

# GET UP!

Volume 1, Issue 9

1 October 2002



<http://sportkilt.com>

*If you like Highland Games...throwing heavy stuff, but you can't see dropping over \$300 for a kilt, see our friends at sportkilt.*

We continue to grow...

I love the responses we get from this little newsletter. Most people like the variety of authors and ideas. Maybe you are not a hammer thrower or caber tosser, but you can learn something from this edition's authors.

Especially as winter begins to close on us, those of us who participate outdoors need to start thinking long term again. So, let's think about our mission!

#### **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*.

Finally, "How I Turned a Caber on My First Try"

**Mike Rosenberg**



*Mike Rosenberg has jumped into Olympic Lifting, Highland Games and throwing as an adult. He is skilled at bringing resources together, usually large hunks of steel for throwing, lifting and carrying. This long awaited (weeks!!!) article discusses how an athlete can learn from brilliant coaching.*

## The Clean Grip Snatch and The Caber

On July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002 I called Dan to tell him I actually got to practice with a caber on July 4<sup>th</sup> and actually turned it once I figured out how to perform the pick. Dan says, "Wait a minute, you turned it your first time out?" I replied, "No, not really, it took me three attempts to figure out how to pick it and walk with it, but once I got the hang of it I turned it on my 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> attempts." Dan proceeds to tell me most grunt rookies take a while to successfully tum a caber. I told him, "It wasn't that bad since I took your advice." Another rousing cry from Dan of "man, can I coach!" followed by a short pause with "what did I tell you to do?"

Dan had challenged me to enter my first Highland Games, the Saint Mary's Games in Notre Dame, Indiana on July 20<sup>th</sup>. I reluctantly accepted his challenge even though I had never thrown a Scottish hammer, tossed a sheaf or had even touched a caber. Nervous and worried I asked for advice on how to train for the caber without easy access to one. Dan advised performing clean grip snatches would work in lieu of a caber.



Not to start an argument about sport specific training and the merits of whether or not there is carry over between an exercise and performance in an event, but when you don't have a caber lying around, you take the advice

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you get and work with what you have. Enough said.

What I have found to work best as an assistance exercise for the caber is the clean grip snatch (CGS) from the high hang. Basically it is the following video, but performed with a clean grip width vs. a snatch grip width:

[http://www.fitrex.com/video/small/hang\\_snatch.avi](http://www.fitrex.com/video/small/hang_snatch.avi).

From the point where you stop forward motion with caber and dip (flex) at the knees is where the CGS from the high hang applies as surrogate training. The explosive 2<sup>nd</sup> pull, trap shrug, rising up on the toes and upward movement of the arms as performed in the CGS makes for good caber practice. It won't help you with the pick or the "spider dance", but in my opinion it was a great help to me for getting the caber to turn.

Take a look at this excellent toss by Harry McDonald <http://saacc.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/glmct1.mov> and a simple two step walk and throw by none other than Kit The Old Caber Dude himself <http://www.old-dude.com/video/caber-toss.mpg> and note the similarities to the CGS. Is it spot on – nope. But is it close, and whilst gently nestled in Indiana corn country and caber-less, close is good enough.

In my first competition on July 20<sup>th</sup> I successfully turned the first caber (16' 4" @ 40kg to 11:00 on my second attempt. I turned an 11:45 on my third attempt but did not keep a straight line of motion and had it DQ'd. None the less I was please with Dan's simple advice about using the clean grip snatch as a training tool. Yes Dan, you can coach.

## Hammer Throwing from a Confined Area

Todd Taylor

*Okay, you got me...this isn't an article, but a response from Todd to an athlete*

## *on the "Ring." But, what a good response!!!*

*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. I hope that you find it beneficial in being able to learn and enjoy this unique event. I have made attributions to coaches/athletes where appropriate."*

**The Taylor Throwers**—my wife, Joyce is also an accomplished thrower and Masters National Champion.  
**Mighty Mite Throwers**—the unofficial club for the super stud hammer throwers who are less than six feet in height; especially those of us in the 67"—69" vertically challenged category with short levers. **Portland Masters Track Club**—great camaraderie and great fun to compete with and against others and cheer each other on.



You inquired about hammer drills in a small area. My wife and I often will work in the shotput and discus areas at the high school because of time & travel limitations of beating the darkness to get to a hammer cage.

Here are some options to think about.

From the shotput or discus circle, throw heavy bars or pieces of pipe. This is a drill not a lift. The straight line of the bar gives you a visual reference of where you are in the ring so you can hit positions correctly. Thing to work on:

- 1) letting the bar "run left" around your left side to "pull you into" the turn.
- 2) keeping enough weight on the right side, so

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**you are not overloaded left and have an active right side.**

3) "feel" the force of the bar pull your right foot off the ground.

4) when you get the right foot down, keep pressing into the ground and shift your hips back and "feel" countering alone generate the acceleration or momentum into the next turn (i.e., forget about the upper body).

5) "see" 180 degrees and be aware of your hips and shoulder alignment to the ball.

6) on the release/finish, anticipate the bar coming down to a low point between your legs and then everything (back, shoulders, head) lifting straight up and around the left side block.

The upside is that a 3'-3.5' 16-25 lb bar or piece of pipe displaces its weight and doesn't chew up the ground or just lands in the pit/throwing area--remember a drill not a lift or throw.



You can also do one-arm/hand turns. Placing the hammer in one hand or the other give you a longer radius and slows you down so you can really see and feel what is going on. You start these with a walk-around wind (keep taking little pitty-pat steps until you get a little momentum going). You concentrate on what the body is doing on the opposite hand/side as the hammer. You can do these without a release.

**Left Hand Only.** Exaggerate the pipe(hammer) going past you and let it run 45-90 degrees or more and feel the force pulling your right side into the turn. At 180 see your body aligned with the pipe.

**Right Hand Only.** Feel your forearm coming across your body and let the upper body remain relaxed and get pulled ahead of the lower body. But you should be aligned with bar at 180 degrees.

Also, use those 18 & 20 lb. hammers to do multiple turns on a sidewalk, driveway, patio, parking lot, playground....use what is available. The Lance Deal's and Kevin McMahon's can do multiple turns and gyros until you get dizzy watching them, but they don't. With those 18 & 20 lbs use that slower turning motion at the beginning to 1) really feel the outward force of the ball, 2) use the downward force of the right foot and countering hips back to gradually accelerate the ball, 3) do not use your arms/muscle to try and accelerate the ball, and 4) feel the "ball speed around you", somewhat like a tetherball unwinding from its pole as its radius gets longer and longer and the speed accordingly accelerates.

P.S. If you are still throwing the 16lb hammer, RobLink, get a heavier pud than 20lb....even for one arm throws.

Hope this helps. If you are motivated to train and throw you can always find a way to make things work.

*Another Great Piece from "Ironman."*

## Nobody Works as hard...

It was another one of those school assemblies where they allow the coaches to tell the school about their recent successes. You begin to drift and stare down the wall clock above the stage after the first thirty minutes or so. Then, somebody said something that woke me up.

"Nobody works as hard as we do!"  
When I heard the high school Cross Country coach say this to the school assembly, I was

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frankly surprised at this blanket statement issued in front of dancers, debaters, academics, musicians and sojourners on the way of life. Life is hard...Cross Country is more of a sport, really.

I was more surprised that nobody from the wrestling team bounded up on stage and tossed him off with a head and shoulder throw. Yet, we have seemed to have harvested this cultural notion that a hard breathing, sweaty kid with flailing arms and awful form is...*working hard*.

Let me state my point simply with a statement that has caused me more arguments and bad feelings than anything one could imagine: the typical high school discus thrower could duplicate the typical high school cross country runners workout far sooner than the reverse. Why? Simply, athletes who train for power can quickly add the "endurance" (whatever that term actually means) much easier than the typical jogger can transform into an explosive dynamo.

Recently, my brother-in-law, Craig, bought a kilt, signed his name to entry form and began his first Highland Game. He competed along side my wife, Tiffini, and me as we began that interesting day long competition that most associate with men in dresses. They are "kilts" and only idiots ask what is under them.



After a few warm up tosses with each implement and three competition throws, the volume of tosses adds up. Stone put, 56 pound weight for distance, 28 pound weight for distance, hammer throw...then the caber toss. The caber toss separates the novice from the neophytes, it is very hard to turn the caber the first time you see one. Following this event, we had the sheaf toss and, finally, the 56 pound weight for distance. Towards the end of the day, Craig asked me: "I think I need food or something...I'm just not all here."

I don't think the scientific journals have caught up with Craig's problem. His heart rate was close to normal, no need to wear a heart monitor at a Highland Game. His muscles were "fresh," he hadn't pumped them up with a supersetted Triceps Extensions and EZ Curl workout. Yet, he was drifting off. I knew the feeling: he actually had eaten, filled himself with fluids, and stayed in the shade. But, his body wasn't ready for "it."

Ah, what is "it." Before you lock yourself back in an elementary Philosophy Class studying Socrates, let me simply quote from Crossfit's Foundation statement: "**Heavy load weight training, short rest between sets, high heart rates, high intensity training, and short rest intervals, though not entirely distinct components, are all associated with a high neuroendocrine response.**" What Craig experienced was a "systems failure," in other words, he had never trained for these events that make for heavy load, short rest, high hearts...and his "metabolism" voted to knock off for the rest of the day.

Throwing the caber involves picking up a log that weighs around 100 to 200 pounds, pointing it straight into the sky, running with it while it rubs your skin off, stopping, and performing an Olympic Lift with it. After you throw, of course, polite Highland Games behavior insists you carry it back for the next competitor. Your heart rate goes through the roof, "catching your breath" becomes more than just a cliché, and you discover small bleeding wounds on your hands, chest and neck. In what seems like seconds, you then hear, "you're up!"

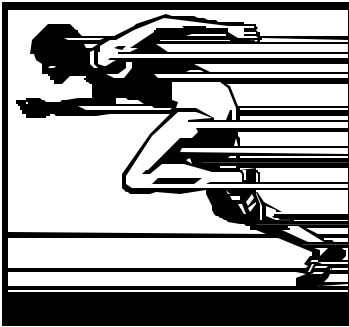
Highland Games are only one of many "strength sports" that teach the athlete the need

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for neuroendocrine response training to simply meet the needs of the sport. Certainly, in team sports like rugby and football, the efficient coach would find a friend in the Crossfit approach. I would argue that ALL of track and field...including our distance people...would find the path to personal greatness quicker with an approach based on the credos of Crossfit.

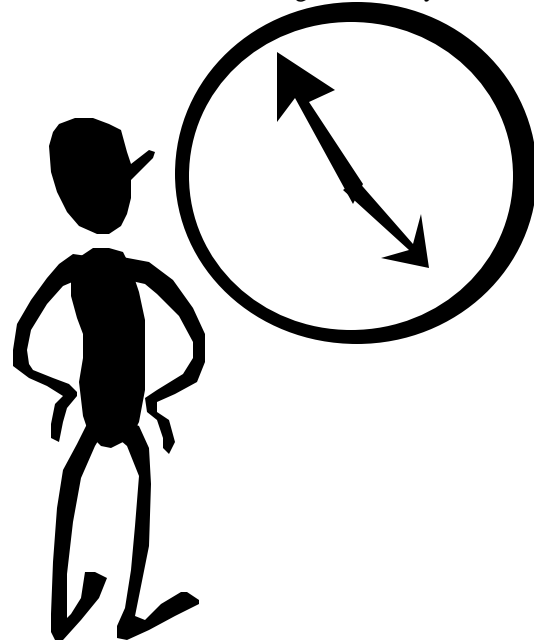


During my undergraduate years at Utah State, Mark Enyeart returned to train in Logan. A high school sprinter, he had become a middle distance runner under the tutelage of Coach Ralph Maughan. Enyeart was the national collegiate champion as well as an American Olympian. His return literally changed the USU running program...Mark lifted weights. Heavy weights. He didn't look like a starvation victim; he had muscles...a physique! And, on the track, he ran everyone down. Soon, my running teammates joined me in the salty, musty air of the team weightroom. One example was worth a thousand articles.

Time and again, people ask me "what is the key to proper training?" It is "time." Sure, you can go out and walk, literally, for twelve hours a day. You could consider this training, but would it prepare you for a Highland Game or fight to the death? Long hours do not make the demands on the physiology that intense training does in just a few seconds, at most a few minutes.

In my opinion, the single best piece of training equipment in a gym is one of those cheap wall clocks with the large faces and the sweep second hand. The key for me is that second hand...I keep the majority of my rest periods at one minute. Moreover, my clocks usually remind me of my children. I steal their old Disney clocks when they move from one

movie to the next. I have trained with the 101 Dalmatians and the Little Mermaid. Not long from now, I will be training with "In Sync."



Use the minute hand to time your total training time. The best powerlifters in the world come from Westside Gym in Columbus, Ohio and their workouts last about half an hour. The Eastern European Olympic Lifters call it quits after 45 minutes. How long do you train? I have a little time experiment I use with my young throwers: Tabata Front Squats. We put on perhaps 65 pounds on the rack and insist that the athlete have a good view of the second hand. Rack the bar on your chest and get as many reps as you can, in good solid form, in twenty seconds. Rack the bar and rest ten. Repeat. Repeat. The Tabata front squats are done in that fashion...20 on, 10 off...for four minutes.

There is a \$12,000 machine that guarantees overall improvements in four minutes, the Time Machine. See? I saved you \$12,000. My athletes unanimously agree that time seems to stand still during the second minute. Why do we do this? First, it is a sound method of bringing up "capacities," whether aerobic or anaerobic would be somebody else's guess. Second, it teaches what can be done in four minutes. Literally, I have never had an

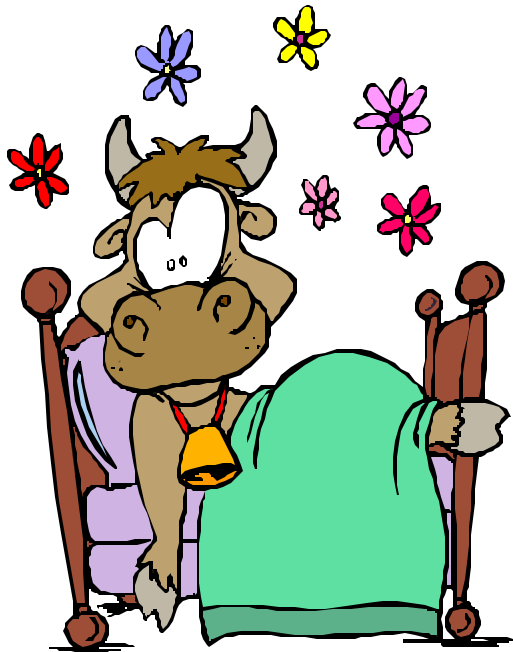
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athlete want to do much else after this exercise, besides flop on the ground.

Four minutes to hard work might sound like a quick fix...well, okay, it is, but the front squat is not easy. It takes an element of discipline to learn how to do the front squat starting from the wrist flexibility needed to hold the bar to the hip flexibility needed to go deep. You must remain upright in the lift at all times and the bar seems to want to choke you as you gulp air. We work up to 30% or more in the Tabata Front Squats and we need "encouragement" to get anyone to do them more than once a month. Yet, the benefits are amazing. Sure, we all look a little leaner, but as competitive Olympic Lifters, we have found that this lift carries over to the competitive platform! First, you have the "wind" to handle several limit repetitions on the platform within a few minutes. Second, you seem to train the nerves to constantly "get up" from a deep position. This second point may have applications for the deadlift, squat, military press, and, with safety considerations, the bench press.



The best piece of equipment for a home gym? The wall clock. One can start by timing the total period of training, then move to measuring rest times. With some training ideas, like

Tabatas, the clock becomes judge and jury over the entire exercise. The long term benefits of adding "Coach Clock" are amazing.

The Cross Country coach started reading off the names of the freshman girls' team and the mileage they would run in a typical day. I realized that the clock stops moving if you stare at it long enough.



From our Sponsor Page:

<http://powerathlete.com>

Have you checked out Eric's Coaching Page? Great Stuff!



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