

May Showers...

Here we go...the Highland Game season is starting to kick off, State O lifting meets are just finishing up, State high school track meets starting up, summer season...

Finally!!!

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*.

Turning Misery into Joy – A Training Journey

Rande Treece

This article is a personal reflection on my first five years back as a track and field competitor. I competed in college, and then returned after 13 years off, at the age of 39. As a Master, I have won a National Championship (in the 56# weight throw) and have ended the year ranked #1 in the hammer, or 35# weight, or 56# weight throw, or all three for one or more of the last few years. However, I have managed to rob the joy from training and competing, I have not had fun and now I want to quit. I wrote this article to try and figure out why I make what should be fun so miserable.

Great American Myth

I believe it starts with my assumptions. We're taught when we are young that we can be whatever we want. That if we

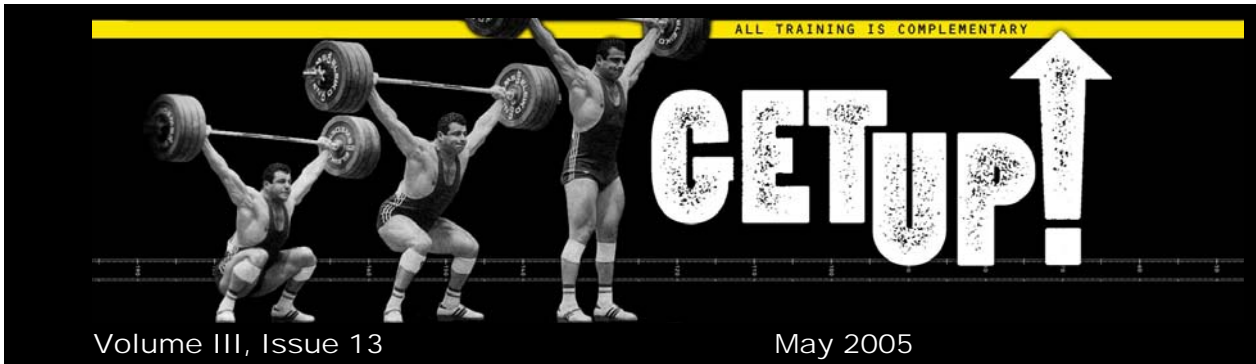
work, or try hard enough, we can achieve anything. Sayings like these can become underlying assumptions and beliefs that govern our life.

But, we often do not realize that the way we live is governed by our basic assumptions. For instance, if one believes that people are the masters of their universe and they alone create all good and bad that happens to them, then those beliefs will drive them to try and control their lives and the lives of those around them. However, if one believes that they are the victims of the whims of fate, then they might tend to passively live their lives blaming all of their failings on external forces, such as "them". I believe life is actually somewhere between those two extremes.

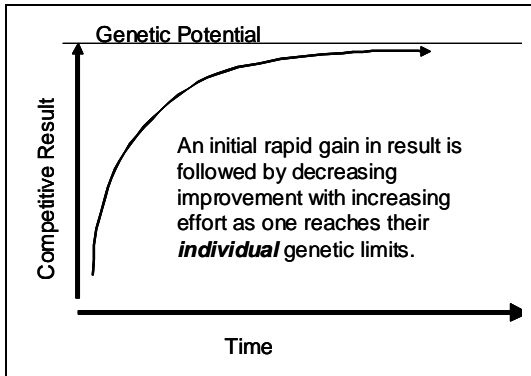
There is a corollary with athletics. If one assumes that any person who works hard enough can achieve any result, then they will continually blame themselves when they do not achieve the results of the few great achievers. Likewise, if one assumes that no matter how hard they train they will always be "hard gainers," then they will not work as hard as they need to achieve results as high as they could.

Real World Truth

I believe the truth lies between the two extremes. Hard training, intelligently applied, can lead most people to achieve good results. People do have genetic limitations. However, those natural



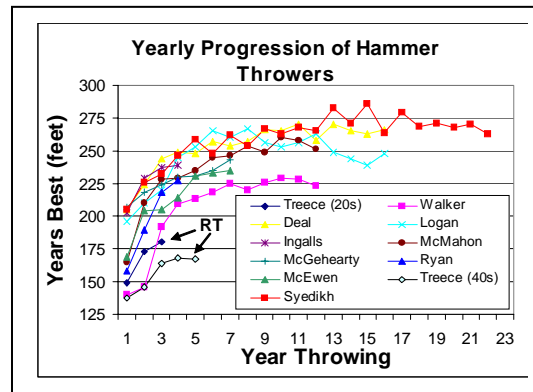
limits may be at a level far above where the individual is currently performing. The progression of a trainee follows a path as illustrated in the figure below.



Progress, as shown on the left axis, increases rapidly in the early part of a career. The first few months, or years, of training can bring rapid gains as the athlete learns the technique and builds initial strength. However, the personal records (PRs) stop coming as fast and then there are meets that have a lower result than an earlier meet. After some period of time, the athlete is working very hard for relatively small gains. They have reached a period of leveling off, where they have achieved a mature level of technique and strength. If they remain in the sport long enough they experience decline due to the effects of aging.

This progression and leveling off is apparent in the progress of hammer throwers. The yearly best marks for

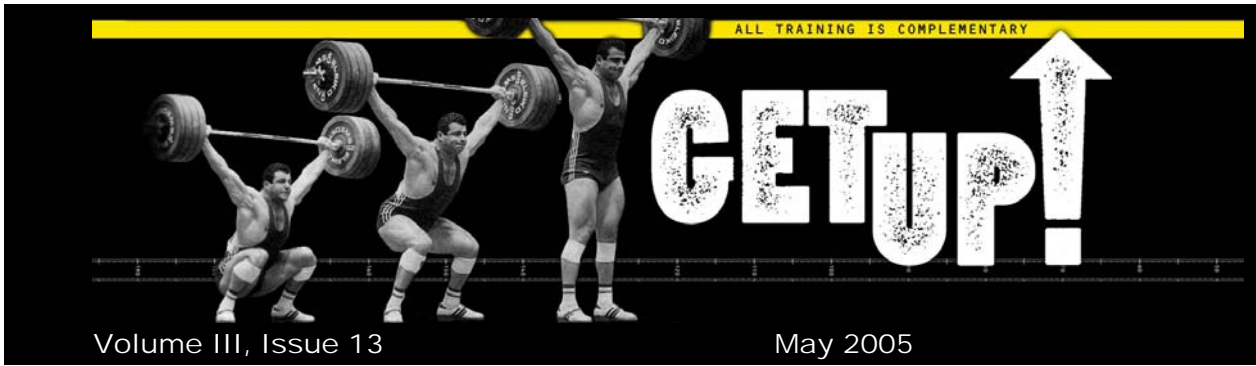
selected hammer throwers are shown in the figure below.



These marks represent their entire careers from their first to their last season (as of the date of the chart). The world record holder, American record holders, as well as other athletes who were gracious enough to send me their results is presented. It is instructive that the general shape of the data lines follows the asymptotic line shown in the first figure. The athletes who attained 250' did not do so until at least their 5th year of throwing and the world record holder reached his PR in his 13th year. (I have a short article that appeared in Long & Strong Throwers Journal discussing hammer throwing progress. If you would like a copy that article, just send me an email and I'll send it to you: randemrg@yahoo.com)

Personal Application

My results from college and masters meets are also on the chart (labeled RT). My progress during both periods definitely conforms to the asymptotic



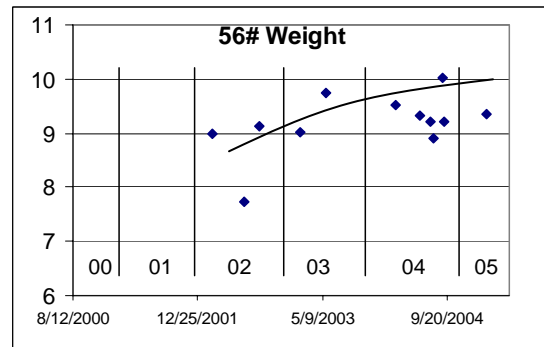
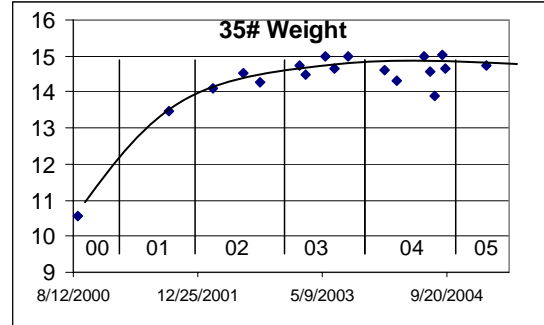
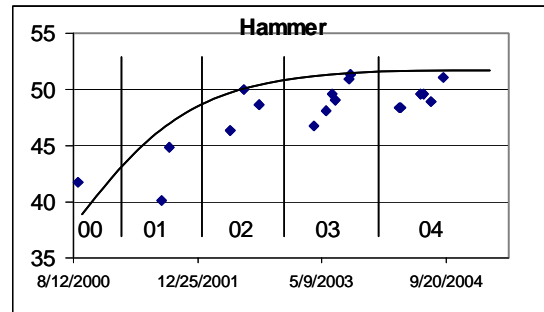
shape. It does not take a genius to notice that my progression in either period is not at the level of Sedykh, Deal, or Logan.

During college my lack of progress was not due to lack of trying. I trained at my physical limits with little regard to my schooling or long term health. I had a good coach and used the same methods as the champions. However, by the end of college after three years of throwing I only achieved a PR in the hammer throw of only 180'. Similarly, as a Masters athlete I have trained at close to my limits of time and health for a working, family man.

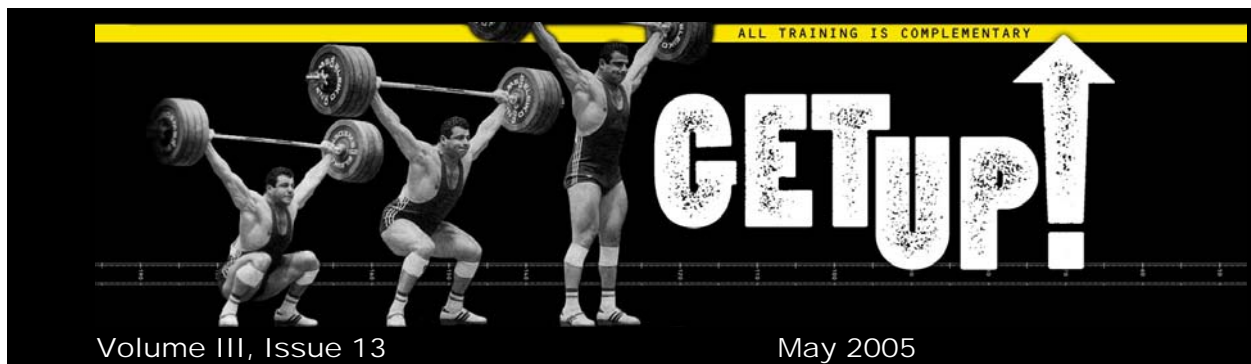
The fact that I have trained and tried so hard makes it difficult for me to look closely at my progress and apparent lack thereof. I say lack of progress because my goals have been big. I've wanted to throw the hammer 60m and the weight 60 feet. That's all, just 60 and 60. Those marks won't even qualify for an Open National Championship. Each of those marks seemed within reach of anyone who trained hard. However, not only did I not reach those distances (in college or as a Master), I have not even surpassed my college marks of 55m and 50 feet.

So, I'm trying to understand the consequences of genetic limitations, and the impact they have on goal setting. Consider the three charts below. I have

plotted my meet results for the hammer, 35#, and 56# weight since I returned to T&F 5 years ago.



Several trends emerge from the graphs. First, and most important is the fact that there has been very little, or no progress



in my season bests for the last couple of seasons. It appears that I have reached the flat part of the asymptote in my career. I may have some improvements, but the notion that I will throw the hammer 60m is very unlikely at this point.

Another trend is that in the hammer throw I tend to improve over the course of a season ending with my best throws at my biggest meet.

A third trend I see in my weight throws is that there is a huge amount of variability from one meet to another. This is very odd to me. One week I am throwing near my PR and the next week I am throwing below the level I did two years back.

The conclusion I draw from the three trends in my data discussed above, together with the fact that I feel that I cannot train any harder, is that I have probably reached a point that is greater than 95% to 98% of my genetic potential for my current age. From this point forward, with a great deal of work, I am likely to perform at about the level I did the previous year. That is until the effects of age begin to diminish my ability further. (I am now 44 years old.)

Facing My Own Genetic Limits

Now while this line of reasoning may seem defeatist to some, it is freeing for me. I now believe that no matter how hard I train, I simply cannot throw the

competition hammer and weight 60m and 60 feet. For some reason, the combination of size, fast twitch fiber, and coordination that God gave me at birth cannot be trained to heave the hammers that far.

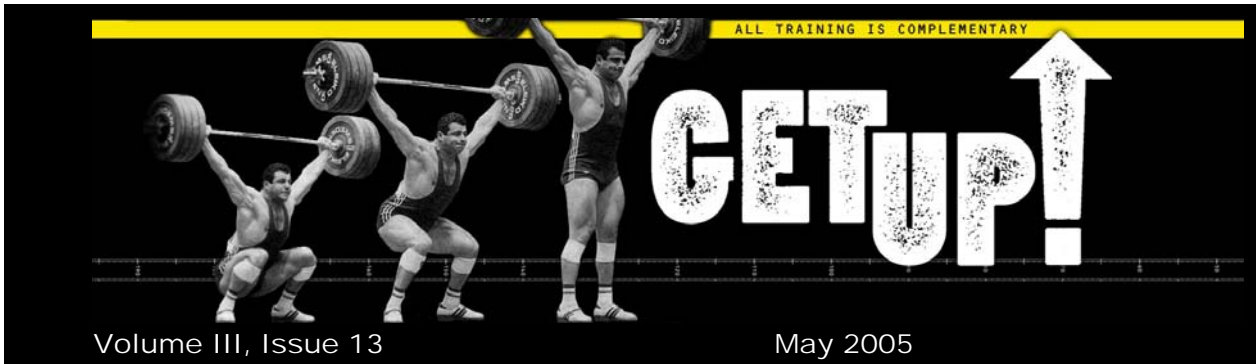
The realization and acceptance of my own genetic limits can release me from the torment of trying to reach goals I simply cannot attain.

That is why I have not enjoyed my athletic journey to this point. I had a predetermined destination of throwing certain distances that stayed completely out of reach of my abilities. I did not enjoy the journey, because I could not arrive at my chosen destination.

Every workout and every meet simply served to remind me that I was not throwing 60m or 60 feet. Breaking PRs didn't matter. Winning meets didn't matter. Being the highest ranked thrower in my age group didn't matter. Winning a National Championship didn't matter. None of those achievements mattered because I was not measuring up to the arbitrary distances I had in my mind of how far I should be able to throw.

What Now?

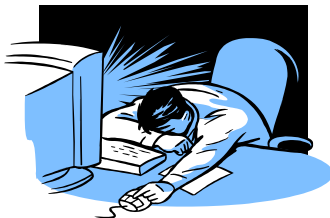
Now I want to enjoy my training journey. I want to do those things that I enjoy and take the results as they come.



For example, I will lift more, train for fitness more, and lose some body fat. While I was trying to throw 60 and 60 I spent a very large amount of my time throwing and doing drills, and less time lifting. This was because I believed that my strength was sufficient to throw much farther than I was throwing. So, even though I really enjoyed lifting I focused on throwing because that was where I was going to get the most distance for the amount of time and energy I had to train. I also let my body weight go up to > 235# because I believed that a little more counter weight would improve my throwing. I didn't like the way I felt at 235#, but I would tolerate it to throw a little farther.

Now I am going to enjoy the training journey and see where it takes me. I may actually throw even farther than I did before. But even if I don't I'll at least enjoy training and meets because I won't be competing against an unrealistic expectation of unattainable goals.

Once again, Rande seems to have found the answers to some fairly big questions in this article. The Editorial Board sure appreciates the contributions of our friend...looking forward to more!



Great Overview of Discus Throwing...but, who wrote it?
I love my inbox on my computer...all day long, great stuff comes in, but...occasionally...things get lost. Like who wrote this great overview!

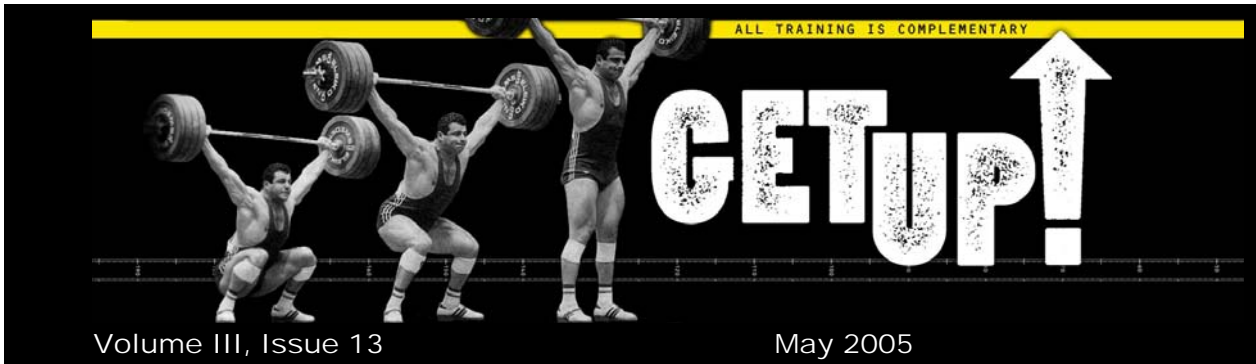
What I learned about throwing the Discus

Back of the circle

(Referenced to right-handed throwers)

Throws most often succeed or fail at the back of the circle. Body position and movement out of the back set up the rest of the throw.

- Feet are slightly wider than the shoulders, knees are slightly flexed and relaxed. Weight is centered over the hips and the body rests on the balls of the feet.
- **"ONLY ONE WINDUP"** and stretch. Drop the implement over the hip, *"spanky position"*, lock the tricep and hold the "X". Left hand is held at waist level, palm down and stays locked with the left knee.
- The turn starts by shifting the weight to the left leg and twisting your feet, the left foot turns 180 degrees. The easiest way to shift your weight is to pick up your right foot. Pick up your foot by **LIFTING YOUR KNEE**. Get your foot off of the ground as quickly as possible. Leaving it



- on the ground forces you to fall into the circle. That's bad.
- Consider the “rhythm” of the throw, slow to fast. Remember, “ 1.....2,3. Slow out of the back and lead with the inside of the right knee. Stay wide. **This whole movement is “1”**.
- To stay slow, you need to stay wide, arms and feet. Lift the knee and sweep the foot.

Middle of the circle

- From 1 to 2 is a sprint. Drive with the left into the circle.
- Remembering the “backward 7”, **fall** onto a flexed right foot towards the middle of the circle. **This is “2”**. The transition from 1 to 2 is a short distance.
- **NEVER, NEVER, NEVER let your heel touch the ground.** Stay on your toe and
- **TURN YOUR FOOT!** The instant your foot touches the ground, it has to begin turning.
- Still holding the stretch, (X), with your chest up you begin the movement from 2 to 3.

Power Position

- **THE RIGHT FOOT CONTINUES TO TURN** and the implement moves from low to high while the left foot slides past the right to the end of the

- backward 7. Your weight stays over the right leg. **This is “3”**.
- Remember that the throw happens from the ground – up. Take your time in the middle of the circle. Get both feet down and **GRIND YOUR RIGHT FOOT INTO THE GROUND WITH YOUR RIGHT FOOT TURNING**, the knee moves down and in. The hip follows and begins to pull the discus around.
- The discus is still behind your hip and moves from high to low in an elliptical orbit. Keep it out wide. The longer you pull it, the further it goes.
- Your weight starts to shift as you climb up onto left leg. The right hip drives forward, the left hip pushes back.
- Throw with both feet on the ground. This is the double support.
- Stretch your chest and push your belly button out.

If no one claims it...and it is considered good...then I wrote it.





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My Old "Strong as Steel" Journal...and a Gem

Friday, October 27, 2000

I'm so sore, it is hard to type. You see, I made the mistake of following Eli's link the other day to a site from a wonderful Romanian coach at Johnson County Community College. I had read and heard about "Steve" Javorek before from training partners and I talked with him at the American Open back a decade or so ago. His training programs impacted my lifting when I heard some of his "radical" ideas:

1. Ten reps are the norm for squats.
2. Do lots of general conditioning for O lifting
3. Stay flat footed in the Olympic lifts

Well, I read the materials at the site (<http://www.jccc.net/~ijavorek/>) and found something I like a lot. A "complex" barbell course was just what I needed for jump starting my conditioning. As much as I like the York courses, I thought his combo II would work wonders. Here is what I did for my workout Wednesday:

Load the bar to 135.

Exercises:

Clean grip upright rows
(Widen grip) Power Snatch
(Last snatch, lower bar to traps) Squat down and explode up to a push press
(Last jerk, lower bar to traps again) Good Mornings
(Last rep, jerk off neck, put bar on ground)
Bent Over Rows.

I did three reps of each exercise (Complex I demands six, I might work to that) and I did it for three sets. Rest of a minute or two in between.

Then, I did Power Cleans up to 245 in strict singles, "strict" meaning that you

pull it really high and catch with minimal knee bend. I did two pyramids of singles up to this to work my speed.

Three hours later, I played in three five-on-five football games. We won all three. This league really helps me keep my conditioning. You don't jog, you sprint, backpedal, spin, collide, and get in fights. Speaking of fights, I was punched twice and kicked after a collision that ended up in a heap. I walked away from it, which turned out to be the right thing to do. I won't bore you with the details, but like Tiffini, my wife, tells me: "Pick your battles."

So, my lats are on fire today. From rows? My hips hurt. I'm sore all over. But, I can see why this kind of thing helps. It is NOT the kind of thing you do three weeks before a contest but it is perfect to do when you are trying to improve your athletic ability. Tomorrow, I will do the complex, then work on either snatches or jerks with a variety of exercises.

I'm keeping my supplements to my basic set: a Mg/K tablet, a Vitamin E, and three Fish Oil Capsules each morning. I might consider adding an additional set in the afternoon, too. I take these for health. Mg is a wonder mineral, as is K. Vitamin E is just too important not to have some insurance, and the Fish Oil helps with my CV system. With my blood tests being excellent (I'm under 2:1 for my triglycerides to HDL ratio, 102 to 58), I like to think my diet and supps are helping.
Until Next Time!

Published by Daniel John

Daniel John, Editor

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