

## Today...on a very special edition of Get Up...

Just back from Las Vegas and the Editorial Board needs a place to put the volumes of notes gleamed from the Charles Staley Boot Camp. Great clinic...Charles and his staff put on an excellent conference and the day flew by.

If you can make this in the future, do it...

### 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*.

## Motivation

or, what it takes to keep going when

the improvements stop coming



David Witt  
As a high school thrower, David ended up third in Kentucky's State Meet under the coaching of Marty Mayer

and Pep Stidham (God rest his soul, he died young in his 40's of heart problems). Going to college that *didn't* have a track program, David has competed as an open and unattached thrower for years in and around the Kentucky area. Married to Pam with two children, David teaches high school math.

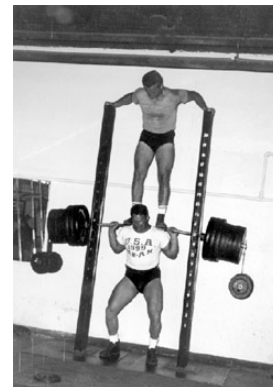
In 2001 I returned to my State Games after an 11-year absence. Since

then, I have been training steadily, well, as steady as you can with a job, family, mortgage, etc. Nothing makes me feel as good as throwing. I've always considered myself a discus thrower. The first two years of my comeback I improved. Then, in 2003 I didn't improve over 2002. Worse still, I almost didn't improve over 2003's marks this year.

Oh hell, 2 inches is not an improvement when you were already in the hole anyway. Now here I am sweating and working hard for 2005. Why? Why do I keep doing this and what keeps me going at age 39?

### *The challenge keeps me going.*

You can always get better. There is no upper limit in throwing. Funny, whenever I play computer or video games, and I beat the game, I'm no longer interested in that game anymore after that. Once I make it through the game or make a certain score I lose interest. I don't get that from throwing.





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***The camaraderie keeps me going.*** You meet some of the best people in throwing. I don't want to imagine not being in contact with these people or not seeing them again. People like Dan John, who is so unselfish with his knowledge. James Birchfield for his support and encouragement, he gave me a free discus. Jason Fisher, for his competitiveness that drives me on toward new pr's. That kid that beat me in the open competition at this year's Bluegrass State Games, I'm not letting that happen again. Getting to meet and spend time with heroes from my younger days, John Powell and Brian Oldfield. Their example is invaluable. John once went six years without an improvement in the discus. If he had quit then he would never had thrown his first 70m throws in 1984 or stunned the world with his World Championship silver at age 40 in 1988. Al Oerter, best throws of his life in his 40's. Again, invaluable.



***Different events keep me going.*** Highland Games has made my training more varied and has given me other ways to find improvement in myself.

The last two years learning the Highland techniques and getting stronger has led to numerous personal records that have kept my hopes alive. Sure, I didn't throw the discus farther this year, but nearly everything else I throw has gone farther. I even picked up a lifetime pr in the track and field hammer. If I can do that, then I know I can throw the discus another inch farther.

***Finally, unfinished business keeps me going.*** In high school, I fell exactly one foot short of our high school discus record. If I had got the record whose to say? I might have quit after high school and never thrown again. I still feel like I have something to prove. Not to anybody else, mostly myself. If I quit now, I'm letting myself down.

*Well said, David. David has quietly become our most prolific writer at Get Up and our in-house philosopher, poet and prophet.*

## Road Trip

Gary John

*Gary is a frequent writer here at Get Up! After years of being lost as a distance runner (competing for San Francisco State), Gary "saw the light" last year and took up the discus throw.*

*Gary...uniquely, by the way...was ranked in the 50-54 year old age division in the discus and the 55-59 year old age division. He lives in San Mateo, California with his long suffering wife, Mary, and two young sons...one of whom throws the discus!*

Luckily, nepotism is alive and well at "Get-Up". Dan invited me to help out at an Olympic lifting session the day before Charles Staley's "Boot Camp" seminar, in Las Vegas. I haven't



been to Vegas since 1972, when I competed there against UNLV. Charles was good enough to comp me this seven-hour program of speakers.

First thing, I'm living on the San Francisco peninsula, where people think of themselves as the absolute center of the universe. Smoking isn't even allowed outdoors in many areas. In Vegas, they arrest you if you're not smoking, or so it seems. We stayed at the Orleans hotel and had to walk through this huge casino to get to our room. All my clothes ended up smelling like cigarettes. But, the upside, for Dan at least, they had a fantastic buffet. My wife warned me my "no breakfast or lunch" eating habit wouldn't fit in with Dan's "I'm hungry" every fifteen minutes lifestyle. We ended up having many of the people join us for dinner on both nights.



On Saturday afternoon, Dan put on a "heels only" snatch class. We had done this class for Crossfit back in May. I joined in with one of the groups and just helped out with small tips. We did a coreblaster circuit and I got to show off to all these fitness trainers. Of course, I did way too many and suffered for it the

next day. Dan makes these classes a lot of fun. Even lifters who already had big snatches were amazed how quickly they matched or exceeded their PR's. And, as always Dan is saying "Now, can I coach or what". Dan talked a guy named Bryan into demonstrating the Tabata Front Squat. He did fifteen on the first set. He actually finished with eight on the last set, but he was a funny shade of pale. The guy is in great shape, but the rest of the class easily understood how brutal Tabatas are on the body. Dan had everybody snatching in two hours. There were a lot of women trainers and, like at Crossfit, it was amazing to see how well they picked up this style.



*The Editor being carried by the author.*

A lot of us got together for dinner and those conversations are where the real knowledge comes from in sports thinking. Best thing about Dan, he isn't locked into this almost religious dogma about fitness or lifting. He is very interested in learning as much as he can. I ended up trying to help a woman



who needed to increase her pushup total for an up coming Army fitness test. Like Dan, I steal freely from everyone, so I explained the whole concept of laddering versus maximum repetitions. I always let people know that I'm just trying to help out. Most of the time, someone is locked into one solution and if you give them a different approach, they can get different results.



*John Powell... watcher of Cop Shows...*

After dinner, Dan took me out for an interesting odyssey. John Powell, of world record discus fame, lives in Las Vegas. He has some throwers that he coaches and some visiting athletes. We went to his house, where we were greeted by Stephanie "from Stanford". Turns out, John wasn't there, but would be back later. Stephanie hadn't eaten, so off the three of us went. The next hour or so consisted of going into Irish pubs and looking for food. The first one had nobody that would seat us; the second one wasn't serving food that night. I just followed along trying to keep up. Stephanie ended up getting a sandwich at our hotel. Then back to John's house.

John was sitting in his easy chair, watching "Cold Files", a documentary crime show on television. I have never met John, but my son and Dan indicated he is a lot like I am (*Editor's note... not necessarily a compliment*). . We are about the same age and competed in the same era. He went to San Jose State, and I used to race against Tommie Smith and Lee Evans. We ended up just talking, and of course watching television on a Saturday night in Vegas. It doesn't get any better than that.



Sunday morning, we were up early and back down to the buffet for breakfast. I've now consumed two weeks of my usual food. Charles Staley's gym was about a half-mile from our hotel. There were five speakers at the "Boot Camp"; Dan was set to do the second hour. His talk was about goal setting and how you need to incorporate these into your entire life. He was a little nervous before it was his turn, but he hit it out of the park. Just by listening, you can see why he is still doing so well in so many different areas at 47 years old. I was sitting with Mindy Lincoln and Mike Pockoski, a pair of America's better hammer throwers. The three of us had lunch together at the



break. Dan was impressive. The speakers after Dan kept referring to some of the issues Dan brought up in his talk. Remember, he is my little brother and I couldn't have been prouder. He explained why you couldn't blindly set up goals, without expanding the rest of your life to accommodate these goals. He has a great method of explaining why you need to make sure that "play" and rest are just as important as training.

Each of the speakers covered a different area. The final speaker was Pavel. I've read some of his work and heard about him on the web. I had a lot of pre-conceived notions about him. I had to bail out the Green Berets a bunch of times in Viet Nam, so I'm always leery when I hear of any "special forces" type. His talk was about building strength, not size. Dan can fill everyone in with the details, but he was explaining why these smaller lifters are able to lift so much more than the heavy weights. There was a whole section on "linkage" and "leakage" of muscle use. Dan was sitting next to me and both our eyes lit up. These concepts relate directly to throwing. Dan had told me, that my emphasis on the deadlift is something that Pavel preaches. Pavel combines a lot of martial art power techniques, into strength building. He uses the deadlift to increase basic strength. I'm already doing lots of deadlifting, what he suggests is breaking it up to low reps at 80%, twice a day. He wants those reps

with perfect form and to tighten the core area while lifting.



After the seminar was finished, we had about an hour of Dan and Pavel working together on the discus throw. Pavel would show Dan exercises that will help his hip pop. He suggested that we try and throw our elbow, like it was the discus. He was showing martial arts instructors how to increase your punch, by making like your fist was in your elbow. Dan has picked up "leakage" in his throwing. Dan is so strong and fast, that he blows right past the "block". John Powell thinks Dan has at least 20 more feet in him, if he could correct this flaw. Let's see, Dan threw 177 last year, hmmm.



For my final comment on Pavel. He is one of the nicest people I have ever met. He has a lot of enthusiasm, and he gives what he knows freely. He invited Dan and me to come on down to San Diego for some of his clinics.

Everybody got together back at the Orleans for dinner. I had a good



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conversation with Charles Staley about his discus throwing. He put on quite an event. I wasn't so sure if I was going to like seven hours of seminars. They were great, but what went on after the seminars was even better.

I actually woke up Monday morning at about 5 a.m., too excited about the previous two days to sleep any longer. I woke Dan up and forced him to listen to me babble on. This last weekend was a once in a lifetime experience and thank God for nepotism.

*It was a glorious time!*

### The Charles Staley Bootcamp...October 2004!

About six months ago, Charles asked me to speak at his annual "Bootcamp" in Las Vegas. To be honest, I didn't think I was ready, but I plotted out the "Art of Long Term Planning," my simple approach and thought it might be of value. The greatest value of this weekend, though, was the amazing amount of synergy produced by getting all these great people together!

On Friday, I drove down to St. George, Utah, where there was a baseball thing going on. The hotel...nameless...had about a million ten year old boy and girl baseball players, none supervised. Do any of you remember hating high school baseball players because of their crude, obnoxious, and loud behaviors. It starts at age ten. Night one on the road: little sleep.

The next morning, I gave a workshop with my "real" job for about three hours then hit the road for Las Vegas. It does require a mental gear change to go from teaching religion to driving into Las Vegas, but it worked out fine for me.

I drove over to John Powell's house, but he wasn't there...not unusual when people are expecting me. Then, I shot over to Charles's gym. It was transforming from a gym to a classroom, but I was only there for a few minutes when Nick Radonjic asked me a "little" about the O lifts. For the next hour, Nick performed rep after rep after rep of the lifts...and improved each time. Of course, for the next few days, I would grab his traps and squeeze at every opportunity.

I unloaded my plates and gear, met a bunch of nice people, then shot to the Orleans Hotel to unpack. I had one pair of undies out of the suitcase and my brother, Gary, told me he was in the lobby. Thus, the weekend begins!

We had very little time to get ready, but still enough time to eat Jambalaya at Big Al's Oyster Bar. Interesting that Gary and I would choose Big Al's...that was my dad's nickname.

I decided to really cut the O lifting clinic into two basic concepts:

1. Squat between the legs ("Yeah, Dan, that's what I do. Look." "What the hell is that?" "My squat." "That's not a squat.")
2. Heels only...Bow and Arrow pulling.



Sure, I would, if I could, toss in some stuff about slapping the foot in the jerk, or racking the weights, or whatever, but I didn't want to muddle this workshop up. I wanted to err on the side of too little rather than have them bear two hours of me pontificating.

I believe in the "Learn by doing, doing, doing method." I blabbed on for just a few minutes then drove everyone through four stations:

1. Stick work on what they understood the technique to be from how I described the technique. Quick point here...people don't snatch and clean sticks perfectly...so don't coach it too close. No one swings a 300 pound barbell up like they swing a stick...the bar will coach that instantly, so don't be redundant.
2. "Shaolin" Squats: Partners grab hands, lean away from one another and squat and rise. Each takes one step to the right and repeats the squat. Repeat for five minutes. Yeow! The idea is to ingrain the "dropping between the legs" by taking the brain out of the equation. The step to the right and holding hands makes the athlete squat naturally and think about the pace. Exhaustion soon gets the brain out of the whole thing and, within a few minutes, you have a squatter!
3. Coreblasters or Kettlebell Swings with toes elevated on something. A minute or two of this and the Bow concept is taught forever!

4. Bouncing Ball Squats. Take a Swiss ball...finally, I found a use for them...and have the athlete hold another's hands and "drop" onto the ball and bounce right back up. These are squats, but having the ball "bounce" the athlete it teaches them a nice groove through the hip.

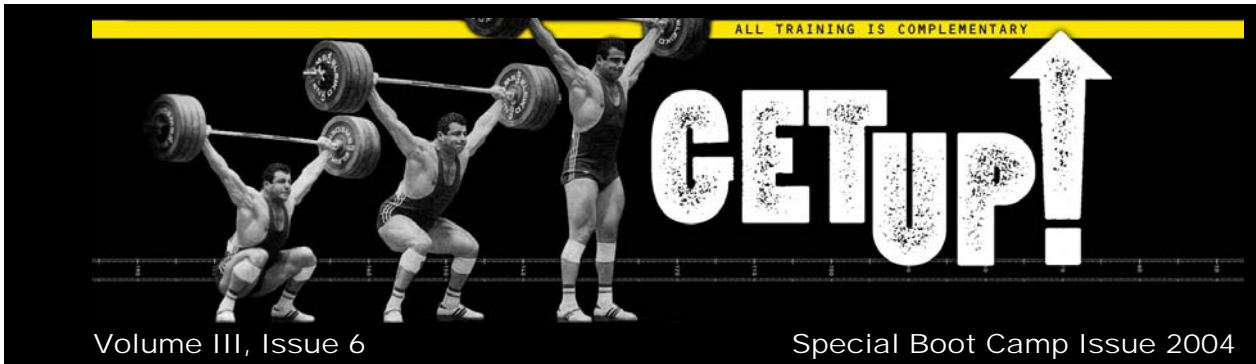
By this time, 25-30 minutes of nonstop exercise by the participants, I noticed my voice tiring...so we did more.

During our rest, I talked through some concepts. I noticed that when the group of forty was exhausted like this, they seemed to be more willing to listen to me prattle on. So, we asked Bryan to volunteer for Tabata Front Squats. T-mag will have pictures on this, but let us just say this: after watching Bryan Front Squat for four minutes, no one in the group will ever think that this is easy or overrated again. In my T-mag article, someone asked "if it is so good, why don't you do it every day?"

Ask Bryan's thighs.

We did leave some time for individual platform work and Sarah impressed a lot of people with her Clean and Jerks. But, soon, it was time to go and we had to eat and watch television cop shows...

I'll admit I was nervous. Dr. Lonnie Lowery, Pavel Tsatsouline, Josh Henkin and Keats Snideman are an impressive group of scholars and



trainers. Also, there was lots of lights, a movie camera, and everything was taped. Not good for a kid with a speech impediment!



*Our host, Charles...*

Fortunately, Josh and Keats went first. They opened with a nice point about the late Mel Siff's hatred of "guru talk." They discussed a number of new training "protocols" that are using names and word combinations to sell as something mystical. Of course, lifting tends to be lifting no matter how many things you add to the equation.

"Train off your goals" was a nice summary of the core issue in athletic performance. They made an interesting point that in most major colleges, the guys with the best benches and squats are the second string football players. Big lifts...no game.

The followed up with another great quote: "Just because it is hard, doesn't mean it is beneficial." One little thing that they showed was a real eye opener. They had a participant, Sarah, I think, stand tall and they slowly pushed her from the back forward. When they pushed hard, her body (being "functional") adjusted by stepping forward with one of her legs. Josh and Keats said that this was a great way to

figure out leg dominance in jerks. Good simple idea...worth stealing.



I wish they had just a little more time to discuss "Striving for Imperfection." Josh did mention that training in sand (as well as odd lifts, different implements, hybrids and the like) really challenged the athlete's neural senses. Something like training in mud and snow with a heavy backpack might be now no longer considered "psychotic" by my neighbors...rather, I will be stimulating neural senses.

Josh and Keats summed training with the "Magnificent Seven:"

1. Military Press
2. Snatch
3. Clean and Jerk
4. Bench Press
5. Squat
6. Deadlift
7. "Some kind of pulling thing"

Great summary...great talk. In addition, Keats and Josh are like those two guys whom I had never met, but knew my whole life...if you know what I mean. We had lots of laughs and lots of fun hanging out...a lot.

I was nervous for my talk. It hit me as I began to speak that this was the day my dad had died...October 31,





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1991. I'm sure he would have busted his buttons in pride having me and Gary sitting at an athletic forum still competing and living the good life.

I have my notes at <http://danjohn.org/cs.pdf> and you are welcome to review them. From what I was told, I am rather "enthusiastic" when I speak with a touch of "passion." It's interesting because "enthusiasm" literally means the "spirit within" and "passion" comes from the root "to suffer," usually for love. I can't think of two better words for what an athlete needs to have to succeed. The spirit to suffer...for love. Okay, it might be too much, but I have stories about this...the longer you keep playing these games, the more stories you will have about suffering for love.



*X-Rays of Reconstructed Wrist...still made the Clean and Jerk...*

Doctor Lonnie Lowry's writings have been part of my "homework" for the past few months. His interview with Charles Staley...contact Charles to join his newsletter and they send you the link...had sent me to Costco to buy even

more fish oil. Besides the gills, taking ten fish oil tablets a day has been a great idea.

Lonnie started off with a simple chart about "accumulating problems." His basic insight...which has the smell of "genius" to me...is that you "don't train blind." Overtraining can occur in just a few days but could take months to overcome! He had a number of ways to measure overtraining with the unique (to me, anyway) idea of looking at "relaxed arm angle." If your arm is bent at 90 degrees when you "relax," you may just want to cut back a bit.

He acknowledged that some things can help manage these issues: warm up, stretch, massage and active recovery, but his best idea was quantifying recovery. He uses a point system that tallies up to 20. Nutrition is worth eight points (breakfast alone is two, snacks and the rest are one), hydration is two, Sleep three, Power Nap or rest is one, Meditation/Relaxation one, Emotional Support one, Warm Up and mental stretch two, and, finally, separate stretch outside of workout is one.

Each night, before bed, simply quantify your day. Simple. If you have a 20 workout and a 16 recovery, you are in debt. Three days of debt might be a sign to really back off...or, get the recovery side up! This point, along with his encouragement of all of us to look into nutrient timing, seemed to me to be a



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clue for success for a drug free lifter or thrower.

“Athletes are underfed.” When Lowery said that, I’m sure a lot of the people thought this was hyperbole. From my experience, this is an absolute truism. My high school athletes...even the fat ones...rarely eat enough! When I show them a typical day’s eating regime...even one as low as 1200 calories...they nearly always say “that is way more than I eat.” But, they ignore the mountains of sugar they pour into their body with soft drinks. Lowry summed eating up simply:

***“Carbs in the morning,  
Fats in the evening,  
Protein throughout.”***

Sing that song! If it is okay, I would like to just toss out some of my notes that have exclamation marks next to them...or the ones that have “YES” written next to them from this presentation:

1. Coffee before workouts
2. Fats are pharmacological
3. Athletes don’t eat enough
4. Increase fish oil, walnuts, and flax
5. Take Vitamins C and E...but don’t go crazy
6. 75 minutes...at the most...in training
7. Watch the negatives in lifting...that where overtraining can creep in
8. Take a week off every 6 or 12 weeks or whatever
9. Moderation in all things

10. Think “MORE!” More fiber, more water, more protein, more apples, more oatmeal.

11. “Junk” Fats...transfats and the gang...are very bad.

12. Beans...kidney beans and the gang...are your friend.

Finally, Lowry noted the “Three Apple a Day Diet.” Well, I went to the websites talking about this and I was staggered. The amount of food was amazing. A typical day...increase calories by eating more:

**Breakfast**

Cheese Omelet

Oatmeal

Apple

**Snack**

Cottage Cheese AND Yogurt

Lunch

Apple

Two Chicken Breasts

Salad

**Snack**

Protein Shake with fiber

**Dinner**

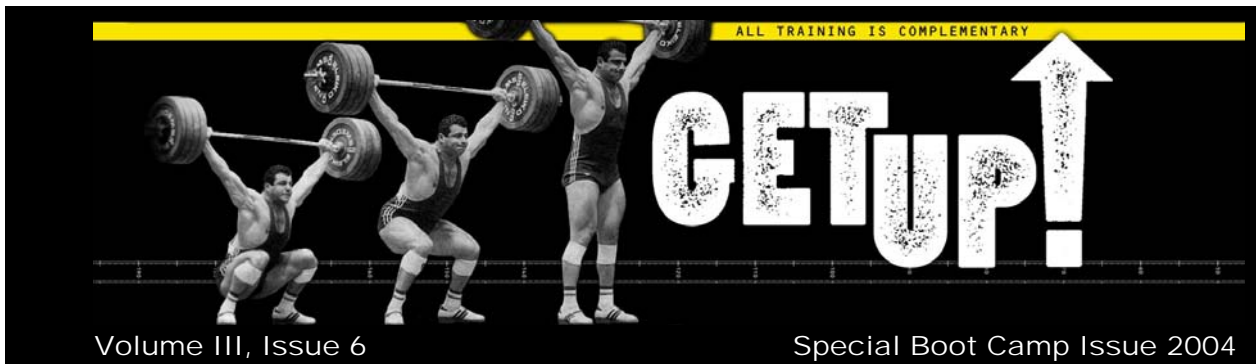
Apple

Salmon

Salad

Thinking through my notes, Lonnie might shift that Dinner apple to the morning snack, but I think the point that one can “eat more” to lose weight still doesn’t connect the synapses in most people.

I’m not sure I can summarize Pavel’s workshop. I will say this...and this is not hyperbole...one of the most



troubling aspects of my career was settled during his talk.

Let's focus on me...sorry. As he talked, I had this overriding insight that this guy was on to something and I need to listen not just with my ears. If you know Pavel's work, the first section was on "Training as Practice" not an effort to become, literally, "worked out."

"Strength is a skill." Now, that is something that does not make it past my brain. I think "smashing my head against a wall for thirty five years is a good idea." Pavel noted that we must NOT mix the concepts of strength training with the concept of "toughness." "I can make you tough, but that is different."

He summed strength training with the line:

***"Train as heavy as possible,  
Train as often as possible,  
Train as fresh as possible."***

He has a nice new way of teaching people to keep "zipped up" while lifting...punch or kick the muscles that need to be tightened. We actually worked my discus throwing technique with this after the workshop. For the record, I'm a fool and know nothing. I have been throwing since the Nixon Administration and have let lots of my power drift away without knowing it. Alas.

**"Strength should be seamless."**

This was a line that I just wrote down. Twenty minutes later, I underlined it and put stars on it. I just didn't get it when I

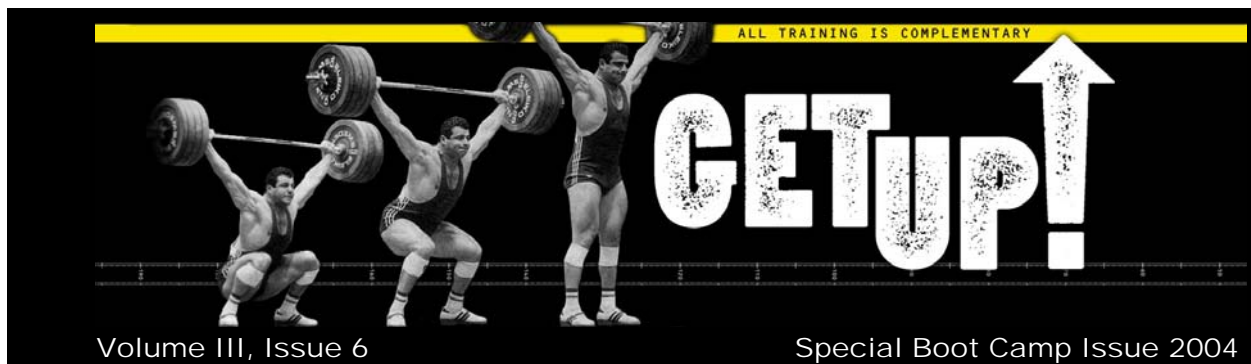
heard it the first time. He mentioned "Active Negatives." No idea.

Then he showed us that we should "Pull ourselves down in the negatives." Hmmm? Then, he showed a simple squat.

The lights went on. How can you have tension, if you let gravity just slap you down each set, you flubber and bounce up, and half way up the squat, you remember to think "tension." Tension must be felt from every moment and the way to insure it is to do "ACTIVE negatives." In other words, gravity doesn't take the bar down, you make the bar come down with muscular effort leading to muscular tension!

Linkage and Leakage were two terms I had never heard before in my life. Yet, I look at my notes now and I see a box with three words: "Seamless." "Linkage" Discus???

Linkage is the idea that is talked about a lot...after I reread "Naked Warrior"...but I never understood. (It's funny, I just flashed over to my copy of "Naked Warrior" and while looking for "Linkage" I found the "Static Stomp" and want to completely rethink this, too, but I have to finish typing...) Linkage is the opposite of "leakage," those areas of the body, usually the shoulder, knee and waist, where energy/tension are allowed to sneak away from performance. Pavel taught me leakage by slapping and punching leaks. He also enjoined several assistants to punch other parts of my body in the discus pull position...then,



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he said, “Now, pop your hip.” It then became obvious that I have terrible hip flexor flexibility and Pavel designed a remedial program for me. This is where those twenty feet come from, my friends...

Pavel’s insights just kept flying in...

1. Judge progress on major lifts not assistance work.
2. Training should always be **“Same, but different.”**
3. Read old books on strength development.

Then, the talk slapped me in my head. He was talking about “Neurological Erasure.” Hmm? The idea that when you start to train...to peak...to focus...more and more “static” emerges into your technique. Too much thinking, in other words.

That is why I have improved after retiring in the discus. This is why a week long vacation hiking in Colorado broke me through a barrier. This is also why three weeks at Discus Camp tends to drop performance for a while...too much static is BAD. This is why...finally!...I know why peaking doesn’t work and never has:

Peaking is nearly the definition of applied static!

You want to peak in a technical event...ignore it for a couple of days and go bike riding.

Or, better, take up Highland Games or an O lifting meet...new noise, less static.

Listen, I’m still unpacking my notes from this clinic, so this is a work in progress. I will tell you this...this was quality stuff, my friends.

I have a basket of apples on my desk, more fish oil tablets and a new love and appreciation for what I am struggling to accomplish at age 47. I met some great people and I will unabashedly support the other members of the crew who spoke at this clinic. These are genuine quality people. Props to all. I also met Chris Shugart from t-mag.com that wrote “Eat Like A Man,” the diet article that probably did as much for my recent success in sports as any of the training. He mentioned that my writing style comes off a bit like a “rant.” Well, I don’t want to go off on a rant here, but...

I am, as always, humbled by the quality of the “top” people in any field I have encountered in my experiences. I have met the Dalai Lama, Archbishops, top professors, Olympic medal winners and world record holders and I have discovered that the “Best” are the best people, too.

This boot camp was the best.

Published by Daniel John

Daniel John, Editor

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