

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 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, for two weeks, 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.



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"

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!

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!!!

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.

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 along. 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.

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.

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 @ 207# 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.



On left, Rosenberg "before."

On right, Rosenberg "after."



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 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.

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 where 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 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!

Once again, thanks, Mike for a great insight into throwing.
We are all looking forward to Camp 2002!

