

GET UP!

Volume 1, Issue 5

III August 2002

Our First Sponsor!

This fifth edition marks the start of our first “official” sponsor. Eric Aragon of **powerathlete.com** has kindly decided to sponsor our little newsletter. This edition introduces us to Jim Smith, aka “Combat Jim” from Animal Ability. Jim outlines an area of strength training we may often forget...*at least, I did!*

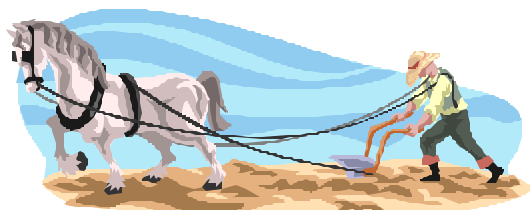
We will also have a little discussion about a “then” and “now” approach to some problems my athletes faced in the mid-nineties. My approach wasn't *wrong*, but I think the internet and some more real world experience has reshaped my thinking.

Let's not forget our mission:

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*.

From the “I knew this already” file

“We call it plowing, a very familiar term with our farmboys.... We throw a strip of canvas around a boys' waist, and he tows another track man across a specified distance and number of times, just as if he were plowing the south forty... {To do this} he must get up on his toes, pick up his knees, work his arms hard, and really lean in to it. The boy holding the lines shouldn't put up to much resistance or he'll start wallowing like a football guard.”



Ralph B. Maughan “The 120-yard line high hurdles.” *USTCA Quarterly Review*, October 1966, 60.

You see, Coach Maughan was my coach in college...we used to do these all the time. I just relearned all this again!!!

A Different Kind of Battle

Jim Smith

Jim Smith lives in Yorktown, Virginia. Jim has been lifting for years and is always ready to experience new techniques and ideas. Jim's forum, “Animal Ability,” is a place where people meet for polite conversation about all kinds of health and strength questions.

A little over one year ago I discovered odd objects and let me say things have never been the same. I've been training iron weights and also using rocks, sandbags, kegs/barrels, farmer's walks, beams, overhead carries, and even waiter's walks with a thick handled dumbbell. I have gained more ‘real’ world strength than ever. You know the kind of strength you can use outside of the gym. Since I'm a personal trainer, my clients have also reaped the benefits of odd objects.

Finally, I remembered reading about the ‘iceman’. That's the guy they found from five thousand years ago frozen after receiving deadly wounds from some ancient battle. This guy was about five foot tall or less when alive and only weighed 115 lbs, yet when they rebuilt his bow it had a 90 lb draws. You may be saying, “Okay he was strong, but there are lots of guys out there who could pull 90 lbs.” Well you are correct, but there are few guys out there who could pull 90 lbs and carefully take aim then release it with precision enough to consistently feed them. At least I haven't seen them. So I'm thinking what made this little guy so tough. He was a hunter/gatherer. That means besides hiking for miles and killing prey then cutting it up he had to haul it back to his camp; which could have been many miles away.



I said to myself, *I could simulate a heavy long haul*. Since I have 100 yards marked on the street in front of my house for sprinting and other carries, why not do a distance carry? So I started every week on non-lift days carrying for distance. I would carry 100 lb sandbag for 1860 yards. I picked this distance because I wanted to carry for at least a mile. The first few times I did it I was dying, but eventually it

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became tolerable. I did this for a few weeks while lifting on M-W-F. After a time I went back to other lifts and laid off distance carry for a while. Then I decided my workout partner needed this experience. So I put distance carry every other time. Needless to say he was shocked at how hard it was. My best time was 14 minutes and 24 seconds. After that we laid off it again. We let a month go by and decided to carry for distance again. The day previous it was around 45-50 degrees, I thought great the temperature ought to be nice for carries.

The next morning when I woke up it was 25 degrees; since I had told my partner we were distance carrying I decided we still were. I put on my layers and set up my Russian hat so that I could flip it back and let it hang down my back when it got hot. The Russian hat is the kind with the earflaps that tie down, so what I did was tie them together at the ends. We warmed up and picked up our 100 lb sandbags each and headed out. What we do is go out 100 yards turn and come back over and over. We usually do 200



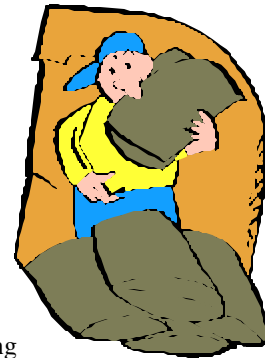
yards bear hug style, and then swing the bag to a shoulder for 200. Then switch to the other shoulder for 200 and repeat nine times. Well on the first switch I knew I was in trouble as my hat twisted half

over my eyes. I was trying to keep up my speed while pulling the hat off my eye. Then things went downhill from there as I switched shoulders the hat turned and the ties tightened on my neck. Great I thought now I'm being throttled. So there I was freezing in the dark (05:00 hrs) as a "noose" was slowly choking me while people drove by on their way to work. I knew what they were thinking 'here goes that crazy guy and his friend carrying sandbags in the cold.'

I thought to myself how I had just posted about mental toughness on my forum. Well now was the time to put my money where my mouth was. I reached inside myself and got in touch with my 'inner dino' and forced myself to go on. Each time I shifted the position of the bag there was a new treat just waiting for me. Finally I shifted the bag to bear hug for the last

time and my hat was pulling my neck in a way that was not going to benefit me. In other words if I didn't do something I'd get whiplash. So I squatted down quickly, laying the sandbag across thighs and grabbed my hat and threw it on the side of the road.

This whole time I was slowly losing feeling in my hands from the cold. I hadn't really noticed until I felt the bag sliding out of my arms. So with my numb hands I heaved the bag up to my shoulder. Since I couldn't really feel what I was doing it went all cockeyed. Oh yes, this was a different kind of battle. My body by this time was trying to convince me to give up. It was I against myself, willpower against weakness. I trudged out the remaining few hundred yards on sheer will power. I barely made it in before my hands temporarily ceased functioning. I hit the timer and saw that I was amazingly only a little over two minutes slower than my best. I had thought I'd be closer to ten minutes slower.



I've been thinking a lot about that carry and know that the carry itself is something that just about anyone who lifts could do. The thing is they have to want to bad enough. I realize that the main thing I accomplished is I showed myself that if you don't give up you could do anything. I hope my experience gets others to try sandbag distance carries. They aren't just a strength thing and they definitely aren't just endurance. Sandbag distance carry is a singular event. Once you do it I guarantee you'll never forget it. You'll also have taken your will power to the next level, which will benefit you in everything.

Since this article was written my partner & I carry the 100lber for 2 miles every so often. Just the other day (8-12-2002) I did 2 miles in 31 minutes & 7 seconds. Then we did six 100yd zigzag sprints. Of course now I'm as sore as a beat dog, but happy ☺.

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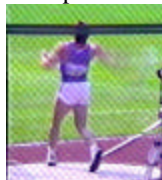
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A New Approach by Dan John

Back in the 1990's, I had an opportunity to work with a number of fine discus throwers and coaches. John Price, national master champ, John Richardson, Big West College Conference Champ, Paul Northway, high school 214 foot thrower, Craig Carter, Utah State's throws coach (and All-American hammer thrower) and the incredible James Parker (keep an eye on him for the 2004 hammer) trained with me ...and a few interested others ... throughout the year.

During this process, we were exposed to multiple resources in the throws. I found some



"East German" materials on modern periodizing that we adapted for guys who worked and school athletes. The three periods, **Accumulation**,

Intensification, and **Transformation**, became the basis for our training vision.

One of us came across one of Max Jones' "Throws" magazines and found these simple four points concerning East German juniors (or "former" East German throwers) at the 1989 European Juniors:

1. High Quality of Conditioning
2. Between throws "repeatedly turning right foot and knee to feel hip lead"
3. Remarkable Shoulder Mobility
4. 30 Puts in a.m. as well as a "snappy" leg workout on day of competition.

What was remarkable about this is that when I had our annual throws "summit" (sitting around yakking about how to improve), our high school athletes came up with this list:

1. Shoulder flexibility
2. Football or something fun...one day a week.
3. More leg bicep work...stiff DLs and leg curls.
4. Circuit training or "something" to "get in shape"
5. Clean Grip Snatches were obviously helping!



So, developed our first training program for the next year, the **Accumulation Training Phase**, to look like the following ...for the High School athletes.

Daily Warm Up

Cycle A

Stiff Leg Deadlift supersetted with Leg Curls ...two cycles of 10 each.

Cycle B

Bench Press (Universal Machine) supersetted with Lat Pulldowns.

Two cycles of 10 each

Cycle C

Sidebends (Right) supersetted with Sidebends (left).

Two cycles of 10 each

Cycle D

Stiff Leg Deadlift supersetted with Leg Curls ...two cycles of 10 each. *Yes, you repeat this TWICE!*

Monday and Wednesday

Olympic Lifting

Clean and Press: Three Sets of Five

Clean Grip Snatch: Three Sets of Five

Power Snatch from floor: Three Sets of Five

When you finished, we would throw the heavy "powerballs" (25 pounders) for height, for distance and for distance with opposite hand. I noted: *"Be sure to do your shoulder flexibility with a broomstick while resting."*



After the general powerball throws, we worked on technique with lighter balls into a wall.

Tuesday and Thursday

Same daily warm up, and then work only on technical stuff. Lots of throws into the walls.

Friday

Flag Football League!

We had some odd rules. Every player had to rotate through at quarterback, first down were at the two 25 yard lines and at the 50. Yes, we played 5 on 5 ...*full field!*

Tons of fun!

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Changes to the program?

Sure! But, first realize that what we were doing wasn't bad! Three national champs and a college conference champ ...not a bad plan for the late fall/early winter.

So, what would I change? First, we knew that the hamstrings were one of the keys to a long successful season. So, we tried to work it "from both ends."

Now, I do it a little different ...with better results! I now use the "Romanian Deadlift" as the hamstring lift of choice for throwers ...with a twist.

1. Use a snatch grip and deadlift the weight up.

2. Step forward onto a 2 x 4 or some 25 pound plates so that just the balls of your feet are on the board ...heels stay on the ground.

3. Lower the weight to the knees or socks by simply pushing your butt back farther and farther...I think the hams trings here as an archer pulls back a bow.

4. Return up and repeat. (You will hate me tomorrow!)

The next big issue would deal with the method of "getting into condition." I would now recommend dumping all that superset stuff and get out sleds, canvas, dumbbells, and wheel barrows and have a few months of pulling, pushing and dragging. I sprint with an 80 pound stone in my backyard and it does miles more for my "conditioning" than a couple sets of ten.

Coach Maughan was right about "plowing!"

We would also throw the balls in dozens of more variations. One handed, two handed and, yes, even with the feet! We would measure for height, distance, speed or whatever and battle to beat each other. General conditioning is much more important than I ever thought. The thrower has to constantly tweak their body into better overall conditioning.

This ain't jogging! Grabbing a 25 pound powerball with one foot and "tossing" it

for distance is dangerous! You have to build up the base to deal with this stuff.

Oh, it is really fun, too.

The weightlifting Part

We learned quickly that it was too static. The great insight came in two directions. **First**, we began doing Week One's lifts from the "high hang," starting the O lifts from the crotch; Week Two's lifts from the "hang," just below the knee; and Week Three's lifts from the floor. **Second**, we discovered that we could handle more reps in Week One, we just couldn't lift as much...so, we soon found that 8's were a good option. This, became the inspiration for the "Transformation Program," that you can find elsewhere on the website,

<http://danjohn.org/coach.html>

A final technical issue...it wasn't until June 2002 that I could teach that foot and leg movement. From "Discus Notes: 2002:" *"Bill Witt takes me aside and defines my problem... 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."



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<http://powerathlete.com>

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