

GET UP!

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Highland Games and Track Season

...are upon us. The NFL draft has passed us by and summer is starting to stick its head up.

This issue will cover a number of different ideas considering long-term approaches to training. Those of you who have competed for years will understand the problems of trying to focus on one thing for years at a time.

I'm trying to focus on getting this issue out before June!

Our mission? To teach everyone:

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

The Southwood Junior High Weightlifting Program

Editor in Cheap

Every so often, I will get an email from a high school coach about teaching a group of kids to lift weights. The emails often sound like the task...to get kids to lift...is insurmountable. Some of the coaches sound like they need a miracle worker to come in and exorcize the student body before beginning the exercise program.

I always argue back to these fine men and women that it **can** be done...easily and inexpensively. I can't claim any credit from the following paragraphs, but I am indebted to Mr. Dave Freeman, my ninth grade P.E. coach for making us do this program!

After eight years at St. Veronica's School, I transferred to Southwood Junior High to begin junior high. It was a helluva transition. From Irish Nuns to public school is transition enough, but I was also going to play football. At 118 pounds of ...ahem...pure muscle, it was obvious to everyone I needed to lift weights.

It was at this time I was introduced to Southwood's lifting program. In a portable building, the school had outlaid about 15 of those cement filled weightlifting sets that everyone from my generation remembers as their first bar.

Mr. Freeman spent little time explaining the "rep-set" system of 8-6-4 because of everybody, except me, knew what to do. That is part of the brilliance of the program...you learned it once and then you lifted. Not exactly rocket science...but who needs rocket science on the football field?

The program was very simple. First, groups of four boys were given a bar. The bars were weighted from very light...maybe 25 pounds...up to perhaps close to 100 pounds. Each cohort of boys would lift one at a time, put the bar down, then the next boy would lift. The four would constantly move from lifter to watcher...the bar never stopped. The three sets (explained in just a moment) would not take very long...in fact, sometimes it was hard to catch your breath in time for your next set.

The reps were very simple:

First set: 8 repetitions

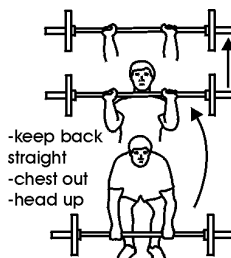
Second set: 6 repetitions

Third set: 4 repetitions

The goal was simple: when you got all 16 reps (8+6+4), you added weight. If you started with a bar that was too light, the next workout, you would be bumped up to the next weight and a stronger group. (Of course, actual variations could include making a whole new group with more weight, too...or whatever necessary to make the group work together).

The program involved four lifts:

- Power Clean
- Military Press
- Front Squat
- Bench Press



Each lift was done in the 8-6-4 format. The bar was cleaned (once) for the set of Military Presses and the bar was also cleaned (once) for the Front Squats. For the Bench Presses, the lifter lay on a board supported by cement blocks (or, later, actual padded benches...without racks) and the other lifters picked the bar up for him to begin the presses.

To "hurry up" the training...as if it was necessary, there were times when Mr. Freeman recommended combining the Power Clean and

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Military Presses ...one clean and one press, repeated for a total of eight reps. This was done with a lighter weight. One could also do the Front Squats after the clean and presses, too. This was an amazing cardiovascular workout.

Each day, to warm up, we had to "run two laps and an obstacle course." The two laps were about 600 meters and the obstacle course had a wall, various upper body challenges, and some balance walking. All in all, this was not a bad program.

We trained this program three days a week during the summer before football season...when we could. As I have noted in other places, I started to focus on the bench in high school and erred by ignoring the clean, press and front squat. I was on the right track here, but, as youth often does, I went the wrong way.

All in all, a pretty good program!

Power Clean

8-6-4 reps

Military Press

8-6-4 reps

Front Squat

8-6-4 reps

Bench Press

8-6-4 reps

Increase weight when you get all the reps!

The Challenge of Year-round Planning

Editor in Chafe

Matt Spiller asked a question in our telephone discussion a few weeks ago. Matt is a frequent contributor to "Get Up!" and was troubled by the seemingly myriad of conflicting information that he had received from the editor and this newsletter.

When Wesley Kersey asked this question in an email...the need became obvious...we need to talk about planning!
"Oh Wise one,

I have seen your post on Crossfit and I think I see the benefits of the programs in terms of strength endurance/CV efficiency etc... but then again it runs across the usual (10 rep rule) so I am seeking your wisdom

again.. would this fit into your "Four Seasons" of training?? Let's say winter months low reps -heavy weight, build up to max strength, then shift to this type of training in the spring??? (Depending on when meets and games are huh?) **How would YOU work into WL meets, discus and HG ? You have more "going on" than I (i.e. WL meets, Track meets and HG) so it is hard for me to visualize how you would integrate. I am gonna try to make at least 2 HG this year and at least one track meet so if I can visualize how you do it with your busy schedule I can easily work into mine. If you can point me to an article on your website, feel free to do that as I know you have a lot going on with all the jobs you have (teacher, Husband , father, Internet strength guru :-)**

Wes



Excellent question...and it is the key (in my most humble opinion) to long-term success as an athlete. What is this key?

Balancing all the wonderful training regimes and ideas and programs and protocols and athletic opportunities and games and sports and recovery and rest and vacation and life and lawn mowing...into some kind of coherent approach to your basic goals!!!

Matt asked a great question, too. He noted that I considered Highland Games as the best discus training an athlete could undertake. "How do you HG in the middle of track season?" You don't!!!

Highland Games is the best prep for discus throwing...after the season. Olympic

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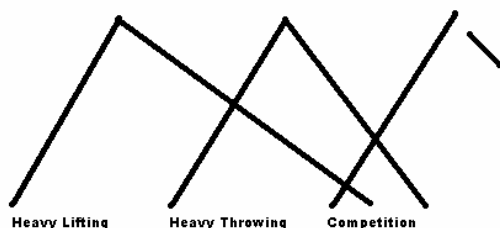
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lifting is the ideal way to train for throwing, too, but don't compete at the Nationals in O lifting the week before Discus Regionals! Let me answer Matt and Wes with a long example:

For years, I used a very simple model for training my high school throwers. It was the "Triple Pyramid."

Three Phased Approach



In the late fall, after football season for many of my throwers, we jumped into an exhausting period of heavy lifting. Other athletes were coming in from volleyball or simple off-season conditioning. The program that we slowly evolved into for the first month or so was called the "Transformation Program." We had discovered that the athletes needed to "get in shape," even though they were "in shape."

Huh? Well, the ability to spend 48 minutes of banging into another person is one kind of conditioning, but to throw and lift was another. The "Transformation Program" answered this riddle for us...monitored higher rep training focusing on "throw strength."

Day One: (Perhaps Monday)

Power Clean and Military Press: One power clean and eight presses. 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest between sets. *If there is a single key to the program, it is the one minute rest period. By strictly monitoring the rest period, and obviously keeping track of the weight, one can track progress.*

Power Curl: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest between sets. Using a curl grip, slide the weight to just above the knees and "curl-clean" the bar. Let it come down under control. Again, get all eight reps in, don't change the weights, and monitor the rest period.

Some kind of ab work. We used side bends, but any kind of crunch is fine, too.

Day Two: (a day or so later, perhaps Wednesday)

Power Clean and Front Squat: One power clean and eight front squats. Once again, 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. Stay "tall" in the front squats and keep your elbows high. We usually use this as more of a warm up for the next exercise.

Overhead Squats: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. Using the wide snatch grip, lock the elbows with the weight overhead and squat down. Athletes who do this exercise well not only develop flexibility, balance and leg strength, but an incredibly strong lower back. Overhead squats make you very strong.

Again, finish with some kind of **ab work.**

Day Three (perhaps Friday or Saturday)

Whip Snatches: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. With a wide snatch grip, stand up and hold the bar at crotch level. Dip and snatch the bar over head. Continue for 8 reps. You will be surprised how quickly this exercise can get into your blood. If you want big traps and explosion, this is the king.

Clean grip snatches: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. With a clean grip, stand up and dip the bar to your knees. Then, explode up driving the bar, in one basic movement, over head. It is like a clean and press, well, without the clean.

Ab work if you wish.

I also had a "Throws Manager," often a young boy or girl who wanted to help a thrower boyfriend or girlfriend...or just someone who liked the thrower community, keep detailed charts of the lifts and the reps. By comparing these week to week...and athlete to athlete...I began to get a feel for "numbers."

Some "Good" Numbers...for a Teenage Boy Press 105

Power Curl 115

Front Squat 115

Overhead Squat 95

Whip Snatch 95

Clean Grip Snatch 95

Now...we expect MUCH more for better athletes and adults. And this is 3 x 8 with a minute rest.

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This Transformation Program did a lot of good. Most of the athletes "felt better," ...a little leaner, joints felt good, a nice overall feeling of wellbeing.

This would not last long.



The "season" would then begin to shape up with the period known as "Heavy Lifting." The best overall program we ever used was the "Big 21," but we also used lots of adaptations for other athletes, like Paul Northway and Taylor Arrigo-Jones.

The "Big 21" DEMANDS a lot of conservative weight selections the first week or so and rewards the athlete with new levels of strength and toughness. The downside? Near exhaustion for someone not "in shape!"

The Big "21"

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Three Lifts only!

Clean and Press

Power Snatch

Power Clean and Jerk

Now, the confusing part!

Each workout, add five pounds to the Opening Weight. After three weeks, Opening Weight will be 45 pounds more!

Rules:

1. All reps must be successful!
2. Start each rep from the floor with heels together, feet pointing out to 45 degrees. (You can choose NOT to do this ...editor)
3. Do each rep under control-start with hips down, and fully extend!

Note well: each of the three lifts is to be done each of the three days a week. In addition, one is expected to add five pounds to EACH lift all nine workouts...over the three weeks.

I have laughed many times when people have "adapted" this program and told me in an email that it wasn't very hard. One guy only did presses on Monday, snatches on Wednesday and jerks on Friday...and noted the 21 reps were a breeze.

Sure! That was only 1/3 of the workout each day. What always amazed the athletes is

how *fast* this workout goes. Constant plate moving seems to speed the lifting up.

Reps and Sets...for each of the three lifts!

Opening Weight x 5
 Add five pounds x 5
 Add five pounds x 5
 Add five pounds x 1
 Add five pounds x 1
 Add five pounds x 1
 Add five pounds x 1
 Add five pounds x 1
 Add five pounds x 1

Total Repetitions 21

You see: the Big 21!



Record end weight	<i>Clean & Press</i>	<i>Snatch</i>	<i>Jerk</i>
Session One	___	___	___
Session Two	___	___	___
Session Three	___	___	___
Session Four	___	___	___
Session Five	___	___	___
Session Six	___	___	___
Session Seven	___	___	___
Session Eight	___	___	___
Session Nine	___	___	___

One hint: you may wish to only do "threes" on the Clean and Jerks. At the end of three weeks, take a week off of heavy lifting, then go to the Transformation Program for a week or two before repeating.

If you have timed the "Heavy Lifting" correctly, you may be able to sneak a weightlifting contest just before the Christmas

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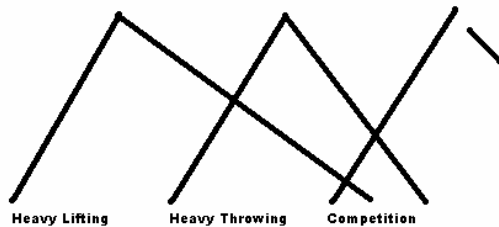
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Vacation. The athletes can max out on the three lifts...then enjoy the weeks off.

On the "off days," we did what we could depending on weather. Often, we took Thursdays off and focused on a little throwing on Tuesdays.

The lifting is important here, not the actual throwing, but, there should be some daily work on throwing drills, discussion, video or whatever.

Three Phased Approach



Notice how "Heavy Lifting" doesn't disappear, but continues well into the season.

For my throwers, we now enter into the time of year for "Heavy Throwing." This includes, but is not limited to:

- Indoor Weight Throwing (the hammer)
- Powerballs against the walls
- Tire Throwing (see my book)
- Lots of Farmer Walks for stability
- Highland Game Weights for Distance
- Overweight implements

How long does this last? I like to keep at this until at least the first few meets of the track season, BUT with less volume as we approach the meets.

What to do in the weightroom? My favorite choice was the "Transformation Program." Why? 15 minute workouts!!!

One of the goals of this time of year that I set as a coach was to only train my athletes one hour a day. The Transformation Program should NEVER take longer than 12-15 minutes! This gives the athletes lots of time, 45 minutes, to work on the throws. Remember, throwing into a wall prevents the long hikes in between throws. In addition, tires and weights don't go very far!

In season, the Competition phase, was very easy. If you read the book, free at <http://danjohn.org/book.pdf>, you will discover two drills: the Soviet Drill and One Throw Competitions. This is all you will need plus an occasional set of overhead squats or snatches or clean and presses. "The hay is in the barn," so you can't really pound out a great workout or two and expect success.

I have some advice for high school football coaches concerning in-season lifting, the same general advice appeals to all athletes:

1. The "heavy" day should be the day after a game...actually, right after a game works well, too, especially for underclassmen who play on the day before the Varsity, having them train on the Friday, for example, helps a lot.

2. The "other" day should be stuff that doesn't take a lot of nerve. Don't Snatch and Clean and Jerk, so to speak. Box Squats, Straight Leg Deadlifts, some dumbbell work and a few machines would work well, but don't have the athlete tax his nervous system.

3. Don't be surprised if he gets really stronger, maintains, or drops way down. Any reaction to the training program is normal. We used to find a lot of kids improved their cleans a lot in the football season. My idea then was that they were finally cleaning once a week with supervision. Now, I have another idea: sled work, driving the legs, sprints and the games were all training the system to clean better. Benching and squatting tend to drop, but that seems normal vis-à-vis the work load of football.

4. Don't be afraid to cut the volume, but strive to keep the intensity up. 5 x 5 just isn't going to work, but 2 x 5 would be fine. Pyramids would be 2-2-1, that kind of thing.

5. Watch the acne. If he starts breaking out, getting colds, that kind of thing...he is really overtraining. HS kids can handle a ton of volume, then they seem to crash.

Seriously, watch the acne and the mood swings. Very often, that was the first sign something was

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going on with the athlete. Usually, it wasn't the training, but late nights, a new girlfriend, dance classes in the morning (seriously...don't get me started) or some other idiocy.

When the month of May rolls around, I start getting telephone calls on Saturday mornings. "I broke my PR by 16 feet!" "I'm the state champ...you were right!"

Now what? What do we do in this long off-season...now, we can talk to Matt and Wes's concerns.

"Off" Season

First, address...honestly address...your weaknesses. I will put my "Confessions" from the past few years:

- I'm a fat pig.
- I have no hamstring strength/flexibility
- I have flat feet
- I have no arms...really, I have no biceps and triceps
- I am all over the place technically...what works for me?
- I have to learn to relax
- Where has the fun gone?
- I need to get my bench up

By honestly addressing these issues, first in my journal, next with a piece of paper and some freewriting ideas, finally with a trusted friend (usually John Price...Mike Rosenberg is a good one, too...Tiffini is very good, but a little too honest), I can come up with a few focused fixes.

One thing that I know is true...the mission of this newsletter. Especially,
3. All training is **complementary**.

If I am peaking towards a local weightlifting meet, I know I am in shape to compete in a Highland Games. I know that playing flag football will help my legs for O lifting. So, unless something BIG is coming up, I let my training be 1. Complementary, and 2. Focused on my weaknesses.

This year, I discovered that my Stone Put...especially in the Open Stone...was pathetic. I have dropped a few feet a year for the past few years. At the Shamrock Games in Illinois, it was the worst.

So, I went to a local Sporting Goods store and paid \$20 for a high school shot. In just three training sessions, I added back five feet to my open stone put.

This little "oh, how wonderful I am story" has a good moral: I recognized a problem, spent money, trained on it and fixed it. That is a good four step process for the off-season.

So, how do you do it all? First, toss out this mental image that you must have absolute specificity for everything you do! Olympic lifting competition will help you in the caber as much as training on the big sticks seven days a week. Specificity works...but at a price of injuries, boredom and the loss of opportunities to compete, see the world and have some fun!

So, to answer you, Wes and Matt: "If you had everything where would you put it?" as Steven Wright, the comedian, put it. "If you had to do everything everyday, when would you have time to do it?" I ask.

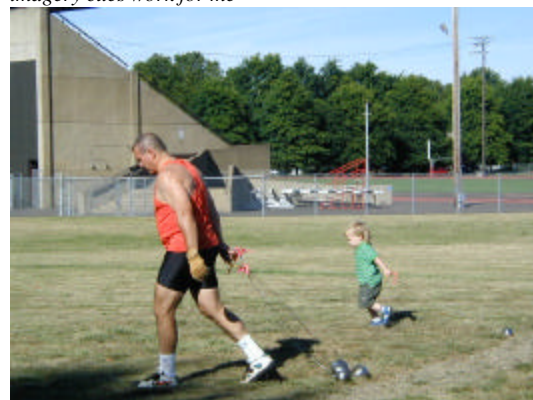
Use the whole year...or decade...to plot and plan your training.

Thanks for the questions, guys.

Two Advanced Hammer Training Ideas

Todd Taylor

Todd is a senior citizen hammer thrower who does some coaching and helps anybody who is interested in improving. As a master's competitor, he has won USA Track & Field Masters National Championships. He states: "By nature I am an "analytical" type and I have also had the benefit of some of the best coaching available. My purpose is simply sharing what I have learned, what I think makes sense in terms of ease of comprehension, and what verbal and imagery cues work for me"



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Core Blaster/Gesek Swings



In the sequence, notice the weight on the heels at the start and the hip thrust that generates the power/explosion to move the weight stack to shoulder height.



The "Device"



Note from Dan: "This is exactly how I am trying to teach people how to clean and snatch now... weight on heels. Could this be used for O lifters?"

Turn Machine

This device has a 180 degree yoke which you grab crossarm inside. Excellent at generating ground-up forces....foot, ankle, knee, leg, hip, obliques...then turn. Two pulleys on angle iron from the wall pull up weight plates from the floor. I start facing the wall to simulate the "catch" of the hammer when the right foot touches down from single support. You can see the weight stack about waist high on the finish position.



More next issue, but Todd also sent in this excellent overview of the hammer...Scottish and Olympic:

"Feel the rhythm of the weight of the implement during the winds as it hits the top (behind your head toward 180) and bottom (0 between your legs in front of you) of the orbit.

You also want to feel that gravity drop of the ball from the top of the orbit to the bottom. In turns with a hammer, that rhythmical drop from the top to the bottom (aided by your right side drive and setting the hips behind the heels in a counter) and then back out to the top....also becomes a timing issue and enables the speed progression through the turns."

Excellent as always, Todd. More next issue!

Published by Daniel John

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