran it were timed, each camper was very concerned how he or she placed with respect to their peers. The training transformation took place. The medley was not perceived as hard work (let me tell you it is), but as a contest, as fun, as bragging rights. The best training is when it doesn’t seem like work.

The medley was an instant hit.

That evening, we paid homage to the malted beverages and grazed upon Cliff bars.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Session 2:

Thursday morning, we went down to the field for the first camper session of the day. Last year, I came down over the weekend between the two sessions so it was all about Highland Games throwing. This year, I got to help with the campers for a bit. Coach Pain & I set up the medley, Ben took a group over to the disc ring, Brian had the shot ring, Dan roamed about encouraging the group and two groups were throwing power balls and discs up hill.

The medley was quite impressive. Not only did it become very competitive very quickly, but it became a test of the will too. Not one kid quit on it. Each and every camper ran the course without exception. Some thrived on it, others were beaten down by it, but all completed it. You have to stand back and figure that it is no big deal for me to drag a 105# sled for 75 feet for time, but to some of these kids, the sled was in excess of 85% of their body weight – and they still pulled it the required distance.

After the campers’ session, Ben & I worked on the Weight for Height (WFH) event with the 35# implement. I found that starting with my knuckles parallel to the ground vs. normal to the ground made for a better release. Ben had a keen eye, had me adjust the orientation of my hand and voila, a little more height. I worked on exploding with the weight, getting full extension and having a smooth pull. I leaned a bit more and life was good.

The learning lunch. I had been after Dan to critique my snatch technique while at camp. So at lunch I took the opportunity to lobby him for some gym time to allow him to watch and for me to learn. He asked where I felt I was having problems. I responded, “jumping under the bar”. “Ah, HA!” he exclaimed, your perspective is all wrong. You don’t jump under a bar; you push it to the sky.” I am thinking, yea, so what is the difference? Dan proceeded to gather an audience and explain how one’s perspective or if you will approach to a lift or throwing event, just like “Screw Spring”, pushing the bar up to the sky is an important distinction as opposed to diving under the bar. “You must think about pushing the bar high high high, not diving under it.” “Get into a position to push it high and lock out.” I am thinking, yea, okay. It really didn’t sink in at the moment. I am slow like that. It comes to me later.
After lunch I was down at the shot put ring listening to Brian take a group through their drills with the fat farmer’s bar (55# piece of 2.5” diameter iron x 4’ long). He told the campers that the purpose for practicing your spin technique with the heavy bar is to train yourself as to the proper orientation of your body. The heavy implement magnifies the errors you make with poor body position. If you have the bar in the catch position of a clean and you lean forward, you will tip forward even more due to the weight of the bar. The weight exaggerates the movement. If your body is in the proper position, life is good. Brian said, “If your back, shoulders and hips are not in the proper position, not only do you have to use your muscles to throw the implement explosively, but you have to use your muscles to compensate for poor body position. They (the muscles) won’t be as fresh for the throw as they could be if you were set right.” Makes sense to me, he is the expert. I went through the drill a few times myself. The weight of the bar keeps you from hopping through the ring, it forces you to slow down and it makes you “lock” your back in the “muscle beach” (big chest) position or face the wrath of gravity.

Later in the afternoon I ran the medley a couple of times. It was set up first with the sled pull, then the farmers bars (with handles), the granite ball and lastly carrying one of the fat farmer’s locked out overhead. I did it twice and thought I was going to die. After I cooled down, in a case of false bravado, I drug the sled along the course path backwards as fast as I could. My quads were on fire, my head was pounding, I was sweating like a pig and my heart was racing. Other than that, life was good. About 20 minutes later, I hit the wall – hard. I had not felt anything as miserable as hitting the wall in a very very long time. I drug my lame self up the hill to the dorms and crashed for 90 minutes. Three hours later my pulse was still high due to the stress load.

Anyone seen Rosenberg? No, more coffee?

That evening, we paid homage to the malted beverages and grazed upon Cliff bars, again.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Session 3

Dan, Ben and I went down to the ring for my first run at throwing the 56# implement for distance (WFD). It is a rather intimidating piece of equipment since it tends to throw you more so than you throw it. Dan said, “Now here is were we Screw Spring!” “Don’t think about planting and pivoting your back foot (left for me) as you complete the final portion of the rotation – think about screwing it into the ground and then Spring to the finish.” Instantly, the imagery of setting, turning and lowering my body in preparation for the explosive finish was captured in one single word – Screw. Your leg is a screw and the explosive finish is the Spring – Screw Spring! Dan said that Bill Witt came up with this simple phrase that gives one (at least me) a description of what to do coupled with an intuitive image of what to do. Imagine your shoe is threaded like a screw and you are twisting it into the ground - then shoot to the sky. I took 6 throws with the 56# and survived, then moved on to the 35# and lastly the 28# implement. On my last throw with the 28#, Dan cupped his hand to his ear and said, “I think I hear rubber turning on the pavement?!?” I finally got the pivot.

The best part about session 3 is I overcame my fear of the 56# implement. I realized that it wasn’t going to tear my arm off. Now that the implement doesn’t overwhelm me, I can focus on getting some distance with it.

Well what do you do after you throw implements, you run with a granite ball. Dan picked up the 60# ball and ran it 100 yards or so to “the hill” then returned promptly with it. Ben did the same. Always being one to succumb to peer pressure, I did it too. It just sucks the life out of you on a 95 degree day in 90% humidity.

Last but not least Dan, Ben, Eugene (a disc thrower from the Philippines) and I head over to the Dennison gym for the next installment of Olympic Lifting Utah Style. My snatch lift has stalled so I asked Dan to give me some advice. We were pretty much warmed up from throwing so we went right to it. We put 50kg on the bar and I snatched it. Well kind of…I ended up power snatching it and came to the realization that I am really tired. It was an effort to move 50kgs. Dan said, “Focus on the movement and push the bar to the sky, don’t dive under it!” I am like, yea right whatever. I snatched the weight and proceeded to get the “Dan John look of disapproval”, this is the same look his daughter Kelly inherited – don’t piss her off! Dan had me change to the frog stance, focus on pulling the bar in and explode after the high hang. Sure enough, they got easier and easier. I really like the frog stance for snatches and use it regularly. Dan asked me what my best snatch is. I told him 72.5kg. He told me that would fall today. So we
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

loaded 60kg on the bar, then 65kg, they went well. We got to 70kg and I pooped out. Not much juice at all – I had the pull but didn’t get under it. So instead of trying it again, Dan puts 78kg on the bar (we mixed metric and standard weights) and tell me to snatch it. “Think of something that really pisses you off and snatch it” he said. I conjured up a memory of something that still to this day makes me very angry – set my feet in the frog stance, hooked the bar, locked and loaded and ripped it. I pulled until I couldn’t pull anymore and started to “push it to the sky”. I saw myself in slow motion in the mirror go through the movement. At that point, “push it to the sky” made perfect sense to me. You don’t dive under it, you push the bar to the sky. I could see when you had to push and why it mattered. The light turned on.

So what I am doing while the light is turning on, I am missing the lift of course. I tried to save it, but alas gravity won. Funny thing was, I felt good about it. I had one of those moments of clarity - the mechanics of the snatch made sense from a different perspective. I never thought I would be glad to have had a mirror in a gym. My “abs of beer” are shy around mirrors.

The day was done, we worked hard and I learned much. We cleaned up and headed out to dinner. Later that night I drove 5 hours to home. Not beat up and sore like last year, but with the comfort that I learned a little more and threw a little further. Maybe one of these days I can get past those two right feet Brian keeps talking about…

Let's Get Rosenberg After He Gets Out of His Coma!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Camp...2002
The First Annual John Powell/Brian Oldfield Highland Games

The Cast:
(Left to Right)
Mike, 222 Hammer Thrower from Boston
Dan, the Editor of Get Up!
Ben Thuma, University of Delaware Discus
Aaron Ross, Penn State Discus and Hammer
Greg Henger, West Virginia Throws Coach
Dave Witt, writer for Get Up!
Mike Rosenberg, writer for Get Up!

We gathered on Friday afternoon, after a week of four a day training and serious carousing. The campers had left and we headed down the hill for the event. A handful of campers stayed around to judge the event (without giving any help to me…and I was willing to buy them off)

We had Scottish music wailing throughout in the background from a stereo.

The Implements
(Left to Right)
Off the Picture…105 Sled and Two “Rosenberg” Bars
22 Pound Heavy Hammer
28 Pound Light Weight for Distance
35 Pound Weight for Distance
56 Pound Weight for Distance
22 Pound Open Stone
60 Pound Braemer Stone

Results
Atomic Ball…60 Pound Braemer Stone

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22lb Open Stone

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28 WFD

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35 WFD

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Important notice…by this time, additional beverages were being provided for the hard working athletes…
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

56 WFD

Mickey 24’7
Aaron 21’8
Dave 17’6
Ben 20’
Dan 27’11
Mike 12’5
Greg 18’7

22 Heavy Hammer

Mickey 80’1
Aaron 67’
Dave 53’
Ben 71’10
Dan 81’5
Mike 40’11
Greg 53’10

Juggernaut…100 yards in Heavy Grass with 2 ½ inch Rosenberg Bars (65 pounds each)

Mickey 17.09
Aaron 19.14
Dave 29.65
Ben 17.60
Dan 20.69
Mike 23.23
Greg 26.59

All week long, all we discuss is rotating the feet in the direction of the throw, like John does here:

“Move the feet, hold the stretch…”

So, what do I do in my first event?

I tell you…this stuff can drive you to drink!!!

Excellent day overall, thank you to all my friends! Why do we even mention this competition? Because…we simply invented it! No federations, no dues, (no don’ts either), just guys wanting to compete! “Show UP!”

An email from Aaron…

Aaron Ross is one of my favorite people in the world. We first met at the John Powell Discus Camp when he was in the Eighth Grade. He spent the next year drilling himself over and over becoming an outstanding high school and college (Penn State) discus and hammer throwing. For non-throwers, this article gives some insights into taking what you learn to applying it to yourself.

Dan,

I hope this week at camp is going great. Thanks for the help and insight with the hammer.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

I have to say that this was the best camp since after my freshman year in high school. The biggest two concepts that I picked up on at a camp were the "twist, twist, twist" that John had mentioned and the image of "clawing" your way across the circle which you had given me. In a sense both of these concepts are linked together, in my mind anyways. It is very difficult to keep your feet twisting and accelerating without both feet on the ground. If I understood John right, in ever phase of the throw, you want to try have two feet on the ground as long as possible. By keeping both feet on the ground it makes it possible to make each successive twist faster than the previous. Analyzing my South-Africans and step and turns over the past couple of days, the longer that I delay my left drive out of the back, the more effective it becomes in accelerating my right foot, and in creating my pendulum.

Another thing that John mentioned was the settle in the power position. While it was not the first time that I had heard of settling, I liked the way that he explained it this time. When he was working with Steff (a thrower from Stanford, editor), he explained that you wanted to time the settle with left foot touching down and discus reaching the focal point. Again, if I understand it correctly, this timing allows the right foot to immediately start accelerating once you hit the power position.

Probably the biggest break through came from my marathon throwing session with the 20 lbs. weight. After about two hours I finally started to get the feeling for twisting and clawing my across the circle as well as accelerating through the "3" position. If I ever really get stuck again, I will go back to the 20 and 35 lbs. weights to get the feeling again.

I threw for about 2 hours today basically working on twisting my feet. I was throwing fairly easy, just trying to let the twist of my feet propel the discus. My stands were nice and easy, about 120 to 125 w/ out a reverse and my step and turns were around 145 with my best at 148. With just working on the twisting and accelerating, I bettered my best step and turn of the season. My south-Africans were only about 155 but had a best at 160. I was having a little trouble timing the left leg drive. On my best SA, I delayed the left leg drive until right foot was almost already on the ground. This really helped the right accelerate and continue to turn. Unfortunately I got a bad blood blister on my right index finger so I was only able to take a couple South-African's and a few full turns. On the full turns, I knocked the intensity down even further, to the point were I could do a few 360's into a full turn, accentuating my feet twisting across the circle. At probably about 60 percent intensity with a less then perfect release, 150 was easy. This was clearly my most focused and best practice in a long time.

I hope some of these notes from camp and from my practice are useful. If you need me to clarify something or explain it better just let me know. Thanks again for all the help and I hope this week goes great.

Aaron

What I learned on my Summer Vacation

Well, I love the written word, so when John Powell handed me an article from “American Track and Field Athletes Only” that he had written, I knew this would be a great two weeks.

John compared the discus throw to skating: “It’s similar to a line of ice skaters moving in a circle. The person in the middle barely moves, but the skater at the end of line has to work hard to keep up with the line while it turns.”

Once again, if the right foot turns for a right handed thrower...good things happen. “The illusion of arm speed is created by sprinting ahead of the discus. Once the thrower winds, the discus stays in the same relative position, “locked” behind the hip. The arm moves as fast as the foot turns. The faster the foot turns, the faster the arm appears to move.”

John also shared with me a few drills that his coach, the legendary “Bud” Winters either invented or stole:

- Throws for height…but aiming for a goal
- The badly named “South African” Drill
- The rhythm of the throw is “1-2-3-and Throw!” During the and...the right foot turns.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Mike Rosenberg also showed up and brought the usual set of painful toys. I asked him what he learned the first day and he answered simply: “You need to learn from the ground up!”

The Big Lesson of 2003

Don’t give yourself an “anchor” in the back…lift your right foot. Huh?

Although Yuri is a hammer thrower, he is actually the one who gave John this clue. All too often, young throwers pick up the foot at the start by first bringing the heel to the butt then lifting the knee…Brian Oldfield calls this cantilevering.

It causes the thrower to slow, stop, or pause as the athlete gets ready to get into “two.” (See http://danjohn.org/book.pdf for details). It kills most of our young throwers! Just lift the knee…don’t bring the heel to the butt!

Oh, it looks and sounds so simple but it has a tremendous effect on getting across with speed, balance and power.

Also, John took me aside and told me that this position of Yuri is something to consider…to go from “one” to “two”…simply drop the left knee one inch and lift the right knee.

Harder to explain than do…I threw farther!

The Next Million Dollar Hint

Sound out your drills. That’s right, say “1-2-3 and throw” or whatever on thrower drills. The louder the better. It takes your brain away and gives your feet a chance to work!

Teaching the Romanian Deadlift

Mike Rosenberg, Dan John and Matt Spiller

This article is a mishmash of internet forum discussions, practical training experiments and some quality time that the authors have spent together working on the Olympic Lifts. Mike is a Highland Gamer from Illinois and coach at the John Powell Camp, Matt is a discus thrower and physical therapist from California and Dan spends his days waiting for his tomatoes to finally turn red.

A Post to a Lifting Forum

The hard thing about the Romanian Deadlift vis-à-vis the stiff/straight leg deadlift is the "learning curve." Hop on a bench, grab bar, descend to shoelaces, come back up: Congratulations, you did a Straight Leg Deadlift.

The RDL requires that your butt goes back, back, back and you don't "go down" with the bar. The bar goes down, because your butt goes back. Any "bar down" motion or thought ruins the effect. It took me more than a decade to appreciate this!!!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

If you remember my long boring discussions of going to the USOC training camp and watching Nico Vlad train, I learned about RDLs before they were known by more than probably ten people. I just missed the point...as did most O lifting coaches and a lot of other much more intelligent people.

To teach the RDL, I always have the lifter put his/her toes and balls of the feet on plates or the 2" x 4" s that make my platform. Then, I just make them go "butt back." You make a good statement about the hammies hurting the next day. If a lifter can get the bar to the patella tendon, they are doing something right in the rest of their training. They have good strength and flexibility. Getting it to the socks is a good goal...I wear high socks.

I also teach it by picking the bar off of a rack or a bench. If you deadlift it first, there seems to be a tendency to deadlift it back down versus butt backing it down. Also, anytime the athlete gets on the toes, the lift is over, drop the bar.

With the snatch and clean training from this position, it is merely my attempt to teach the modern methods of the snatch and clean. The Bulgarians are now teaching to stay on the heels the whole lift...not just until the "top of the pull" as I first was told about this approach. RDLs with the feet on boards teach the feeling of this "Heels."

The other great thing about RDLs is that you can keep some good volume...easily up to eights without a problem with proper weight selection. As you may know, I like the higher reps so the athlete has some "wiggle room" to screw up a rep or two and still have the bulk of the set a quality rep. I like to teach the athletes to explode each rep, but the nature of lifting sometimes makes it hard to get each rep perfect. With an RDL set of 8, you might screw up one or two, but most reps will be ass back hammie burners.

I know a lot of people push big RDL numbers, but I think you shouldn't go much over one's best snatch or clean. Like with pulls, athletes often will sacrifice carryover to performance for just more weight. I get letters from people who tell me they can do enormous overhead squats and pulls, yet can't snatch near that much (I have my doubts about depth and quality...). This is when the athlete needs to rethink training.

Insights learned at John Powell's camp this year in experimenting with the RDL...

Mike Rosenberg

1) Start a couple inches away from a wall.

2) Unlock the knees.

3) Keep shins perpendicular to the floor (move with your hips, not your ankles). If you shins are not perpendicular, you are moving the wrong joint.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

(Editor: this is Dan…and Steph hidden behind him…practicing the “feel” in the dorm room in Ohio. Both athletes are simply doing some “butt touches” then scooting farther and farther from the wall…then, butt touching again.)

4) Move the bar down along your thighs.

5) Only move the bar by pushing your butt back and your chin forward (put your butt on the wall behind your -- push back hard -- put your chin on the wall in front of you --- really jut it out there)

6) When you brush the wall with your bum - straighten up - move out 1" and do it again. repeat this step until you find your distance from the wall. After your distance is set, think of it as a touch and go type of exercise...

(Steph and Dan will next be doing RDLs…the bars are right in front of them.)

As noted by DJ, you will feel a big "X" in your hammies when you stretch properly, they will want to just pop off of your legs if you are doing it right.

We tested this methodology on several first timers and accomplished athletes...seems to work well until we find something better...
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Matt’s Review of the RDL to the Snatch

First step is to find snatch grip. Hold the bar with a grip width so that the bar hits you at where the top of your zipper would be. I had been holding the bar about two inches narrower each side.

Then put balls of feet up on two by four with heels on the floor. This keeps your weight on your heels. This is KEY.

Then, you Romanian Deadlift the weight down. You do this by having “beach chest” (chest up, low back arch locked), armpits “tight” (like pinching someone’s fingers in your armpit) and sticking your ass straight backwards, keeping the bar close to your legs. You are NOT lowering the weight. You are just pushing your hips backwards. As your hips go back, the weight will descend. BUT, the cue is “butt back”, not weight down. Dan helped me cue the butt backwards by having me push my hips back until they hit a ski pole (the shaft, not the tip). Dan would progressively move the ski pole further away to get me to push my hips back farther and farther.

Also, as you push your hips back you make this “raptor-like” noise with your jaw open. It helps, don’t know why. It just becomes part of the RDL, nothing you have to focus on separately.

Then when the bar got down to the top of my kneecaps, the cue was to put your “chin to the ceiling” FAST. Not halfway towards the ceiling, all the way! The bar flew up. Dan progressed me multiple reps from 95, 115, 135, 145, 155. I missed 155. The bar felt heavy and it psyched me out. Instead of following the cue to put my “chin up”, I pulled the weight with my arms. I hadn’t realized at first following the chin cue, I didn’t even think of my arms!

Read that again!! I didn’t think of using my arms. I didn’t pull with my arms. My trunk followed my chin, my hips were thrust forward and the bar flew up into the catch position as I sank into a squat snatch. I didn’t even think of shrugging, nothing about my arms, just my head extension.

Previous attempts of mine with the quick lifts focused on keeping the arms straight so I didn’t pull with my arms. Doing it the way Dan showed me you don’t have time to think of your arms. This is a BIG difference in looking at how to do the lift.

After the first few reps, I didn’t need the 2x4, I just made sure to stay on my heels. Staying on your heels becomes part of the RDL technique, not a separate action.

After a few reps the lift just became “butt back - chin up”. I couldn’t believe the lift was this easy. I’m not known for picking up physical skills quickly. I’m no Bob Mathias. So, it must be the coaching. Man, can Dan coach.

So true, so true...
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Matt Spiller's Odyssey to Utah

What's the first thing you would feel like doing after driving an ass-numbing eleven and a half hours to Utah?

Dan thought it would be a good time to teach me how to snatch.

Dan graciously invited me to his house for two days to just throw and lift. I’ve been unable to go to John Powell’s discus camp the last three years so this was a fantastic opportunity for me.

When learning to snatch, I was expecting all sorts of complicated directions and having to focus on many things at once. This was much easier than I expected. So much for the snatch being complicated…

I thought making a lift with 145 (97% of max) was pretty good. Plus, this was from the hang, not the floor. I hadn’t been lifting heavy or often recently due to focusing on throwing the discus in my competition phase.

Before I snatched, I warmed up with front squats with chains for 2x2. Being the first time I used chains, I was surprised how they MADE you lift fast. You have to lift fast to “outrun” the extra weight piling on. I’ve read how the extra weight helps to match the strength curve of the lift. And, I’ve read how chains are used for speed work. But, to FEEL the extra weight is totally different. Dan liked these because they taught you to lift fast. He used to have to tell the athlete to: “Down slow, up fast.” Now the chains do it for him and he can save his valuable breath.

Dan’s comment that if he could do it all over again, he would use chains for every press and squat shows how good this idea is.

After the lifting with the barbell was over, I got to try the original Rosenberg Bars™. 2 ½ inches of solid metal weighing 55# in each hand. Dan prefers these for grip strength over the hand gripper type training. For discus throwing, I agree.

For abs, Dan is doing Armstrong swings more often. You take a four or five foot piece of PVC pipe with a “T” on the end, slap a 25# plate on it and swing it around like the Highland Games hammer throw. But, don’t throw.

This workout format follows Dan’s workout plan as detailed on his “Off Season Training” page on his website: http://danjohn.org/2003directory.html.

Dan recommended a similar plan to me for my “Heavy Weights” season. I periodize the year into Heavy Lifting, Heavy Throwing, and Competition phases. I plan on doing a three times a week weight training workout utilizing a day each for push, pull and squat. Then, I will have four conditioning workouts (A,B,C,D) that will be done in the park across from my house afterwards. Thus, I’ll be doing the same weight exercises and conditioning exercises together only once a month or so.

Another conditioning tool Dan uses is Hoover Ball. Volleyball with a medball, with no spiking. This will get your heart pumping and your lungs huffing and puffing. Excellent “cardio” option.

(From the official “Hooverball” site)
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

I quickly realized that Dan’s approach to improve throwing technique does not consist of telling the athlete what he is doing wrong and then having the athlete try the throw again following the new directions. What he does is find a drill that: “teaches the thrower” automatically how to do the movement better. Experiencing this new motor pattern, the athlete can then carryover this “feeling” to the competition throw.

A lot of the drills use heavy implements. Heavy implements can “magnify” any mistakes you make, often causing you to fall on your face.

Although we focused on the discus throw, these principles apply to any rotational thrower, including shot putters and Highland Games contestants. All the following descriptions apply to right handed throwers. So, sorry to all you left handed freaks. You will also need to be familiar with Dan’s terminology, such as “1, 2, 3, etc.” as outlined in Dan’s excellent discus book. It can be found for free at: http://danjohn.org/book.pdf

Drills covered included:

**2-3 with tire**

Teaches you to stay upright
Teaches you to turn with bent legs
Straightening legs will cause you to lose balance and fall

You hold a tire with your right hand (glove recommended) and repeat 2-3s down a straight line. If you’re doing it correctly, you will follow a straight line. If you do it wrong, you will go off track. If you straighten your legs, you will fall, trust me. You want to “paw” with your legs as you turn down the line. It is also recommended to do this drill up a hill.

**Nickersons**

Helps “erase” all the little errors you make with the throw
Focuses on the main footwork of the throw

Hold a medicine ball or weight and start at the end of the throw. Hold the object out in front of you as it would be just before release. Support the object and your right hand with your left hand. Whip the implement backwards behind you to start the throwing pattern backwards. So, you start in 3 and move backwards through 2 and 1 to the start of the throw. Then, move forwards through the discus throw pattern. Repeat backwards and forwards many times fast.

I also did these with the 56# weight going backwards only. Standing in 3, swing the weight straight forward, then as it goes straight backwards it pulls you through the throw pattern backwards.

**56 throw for distance**

Teaches you to stay upright
Teaches you to hold the stretch

Stand with feet apart holding the 56 pound weight in your right hand. Imagine you are standing with both feet on a line. You are going to work your way down the line to your left. Swing the weight across the front of you, then behind you to start the throw of the weight. As you swing the weight around from behind you to in front of you, let it pull you around as you pivot on your left foot and swing your right foot around to land on the line. Keep pivoting on the right foot swinging your left foot on the line. Continue to pivot on your left foot and step forward into the 1 position. Then complete 2 and 3 and throw.

**Float Float Sting**

Holding a discus perform 1-2-3-shuffle-shuffle-1-2-3-shuffle-shuffle-1-2-3-throw.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

The shuffle-shuffle is basically hopping forward with both feet with your feet staying in the 3 position, pushing off with your right foot.

**Tire overhead**

Teaches you to stay upright, in all phases of throw

See the book.

**Stone throw with right foot turn**

Teaches right foot turn/push

Hold a heavy (about 80#) rock in front of you with both hands. Stand in the 3 position, but have your right foot turned pointing 90 degrees to the right. Pivot on the ball of your right foot so that it is pointing forward then throw the rock straight forward with both hands.

**Stand Shot put with right foot turn**

Teaches right hip/foot turn/push

Stand in the 3 position, then turn away from the direction of throw. Holding the 16# shot at your neck with your forearm perfectly vertical (the “pillar of power”), turn your feet to face the direction of throw, then put the shot.

Dan sure can coach. And if you forget to say this out loud, he will cue you. (Editor: yes, I do do that, don’t I?) He’s constantly monitoring his athlete, even more so than the athlete is monitoring himself. He knows when to hand you a beer and when to add more weight to the bar. His plans are flexible and change rapidly based on how the athlete is responding. This can only be achieved by experience, lots of it. And, if he hasn’t seen what the heck you’re doing before, he can figure it out.

On day three, I was doing snatches with the “proper” technique but losing them out in front. I couldn’t figure out why. After a minute, Dan figured out that my fast twitch fibers weren’t twitching fast. I was doing “chin up to ceiling” correctly, but too slowly.

Dan helped me find a “set” technique that I could continue to practice on my own at home. I focus on starting the throw keeping a bent left leg and leading with my right knee. At 2, I “paw” myself around which helps me turn the right leg all the way. However, I can’t focus on “putting the plate up on the shelf” also. It’s too much to focus on all at once. If I focus on “putting the plate up on the shelf”, I don’t turn my right foot all the way around. So, for now, I focus on the right foot more. Once, my “set” technique is ingrained I can focus on other points.

Dan offered to let me look through his extensive library of track and field and weightlifting books and videos. I was fortunate enough to be able to photocopy a lot of discus related information, much of it out-of-print and one-of-a-kind. I’m still going through all of it.

Learning the rotational throws without a coach isn’t easy. Dan’s book helped a lot and training with Dan in person helped a lot more. Now I’m training regularly with Dan’s friends here in California. I look forward to the next time I make the trek out to Utah to throw and lift.

How I spent my summer vacation

Mike Rosenberg

Mike is a Highland Gamer from Indiana and coach at the John Powell Camp. In the last edition, we got the wrong state for Mike and this seemed to bother him. No one at the Editorial Meeting knew there was any difference between Illinois and Indiana because they both start with the same letter...

Year Three, the saga continues. What can I say; I just keep coming back for more. This is the third year I have attended John Powell’s Shot Put & Discus Camp as a guest of my gracious host Dan John. For me this year is kind of special in a way; 1) I brought along #1 son, my 12-year old Seth and 2) I had recently been laid off and had way too much time on my hands. Camp was not only an opportunity for me to train hard and non-stop for 10 days, but it presented the chance to introduce my eldest to the time honored sports of shot put and discus. It was also quite cathartic in that it took my mind away from this rotten economy and my current employment predicament and allowed me to focus on something I truly
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

enjoy – throwing. Many thanks to John Powell, Bill Witt and Dan John for allowing Seth and I to participate in the 2003 camp.

Mike Rosenberg...doing his fling

As always I brought a wonderful array of toys. This year I brought: two 55# dragging sleds and harnesses, two sets of farmers bars (4-bars) at 65# each with handles courtesy of Joe Garcia, the 60# granite ball from Atomic Athletic, 20# shot, 56# Highland Games (HG) throwing weight, 28# HG throwing weight, 22# heavy Scottish hammer (from The Old Celt) and as an added bonus 100KG of Eleiko bumper weights and a Chapman Grizzly olympic bar. And of course, I brought 2 fifths of Scotch. One of 15-year old Laphroaig (Gaelic for: "The beautiful hollow by the broad bay") and one 15-year old bottle of Glen Dronnach – aged in a sherry cask I’ll have you know.

The Laphroaig was offered to Dan upon arrival so that he may have mercy upon my weary bones and we proceeded to unload the Durango and set up mine and Seth’s room. The first order of business was to create a “salon” so that we may lift when we so desire. A younger counselor graciously “gave up” the room that adjoined ours to take residence on the 4th floor so that Dan & I could Olympic lift without having to trudge down the hill to the Dennison gym. Dan and I neatly disassembled the bed frame and stacked the desks on top of one another to create enough floor space. In 15 minutes we had a lifting salon - 20kg, 15kg, 10kg bumpers, 5kg, 2.5kg iron weights, collars, straps, a bar and chalk. With squat stands and it would have been perfect. We then drove down the hill to unload the remaining toys next to the training field.

I met up with John Powell, Bill Witt, Ben Thuma, Greg Hanger (Coach Pain) and Brian Oldfield and did a little catching up. It was good to see the crew ramping up for week 1 of camp. I also had the opportunity to also meet Stephanie Benight, a counselor who attends some little school out west called Stanford. When she is not being really really smart majoring in chemistry, she throws the discus.

June 16th:

AM Session – I assisted with the tire drills. In this drill, a tire is held overhead and tossed with the emphasis on footwork and holding the “X” to get the most out of the rotation. The campers did standing throws, step and turns, South Africans and full turns with the tires.

After the morning camper session, Dan, Ben and I turned to the 28# weight for distance (WFD). Per usual, I didn’t keep up with my throwing so it was the first time since March I had taken a weight in hand to give it a go. Brian O. sat on the sidelines to watch us and make sure that I was to get an earful of feedback. The first few throws were in the low 30’ range. Dan tweaking my time such that he wanted me to wait until the weight came around to be in front of my face at head level before beginning both the 1st and 2nd rotation. Remember, this is Highland Games (HG) style. It is not the same as used for field events. Voila, a 37’ throw followed by a 38’throw followed by a 40’ throw. A personal best for me in the 28#
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

WFD. As expected Dan looked to the sky and proclaimed, “Man, can I teach or what!” Yes Dan, you can indeed teach.

By waiting for the weight I was letting Coach Gravity do a fair share of work for me vs. pulling the weight through the ring 100% of the time. If you are respectful of Coach Gravity he will be good to you. Anger him and suffer the consequences.

After lunch Ben, Coach Pain, Steph and I adjourned to the lifting salon where Ben introduced us to the German Javelin Training Protocol. It is quite simple yet very effective.

1) Clean Grip Snatch x 8
2) Front Squat x 8
3) Power Curl x 8
4) Back Squat x 8

At face value it does not appear to be so remarkable of a complex. But when you perform each of these movements back-to-back as fast as possible for some give amount of weight, it can run you ragged. After a circuit, you wait for your pulse to drop to a certain level (an article in the July 2003 issue of Pure Power Magazine www.purepowermag.com cites 124 bpm as a good recovery target) perform the circuit again. Do these as many times as you can manage. As for the weight to use, check you ego at the door. We used 40kg for this drill. It was more than sufficient to give us a quality work out. There is a similar program in Dan’s first edition of Get Up! Check it out at this link… http://danjohn.org/gu1.pdf.

For the question that everyone asks with German Javelin Training - when I can I use more weight? As your time to recover (time to get back down to 124 bpm) improves, bump up the weight.

Then Dan joined us and “re-trained” us on the snatch lift. He presented a simplified approach to the lift that distils the lift down to the essentials. Best of all – no technical terminology. If you have been fortunate enough to read Art Dreschler’s epic tome Weightlifting Encyclopedia (www.wlinfo.com) you can find an expertly detailed breakdown of the Olympic lifts in all of their glory. Dan with all of his Utah common sense and simplicity broke it down to:

1) Put your weight on your heels the whole time
2) Put your butt on the wall behind you
3) Put your chin on the wall in front of you
4) Throw your chin on the ceiling for just a brief second (look at the ceiling for a moment) and shrug

And voila, you have performed the snatch. As you will see later, there is much carry over from the Romanian Deadlift (RDL).

Anyway, we began from the low hang, bar starting just below the knees and worked on butt and chin positioning. Stretch your bum back as far as possible and at the same time; try to put your chin on the wall in front of you. You must really work for the stretch. All the time remember to keep your weight on
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

your heels. Then with all your might, throw your chin on the ceiling (give the sky a quick glance with your eyes) and shrug.

Dan showed us that it is a good basic non-technical introduction to the snatch.

In the evening, I spent a little time on the quad doing hammer turns with the 22# Scottish hammer then went down the hill to catch Dan John and John Powell in the midst of one of their “qualifying” meets. The weapons of choice this evening were the 4K and the 1K disc. John won the 4K contest with a toss of 92.5’ vs. Dan’s 91.8’. Dan however prevailed in the 1K with a 203.5’ toss vs. 193’ for Mr. Powell.

I went off to throw the 28# WFD. I had six throws consistently in the 35’ range which is a nice improvement for me.

In the evening we partook of the malt.

Not bad for day 1.

The next day (6/17), I ran the “carry and drag” station that is a part of the training regimen. The same basic concept applies each session but we vary it up a bit here and there. Some combination of towing a sled and carrying a weight or farmers bars is performed. Sometimes the carry and drag is done together, other times they are sequential. It is still great to see the kids get instantly competitive with one another when a timed event is a part of the rotation.

As for myself, I did a lot of footwork drills today. The one I hate the most, but get the most out of, is rotating with a tire up and down a hill. I can really say I truly despise this drill because it is so damn difficult. Yet, I can not think of a single drill which flushes out your rotation flaws and shows you what to fix as well as this one. Then do them under the watchful eye of Brian O. and one can really appreciate the full depth and breadth of his colorful and quite expressive vocabulary.

The hill is short, less than 10’ feet in length where we practice, but the rise is very steep, about 5’ feet or so. You start several feet back from the incline holding a tire in one hand and rotate up the hill. If you so much as under or over-rotate by even a little, the hill forces you off course immediately and you can easily determine what needs fixing. Additionally, if you are not “sprinting through the ring” so to speak, the steep incline will bring your forward progress to a grinding and abrupt halt.

Rotating down the hill enforces the Bill Witt metaphor of “screw spring” (see last year’s notes). If you are too upright as you rotate down a steep hill, you feel as though you want to tip over. Again, it exaggerates any over or under-rotation issues you may have.

Then I took the 28# WFD for a spin, so to speak to see if I retained any information from yesterday. I had 8 throws consistently in the 35’ range which is an improvement for me. I took 7 throws with the heavy hammer and hung my head in shame. I need to work on maintaining a good orbit and solid foot position in this event.

The evening session included more 28# WFD and an introduction to the Romanian Deadlift (RDL) by none other than Dan John himself. The joy of working out with Dan is that not only does he enjoy training, but he wants to understand the why’s and wherefores of a given movement. Then he wants to make their application more efficient.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Dan Sterba, Steph, Coach Pain, Dan and I retired to the lifting Salon to undertake the RDL. The way Dan explains how to do it and the manner in which you see most others do it are completely different animals. Most lifers do something along the lines of a limited range stiff legged dead lift (SLDL) instead of an RDL. The RDL is not a ballistic movement and in my opinion requires a fair amount of focus when doing them.

1) If possible start from blocks or on the pins outside of a power rack. This curbs the desire to mimic the SLDL.
2) Utilize a snatch grip.
3) Shins should be vertical to your feel the whole time. (Don’t bend your ankle joint at all!!)
4) Unlock your knees – just a little.
5) Slide the bar along your thighs. Keep contact.
6) Your weight should ALWAYS be on your heels. (lift your toes to get the feel)
7) Move the bar down by pushing your bum back as far as it can go.
8) Simultaneously, as you push your bum back, try to place your chin on the wall in front of you. Really work to jut your chin out there.
9) But moving your bum back and your chin forward, lower the bar to your patellar tendon and then stand up.

If you are doing these right, you should attain the feeling that your hamstrings want to pop off the back of your legs. I highly recommend doing these for the first time with an empty bar. Trust me, it is enough weight to tie up your hammies. If you “feel it” in your lower back, you are either moving your knee or ankle joints too much and not your hips. You should only be moving your hips, your ankles should be fixed and even though your knees are unlocked, you should not be moving the ankle joint. Again, if you feel an “X” forming across your hamstrings and they want to pop off the back of your legs. You are doing this correctly.

We then cleaned up and partook of the malt.

June 18th

Today like everyday began with stretching, breakfast and the morning session. I would like to focus on the highlights of the day vs. a detailed recount.

Today Counselor Josh met the Big-21 program. Many of the weightlifting programs that Dan espouses are quite simple in their composition, yet if you do them right (with good intensity and giving it your all), they work to kill you. The Big-21 is one such program. It combines volume and progression in one protocol such that it embodies the Friedrich Nietzsche mantra – “that which does not kill me makes me stronger”.

The details of the Big-21 can be found at: http://danjohn.org/page73.html

It is built around three movements; the clean and press, snatch and the clean and jerk utilizing the following rep scheme.

Starting weight for five reps
Add five pounds and do five reps
Add five pounds and do five reps
Add five pounds and do one rep
Add five pounds and do one rep
Add five pounds and do one rep
Add five pounds and do one rep
Add five pounds and do one rep
Add five pounds and do one rep
Add five pounds and do one rep
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

After you C&P it, break it down to the starting weight and snatch it. Break it down again and C&J it.

It is just that simple, 21 reps per set, 63 per session!! Do it three times a week for three weeks and each time start 5 pounds heavier than the previous session. Trust me, it is about all your body can take.

What separates the men from the boys is the selection of week one’s starting weight for the first set. The boys will put one something close to their 5RM. The men will have enough common sense to know that the 21st rep will be 40 pounds heavier than the first and your body will be in a different place after 21 reps. Oh yea, I forget to add – minimal rest between sets!! The opening weight for your last workout will be 45 pounds heavier than rep one on session 1!! Keep that in mind and check your ego at the door.

After three weeks, you will be a new person. It is an excellent off season workout.

Anyhow, Josh was introduced to just one session of the Big-21 and became a believer. He put in one heck of an effort and made it though. Dan let him select an opening weight that was a bit high to emphasize that this is a 9 session program, not a 1 session quick fix. By the last rep, Josh clean & jerked over 200#. Not bad for the morning session! He was a real trooper and a new believer.

In the afternoon, I again attacked the 28#WFD. I took six throws for 42’, 44’, 37’, 39’, 35’ and 39’. My first time over 40’!! Not bad for a little guy who never practices.

After dinner I hit the heavy hammer for 7 throws. I really focused on the orbit and tried to make my winds consistent. I took a few more tosses with the 28# and put two over 40’ with the remaining six in the 35’ range.

We then cleaned up and partook of the malt.

**June 19th**

Again the day started off with the usual morning stretching session followed by breakfast then the morning session. Today we focused on Olympic lifting. The post AM session workout centered on the snatch. Dan is converting me over to the “new” style of flat footed pulling vs. coming up on the toes. The idea is espoused in an excellent video offered by World Class Coaching LLC ([http://www.worldclasscoachingllc.com/](http://www.worldclasscoachingllc.com/)). The idea is that by staying on your heels during the pull and leaning back a bit, you can elevate the bar to a higher point prior to transitioning under the bar. As noted in my recollections from 6/16, I worked on throwing my chin on the ceiling. It takes a bit of getting use to. For a brief second, you need to glance at the ceiling and shrug. If you do it right, voila, you are under the bar.

After lunch it was overhead squat and RDL time and after dinner Mickey and I worked on a couple of complexes. One was the clean + FSQ and the other was the RDL + snatch + OHSQ. One thing I have learned working out with Dan – if it is broken, you can fix it with more weight and more reps. It is kind of the philosophy of the entire Powell Camp. Make training heavy and complicated with a strong focus on technique, then when it comes time to compete, let your muscle memory take over.

**June 20th**

The First Annual Dan John Powell Highland Game Throwing Extravaganza

As highlighted in issue 22 of Get Up! ([http://danjohn.org/gu22.pdf](http://danjohn.org/gu22.pdf)) we held a highland game on the beautiful grounds of Dennison. As Dan noted afterwards, you had to come with you’re A-game or it wasn’t going to happen.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

We threw the 20# shot, 60# granite ball Breamar style, the 28#, 35# and 56# weight for distance (WFD), the 22# heavy hammer and the juggernaut for time (towing a 55# sled whilst holding a 2.5” diameter x 4’ steel bar in each hand). The bars had to be gripped with an overhand grip which can only be done by squeezing with everything you have.

In keeping with the tradition of Powell Camp, if you’re not doing something, you’re doing something wrong. We completed all the events in just under 2 hours. As a collective group is it fair to say we were beat up.

What did I learn from our morning in the sun? I need to keep my arms long in the heavy hammer and move with faster feet over all. Even though I belonged in a division below all of the other guys it was still a worthwhile experience to get out there and put it on the line. The best way to learn is to compete. And I still hate the 56# weight for distance…

Later that day I practiced hammer winds with the heavy hammer and turns with the 56#. After that, I will pretty well shot.

As per the end of week #1 tradition, Dan’s better half Tiffini arrived as did Ben’s girl friend Katherine (with a “K”). On Sunday Mindy Ramsey, a shot putter from Michigan came to train. Having the three ladies present was a welcome break from the sweaty men-folk.

June 21st

To celebrate the Powell Camp day of rest, I went back to practicing rotating with a tire up and down hill. I spend nearly an hour working out the kinks. I really hate that drill but it is incredibly valuable. Then I spend about an hour working on hammer winds and turning with the 28# weight.

Dan then spent some time tweaking my 28# WFD. He focused my efforts on the initial cast. Dan indicated that I should come out stronger and pull the weight through the initial turn. Then after completing the first rotation I was to have “courage” to wait a brief moment to let the weight catch up. Dan likened the waiting period to a “jerk recovery”. Dip the knees a bit and for what seems like an eternity – wait just a fraction of a second. What this ends up doing is it allows you to guide the weight forward and use it’s inertia vs. muscling the weight through space. It makes a big difference in how you use your energy.

While we were training John was over in the ring tossing a 1K about. #1 son – Seth walked up to John and asked for a discus lesson. John gladly obliged. I mentioned to Bill Witt a bit later in the session, “How old do you think Seth will be when he truly appreciates the opportunity he was given today?” Bill just kind of shook his head and said, “he is getting a million dollar lesson and doesn’t even know it.” Seth was 2 for 2 today. Earlier while I was doing tire drills, he was getting a shot put lesson from the Big-O himself. Some time later in his life he will appreciate the time these two men took to introduce him to the basics.

As always, we festivated with fine malt beverages in the evening.

June 22nd

Week #2 began. Seth and I went down the hill to throw some more. He worked on the skills John and Brian showed him on the previous day and I worked on my initial cast with the 28# throwing weight. I got in a dozen or so throws and was consistently putting them out between 35’ – 40’, but with much less effort and before. As we all know, Dan can teach.

It was nice to spend some time with my son and watch him take a liking to throwing. These will be memories I will hold dear for many years to come.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

In the late morning, I assisted with registration set up and processing. That lasted until 4 o’clock or so. After dinner we opened up the weight salon and worked on snatches and RDLs. Mindy was shown the RDL technique. It took a bit of getting use to for her as she kept bending at the ankles vs. the hips (remember keep the shins vertical). After a few trials, she had the technique down pat.

One of the things I appreciate at Powell Camp is that I get the opportunity to be with people who enjoy training, who train hard and who share their insights as to how we as a group can train more effectively. It is one of the few places where I can lug 125kg of bumpers, set them up in a dorm room and have people say it’s great vs. getting a vacant stare. There were times during the week we had lines 5 and 6 deep to knock out a set in the salon.

By this time, like everyone else who had been there a full week already, my body was in a perpetual state of…something. Sore, tired, run down, no spring, etc. Of course, in Dan John’s world, this signifies that your glass is most definitely half full. Why? Because when you are run down and your strength is sapped, you must push forward with better technique because you sure as heck don’t have enough gas in the tank to muscle it. Thus we trained more. Snatches and overhead squats for everyone was the order of the evening.

One thing John added to the program Sunday evening was an impromptu demonstration of the Scottish heavy hammer. All the campers assembled down the hill for a demonstration by Dan, Ben and Mickey. After the demo, John gave an open offer to anyone who wanted to throw it – as long as they put on a kilt (which was supplied). Several of the campers gave it a whirl. Hopefully some of the campers will look to Highland Games as an opportunity to throw more and supplement their schedule when they are “out of season”.

Monday June 23rd.

It was fun to watch Seth during the drills today. Unlike the other campers, he had already put in a full week plus some overtime on the weekend. He was dog tired and could barely make through the morning warm up and field session. As for me, I pretty much felt the same. I got some hammer winds, 28# for distance and some puts after the morning session. Later that afternoon I did some overhead squats and some footwork drills out on the quad.

Seth finishing the Sled Pull...

It was Seth & my last night at camp so we celebrated by ordering Seth a pizza. I settled for more traditional offerings, namely malted beverages.

The next morning we packed up said our goodbyes and made the 5 hour trek back home to South Bend, Indiana.

I would really like to thank John Powell for allowing Seth and I to have an extended camp experience as well as Dan John for his hospitality and perpetual enthusiasm for training. I would also like to thank Ben, Bill, Coach Pain, Mickey, Stef, Dan, Becky, Tiff, Mindy and of course Brian for making it a fun and memorable learning experience for the two of us.

See you all next year.

Fantastic stuff, Mike!!!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

How I spent my summer vacation

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 to Pam with two children, David teaches high school math.

Thursday June 19th. I jumped in my car and headed north into Ohio. About 2 hours later I pulled into beautiful Granville, Ohio, a quaint little college town, much like the town my Grandmother lived in. I found the campus and, being it was around noon, determined that everyone was probably eating lunch. I found the cafeteria and immediately spotted a large figure sitting at a table over a tray full of food and coffee. This must be the legendary Dan John. I walk over and say “Hi”; Dan looks up at me with blank recognition on his face. Geez, you would think after writing four articles for Get Up he would recognize me. I tell him my name and the light goes on. Now we’re old friends. Dan takes me over to meet John. He also makes me feel very welcome.

We head over to the dorm and drop my stuff somewhere and proceed to the weight room. It’s a dorm room with some weights that Mike Rosenberg brought with him. I meet the legendary Mike Rosenberg, the man that turned a caber in his first Highland Competition and another contributing writer for Get Up.

Rosenberg’s “Guest Bedroom”

We start with a few overhead squats. Then we do some “Rosenbergs” which is a hang snatch followed by an overhead squat and then another hang snatch only lower, and then a full snatch from the floor. Dan says “One day you’ll thank me” and everyone else says in unison “Today’s not that day!”

“Today is not that day!”

Next it’s on to the Romanian Deadlift. You’ve probably already read about this in Get Up issue 2 No. 1. Suffice it to say, don’t bend your waist. Keep the knees still and shoot your butt back. This one really works those “going away muscles”, the muscles you see when someone is walking away from you. The erectors, gluts, hams, calves. The muscles that make things fly far. Gee, that seems familiar.

Soon we head down to the field for the afternoon session. Stations are set up and everybody rotates through the stations in groups. My group consists of several of us older guys and a few of the really young campers. We hit the sleds first, dragging a heavy sled for time. Mike Rosenberg is in charge at this station, and tells me I have a good time on my first try. Thanks Mike. I need all the positive reinforcement I can get.
Next, the Nickerson drill with a 56 pound weight. Nickersons are basically doing the throw backwards. It takes a little bit of timing to get that weight moving, but once it does it pulls you through the drill. I manage to catch that time perfectly on one of my first tries and get lots more positive reinforcement from the coach at that station, I think it was Ben. Ben is a really great guy that just graduated from college and a talented thrower.

On to the float-float-sting station. Here we do some FFS’s with a powerball. First thing I relearned here, just because you’ve done some of these in the past, doesn’t mean you can do them in the present. They had us count out the steps as we did this drill, it really made you stop thinking about what you were doing and just do it. I really wasn’t happy with my performance in this drill. I need to do more of these in my regular training. I like the power ball, and promptly bought one later from Bill Witt.

Next station, 28 weight for distance from a South African drill. I don’t turn my right foot enough. That was the major thing I needed to relearn at this camp.

Next, into the discus ring for a timed drill. Using a 1K, 2K, 3K, and 4K discus, do a standing throw, step-and-turn, south-african, and Nickerson drill into a full throw. Use the 1K for the standing, 2k for the step-and-turn, etc. Do all this in 30 seconds. I could only get the first three done. Later, I asked John why the time limit, and he said basically to make the athlete stop thinking and start doing. Keep them from standing around doing nothing. Get them involved.

“More reps…more reps…more reps.” John Powell

Next the X-sticks. Bill Witt was at this station and right away he accused me of losing the x immediately after my windup at the back of the ring. Ok, I do. I’ve always been more concerned with hitting the x in the power position and coming out of that at the front. But, I’m here to learn and brought an open mind, so I play it his way. I like the x-sticks and could feel some torque with them. I’ll try this out later with a discus.

Bill Witt…details, details, details

Finally, we get to Brian’s station. Brian immediately has me do some rotations up the hill. I can’t get too far up. I really don’t turn my right foot enough. Nuf said.

After the session, Bill Witt is kind enough to show me some javelin technique with a turbo jav. I was thinking about throwing javelin this year in our state games, so this was great advice. Bill is a great guy who also teaches math like I do, and you can’t go wrong with that last name.

When it was all over, I talked with John for about 20 minutes. This alone is worth the trip.

After a great cookout, I headed back down to the field with my discus to practice what I had learned. Even though I was tired, the throws felt good. There was a line across the field at what I assumed was 100 feet, and going by that, my throws were very close to my seasonal best marks with a totally new technique.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

That night I broke out the supplies of beverages I had brought along, along with the scotch for Dan and a bottle of good Kentucky whiskey called Makers Mark. Everyone was very appreciative. Next year I’m bringing some wings though.

The next day was Friday. After the campers left for home, we headed down for the first ever John Powell Highland Games. Being only my second Highland Games, I was able to pick up three PR’s in three events. The 56 WFD, the 28 WFD and the 22 Hammer. A lot of fun was had by all and it was fun being in a games with Dan and Mike, the two who inspired me to get into this madness and buy a kilt.

After the games I spent some time with Bill Witt throwing discus from the grass up a hill. Again, thanks Bill for spending some time with me on the discus. If you hear the grass squeaking, you’re turning your foot.

Later that evening I went back out and threw some more discus. Mike’s son was there, and let me tell you, that boy has some potential. I’ll be looking for his name in about 6 years.

Little Seth Rosenberg…of the Indiana Rosenbergs

That evening I spent 3 hours talking with Brian. We shared a bathroom and I had to go through his room to get to one mine since my door didn’t work. We talked about everything from training to technique to family and everything. I had brought my copy of Dynamic Track and had Brian and John sign the pages with their photo sequences. Funny thing, both thought that the throws on those pages were not very good.

Saturday, I met the lovely Tiffini, Dan’s wife. I wish I could have stayed around longer. I had breakfast with Bill and John. Again, talking with John was worth the profit of admission. I’ll never forget walking down the street with John or sitting at the table in the restaurant and wondering if the people there knew that an Olympian was in their midst. If I didn’t say it enough, thank you John for the opportunity to come to your camp. Thank you Brian for the wonderful conversations and advice.

So what did I learn or relearn? Having the tapes is wonderful and advised, but you have to keep doing what is on the tapes in your workouts. Once you master a drill, keep doing that drill so that you don’t lose the skill the drill is supposed to teach you. Did I mention I don’t turn my right foot enough? Turn that foot! That is the one component that separates the discus from any other sport. It is also used in many Highland Games events. I’m totally revamping my discus technique to simplify it and hopefully make it easier. Buy a powerball. Especially one you can fill with sand to adjust the weight. Mine is at 6.5 pounds right now.

Lastly, get together with quality people. People interested in your sport. Whether at a meet, a training session, or a camp, get around good people. It never ceases to amaze me how good the people are in these throwing events, both in track and in highland competitions. Dan mentioned at camp that it was too bad we all lived 12 states apart from each other, and he’s right. One way to get around good people is to go to these camps and I recommend it for anyone interested in throwing. I plan on being back next year and doing much better in the 2nd annual John Powell Highland Games.

Thank you, David! Your insight about quality people might be one of the forgotten keys to success.

Three years at Discus Camp

Steve Hnat is a High School Junior from Floyd Central High School, Southern Indiana, three year camper and John Powell’s throwing camp. “I’ve been throwing the discus since 7th grade and have been lucky enough to have been a two time state competitor finishing 14th in discus 2003. I am small in the throwing world at 5’11” 165lbs.”

Steven and 2003 NCAA shot put champion from Nebraska Becky

CAMP 2001

I was going to be entering high school the coming year and arrived at camp thinking I was very knowledgeable of throwing the discus and shot put. WRONG…After meeting John
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Powell and Brian Oldfield who were people whom I had spent many hours researching and analyzing their throws I realized that my knowledge base would soon multiply by many times in my week at camp and I was ready.

The next coach that I came across was the man himself Dan John who was introduced to the camp body as the lifting man who would answer all of our lifting questions.

POWER BALL

I came to throwing camp to throw the discus and ended up with a power ball that was weighing in at nearly 12lbs. I was now informed that this would be my implement for the remaining week and I would learn to love it.

CAMPS CONCEPT

Dan lead our first session and gave us the concept of working your throws and drills from the ground up, meaning that your start with your feet moving to the hips-abs-shoulders-and focal points.

FOUR STEP THROWING

Next came our introduction of the way to throw the discus in four easy steps. Since I was always told that throwing was one of the most complex movements in sports I was ready for this.

1) Stretch
   Stretch your arms wide and back as far as you can feel the pull in your chest. Now twist your upper body back forming an “X” with your shoulders and hips

2) Twist
   Twist your feet out of the back never lifting them off the ground

3) Lift
   Lift the right leg. This allows you to force yourself to push or run to the center of the ring, building up the throw with the idea of slow-to-fast. If you reach the center of the ring and have not driven off the left leg you are now unable to turn on the right foot and will never create any power in your throw.

4) Twist
   Twist on the right foot rotating it 360 degrees in the center all the way threw the release of the discus.

Now Dan explains to me that if you take a short step out of the back to the middle of the ring you allow both feet to be on the ground at the same time. This is a good thing because now you can push with the left leg rotating 360 degrees into the power position.

THE YEAR AFTER CAMP

I left camp in 2001 with a full notebook and a many new friendships with the coaches from camp who too are campers themselves always willing to interact with the camp and share there valuable knowledge to those who are willing to listen.

Summer pasted and the concepts of camp fell into the back of my head. Now into January 2002 thoughts of track began to filter into my head. As I read my notebook and throwing logs I began to get excited as this was my freshman year and I was out to make a name for myself.

Spring came and went leaving behind new PR’s and a trip to the state finials in the shot put. I was done with school and it was time for camp.

CAMP 2002

Going into my 2nd year of camp I was open to ideas and wanting to take in as much as possible. Camp started on a Sunday with on evening session which evolved the filling of power balls and then throwing them through the field goals using running south africans.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

CONCEPT FOR CAMP 2002
After tripping and nearly falling on my face by holding onto the ball too long, one of the coaches told me to sink into the throw. I said ok and joined the line again. On the next throw I threw one of the biggest scoops I’ve ever done pulling my arm along with it, but I did sink more. Now the sinking would be told from a different point of view by screwing your foot down into the ground. Now I refer to it as walking down the steps here in my training.

WHY I ASKED
By screwing the right foot down into the middle of the ring it provided an easy way to incorporate the legs along with creating torque in the “X” accelerating throughout the throw. This one small idea has opened many new doors for me and makes throwing very simple.

SESSIONS
The next sessions would my geared towards the four-step approach.
1) Stand 2) Step and turn 3) South African 4) Full

RHYTHM
Some months later I was day dreaming about throwing and it hit me. I need to do my warm up in the order of the four-step approach. I went to the shelf and pulled out John’s video and put it in. I wanted to see if the four step approached if done in order created an even rhythm. Watching the tape I listen to the sounds created by Carol Cady’s feet and came up with my own concept I would use.

1) Stand
   1 beat from the one movement
2) Step and Turn
   2 beats 1-turn 2-throw
3) South African
   3 beats 1-drive to middle 2-turn 3-throw
4) Full
   4 beats 1-wind 2-drive to middle 3-turn 4-throw
That’s why John says rhythm is such a big deal and always has classical music playing during camp.

PROBLEM WITH MY NEW WARM-UP
As the year began to really get going I abused the South Africans no longer running/driving into the middle but rotating loosing all the power that would allow me to sink down into the throw. So I took out the South Africans and added the Nickerson drill losing the rhythm aspect but giving me more confidence.

ROSENBERG’S STATION
1) Sled Drag 2) Ball Carry 3) Farmers Walk
This was a fun station, but man did it leave you winded. I took these drills home and made it into a fun practice for the team, and added into that the jogger knots.

JOHN’S ANSWER THAT CHANGED MY THOUGHT PROCESS
The one thing from camp that has stuck with me since that day was one answer John gave me. For the better part of the past year I had been blocking with the left leg, but only my toes were on the ground and I felt I was loosing power because of it causing a left leg bend. I went to John and asked him how can I keep my whole foot down and he calmly replied “I don’t know, but when you figure it out come back and tell me.” I took a step back when the man with all the answer gave me that answer. Through the conversation he led me into realizing that everyone has their own throwing style and way of going about getting it done. This made me think for a long time to come. In my conclusions here I find that while watching tape or another thrower you can always find some error that can be pointed out as needed to be fixed, but you need to not only find the error but the cause of it which could take you all the way back to the very beginning of the throw.
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

FIXING MY BENT LEFT LEG

After trying to find the beginning of my problems that was leading to my bent left leg, we found that a long drive phase out of the back left my feet very close together often less than 12 inches. This made be left foot very slow causing me to lose the “X” because I had already started to throw before my feet where all the way down. I now have the understanding of why John couldn’t answer my question along with a thought process to use while training.

Breaking 50 feet as a FRESHMAN!

CAMP 2003

I prepared for camp 2003 by making a heavy power ball of around 16 lbs using iron shot and sand. I figured I would give myself and mental and physical battle this year.

The evening session went as years past pointing out that I was still throwing in a very vertical position and needed to settle into the middle.

The next few workouts were completely dedicated to Nickerson Drills Stretch-one-two-three-point-one-two-three by now I thought I had “mastered” the drill when the coaches decide to throw in the Nickerson using our off throwing hand.

So I was back to zero on my ability to do the Nickerson, But doing them backwards made me think the throw through and perform the motion more correctly without bad habits.

THROWING DOESN'T HURT

This was the next major point that came from John saying that “If you’re throwing or lifting motion is hurting, change it.”

This would soon come in an example from my nightly euchre partner and Penn State thrower Aaron Ross who spent something like three hours throwing the 35 lb weight trying to beat a mark set early in the day by Mike. He was doing only South Africans and during one of your conversations he seemed not as tired as he should have been. This takes me back to John’s statement in that he had a good technique and his foot work was creating the power rather than his arm allowing him to last that long. This also seems to have applied to John’s career allowing him to complete at an international level well into his 40’s.

HILLS AND TIRES

Next in our rotation would be Brian Oldfield’s Station. He introduced the camp to a new drill that will be applied to my training. He had us hold the tire in our throwing hand and rotate up the hill like we were doing a version of float-float-sting. Wow this turned out to be tough because you had to hit the drive phase right as you were facing up hill or you would be completely thrown off balance and get your earned earful from Brain. I am lucky enough to have a hill leading down to my high school throwing area and it will be uses for this drill many times in the future. This all came from three years of camp and a notebook full of ideas and innovative drills that are applied to my personal training.

This is just excellent, Steve. Not only your insights...but your writing skills, too. Keep it up!

What I did on my Christmas Vacation

While Salt Lake City dug out of an epic winter snowstorm, I had the misfortune of having to spend several days with the John Powell Discus Camp at the National Training Center in Orlando, Florida. Besides the tan, I learned a ton of new stuff.

Technically, it was a time to relearn and refocus. John reviewed the usual points of Stretch, Twist, Lift, 1-2-3, 3-2-1 and all the rest, but it takes a few days for the campers to grasp the real key. John wrote it like this:

"It's similar to a line of ice skaters moving in a circle. The person in the middle barely moves, but the skater at the end of the line has to work hard to keep up with the line while it turns. The illusion of arm speed is created by sprinting ahead of the discus. Once the thrower winds, the discus stays in the same relative position, "locked" behind the hip. The arm moves as fast as the foot turns. The faster the foot turns, the faster the arm appears to move."
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

The best new drill for me was the 360 drill (Turns in one place) with a slide. Simply, after the right foot lands after doing the 360, the left foot slides into the throwing position. This is a great drill to feel the notion of “twist-twist-twist.”

John and I spent many hours talking about training. We roomed together (one of us snores) and we talked about a Litvinov’s prep for the 1983 Worlds. This hammer thrower would Front Squat up to eight reps, then run 400 meters around 75 seconds. He did this for three sets. For John, this was illuminating as not only was Litvinov strong…he was also together. John took this idea and began to incorporate a lot more running (200s) as well as an idea from Brian Oldfield, the concept of throwing light implements and overweight implements.

We also discussed an idea for discus camp about making an Athletic Pentathlon and awarding points for each event. We discussed using the Weight for Distance (35 lb for males, 20 lb for females: 50 feet), Pushups, Situps, Pullups and a 400 meter run. Scores of Five would be a 50 foot throw, 60 Pushups, 60 Situps, 10 Pullups and a sub-60 400. We felt that these scores, along with a basic understanding of the throws, were “doable,” and we then scaled back very reasonable scores for 1-4…a one point effort would be 30 ft in the WFD, 40 Pushups, 40 Situps, 2 Pullups, and a 76-80 Second 400.

Adding the scores could give you up to 25 points (very much like the Drew Carey TV show where the points have no meaning) and one could reasonably…in a camp setting…strive to improve over the week.

The biggest news from camp is that the video “Discus II” is now available on DVD. I like this format. My favorite part of the DVD is the “Four Step Approach” and I have often watched the sequences just before throwing to get a mental image of what I want to do. The DVD format is very good for this. In addition, the film has plenty of lifting…a nice package altogether. Call John for them…leave me alone…at 1-800-456-SHOT for the DVD.

In the weightroom, Mike and Mindy have really been improving lately. I taught them the joys of Tabata Front Squats. We also came up with something that may have a lot of use for many interested in fat loss: Tabata Core Blasters!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

If you don’t know Core Blasters, check the previous editions and see Todd Taylor’s first explanation and David Witt’s “how to” article for Core Blasters under ten bucks. We have been doing them for sets of thirty seconds, but doing the blasters in the Tabata Method really reinforces the need to stay on the heels and hold the central core together. The Tabata method is twenty seconds of core blasters followed by ten seconds of rest…repeated (that means without stopping!) for eight cycles. A real builder of lower backs, I assure you and a perfect exercise for hammer throwers who have gotten lazy about posture.

A “Prudent” Discussion

I went out with Mike and Mindy to Denny’s to gorge on steak and eggs and we started talking about goal setting. Both of them have lofting goals for 2004…and I feel they need a lot more boost from nutrition to do these goals. While I told them to consider drinking olive oil throughout the day, Mike worried about getting fat.

“Wait,” I said, “I thought you just said your goal is ‘X.” “Yes, it is, but…” It was at this time we started talking about how most people have multiple goals and they often conflict with each other, but we rarely acknowledge this conflict. I often hear people tell me they want to lose fat, but don’t want to give up their doughnuts. That’s a conflict.

The other thing I wanted both of them to spend some time thinking about is the “cost to benefit” ratio of getting their goals…and not getting their goals. For the past few years, I have used a simple chart to help people work through a goal:

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<tr>
<th>Goal Chart</th>
<th>Pain</th>
<th>Pleasure</th>
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<td>Do</td>
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<td>Don’t</td>
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Simply, one takes a goal and writes down all the Pain and Pleasure they will receive if they get their goal (“Do”) or don’t get their goal (“Don’t). Filling in the chart is odd: one of the first thing people ask is “Wait, there might be pleasure in NOT getting my goal?”

Of course! That is exactly why most people fail on fat loss programs and athletics…there are many hidden benefits to not getting your goals. I am always reminded of coaching high school football here: I was told by many of my former players that they were
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

actually happy they lost early in the playoffs just so they wouldn’t have the long days of practice anymore. Certainly, showing off the Championship Ring the rest of their life would certainly be better than a few days of extra time, but, at the moment, there is pleasure in failure. For people who have families or busy jobs, not getting a goal (a vacation for selling the most cars for example) might be easier than juggling a change in schedule with your kids.

The next question is usually “There is pain in getting the goal?” Sure, toss the discus 190 and the first words out of everybody’s mouth is “when do you get 200?” The bar is always raised when you get a goal. Moreover, there is a lot of inconvenience when you get goals: when I lost 50 pounds on Atkins, I had to buy all new belts and pants. In fact, my clothes didn’t catch up to my body for months.

What’s the value of all this work? First and foremost, this little exercise brings out one big point: you may not have associated enough pleasure with getting your goal and so you easily succumb to smaller trifling sub-goals…like eating the whole plate of doughnuts before anyone else gets one. In fact, when I work with athletes on goal setting, the most common problem is that they have practically nothing in the box “Pleasure/Do.” The more things you can associate with getting the goal that will make you happy, money, sexy, successful, fitter, funnier, smarter or cooler, the more likely you are to make stay focused on the goal.

I think goal setting is the easiest thing to do in the world. I used to teach high school and sophomores would be struggling to figure out if they would star in the NBA or be a doctor or lawyer or simply be extremely wealthy. You see, that is goal setting at the basic level: open your mouth and let something fall out. The real method of goal setting is to spend time looking at the “costs to benefits” ratios of these goals…then, finding conflicts in your life that will stop these goals, then, eliminating the conflicts!

Great camp!!!

What I learned at Discus Camp...2004!

Dan John...old geezer

To keep tradition…and the truth…these were the best weeks ever of the John Powell Discus Camp in Granville, Ohio. Kudos to our interns…especially Samir…and, of course, Vicky Sussman. We ate well…partied well…trained well, well, it was pretty good.

In this “brief” version, I would like to hold out the best single idea of camp…for a right hander: left handed throws. Mike Rosenberg and I were playing around with the 56 pound weight throws and Brian Oldfield dropped by to coach us.

Overall, most people came away with the belief that Brian really knows what he is talking about…although most of us realized that years ago. Ben Thuma promised an article reviewing the basic core ideas that Brian can turn your life around with in the ring.

So, we are throwing and Brian tells us that we need to throw left handed (Mike needs to throw right handed…being a left handed freak). Why? Well, most throwers will do things correct with the wrong hand.

Moreover, to quote Brian:

“Sit up in a chair…that’s how you throw. The axis is the spine, not the sternum. That’s the “little circle!” Bing! Light goes on. The key to throwing far in rotational events is to keep the rotational axis as small as possible. Brian told us the story of a researcher who told Brian that he “stopped” in the middle…
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

“No, I didn’t, I had such a small axis that the computer said I stopped but actually the ball was flying around... a very small circle!”

And, this relates to left handed... how? Well, if you focus on it with the wrong side, it carries over without thought to your normal throw. In fact, it is so simple, I probably won’t use it. Ben Thuma spent a whole week training with the 3k and 4k discs learning to throw with the wrong hand!

Okay, I’m not even there four hours and I am better than when I arrived. Next, we discover that I have a habit of “locking my left leg” in the Power Position (PP) which makes the discus or shot (or hammer, as I was to discover), just take off. Brian told me to throw a lot with “soft” legs; in other words, throw with bent legs... don’t lock them out.

For three weeks, I worked on releasing the discus with a big torqued throw with soft legs knowing that in competition I would “climb” up the left leg with adrenaline. It worked... far better than I would have thought!

Brian asked me a simple question related to the chair again: “would you sit down with straight legs?” No. “Then, take a moment to sit in the PP and put your navel where you want to throw it!”

The next day, I went up to a yearly best in the deadlift with a 525 pull which I had to do because the Denison University football players were grunting and acting up with 405.

I also found that when I focused on bringing my “butt to the ball/discus” rather than any other concept in the discus drill “Step and Turn” things got better.

John Powell added an interesting insight when he said that when “you come into the PP, do a little “hop” holding the “X.” We invented several drills that really seemed to work this, including the Stephanie Drill (Stephanie Benight) where the athlete hops, hops, hops then hits the PP with a hard “X.” Mike Pokowski also claims to have invented this drill but his version was:

Bounce
Bounce
“3”
Bounce
Bounce
“3”

Radically different. (See the book, “The Contrarian Approach to the Discus Throw” for explanations of the terms... free on the site).

I found during the first week that the image of “Sit down” in the PP seemed to help me throw well. It gave me time to let the hips come around and lead the throw. I had a hard Tabata Thruster worker the first week and I was sore for days. I ended up tossing the 3k discus 128’7” the first week, too; a pretty good toss.

Friday afternoon, we had the Second Annual Brian Oldfield/John Powell Highland Games. We had plenty to drink and lots of food grilled on our BBQ. The good people at Denison scored us all the buns, mustards, ketchups, chips and all the rest and we had a fine party.

Head Scorer: John Austin
Officials: Austin Maeri, Adam Theieleman

Athletes:
Mark Shughart
18 Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

Jake Fautz
18 Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania

Steph Benight
19 Schaumburg, Illinois

Greg Watson
20 Las Vegas, Nevada

Mike Pokowski
27 Dayville, Connecticut
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Mindy Rawlings
27 Otter Lake, Michigan

David Witt
Old Kentucky

Dan John
Even Older Utah

Atomic Ball (60 Pounds)

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<th>Mark</th>
<th>Jake</th>
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<td>14’5</td>
<td>Mike 20’11</td>
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<td>Dave</td>
<td>14’6</td>
<td>Dan 18’9</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

Open Stone (22 Pounds)

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<td>Mike 45’2</td>
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<td>Dave</td>
<td>31’3</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

56 WFD

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<td>Dave</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

35 WFD

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<td>Mike 58’11</td>
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<td>Dave</td>
<td>37’1</td>
<td>Dan 50’4</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

28 WFD

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<td>Dave</td>
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<td>Dan 57’</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

20 WFD

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<td>Mike 106’5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>66’10</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

Witt Hammer

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<td>Dave</td>
<td>43’10</td>
<td>Dan 65’4</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!

Dimwittie Stone (6 pounds on the Trig)

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<td>Mike75’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Dan 72’2</td>
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Mike sets a new camp record!
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

Final Results
Mike 1st
Dan 2nd
Mark 3rd
Jake 4th
Dave 5th
Greg 6th
Mindy 7th
Steph 8th

Much revelry and cheering followed the event…much fun.

Yuri arrives. (Jeori Arrives. Juri Arrives)
Part of the excitement of Week Two was the arrival of hammer world record holder, Yuri Sedyk. I didn’t know what to expect but we went down and started throwing. Everytime Yuri starts to explain the hammer, he finds a piece of string, rope, or ribbon and hangs an item on the end and shows “pendulum.” He then has someone…my daughter, my wife, Samir…swinging it around their head until they discover that you accelerate on the “down”…not the “up.” To quote Yuri: “the ball is pendulum.” If you can get the feeling in the Olympic Hammer that the ball pendulates each and every swing and turn…good things happen!

We also learned in the first session that we had better learn to get the ball to the left…we heard “more left” about 10,000 times.

It was the evening session that things made even more sense. Yuri loaded a 28 pound Highland Game hammer on the end of an Olympic Hammer wire. He asked us to wind it 10 times. Yeeow. Then, ten times to the opposite side. Then, turns. Then, turns to the opposite side. We discovered…for days later…that this builds throwing muscles. The concept was “Go left” and you have to do this with “soft legs” in the hammer…don’t straighten out the left leg!!!

We did a fun drill where he had five campers hold hands.

Camper one: shoulder
Camper two: arm
Camper three: hand
Camper four: wire
Camper five: ball

He then had the campers “swing around” the shoulder. Camper five was in a full sprint while the “shoulder” slowly moved in a small circle. “That is hammer throwing!”

The other amazing key is something Kevin Brady tried to teach me in 1979 and I figured out that summer with a broomstick: snapping your hips around in front of the shoulders. I will have a video clip on this in a week or so on the site…hard to explain. So, I mastered a three turn throw back in 1979 that brought my feet in line (basically: all three turns had my feet in the same parallel relationship as the swing stance) with a tremendous lead on the ball and an effortless pendulum.

Of course, I was told this was wrong by experts and I should ground my right toe and twist ahead of the ball. It never worked…ever.

Yuri told me to do what I learned during the Carter Administration. All of a sudden, I am effortlessly working the ball (with a nice right foot stomp…which may or may not be perfect, but I’m almost 47 and I can only change so much) and my distances leap up.

This hard hip ahead (“assarounds” as I call them now) relates exactly with the discus and shot, too. I have been working on an early preturned right foot and I added the ass around concept to the discus and things just took off!

I discovered on Monday and Tuesday that my right foot work in the discus was the best of my career…I can’t mentally wait to turn the foot, but if it is preturned with the hip around it turns just fine. I also used the clue to “sit down in the PP” and that helped me really drive the discus. This is good, but would it hold up under meet stress?
What I Learned on My Summer Vacation

I soon discovered that Yuri’s clinic twice a day and four discus sessions a day were starting to tire me out a bit. Let me give you a few Yuri ideas:

1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 Hammer turns in a row with one swing…killer.
15 hammer turns in a row….killer
1+2+1+2+1+2+1+2 swings with turns…both right handed and left handed.

We would do at least this many drills after each throwing session. I would try to snap my hips on most drills, but, honestly, sometimes I was merely in survivor mode.

Wednesday, I took some hard discus throws and in “The Valley of Death,” I threw 165’. Not bad, I figured. I once threw 165 in Denison and came out a week later and tossed 184’. So, I figured in a week or so…unfortunately, we had a meet on Thursday and I was losing my edge.

I slept bad for three straight nights, threw in a hammer competition arranged by Yuri Thursday morning (three fouls, 165 best in the hammer), got in a van and went to The Ohio State University for a track meet and had my rear end handed to me in the hammer. The hammer went awful. Mike used an excellent bit of psychology in the hammer to wake me up: “These guys are all calling you the “old asshole” and saying you don’t belong here.” “Really?” “Yeah, man, it’s pissing me off.”

Mike made it up and I got ready for the discus. Nice effort here, Mike…

So, I get in the discus ring after warm up throws of 125 and 145 and, with dead legs, throw my yearly best (and millennium best) throw of 177’ 7” on my opener. I add three other throws over 173, too. Go figure.

After the competition, we celebrated and waited for Tiffini to arrive. On Saturday, we had a left handed discus throwing contest and sled pulling contest. I got killed in the throws and died in the sleds.

The last week was basically a lot of review and I developed a new system of coaching…as Andrew will tell you.

“Okay, I am having problems with my right foot, so all of you need to help me get better…coach me!” After thirty throws up the hill, the whole group was really preturning the right foot and pivoting like crazy. Coaching in the Third Millennium…

I also Overhead Squatted up to 205 the last week (from the snatch) for a bunch and lifted and pulled sleds and all the rest.

The best lessons? Well, I am going to buy a little shed for my “facility” to hold the farmers bars, Rosenberg bars, sleds and the like. That just makes sense…of course.

Here is the best of the best, though: I am still learning more than the campers. I keep muttering “pearls to swine” and “Horse-water-drink” the whole time I talk to many of the kids about throwing, but the truth is that they simply can’t “hear” how amazing the gems are that they are hearing and seeing at discus camp. They imagine it is a typical day that the WR holders in the disc, shot and hammer…as well as a cadre of the best coaches in America…are working with you 12-14 hours a day.