

# **Strength and Conditioning Interrogations**

Interviews with 21 of the top names in the fitness industry

By Alwyn Cosgrove

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**Table Of Contents**

## Contents

1	Lyle McDonald	5
2	Nick Grantham	11
3	Zach Even-Esh	17
4	Bill Hartman	33
5	Cameron McGarr	43
6	Chris Mohr	47
7	Chris Shugart	51
8	CJ Murphy	56
9	Craig Ballantyne	61
10	Robert Dos Remedios	70
11	Tom Venuto	75
12	Jason Ferruggia	87
13	Jason C. Brown	93
14	Josh Henkin	96
15	Lee Taft	105
16	Lori Incledon	110
17	Mike Boyle	114
18	Mike Mahler	119
19	Tony Reynolds	123
20	Rachel Cosgrove	130
21	Alwyn Cosgrove	135

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**Lyle McDonald**

**AC: Hi Lyle, Thank you for the interview. Let's get right to it. I've known you and spoke to you for a few years now. You might just be one of the most anal guys I've ever met when it comes to nutrition and training. Honestly - why is that? What drives you?**

LM: I just have somewhat of a classic addictive/obsessive compulsive personality, I realized this fairly early in life; whatever I get interested in, I want to know everything about it. I go to sleep thinking about it, I wake up thinking about it. You've read some of my "Gee, I wonder" questions and we've discussed them in email, you know how bad it gets. I became fascinated with training in my teens and this intensified in college; as an athlete who was mediocre at best, I wanted to find better way to train, to eat, I devoured everything I could find. As I became more research oriented, and this came out of actually looking into the claims being made for a lot of stuff, it just got worse. I've been obsessed with fat loss since my teens, most likely as a consequence of having been chunky as a kid. Basically, like so many, most of my drive is to fix myself; that I've managed to turn it into a career is just a bonus.

**AC: Lyle you are probably best known in the industry for your diet books, Ultimate Diet 2.0, Rapid Fat Loss, Flexible dieting and the Ketogenic diet. Now these are more for the extreme dieter. Are there any "laws" or underlying rules that you observe when designing diet programs for the general client?**

LM: Absolutely and quite in fact, for general dieting purposes, I try to get people focusing on the important principles and not worrying so much about the minutiae. It's like your approach to training, people get hung up in miniscule details over tempo or rest intervals and tend to miss the big picture. Same with dieting. In my mind, a proper fat loss diet needs to a) be below maintenance intake (anybody who tells you that you can lose fat without eating less is bullshitting you) b) provide adequate protein c) provide the essential fatty acids. Those are the fundamental principles, just about everything else from carb intake (whether high or zero) to meal frequency to whatever detail you can name, depends on the circumstances. Most importantly, the best diet is the one that someone will stick to. Issues of adherence, food preferences, etc. are just as important as purely physiological requirements. There are too many variables but as long as you get those three fundamentals correct, you are ahead of the game.

**AC: Other than "eat less" or "eat more" how would you tweak those recommendations for fat loss, or for gaining size?**

LM: Not as much as you'd think. Once you start thinking in terms of fundamentals, you find that one of my mass gaining diets won't look much different than a fat loss diet, the biggest difference will be caloric intake (protein intake often goes up slightly on a diet). So a dieter will be eating sub maintenance with adequate protein (say 1 g/lb bodyweight), ensuring EFA intake (fish oils) and the rest of the diet depending on the situation. Someone looking for mass gains will still be getting their 1 g/lb of protein, their fish oils, but they will be eating more total calories, from some combination of carbs and fat. And, yes, you read that right, you need more protein when you're dieting than when you're trying to gain mass. If I had to sum it up, within the context of my baseline diet, for dieting you reduce carbs, for gaining you increase them. Mainly because I tend to keep protein and fat intake fairly static (again, depending on the specifics).

**AC: Can you outline a very basic fat loss routine for our readers?**

LM: About the simplest diet writeup I could give, not knowing anything about the person or their situation would be a) set calories at 10-12 cal/lb of current total bodyweight. b) set protein at 1-1.5 g/lb of bodyweight c) set dietary fat at 25% of total calories d) the rest of your diet is carbs (typically around 40-50%). This gives you a diet of roughly 25-30% protein, 25% fat and the rest carbs. Depending on the circumstances, I might adjust that (usually lowering carbs if needed).

**AC: What is the most counter-intuitive tip you can give us for fat loss?**

LM: Probably has to do with refeeds (periods of deliberate carbohydrate overfeeding where you break your diet): the leaner you get, the MORE often you need to break your diet to keep it moving forwards. In both *The Rapid Fat Loss handbook* and *A Guide to Flexible Dieting*, if you compare the recommendations for free meals, refeeds, or the full diet breaks, they are performed more frequently for leaner individuals. This is because someone trying to go from 10% to 8% bodyfat, their body is fighting back much harder than the person going from 30% to 25%. So while someone at 30% bodyfat may only be refeeding once every 10 days, someone at 8% may be refeeding every 4th day to keep metabolism from shutting down too much. During one of my own most successful diets, I was refeeding for 5 hours every other day towards the end.

**AC: What's the worst advice you've heard recently training wise?**

LM: That the average trainee needs to try to emulate Olympic level athletes and train more frequently and more hours/week to get into shape.

**AC: and what's the best?**

LM: I think the best soundbite I've heard on training that really encapsulates an important aspect of training came from an article on sprint training by Kelly Baggett. He wrote "Use frequency to learn - use intensity to enhance what's learned."

**AC: Do you train males and females any differently? Particularly in regards to fat loss**

LM: Not really. I do find that, to get really lean (especially in their lower bodies), women tend to need more cardio than men. This is a function of blood flow issues and stubborn female bodyfat (this is going to be the topic of a forthcoming book project).

**AC: I'm known for not recommending much in the way of steady state aerobics for the general population. However - for the competitive bodybuilder - it's a different story.**

**How do YOUR recommendations change when we're talking about "beyond lean" - when you're talking about getting a guy ready to step on stage.**

LM: Trying to get someone from 10% to 5%, without muscle loss and without drugs becomes very difficult. Metabolism is slowing, fat mobilization is impaired, their bodies are fighting back hard and it can be tough to keep things moving. There tends to be a limit to how far calories can realistically be dropped (before hunger becomes a real issue) so adding in more activity is the only way to keep the fat loss moving at a reasonable rate. Add to that issues of muscle loss and overtraining on a diet and it gets tricky. That said, unless someone was really far behind on their prep (because they started too fat or too late, or both), I don't think they should have to do zillions of hours of cardio per day. I know it's 'standard advice' to do 2 hours/day (or more) to get ripped, I don't think that's automatically necessary.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

LM: Well, I'd have to list Dan Duchaine as perhaps my largest influence. Without him, I would never have attained whatever status I have in this industry. Beyond that, I read everything (well, I want to anyhow), by everyone. Even if I think that 99% of what someone says is total bs, if I learn one thing useful from them for my own training or someone I might be working, that's worth it.

**AC: Ok - you've got 8 weeks to get Mr Smith ready to be a Hollywood action hero. He's about 30lbs over-fat. What do you do?**

LM: Well, I'm going to assume that he hasn't been involved in regular training, which is probably why he's carrying so much extra fat. A nice thing about folks in this situation is that they can often gain some muscle while losing fat at the same time. Of course, 30 lbs in 8 weeks works out to just under 4 lbs/week. Short of some

serious drugs, that's going to take some seriously intense training. The nice thing is that making him super lean will make him look bigger on screen (more so than adding muscle) so that's going to be the focus: getting him lean while maintaining or building a little bit of muscle.

First 2 weeks: I'd put him on the diet described in my Rapid Fat Loss handbook along with 2-3 days/week of depletion style training. So higher reps, short rest periods. Goal being to burn some calories, deplete muscle glycogen (this enhances whole body fat burning) and get him ready for heavier stuff to come. By the end of 2 weeks, he should be down a solid 4-7 pound of fat and 10-20 lbs (the extra weight is water weight). We'll also have broken him of any bad food habits by getting him eating lean protein with veggies and a little healthy fat every day. I will probably have him do very light aerobic training for 20-30' 3X/week just to start building his fitness up a little bit. This also helps with food control on that particular diet.

Next 4 weeks: I'll end the first diet phase with a short (1 day) refeed to give him a break from the dieting grind. He'll have done 1 or 2 controlled free meals each week during the diet. During the next 2 weeks, I'm going to move him to a more moderate dieting approach (probably 10 cal/lb). basically he'll take what he did during the first 2 weeks, still keeping in the high protein and veggie intake and add some more carbs and fat to bring his calories up. Some of his carbs and protein will be targeted around training to support training intensity and recovery. Then I'll just train the hell out of him. Still only weights 3X/week, full body. Each workout will be warmups to a couple of heavy sets (in the 5-8 repetition range) of a compound leg exercise, compound push and a compound pull. Like 20' total time but very high quality, pushing up the weights as much as possible. This would be followed by high rep/short rest circuits such as what's in your Afterburn program. Basically I want to get a some muscle building stimulus with the low-volume heavy work, yet still get some good calorie burning (and post-workout calorie burn) with the circuit work. On alternate days, he'll be doing a combination of interval training (perhaps 3-5X30-45 seconds with a 90" break) followed by some steady state cardio, about an hour total done three times/week. He'll have Sunday off every week. At this point, he should have recomposed a bit, gained a little bit of muscle while dropping some more lard. He should be down another 6-8 at this point.

Final 2 weeks: I'll probably move him back to the rapid fat loss diet to take off the last little bit of fat and dry him out again. so it's back to protein and veggies, some basic heavy tension training with a bit of circuit work and minimal cardio to help keep his hunger at bay. At the very end, he'll do a full body depletion workout and a short-carb load. This will fill up his muscles and make him look nice and full but still dry to look his best on camera. Of course, tanning, shaving and the rest will also improve his appearance.

At the 8 week mark, he may not make the total 30 lbs but he should get most of it, have gained enough muscle and tone to look much better and drying him out will make him look that much better.

**AC: Your [Rapid Fat Loss manual](#) sounds very interesting. Can you give us a basic outline of what the program contains?**



LM Basically, the diet described in the [Rapid Fat Loss handbook](#) is a modified Protein sparing modified fast (PSMF). The PSMF has been around forever, it was classically used in cases of extreme obesity to generate rapid weight/fat losses while sparing body protein (hence the name). Fat loss of 1/2-2/3rds of a pound per day are not out of the question in very fat individuals. So I took that approach and modified it further. I'd say my main change has to do with adjusting protein intake based on starting bodyfat percentage (lean people get more protein than fatter) and activity (which increases protein requirements). This has a secondary effect of actually changing the total daily deficit; leaner people get a smaller deficit relative to their maintenance requirements. Along with that I added an essential fatty acid supplement. I also describe how to train on the diet (weight training being far more important than aerobics). Finally, I included free meals, refeeds and even a full diet break (where you take a full 2 weeks off of your diet) into the program. Basically, the diet is aimed at folks who need to lose a ton of weight and only have a short time to do it. Which means it's certainly not for everyone. So the athlete who needs to make a weight class in 2 weeks, the individual who needs to look good in a bathing suit 2 weeks from now, high school reunions, weddings, that kind of thing. Even bodybuilders who are behind on their prep can use it to get caught back up. Some people have used it just to get the diet over as quickly as possible. So rather than diet moderately for 6-8 weeks, they'd rather just diet hardcore for 2 weeks. And I really want to make this point clear to the readers of your newsletter, this isn't meant as an across the board kind of diet. Under most circumstances, I'd rather people take the long-view, making moderate changes. But sometimes that's just not feasible. The rapid fat loss diet is for those specific situations where you need the greatest amount of fat loss and simply don't have 12-16 weeks to get it done.

**AC: Any new projects on the horizon ?**

LM: I'm currently finishing up a book with Jamie Hale of [www.maxcondition.com](http://www.maxcondition.com) on protein for strength/power athletes. We're looking at the research on the topic as well as giving concrete practical guidelines on protein: amounts, types, timing. Individual aminos such as glutamine and the branched chain amino acids are also discussed.

At some point in the very near future, I'll be putting together a booklet on stubborn bodyfat, what it is, what causes it and, most importantly, how to get rid of it. Beyond that, I'd like to stop writing about diet for a bit and do some training stuff, mainly focusing on hypertrophy for everyone from beginner to advanced bodybuilders. It's funny but my degree is actually in exercise physiology, yet everyone thinks of me as the nutrition nerd.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

LM: Well, my main website is at [bodyrecomposition.com](http://bodyrecomposition.com). You can read a bunch of my articles (mostly stuff from books I never finished), sign up for my newsletter, or check out the forum. Beyond that, I'm literally all over the net, a search on my name

will turn up stuff all kinds of places; some of them I probably don't even know about. I've written for Avant Labs, Read the Core, the old Mesomorphosis site (now split into Meso-Rx and Thinkmuscle), Cyberpump and I know I have articles a lot of other places.

To order the rapid fat loss manual – it's available [here](#) :

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?Clk=1371504>

**AC: Thanks for the interview Lyle!**

**Nick Grantham**

**This week we have an interview with Nick Grantham, a strength and conditioning coach for the English Institute of Sport. I have known Nick for years, and felt it was about time that my readers got to know him too. Nick just interviewed me for his newsletter in what was maybe the longest interview I have ever done! Make sure you get over to [www.winningedgefitness.co.uk](http://www.winningedgefitness.co.uk) and sign up for the newsletter.**

**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?**

NG: I currently work for the English Institute of Sport, a lottery funded organisation that provides a nationwide network of world class support services, designed to foster the talents of elite athletes. My role is lead strength and conditioning coach for the West Midlands region and I'm responsible for the programming of 20-30 athletes from a range of sports.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?**

NG: I left school early and took a couple of steady jobs working in banking and insurance, to cut a long story short, I was lousy at both and the thought of driving a desk until retirement was a scary prospect. During this time I was competing in Taekwon-Do and I started reading around the areas of nutrition and training. I discovered you could make a living working in sport decided I was going to go to University to study Sport Science. After two years at night school I gained the entrance qualifications for University. Four years later I came out of University with an honours degree in sport science and a masters degree in exercise and nutrition science. Since leaving University I've worked with a range of clients, most notably the British Gymnastics Team and England Netball Team.

**AC: And what is your training background?**

NG: I've always taken part in sport, when I was younger my weekends were taken up with football (soccer for our American cousins) and rugby matches and athletics meets. Although I enjoyed the competing in these sports, my enthusiasm probably outweighed my talent!

At the age of 13 I took up Taekwon-Do (much to my mums disapproval), for once my talent matched my enthusiasm and as I progressed through the grades I developed a real enjoyment of the sport aspect of Taekwon-Do. My TKD career culminated with me representing my country at the 1997 World Championships.

Right now, mountain biking is my thing, I've had a couple of seasons of simply enjoying myself and now I'm starting to take things a bit more seriously and I'm working on improving my bike fitness (no point having a bike worth three thousand dollars if you have only got legs worth 25 cents).

**AC; what did you take from your TKD background that would be valuable for our readers?**

NG: Discipline is a fundamental aspect of TKD and it's a fundamental requirement of everything we do in life. At the peak of my TKD career I was also studying full time at University, in fact I sat my finals two weeks before I competed at the World Championships. It took discipline to fit in 3 training sessions per day, attend lectures and revise for exams.....not to mention avoid the constant temptation of going out to end of year parties!

**AC: What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?**

NG: I work with world class athletes, they will range from athletes that have just been talent ID'd and brought onto a training programme with aspirations of medalling in 4-8 years time through to athletes currently at the height of their career. We cover up to 20 different sports, male and female, disabled and able bodied ranging from 15-30+ years of age. I've just read that answer back.....there's not really much in that which is typical!!!! Personal achievements as a coach range from getting someone to squat with a good technique to seeing an athlete I have worked with on the winners podium and knowing that I had a part (even if it was a small part) in that achievement.

**AC: Can you describe a typical training session consist of for your clients?**

NG: Nope!!!! It really depends on the athlete and the type of session we are doing (rehab, speed development etc). I guess that's not a very helpful answer so lets give you an idea of what I would do if we have a strength session. Before we do anything I'm going to have the athlete come in and foam roll. This is a recent addition to my sessions and I can't believe I hadn't been using it before now (credit belongs to Mike Boyle for this one – I watched his DVD series and immediately started to programme it into my sessions). Next we may perform some strength diagnostics (sounds great doesn't it!!!) – simply put I use a variety of vertical or horizontal jumps to establish the athletes readiness for the training session. We are fortunate enough to have some pretty fancy kit that can provide a whole load of data – peak power etc.....if we don't have the fancy kit.....we can look at some other indicators, vertical jump height, horizontal jump distance and even listen to the sound on contact (Charlie Francis – talks about listening to his athletes foot strikes in Speed Trap – it sounds a little crazy but you really can tell if your athlete is ready to train or not by listening to foot contacts during jumps and bounding drills). Assuming we are good to go we will complete some activation exercises before getting into the most technical lifts. I'll tend to complex my exercises and I often complex a prehab/rehab exercise in with the main lifts (its much more time efficient and you know the work is being completed). The session typically finishes off with some core strength and stability work.

I prefer to have this at the end of a session rather than as a separate session because experience tells me that when left as a separate session.....athletes 'forget' to do it!!!

**AC: What are the three best general training tips?**

NG: Quality vs Quantity – it's funny how people get into a pissing contest about who can lift the most – who is the President of Squat Town or the King of Bench Ville.....who cares.....more often than not the President of Squat Town is the same person that is sat on the bench come game day because they have an injury they picked up performing their lifts with crappy technique.

My number one training tip is never sacrifice technique for increased poundage. Get in – train – get out: once again, most people wear this badge of honour with pride – I trained my chest for 3 hours today.....well done, I'm sure your mum is proud! If you are training for that long something is wrong with your programme, my athletes will be in and out of the gym in 60-90 minutes max (and that includes foam rolling, strength diagnostics, and core – the lifting part is typically 40-50 minutes).

Do the basics well and do them consistently. I was fortunate enough to listen to Michael Johnson speak recently – he put his success down to the fact that he was consistent in his approach – he kept the same coach and he used drills he knew worked. People would say he should change coaches or alter his training techniques – why didn't he? Well the people making all the noise were also the ones he was beating on the track day in, day out!! It's easy to jump on and off of training bandwagons, your series on under and over reaction sums it up nicely. Find a good coach, learn the basics and then perform the basics well, consistently over time.

I've just noticed there is a bit of a theme.....and it's a quality vs quantity issue.

**AC: And the three biggest mistakes?**

NG: Simple answer is doing the opposite of the three best training tips!!! However, here are my other top three biggest mistakes.

Slow steady state cardio training for athletes competing in speed/power based events. WAKY WAKY.....YOU ARE SO FAR BEHIND THE CURVE ITS NOT EVEN FUNNY. How do I know its wrong – because I used to do it and it didn't work. I still see this all the time and the best answer they can give is that's how we have always trained....wrong answer!! If I hear another coach tell me they are developing an aerobic base I will scream!!! There are so many reason I won't go into them now...trust me if you are still doing this (and you know who you are) then stop. I can feel my first e-book coming on 101 reasons why steady state cardio sucks!

Taking the principle of specificity and flogging it until its dead. Seriously I've watched a coach working with a swimmer using a metronome so that the swimmer can lift at the same tempo as his stroke rate and.....guess what....each set lasts as long as one race. Why don't you just go and swim!! Strength work is about transfer of training effect.....not specificity.....if the strength drill is too close to the actual sports technique research shows you will actually reduce the sporting performance. Thinking that there are 'bad' exercises. There's no such thing, just crappy programming. I've worked with some pretty extreme sports and the nature of the sport means the body has to do some things that strictly speaking it's not designed to do. it's not that a particular exercise is bad, it's more to do that the coach or athlete has not thought about proper progressions or whether the exercise is suitable for that

individual. We must not do straight leg sit ups....its bad for your back.....what if your sport is gymnastics and requires that type of movement?

**Ac: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your clients?**

NG: I've used a variety of methods ranging from simple training diaries through to some of the strength diagnostics techniques that I mentioned earlier. But lets not forget the art of coaching – one of the most potent tools available is establishing a good understanding of your client, talking, observation – 9 times out of 10 I can tell within the first couple of minutes where a training session is going to go, just by looking at the body language and listening to what they are saying. How far we push depends on the individual, with some clients it's a case of having to pull them back rather than push them hard.

**AC: Do you train males and females any differently?**

NG: Short answer....nope! Long answer....I programme according to what is in front of me and the information I've gathered during the initial needs analysis and movement screen. In that respect male or female...the approach is the same. However, how I interact is different. Males tend to be driven by their ego so you have to appeal to this side when coaching, facts, figures how much how often etc. Wind them up and watch them go, typically male athletes just want to train and talk about how much they are lifting.

Females tend to be driven by security and they are not so caught up in the whole ego thing. So when I'm coaching my questions are centred around feelings – how did that exercise feel. There's usually a lot more talking taking place between sets when I'm working with females.

It's easier to focus on quality with females, they are happy to become technically sound before progressing, unlike men, who typically take offence if you suggest we drop the weight to regain good technique!!!! Women tend to come in and accept coaching, men tend to have a 'know it all' attitude – especially if you are not built like a NFL quarterback.

Of course, there will always be exceptions to the norm and you have to be able to adjust your approach accordingly.

**AC: We spoke before about doing very short high speed interval work for endurance training. Can you expand on that for our readers?**

NG: Slow and steady may be appropriate for some clients (overweight, sedentary, recovering from illness/operation, ultra endurance athletes), but if you've got an average aerobic capacity 45-50ml.kg.min....forget it, intervals are where its at.

AI, this stuff works, there's a heap of research from Europe that clearly shows increases on aerobic capacity from interval based training, even intervals as short as 20 seconds.

The typical picture (not with my clients!) at pre-season is that of players coming in to work on developing an aerobic base....long slow and steady running....what a crock!

It's a crock for a number of reasons (not all of which I can go into now) but not least the fact that their sport rarely requires long slow steady efforts.....much more likely to be high intensity repeated efforts.

Why do I love it so much?

Because most of the sports I work with are not pure endurance sports – they are repeated effort speed and power sports.

Intervals are time efficient (back to quality vs quantity) – a 20-40 minute interval session is going to hike up your aerobic capacity far more than a 60-90 minute jog.

You get a fantastic anaerobic workout – increased lactate tolerance.

You can work at 'match' intensity and then build endurance on later on in the season (Ian King – Reverse Periodisation).

Intervals can incorporate sport specific movement patterns and drills.

What would I do?

Start short -15-20 seconds work with a 1:1 – 1:2 work rest ratio.

Session duration – 20-40 seconds

Progress from basic repeat sprint to more complex drills incorporating sport specific patterns.

Build endurance into the progression with maximum work period of 2 minutes.

Once into competition phase mix the work rest periods up so that you get a complete mix of demands on the body so that the athlete is constantly adapting.

If the client insist on a long run – get them into a pool (not just standard aqua jogging – we have some special drills that really work) and unload them to reduce the amount of impact going through the musculoskeletal system.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

NG:

1. You
2. Marques Church – A great S&C coach from New Zealand.
3. Pretty much anyone that is willing to talk to me!!! Seriously, nearly everyone has at least one good idea and hopefully during the course of a conversation I will be able to pick out that good idea.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

NG: The late Mel Siff – I'm still reading Supertraining and it still makes my head hurt, seriously this guy was way ahead of his time and his book should be in every S&C coaches library.

Ian King – I've studied a lot of Ians material and it shaped my early years as an S&C coach and even now I refer back to his work (reverse periodisation, prioritization of training, importance of needs analysis)

Mike Boyle – I've started looking at his work during the past six months –he has a great approach to training and he has an honesty that I admire (rehabilitation, core training) (check out Mike's [Functional Strength Coach DVD set.](#))

Marques Church – I've name checked him already – this guy switched me on to the benefits of pool based training – its under used and can improve endurance, speed, power, proprioception.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

NG: Recovery strategies are poorly used and understood. At the moment its all about the sexy stuff, compression skins, contrast bathing. Omega wave etc. People have overlooked the basics – training, nutrition and sleep (quality and quantity). If as a coach you don't know what your client is doing in these areas then don't even think about using the sexy stuff. I can feel a whole other article coming on.

**AC: Do you use any supplements?**

NG: Supplements is a four letter word in the UK (well its not but you know what I mean), it's a minefield when working with top level athletes and at the moment it's very difficult to make sure that the supplement you are taking is clean. Depending on what the clients nutritional requirements were and assuming that it's clean I would go with the following supplements (based on the fact that they have been shown to work):

Creatine

Glucosamine and Chondroitin

Caffeine

Carbohydrate/Protein mix

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

NG: Continue to learn.

Continue to make a positive impact on athletes performances

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

NG: Quality vs Quantity – establish sound training techniques across a range of drills and exercises and perform them consistently over time.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

NG: I have a website: [www.winningedgefitness.co.uk](http://www.winningedgefitness.co.uk) there's a comprehensive library of articles by myself and a free newsletter with feature articles and Q&A's from leading professionals in the field of physical preparation. You can contact me via the website, I'll be more than happy to answer any questions.

Thanks for asking me to do this interview Al, I hope your readers have found it interesting.



## **Interview with Zach Even – Esh**

### **The Underground Strength Coach**



***AC: Zach, Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?***

AC - it is my pleasure to have such an awesome opportunity to be one of the coaches you interview! Currently, I am training mainly high school athletes, the majority of them are wrestlers and football players with a few baseball players. All of them are highly serious athletes which makes coaching them an absolute blast!

***AC: Can you tell the readers your educational background?***

I have a BA in Health & Physical Education & my MA is in Health Education. In March of 2005 I was 1 of the first 20 in the world to be invited to Brian Grasso's IYCA certification program to become a Youth Conditioning Specialist! I am currently the only YCS in NJ.

The rest of my education comes from a lot of in the trenches experiences as well as consulting often with some of the top performance coaches in the world. Generous people like yourself, Brian Grasso, Steve Cotter, Louie Simmons, Ethan Reeve, the entire crew at Elitefts.com and a handful more have taken time to speak with me often about training. I have learned so much from all of these great coaches & it motivates me to elevate my knowledge to even greater levels. These guys can talk to me for 15 minutes and they unleash so much great information in such a short time it opens my mind and eyes to an entire new world of what I can still learn. I make sure I keep learning on a consistent basis so I can give my athletes the best possible training. In addition it is simply my personality to do things to the best of my ability! I would NEVER be satisfied with myself if I stopped learning! I don't do anything half assed!

***AC: And what is your training/grappling background?***

I started wrestling in high school. I fell in love with training for wrestling and bodybuilding at that time. I wrestled through high school and took my first year in college to focus on bodybuilding because I needed a break from all those nights of running 5 miles and running my mind and body to the ground. I stayed involved with wrestling ever since but not on a competitive level because I was bodybuilding afterwards.

Once the UFC & Pride fighting events became more popular I became so intrigued by the MMA scene that I found a place that had Muay Thai and grappling. I LOVED it! I trained for 2 months and entered my first event which was the NAGA world championships and I ended up taking fourth place. I was so angry with taking fourth that I trained harder than ever with the goal of winning the Grapplers Quest Nationals. Two weeks prior I tore my ACL while training and I just stepped back on the mat 2 weeks ago after a year and a half away. That injury woke me up big time and proved to me that my bodybuilder training methods were ineffective for what I was doing. I had some other injuries from wrestling before that as well, but the ACL tear devastated me. This is when I began dedicating myself to learning how to train the right way for combat and it was only right to get this information out to the community of combat athletes!

***AC: What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?***

My typical client is a teenager in high school (wrestler or football player mostly) and they are very uneducated on how to train. They are also very deconditioned with the posterior chain being very weak as well. Exercises such as push ups, pull ups and body weight squats are difficult for them. They come to with tons of questions and they want answers & results! I give them both as long as they are dedicated and committed to doing all the work necessary!

As a coach it is hard to list my achievements because I am proud of so many of them. An example is I have 2 baseball players who started training with me in mid August. They weighed 105 and 110 respectively. They come every Friday and then follow my guidelines when they train on their own. They weighed in at 140 and 145

last week! They were benching 75 lbs when we started and last week they cranked out sets of 5 with 135 on the bench no problem and dead lifted 225 for an easy 6 reps!

Two other clients I have, both wrestlers have gone undefeated so far this season. One is ranked 4th in the state and is only a freshman! The other has broken school records left and right this season and his power, strength & conditioning are second to none! Another wrestler is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the country in his weight class for the Prep schools. Other kids were getting hammered last year and now are dishing out the ass whoopins' on their opponents.



I can list endless accomplishments but this is all about the kids I train, not me! When I see them being successful and getting scouted by college coaches I am so proud of them. I also see how they grow as individuals, learning dedication and sportsmanship while training here as well as respect. In the end, it is all about these kids and it all started with me wanting to help kids avoid all the training mistakes I made. It's a gift to do what I do.

***AC: Can you describe what a typical training day consists of for your clients?***

The simple answer would be to say there is no typical day with my clients! Which is a true statement but I'll do my best to elaborate. What I mean is we incorporate tons of variety! There is never a workout the same as the last one! But, I do follow a format that holds solid most of the time. We always begin with a dynamic warm up. The warm up also depends on the weather. During the warmer times of the year, my wrestlers might play 2 on 2 half court basketball for 5 minutes as a warm up! Other times we incorporate a variety of movements such as galloping, skipping, back

pedals, bodyweight calisthenics and ab work. Other times we do a small circuit of jumping rope, low reps sets of pull ups, stability ball push ups, sledge hammer work and various forms of step ups and lunges.

After a warm up, we use a variety of tools: free weights, body weight, Russian kettlebells and some form of strong man work (sleds, truck pushing, sand bags & sledge hammers). Workouts are typically full body, sometimes there is an emphasis on lower body or upper body. If the emphasis is lower body we include some bodyweight training for upper body, or vice versa.



Each workout lasts 45 minutes on average. In season workouts are never longer than 30 minutes though. The warmer times of the year my athletes get more strongman training done as well. My football and baseball players sometimes get a full workout devoted to speed, agility & quickness. The key is to balance everything out and make the workouts FUN! I have never had a kid become bored with our training!



The overall method I use for training with regards to training revolves around the Russian methods. The application of these methods have done wonders for the progress my athletes achieve short term and long term. The way I used to train myself led to countless over use injuries and a slow progress in my performance in &

out of the weight room. My clients have reaped great rewards by following my current methods.

A **sample split** for my grapplers would be training on Mon – Wed – Fri

Monday and Wednesday are full body workouts, Friday being more of a high rep, lactate tolerance style day:

Here is a sample program (not including warm ups):

**Monday:**

- 1) Sleds x 10 – 12 minutes
- 2) Keg clean and press 4 - 5 x 4 – 6 reps or 1 hand KB snatches (higher reps on snatches, approx 5 – 12)
- 3) Log or sandbag squats – zercher position (using an actual tree log, rip the log off the ground and hold it in zercher position) 4 x 6 – 12 reps
- 4A) pull ups (hold med ball between legs for added weight) 4 x 6 – 12
- 4B) 2 hand Kettlebell swings 4 x 8 - 10 reps
- 4C) parallel bar dips or feet elevated push ups 4 x 12 – 20 reps (sometimes Dips were performed with a mini band around the neck or squeezing a med ball between the legs)
- 5) Finish with some grip work mixed in with abs and light reverse hypers for 2 – 3 sets of ea. Exercise

Sample **Wednesday** work out:

- 1A) rope climb x 1 ascent x 5 sets (15 ft rope)
- 1B) sledge hammer overhead swings 5 x 20
- 1C) log carry and squat (walk to one end of the yard and squat 3 reps, squat 3 more when returning to start point) 5 x is one trip like this (6 reps per set)
- 2A) Trap Bar Dead Lift 5 x 4 – 10 reps
- 2B) Pull ups 5 x 5 – 12 reps (add weight with med ball sometimes)
- 3A) Flat / Incline Bench or DB Press 4 x 3 – 10 reps
- 3B ) 1 arm DB row or barbell row (sometimes using Kettlebells for 1 arm rows) 4 x 5 – 10 reps
- 4) 1 or 2 sets of truck pushing (often times alternating 15 second pushed with a partner, each set getting 2 pushes of 15 seconds)

**Friday** will be a day of complexes, looking like this:

2 rounds of bar complex: 6 reps each exercise (95 and 105 lbs)

1. RDL
2. bent leg DL
3. bent over row
4. hang clean
5. high pull
6. shrugs

2 rounds of KB complex, 6 reps per leg / arm

1. snatches
2. clean and press
3. 2 hand squat
4. 2 hand rverse lunge
5. 1 arm row
6. 1 hand swings

bodyweight complex, 10 reps each (1 – 2 rounds, depending on energy levels)

1. push ups
2. pull ups
3. dip / leg raise combo
4. v ups with 12 lb med ball

**AC: *What are your thoughts on nutrition? For mass gain? For fat loss?*** .

Nutrition is key. I will never say nutrition is 50 % and training is 50 % , etc. I believe they should all be 100 %. I educate my athletes on clean eating habits as well as how frequently to eat. And last but not least *WHEN* to eat. Breakfast & post workout nutrition can infinitely improve an athlete's progress. I give my athletes a list of foods to choose from and encourage them to eat a protein and carb during each meal plus one salad a day.

For my athletes who are pushing to gain weight we add a meal before bed time and they also invest in a quality meal replacement drink. They end up consuming 5 or 6 small meals a day. The regular eating also improves their performance dramatically! I also have some of these athletes eat mini meals through the day. These mini meals might be an extra peanut butter & jelly sandwich on rye bread, or simply having a few spoons of peanut butter spread during the day.

I am not very dogmatic though. Because I train teenagers mostly they do go out and eat fast food here & there but for the most part they have a good understanding of what they can do on some occasions.

Weight loss is a big problem in the wrestling community. Uneducated coaches & parents put a lot of pressure on their kids to cut a lot of weight which burns away all

the hard earned muscle they worked for (and Mom & Dad helped pay for) in the off season. I encourage wrestlers to train at a weight which allows them to eat a regular breakfast, lunch & dinner and still allows them to perform optimally. In the real world, it honestly NEVER happens this way. This is the battle I face when training wrestlers. I am not their parent or their wrestling coach so with so many words of wisdom thrown their way it becomes a daunting task.

In the end, every athlete responds differently to training & eating so we try to keep things simple enough to allow them to follow the principles of regular meals through the course of the day.

***Ac: In terms of training, you're known as a psycho!!! But I know you're actually very diligent about what you do. How do you monitor it - how far do you push your athletes?***

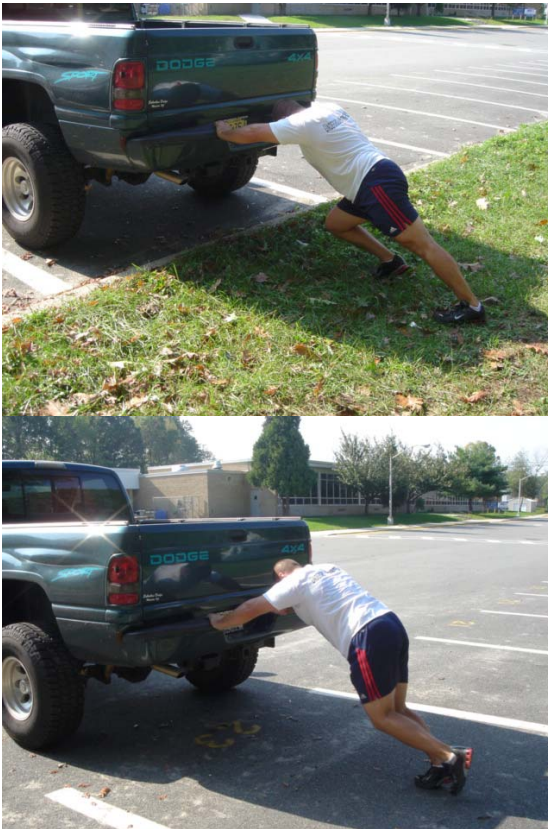
I am not so sure I'm a psycho, Ha-ha !, but training hard is something I love. I learned all this intensity from wrestling but as I have become more educated I have learned how to train SMART as opposed to just intensely, especially with my own athletes. Young teens do not need intense workouts and since each athlete trains with me on a minimum of 3 months at a time, I am able to learn how they recover from each workout and how much intensity they can handle. One of my wrestlers thrives on training no more than 3 x week, so every 10 workouts we go back to 2 x week. This gives him extra recovery physically & mentally. For wrestlers, mental / psychological recovery is so important because too many wrestlers peak mid way through high school and never continue wrestling after high school or as seniors. Long term progress means everything regarding young athletes. This is why I never train them more than 3 x week. If we train a 4th time it is usually a day devoted to various form and agility drills and stretching.





As I mentioned before, the Russian conjugate and concurrent methods are great. The constant variety strains the CNS to a lesser extent and helps them avoid burn out. One thing I learned from Coach Ethan Reeve was to purposely make some work outs easy, allowing the athlete to go home still wanting to do more. This gives them that extra recovery and keeps them returning stronger. This is also where wrestlers and young athletes in general want to do more because they don't understand how beneficial this is for them to actually do less during certain workouts. If I would have known this back when I was a kid I would have reduced my injuries greatly, many of which were overuse injuries!

With out doubt though, there are many tough workouts that challenge my athletes physically & mentally. If a workout was very taxing one day, the next workout I will make sure to taper the intensity level. We also taper our training before the season and in season. The volume, intensity & time are lowered during these times to keep the athlete healthy and in a state of peak performance as often as possible.



***AC: Do you train males and females any differently ?***

As of now I have not had any female athletes train with me. It is no secret that females can benefit greatly & should strength train, especially with the large number of ankle and knee injuries they encounter. I am currently in the process of discussing a group training program with a girl's basketball coach for the local high school. The training would be limited to the court itself, but as you & I know bodyweight strength

& conditioning can be awesome. I also think the group training for the girls will be a great setting for them as young athletes in general enjoy training with friends.

This team currently does no form of strength work so the beginning of these workouts will be exercises such as body weight squats, split squats, various forms of lunges in various directions, push up variations, and various bridging motions to engage the core. When I mention the core I do not think of simply the abs and the low back. I am taking about the upper glutes, hip flexors, obliques and the overall center of the body.

Elastic tubing will work well here as well, exercises for the upper back and mid back using various rowing motions (face pulls, chest rows, and rear delt movements) will be worked here. These are just many of the ideas running through my head as of now so I am excited to see if this project will come to fruition.

***AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?***

As you know, I bother **you** a lot for training information! Ha Ha !! I also call Brian Grasso who is very technical and thorough, especially for times when I am evaluating an athlete's weakness he is great at deciphering what a certain movement means with regards to muscular weakness or imbalance. Joe DeFranco is awesome, Louie Simmons is amazingly knowledgeable and I could talk to the man forever. The methods of Pavel Tsatsouline have obviously influenced my use of Russian Kettlebells as well as my good friends Jason C Brown & Steve Cotter. Ethan Reeve is a great coach and a genuine person and is always willing to chat about his training methods. Josh Henkin always reveals great info when I need a hand as well and is probably one of the most underrated strength coaches out there, the man is an encyclopedia of training knowledge!

***AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you ? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers ?***

Speaking with Louie Simmons truly opened up my mind to the Russian methods and increasing GPP with sled work and strong man type methods. Larry Jusdanis of Canada and his BLITZ methods are awesome and highly effective. Joe DeFranco has a great understanding of how to take an underdeveloped athlete and turn them into beasts. Joe has motivated me and influenced me with my training methods big time! The best tips come from listening to my athletes and changing from their feedback. With regards to the guys at Elite (especially the power lifters) people are greatly mistaken when they think they are only adept at training power lifters. Louie Simmons trains pro football teams, Pro MMA fighters, elite college athletes and young kids. James Smith is very thorough and always makes me rethink my training methods to make me a better Coach.

Louie really trains his athletes with some odd movements like leg raises with chains draped on their ankles, Russian twists with chains on the end of the bar, squatting, lunges and pressing for up to 6 minutes at a time to mimic a wrestling match in duration. The guy always opens up my mind to effective & fun training methods!

***AC: What tips could you add of your own ?***

I highly recommend using a variety of tools when training. I often see athletes or coaches who espouse to using only bodyweight, or only kettlebells or only free weights. I suggest finding a good balance between a variety of effective tools, key word being effective. If something doesn't work there is no need to use it in your training.

I love kettlebells and strong man training but I would be limiting my athlete's capability to progress if I only used those two training tools. I also recommend keeping an open mind. I always love to hear what someone else does and I never feel threatened when I am told by a more knowledgeable coach that I am doing could be done better. Just because I haven't heard of a certain training method doesn't mean it's BS.

***AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?***

We evaluate them through movement activities and bodyweight exercises as well as simple posture evaluation. ALL young athletes have weaknesses and the posterior chain is a big weakness. I did train a wrestler who was an absolute physical specimen! Unfortunately he moved. He began training with me at age 14 and was a national wrestling champion. His physique was that of a Greek statue carved from stone. He was also a football player but he wrestled year round. His strength was amazing and after 1 month of training he was able to do nearly 30 pull ups at a bodyweight of 150 lbs.

Still, this athlete started with a lot of unilateral work to improve overall balance and we focus on the posterior chain. When summer is here we take advantage of the weather and do a lot of sled dragging variations to work the glutes, hams and lower back.



I have found that my football players come to me being the most deconditioned. They take longer to work up to training at high intensity levels and carry more body fat than my other athletes do. For these athletes we do a lot of kettlebell swings, kettlebell cleans and kettlebell squats. These exercises condition them effectively and allow us to work safely with high reps with out losing control.

***AC: What are your goals as a coach?***

I want to continue training young athletes, as well as college athletes and pro athletes. I have watched the last PRIDE fighting championships and as I watched Mark Hunt I thought to myself over & over how much better he could be if he was in better shape - I would love to train a guy like that. Also, watching Mirko Cro Cop train on his DVD with a circuit of bicep curls, back extensions and seated crunches, I knew once again how his workout could be revamped for infinitely greater results.

I love the fact that I have been able to reach athletes all over the world - I never imagined such a thing would happen when I started all this - and I will continue to make top notch DVD's and books so I can reach out to even more hungry athletes & coaches!

***AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?***

Train for long term progress by using a variety of effective training modalities under the conjugate or concurrent method - this ensures the qualities of strength, power, and muscular endurance (and all the other qualities) get worked regularly & equally to help build a complete athlete.

Listen to your athletes and watch them carefully so you can individualize their programs as much as possible to ensure the best results as possible. This is the 'Art of Coaching' & I work on this every single day!

Keep on learning and keep an open mind to other training methods!

***AC: You use Strongman training and kettlebells a lot. What can you tell the reader is the extra benefit from these methods as compared to regular strength training?***

Kettlebells are not the same as dumbbells first of all - kettlebells always have the grip factor involved, and kettlebells can be held in positions that dumbbells can not. The rack position places the load in the front of the body where as dumbbells can not rest there, thus making kettlebells highly effective for wrestlers, grapplers and mma fighters. The use of kettlebells helps the athlete use their energy efficiently. You learn to finesse the kettlebells around your hand or you have some places where you learn to rest your body for brief moments. In wrestling this is key because of all the bursts of energy that go on / off during a match. The versatility of using one or two kettlebells on different exercises lend themselves to working areas of the body that do not ordinarily get worked via dumbbells. They also teach the athlete to use their entire body. So many kettlebell lifts work the entire body at the same time so they are extremely efficient.



**Above, squatting with two different sized kettlebells.**

Strong man training loads the body in so many different ways it all depends on what movement you are doing. But, take an athlete and incorporate truck pushing, sand bag work, sled work and some more and you will see a strong and highly conditioned athlete.

With kettlebells and strong man training I do a lot of combo / hybrid work, many ideas of which hit me when watching your combo DVD! Try doing a clean and press, then a front squat with the sand bag for 2 minutes non stop! Or try doing 5 reps of each of the following 1 arm at a time with kettlebells: 1 arm swings, 1 arm military press, 1 arm snatch, 1 arm squat, 1 arm row - talk about full body work! I can't do this with dumbbells alone but if you give me one kettlebell or one sand bag I can work strength, strength endurance, power endurance and much more!

**Above, suspended ring dips**

The mental benefits of each are also awesome! The toughest athletes can benefit greatly from high rep kettlebell snatches! Train an athlete and have them carry logs, push trucks and drag sleds and watch their confidence soar! Just taking about this training gets me psyched!!



**Above, a police officer in training, performing cleans with two different sized kettlebells.**

***AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to an athlete that is just beginning structured training?***

Start with bodyweight strength training first  
Do full body workouts 2 - 3 x a week (depending on training age) – or split them into upper / lower body work outs like Joe DeFranco's WS4SB program.  
Start eating small meals through the day on a regular basis, most important of which are post workout meal and breakfast.

Keeping it simple for the young beginning athlete and FUN is key - FUN is always key as a matter of fact! After spending regular time on bodyweight workouts, start using a light sled for various pushing, pulling and dragging movements. Progress slowly & safely and use tons of variety!  
OK, sorry AC - that's more than three!

***AC: What about recovery techniques ? Any suggestions?***

Post workout meal or meal replacement within 30 minutes after workout. Hot baths the night after a tough workout. Static stretching on days off especially the hip flexors, hams, low back and glutes. Receive ART once a week if possible. If not possible, perhaps find a way to receive a full body massage once a week or every

other week. If you are feeling exhausted and tired for a few days straight do not be afraid to take 3 days or even a week off! Also, schedule easy workouts to give the body a physical & mental chance to recuperate.

***AC: Anything else you'd like to mention ?***

Yes, you're THE MAN! I am grateful for this interview AC, and thanks to you and a handful of other guys, I am having a blast doing what I love. I encourage everyone to go full blast after their dreams and turn them into reality. Take care of your health & make it your priority in life. Without your health you have NOTHING! I hope one day I can be a great friend to you as you have been to me! I genuinely thank you my man, your clients are super lucky to be under your wings my friend!

***AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?***

They can check either of my web sites out:

[www.ZachEven-Esh.com](http://www.ZachEven-Esh.com)

[www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com](http://www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com)

Or e mail me at [Zach@CombatGrappler.com](mailto:Zach@CombatGrappler.com)

I look forward to hearing from your readers AC!

All the best to everyone & thanks again :)



**Bill Hartman**

***AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current training/rehab commitments?***

I'm currently managing two PT clinics for the largest occupational medicine company in Indianapolis. In addition, I run PR Performance, my own fitness and sports training business. We've just released our first DVD for golfers, Your Golf Fitness Coach's Video Library 1.0, consisting of an extensive self-assessment, corrective exercises, and dynamic flexibility exercises all designed to eliminate the common restrictions that prevent golfers from achieving their ideal golf swing. I also sit on the Board of Directors of the International Youth Conditioning Association and wrote a chapter on Considerations for Strength and Power Training for Young Athletes that will be included in the IYCA Certification Text.

***AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous training background?***

I have degrees in both Movement/Sports Science, what would today be called Kinesiology, and Physical Therapy as well as a large chunk of a Masters Degree in Exercise Physiology which was interrupted by my physical therapy studies. Over the last 15 years or so, I've had advanced training in treating disorders of the shoulder, spine, knees, foot/ankle, and soft tissues. My soft-tissue training also includes credentialing in Active Release Techniques for upper extremity, lower extremity, and spine.

I've acquired various certifications over the years including my CSCS with the National Strength and Conditioning Association and Sports Performance Coach with USA Weightlifting. At one time I worked for a fitness training certification company, so I'm a bit jaded as to the true value of many of the fitness certifications.

I've been lucky to have worked with athletes in a variety of sports from basketball, football, baseball, race walking, track & field, martial arts, tennis, and golf which has become my primary form of sports-related training.

***AC: Who are your typical clients?***

At this point about 80% of my clients are golfers with ages ranging from 9 to 81 years old. That's why our first DVD has focused on golfers needs especially from a flexibility standpoint.

The level of play ranges from your typical casual golfer at your local country club to competitive golfers at the high school, college, and professional levels. I've recently been working with a long drive competitor which is quite fun as his training is much like mine was when I threw the javelin in college. We've seen some amazing improvements in his performance over the last 6 months.

My remaining clients would fall into the general fitness category but many of those have assorted "rehab" issues so I draw quite a bit on my PT background.

***AC: What does a typical rehab clients training day consist of ? For knee pain? Low back pain? (generic I know but it will still be interesting)***

As far as the typical rehab client, it really depends on their stage of rehab. In the acute stage, we may be focusing on pain control, but every rehab client is instructed in a home exercise program to complete each day. It's imperative to get them moving as soon as possible. It also gives them a measure of responsibility in their outcome making their rehab an active process. I hate when someone comes in the door with the "fix me" attitude. Their outcomes are never as good as someone who commits to improving from day one. This early stage is typically where I use most of the manual techniques like ART, joint mobilization, or muscle energy techniques to improve joint and tissue mobility.

From there it's not entirely different from a fitness client with perhaps some special emphasis on key areas directly affecting their initial injury. Emphasize strength-endurance first working proximal to distal while restoring mobility and flexibility.

If we're talking about general concepts of non-surgical diagnoses of knee pain once you get any acute symptoms under control, reestablish range of motion as quickly as you can. Deficits in range, like a lack of knee extension, just create more wear on the joint.

As far as strength training goes for knee pain, the days of the knee extension for knee pain are pretty much gone. One thing that bugs the hell out of me are fitness writers who bitch about how physical therapists are emphasizing "open chain" knee extension to rehab knees. These writers obviously haven't been in a PT clinic in the last 10 years. I don't know any PT's that emphasize "open chain" knee extension in their programs. In the early stages, we may use some muscle activation exercises that don't include weight bearing because of the acute joint status, but once that's over, the foot is on the floor.

That means activities will progress from something like a supine bridge or hip lift, whatever you call it, to standing weight shifting, partial squats, and low step-up variations progressing to more intensive versions over broader ranges of motion to finally single leg versions of the same. I also have an indoor sled that I use a lot for pushing and pulling activities that I don't think PT's use enough. It's a great method of progressive loading.

My first PT job was in a spine clinic and about 90% of my rehab clientele are back patients. I tend to be very manual therapy based in the initial stages because of the immediate impact on their general mobility. It's quite a feeling to have someone practically crawl into the clinic and 5 minutes later watching them bend to touch their toes with minimal to no pain.

As much as I hate to admit it, Janda may have been on base when he emphasized treatment of the psoas in low back patients. A majority of my low back client experience dramatic relief by restoring even the least bit of extensibility to the psoas. McGill touches on this as well in relating the frequency of hip mobility issues with back pain. So a hint to all you folks with low back issues. Work on your hip flexibility. In my experience, you tend to see limited range in internal rotation and extension. That means hip flexor and hip external rotators need work.

Hamstrings may be one the most over stretched muscles of all time in regard to back pain. I don't see them as being overly tight in most folks who work on hip extension flexibility. The tight hip flexors tend to rotate the pelvis forward into an anterior tilt which increases tension on the hammies.

If you're talking about back pain, you have to mention core strength. Most will tend to emphasize abdominal strength, which is important, but you can't forget the butt. McGill talks about "gluteal amnesia" in his books, and I'd have to agree that most folks with back pain can't even activate or sustain a strong contraction of their glutes, so we spend a decent amount of time initially teach a client to activate their butt muscles in a variety of postures. Then we integrate the glute work into a broader posterior chain strengthening program that emphasizes squats, bends, pushing, and pulling.

As far as ab training for lower back pain, I don't go for the transversus abdominis isolation stuff. I do use a lot of isometric strength endurance exercise initially to promote activation and reestablish stability and then move to more dynamic work typically in PNF diagonals like chops and lifts. End stage training includes work-oriented activities like box lifts, sled work, and carrying heavy stuff to promote the involvement of the entire body not just isolated parts.

***AC: You have a very effective way of evaluating the core. Can you share it with our readers? And what to do with the results?***

I certainly can't take full credit for the way I test the core since I draw heavily on Stuart McGill's methods found in his books, *Low Back Disorders* and *Ultimate Back Fitness and Performance*. The emphasis is on testing core strength-endurance as this has been shown to correlate with a lowered risk of back injury.

I use three primary tests for strength endurance of the core. The first is the static back extension where the athlete performs a typical back extension and holds the top extended position with a neutral spinal alignment for a goal of two minutes. Anything less than two minutes is a failure of the test. This is followed by a side bridge test which ideally would equal 75% of the time that the back extension is held. If they pass the back extension test then you'd expect an ideal outcome of 90 seconds for the side bridge test on both sides of course.

Where I deviate from McGill's tests is in testing the anterior trunk. McGill uses static sit-up variation, whereas I use a prone plank with a neutral spinal alignment for time. Like the back extension test, passing for this test is two minutes.

I suppose the most unique feature of the this whole testing method is that if a client fails any of the tests, that client will be limited to a maximum weight of 20% of body weight for strength training exercises until he or she passes the tests. Otherwise, the client will end up using a less effective and potentially dangerous stabilization strategy as they fatigue during heavily loaded exercises like squat, deadlift, pulls, etc.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for an injured client? And in healthy ones? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

The most challenging thing with any client is altering their eating habits for the better. Regardless of their goal, you have to address meal structure, meal frequency, and portion sizes to establish new habits. Then we proceed with individualizing to clients needs.

For injured clients, I always recommend two things be addressed beyond the basics mentioned above. Pineapple and water. Yes, pineapple and water. The pineapple contains the enzyme bromelain which contains a natural anti-inflammatory. Water is necessary to prevent dehydration. If the brain recognizes that the body is becoming dehydrated, it increases production of histamines that can result in increased pain.

For muscle gain or fat loss, a lot of issues revolve around the training period. I like client to train in a fed state preferably with a liquid protein and carb shake for muscle gain and primarily just protein for fat loss. If muscle is the goal, you may want to add in some carbs during the workout as well. Post-workout is protein and carbs for muscle gain and again primarily protein for fat loss.

Just getting clients to eat REAL food consistently throughout the day has the greatest impact fat loss or muscle gain.

**AC: Do you train or rehabilitate females any differently from males?**

If you address each client's needs on an individual basis, you don't have to look at it from a gender perspective. Maybe that's some of my rehab perspective. Although females need a little more convincing to increase exercise intensity to better impact fat loss, I can't remember the last time an athlete or rehab client had sufficient core and posterior chain strength or shoulder girdle mobility, male or female.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push?**

I typically use repetition maximums (RM) to control for intensity levels or monitor reps per unit time, such as max reps in 3 or 5 seconds, in regard to strength training. As to how far to push, the question then becomes does my client need intensity or capacity?

Can the client achieve the necessary maximal effort required to compete at the level they desire? Do they have sufficient top speed, vertical jump, upper body strength,

punching power, etc. If not, then most strength training will be pushed to specific RM or a specific reps per unit time until performance or technique declines.

If the athlete is capable of peak intensity but lacks the ability to sustain performance throughout a game, then development of capacity is emphasized. For instance, you have a basketball player that plays like an all-star in the first quarter and consistently falls off in performance throughout the game, raising peak intensity won't achieve your performance goal. From a strength training perspective, we'll take an exercise up to a certain RM for that day and then perform sets at that load but for submaximal reps. For instance, an athlete trains up to his 5 RM on a squat and completes sets of 3 at that 5 RM weight until performance drops. You could also apply this same concept to conditioning if need be. The point being increasing the athlete's ability to perform at the desired intensity for an extended period of time.

I think a big mistake that a lot of athletes who train themselves make is that they're constantly striving for greater intensity and for every increase in strength they lose work capacity. If instead they'd develop and stabilize capacity at a new strength level, they'd then be able to sustain performance throughout their game.

***AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?***

I was very lucky early on in my career to have a couple of good mentors, at least from a PT perspective, that I think gave me some perspective and taught me some solid study habits. Now it's rare that I have the opportunity to sit and just talk shop, and frankly, where I live is not the hot bed of the strength and conditioning field.

I spend a lot of money on books, videos, seminars, cd's...you name it. I study more now than I did over 15 years ago in school. According to Tom Myslinski, former assistant strength coach for the Cleveland Browns, the information in regard to strength and conditioning is doubling every 18 months. I make an effort to keep up. My personal library takes up about 2 rooms worth of shelves at this point...another thing that drives my wife crazy.

I'm also lucky enough to get to stay in contact with guys like yourself, Brian Grasso, and Craig Ballantyne.

***AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?***

Thomas Myers, Shirley Sahrman, Gary Gray, Mike Boyle, Gray Cook – Everything in the body is connected and one will influence another from your big toe to your finger tips. When you assess a client, even when looking at one specific body part, you have to consider the rest of the body.

Zatsiorsky, Mel Siff, Louie Simmons, Dave Tate – How to develop specific strength qualities that influence performance. Using my golfers or any athlete who performs speed-strength activities as an example, in the initial stages of training, increases in maximal strength will result in increased performance by increasing the amount of muscle they can recruit. This performance level will quickly level off at which point rate of force development and power must predominate to continue to raise

performance. Mel Siff also provides a great deal of understanding of tissue biomechanics that can influence decisions made in training. For instance, too much heavy training will reduce tissue compliance, slow recruitment and reduce speed production.

Charlie Francis, Siff, Ian King, Al Vermeil, Alwyn Cosgrove, and several Russian authors translated texts – These among many others provide guidelines as to the ideal organization of training with a lot of crossover to other sports.

I've also been lucky to have some direct contact with a few great strength coaches like Frank Ecksten, Senior USA weightlifting coach, and Grant "Rufus" Gardis also with USA weightlifting.

***AC: What tips could you add of your own ?***

Early on in training establish a solid level of general physical preparation (GPP) and consistently work to maintain it and raise it when you can. This includes dynamic flexibility, joint mobility, muscle balance, strength-endurance, and postural alignment/reinforcement. All of these qualities will directly affect your ability to tolerate the intensive type of training programs that truly raise performance in the gym or on the field with a minimal risk of injury assuming you have a decent balance to your strength program.

Especially when you're specialized in a sport or perform the same type of work day after day, you tend to gain mobility and strength in the activities that you perform most frequently and lose mobility and strength in other planes of movement. Guess what planes of motion most folks get injured in? The ones that they spend very little time training in which is usually the frontal and transverse plane.

Simply including dynamic flexibility/joint mobility circuits in your daily routine, dumbbell/barbell complexes, and spend some time working medial to lateral and in rotation will save you a bunch of rehab time later on. Once or twice a year do a full training cycle that emphasizes GPP if that's possible. This is obviously difficult for many specialized athletes, but even a week or two of focused GPP will go a long way if you maintain it year round.

***AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?***

First thing I do is evaluate them head to toe for any potential weak points. The most common you'll find is core weakness. This would include poor scapular mobility and stabilization strength, weak abs and lower back, and weak hips. Then we go to work on developing their foundation of GPP that I mentioned before.

Probably the best all-around young athletes I've come across are those with a history of martial arts or gymnasts. Both of these sports emphasize a lot of body weight based "strength" activities, balance, coordination, body awareness, and dynamic flexibility. So basically, they've got a head start on just about every other young athlete. The GPP is built into the activities themselves.

***AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven ?***

I don't see them as being much different from an athlete. Everybody bends, squats, lifts, carries, steps-up, etc. The only difference is that we're not preparing them specifically for any particular event. The principles remain the same. Strengthen them from the middle outward. Restore normal mobility where needed and then increase work capacity. Why are most folks fat aside from crappy eating habits? Low work capacity/GPP.

That means the early stages of the my "fitness clients" revolves around body weight calisthenic circuits, dumbbell complexes, interval training, etc. On some level this remains a component of the fitness program regardless of the client's level of training experience.

The only time I would reduce emphasis on work capacity/GPP is when someone's primary goal is to increase muscle mass. Too high a level of work capacity makes it difficult to hang on to muscle mass. Take a marathon runner for instance. Very high work capacity. Very little muscle. At the other end of the spectrum you have a super-heavyweight powerlifter. Huge muscle mass, but they get gassed walking up a flight of stairs.

***AC: What are your goals as a coach?***

I want to be an ongoing resource for my clients, patients, and athletes. By that, I mean that I want to be able to provide them with the best individualized programming they can find and be able to either answer any potential question they may have or at least direct them to the best resource available to them. I hate not knowing all the answers, so I make an effort to keep up with the growing volumes of information. I always want to remain in "student" mode on some level.

I'm always working to refine and better the systems that I use with my clients and to expand my influence with the golfers in my area. Plans are to shift from splitting time in the clinic and the gym to working with golfers, other athletes, and fitness enthusiasts in a single setting.

I also have plans to provide other fitness professionals interested in training golfers for improved physical.

***AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?***

While there are general principles that will apply to almost any training situation such as increasing strength, increasing speed, losing fat or gaining muscle, you must individualize each and every program in some way shape or form. It may be exercise selection, volume or intensity prescription, or some other factors. You can't make your best progress on someone else's program.

***AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?***

Understand that training is a very long process consisting of years of biological development and training adaptations and if done right can make a good athlete great. Be a student of your sport and the training behind it.

Find the best strength and conditioning coach you can and take full advantage of his or her wisdom in regards to training.

Establish a very broad foundation of general physical preparation and maintain it forever.

***AC: What about recovery techniques ? Any suggestions?***

Probably because of my PT background, I'm a big fan of manual techniques like massage, Active Release Techniques, and joint mobilization. I've been using foam rollers since 1991 which don't substitute for a good pair of hand but can go a long way to prevent soft-tissue adhesions developed with heavy training.

I teach my clients how to do some techniques themselves. I think it should be standard procedure for any athlete to learn some basic restorative massage. Understanding the training process only makes for a better athlete because they then learn to speak the language and can then provide better feedback regarding their training response.

I'm also a big fan of ice. Ice reduces traumatically induced inflammation and reduces the collagen breakdown that can occur on joint surfaces with heavy training. So literally every trainee should consider ice application to the affected joints after training. Couple that with some high rep/low intensity exercise and you've got a great joint saving prescription.

***AC: What are the top three rehab books someone should read?***

Only three??

***Diagnosis and Treatment of Movement Impairment syndromes by Shirley Sahrman.*** This is a great book to identify posture and movement related issues that need to be addressed in the initial stages of training to prevent a lot of injuries. She has great examples throughout the book to begin to train your eyes to pick up on these syndromes quickly.

***Anatomy Trains by Thomas Myers.*** This is actually a Rolfing book, but it does an outstanding job of showing the relationships of the muscular and fascial anatomy as it relates to function.

***Orthopedic Physical Assessment by David Magee.*** A good solid orthopedic assessment book.

Honorable mention would be ***The Hughston Clinic Sports Medicine Book.*** This book has just about any common diagnosis you can find, from asthma to ACL reconstruction to sprains, strains and fractures. It includes an in-depth description of



findings, contraindications, and rehab recommendations which makes it a really good book regardless of your background.

**AC: Training books?**

It's impossible to limit it to just 3 but I think these three are foundational knowledge for anyone interesting in training theory.

**Supertraining by Mel Siff.** Probably the most complete source of strength training information in a single book. It's a tough read because it's pure technical information, but if you read it in small parts, it'll build a strong foundation of knowledge.

**Science and Practice of Strength Training by Vladimir Zatsiorsky.** The most solid training information in the smallest book.

**Periodization: Theory and Methodology of Training by Tudor Bompa.** While some of the planning doesn't apply to the year round athlete, it's very solid foundation training organization theory.

**AC: Business books?**

**E-Myth Revisited by Michael Gerber.** A must read for anyone who dreams of having a successful business.

**The Ultimate Marketing Plan by Dan Kennedy.** Actually anything by Dan Kennedy is a good choice. He's a guy whose done it all and is more successful than most with real world experience.

**Visionary Business by Marc Allen.** A book much like **E-Myth** with respect to initial planning and ongoing business development.

I'd also like to mention Dave Tate's new book **Under the Bar.** Just great advice for anyone whether they'er in business or not, but he used lessons he learned in training to make it understandable to the typical strength/fitness enthusiast/muscle head.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention ?**

Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to your newsletter, and my favorite superheroes are Spider-man, Batman, and Alwyn Cosgrove

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

Well, I can always be found via my website, [www.yourgolffitnesscoach.com](http://www.yourgolffitnesscoach.com) and my free bi-monthly training journal. My DVD, Your Golf Fitness Coach's Video Library 1.0, is also available on [www.alwyncosgrove.com](http://www.alwyncosgrove.com). I have a regular column in Men's Fitness Magazine, and I'm the co-author along with Adam Campbell of The Muscle Prescription. I was also a contributor to the Speed Experts Collection. You can hear me talk golf training on the Training Young Athletes CD collection at

[www.trainingyoungathletes.com](http://www.trainingyoungathletes.com). I'm a contributor along with Alwyn of the e-book ShapeShift which is a program available specifically for females, and I've also been interviewed by Craig Ballantyne on numerous occasions at [www.cbathletics.com](http://www.cbathletics.com) who puts out a great newsletter. And if I'm lucky, maybe I'll be able to contribute something more to this site, the name of which escapes me at the moment. ☺

**Cameron McGarr**



This week I have an interview with someone many of you may not have heard of -- but definitely soon will -- Cameron McGarr. Cameron in my opinion is the next big name about to hit the fitness industry.

***AC: Cameron, Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?***

Cameron: Thank you for this opportunity. Currently I coach at a semi-private training facility in Southern California. I train athletes for contest preparation and general population clientele for aesthetic purposes. I also train online clients for the same services.

***AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?***

Cameron: I attended CSU Chico where I received my undergraduate in the field of fitness. I have been working with athletes for the past seven years.

***AC: What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?***

Cameron: Although I do train a number of athletes the bulk of my clientele comes from general population individuals who just want to drop excess body fat or gain some lean muscle. If it's a challenging goal and you are ready to work hard – I'm in!

***AC: Can you describe a typical training session consist of for your clients?***

Cameron: I usually start with some form of muscle activation technique – for example an X-band lateral walk to “switch on” the glutes, scapula retractors, and the rotator cuff. Then typically we'll do some form of general or dynamic warm up – before moving into stretching, the strength portion of the workout (nearly always performed in alternating sets – rarely straight sets), then we'll finish with self myofascial release and some energy system work.

***AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition? For mass gain? For fat loss?***

Cameron: I love this question. Most people understand they need to eat right as well as workout in order to achieve their goals. The problem is that most people do not work hard enough on their nutrition to support their training. For some reason people have it in their heads that they just need to workout harder in the gym. The reality is more commonly the opposite. I would say that most guys trying to gain muscle do not eat enough. Surprisingly I have found the same problem exists for clients who want to lose fat.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your clients?**

Cameron: Intensity is relative. I like to push my clients to their limit. Obviously the limit is going to be different from the 14 year old ice hockey player to the 40+ year old elementary school teacher. The reality is if you want to change the way you look you have to make your body change. The body does not want to change so you do have to work hard. The same goes for athletic preparation. Your clients have to be prepared for anything their competition might throw at them.

**AC: Do you train males and females any differently?**

Cameron: I train males and females exactly the same. The muscle on a male is no different than muscle on a female. It is just that most males have more muscle. When it gets right down to it the only change is the method of motivation. A male might respond to a challenge where a female might respond better to encouragement.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

Cameron: I just had the opportunity to go the Southern California Perform Better Training Summit. There were several individuals there that gave me a lot of really good information. I like Gray Cook, he really knows his stuff but there is something to learn from just about anyone in the field, no matter how well known they are.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

Cameron: Not trying to stroke your ego or anything but you have influenced and helped me more than anyone. Ryan Lee has also influenced me quite a bit from a relatively short meeting just because of his energy (for more on Ryan Lee – check out [www.alwyncosgrove.com/Links.html](http://www.alwyncosgrove.com/Links.html) ). That really goes a long way. The best tip I have had is that you need to be able to adjust your training style for every single client. Some clients need a drill instructor – some need a softer approach. A good trainer knows that they can't train everyone as their personality just doesn't match. An ELITE trainer knows that he or she NEEDS to adapt their coaching style to the client.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

Cameron: The best tip I could add would be directed toward the clients. You all accept the fact that you don't know enough about training that is why you hired a trainer. The same thing goes for your nutrition. That is just as complicated so why not get a professional to help with that as well.

***AC: Your own career has, in my opinion been fast tracked. You've literally come out of nowhere and are now one of the top trainers in the field – featured regularly in industry magazines etc. I know some trainers with a LOT longer than you in the field who are nowhere as skilled. What's your secret and what tips do you have for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?***

Cameron: It's actually very simple. You can spend the next fifteen years reading and studying for example, what you, Alwyn have read and studied and end up coming to the same conclusions. By this point you're another fifteen years behind. My plan is always to seek out those that have gone before... why re-invent the wheel?. If I just ask again, you or Gray Cook for example for information – I'm getting at least fifteen years worth of knowledge and experience with the answer.

It's the same as hiring a fitness trainer – look for someone with a proven track record and use them. I'm sure there are guys out there who are smarter than I am, but they are spending too much time trying to figure it out on their own when they could be learning from others and really improving at a fast rate.

***AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?***

Cameron: Every one goes through a very in depth evaluation before we train. No sport is better than another. If an ice skater stepped into the ring with a sumo wrestler what do you think would happen? But what would happen if you switched it around.

***AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven?***

Cameron: Most of what I see are people who want a very athletic physique. What I can not understand is why they do not train like the athletes they want to look like. If you want to look like a 100 meter sprinter, then train like a 100 meter sprinter, not a marathon runner. If you want to look a pro beach volley ball player then train like one. You have to train like the people you want to look like.

***AC: What are your goals as a coach?***

Cameron: My goals to become as knowledgeable as possible in order to pass along the best training advice available. I like to change peoples' lives for the better. The more knowledge I have the better I can be.

***AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?***

Cameron: There is no staying the same. You are either getting better or getting worse. Which will it be?

***AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to an athlete or client that is just beginning structured training?***

Cameron: 1) get someone who can write a good program. It does not have to be too fancy just something that will not get you injured. 2) Get good nutritional advice as well. 3) Dedication! It will take work and some time. Either gaining or losing weight, in order to do it right expect a two pound per week change. That is not a lot but after five weeks you will have a huge change.

***AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestion?***

Cameron: Pre/Post workout shakes are very important. This is a very easy recovery tool that is more powerful than most people know. Drinking a good post-workout shake the equivalent of speeding up your results. Don't miss it.

***AC: Anything else you'd like to mention ?***

Cameron: Thank you again for the opportunity.

***AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?***

Cameron: [www.cameronmcgarr.com](http://www.cameronmcgarr.com) has several tips and article that convey my philosophies and training techniques.

Thanks to Cameron for the interview. Make sure you sign up for Cameron's newsletter as he has some really Also check out Men's Fitness where Cameron contributes on a regular basis.

**Dr Chris Mohr****AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current commitments?**

CM: I just finished up my PhD and thought I'd get a little break from the day to day grind of research, writing, etc, and have a chance to "come up for air." To be honest, though, I seem to have less time now! I just wrapped up our joint project, Human Inferno:99 Days to Lean, which, if I do say so myself, is an awesome 250+ awesome day by day manual to help folks shed unwanted pounds (no bias at all). In addition, I co-authored another 300+ page manual on packing on lean body mass, called Weapons for Mass Construction. I also have the day to day commitments with writing; I currently write for a number of men's and women's fitness magazines, including Men's Fitness, Muscle and Fitness, Muscle and Fitness Hers, Fitness, OC FLAIR, and others. I also consult for the Discovery Health Channel where I write some of the medical literature for their online and TV programming. I do a bit of online consulting for folks and I am also working with a handful of supplement companies on some research and formulas for products for them and, in my spare time, I teach a graduate level sports nutrition class at the University of Louisville. It keeps me busy, but I love what I do!

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background? How did you end up as a nutrition expert?**

CM: My undergraduate degree is in nutrition from Penn State University. I then completed a dietetic internship at the University of Delaware to become a registered dietitian, a MS in nutrition from the University of Massachusetts, and a PhD in exercise physiology from the University of Pittsburgh. I think the combination of formal education and, maybe even more importantly, "real world" education including seminars, reading, training myself, and studying extensively in the areas has helped me become a nutrition "expert".

**AC: Who are your typical clients?**

CM: I've worked with everyone from athletes to soccer moms, senior citizens to children. So it really ranges in terms of my clientele.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for fat loss?**

CM: Nutrition is by far the most important component of a fat loss program. Of course exercise is crucial as well, but it very possible to lose fat by changing your diet; it's a much slower process to do the same solely thru exercise. Folks need to focus on real foods; foods that are loaded with nutrients, fiber, and allow them to lose weight quickly and healthfully, not those with a laundry list of ingredients, loaded with crappy ingredients. Diet and training are like two wheels on a bike; you ultimately want both working to accelerate the process and keep your hard earned muscle.

**AC: Can you outline a very basic fat loss routine for our readers?**

CM: My PhD work focused on the prevention and treatment of overweight and obesity. I like to tell people I spent 10 years in school learning that to lose weight you need to eat less and exercise more. There's no way to get around the fact that weight loss requires a shift in energy intake and expenditure, so you're expending more calories than consuming. Obviously where those nutrients are coming from is important, as is the type of exercise you do. You can lose weight and look like a "skinny, fat person" or you can lose weight and actually preserve some muscle mass to help burn additional calories. It's crucial to learn about optimizing your nutrient intake first; if you're reducing your calories, you need to make sure the calories you're eating are providing a ton of nutrients...a lot of "bang for your buck" so to speak. Focus on whole grains (or as I like to say "think fiber, not carbs"), lean proteins, the omega 3's and other healthy fats, and of course fruits and veggies. It's important to learn what a portion size is to determine the amount of calories in particular foods; once you learn this and actually eat proper portion sizes, the weight loss part will come along for the ride.

**AC: What are the three best tips for fat loss?**

CM:

1. Monitor your intake with a food and exercise journal. It's impossible to know what's working if you're haphazardly guessing. It's like swinging at a piñata—sometimes you hit and often you don't.
2. Learn about portion sizes. (HINT: the platter full of food they serve at restaurants is NOT a portion for a human).
3. Eat "real" foods. Stick to those that don't come from a box or bag, but instead are closest to how they're found in nature (oats, whole grains, fruits, veggies, chicken, fish, etc)

**AC: And the three biggest mistakes?**

CM:

1. Eating less, but focusing on "empty" calories (yes you'll lose, but any hard earned muscle you had will go right down the toilet with it). You can easily lose weight eating 4 snickers bars everyday, but you sure as hell won't look very good.
2. Focusing solely on steady state aerobics and hoping your body comp will improve.
3. Starving yourself to lose.



**AC: Do you work any differently with males and females? Particularly in regards to fat loss.**

CM: No. The only difference in my opinion would be their specific dietary needs, meaning preferences, allergies, etc and calorie needs. They both need a reduction in calories and need to focus on nutrient dense foods. They both need to train hard, hit the weights, and try to preserve as much muscle mass as possible. They both need some type of interval work to ramp up their fat loss. Females may have some more “stubborn” areas than males, but the training would essentially be the same, as would the diet.

**AC: I'm known for not recommending much in the way of steady state aerobics for the general population (i prefer interval work). However - for the competitive bodybuilder - it's a different story. How do YOUR recommendations change when we're talking about "beyond lean"**

CM: I too believe wholeheartedly in interval training. The one problem is because it's so physically demanding, it can lead to overtraining when combined with hard weight workouts. So, I definitely recommend some steady state activity. Minute for minute, you'll expend more calories, so when you're talking about “beyond lean” I think steady state aerobic exercise absolutely plays an important role. I do want to say that I don't care when you do this---if you want to exercise on an empty stomach, enjoy. If you want to eat breakfast than exercise, enjoy. The difference in fat oxidation and all that crap that folks talk about is, ummm, crap. If you “burn” 300 calories during a session, you burn 300 calories. Eat immediately after you burn those calories and you just replaced those 300 calories. Eat before the activity and, well, you just burned the 300 calories you consumed. Either way, you've maintained energy balance for this example and there ain't no way around that concept when you're trying for fat loss. Negative energy balance means you'll lose weight. Maintaining energy balance means you'll maintain. Positive energy balance means you'll gain. Folks who tell me that you can get around the energy balance equation likely also believe that the earth is flat. Of course within those three parameters, you have to focus on quality nutrients, training, etc so the “loss and gain” is primarily from fat and muscle, respectively.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for advice?**

CM: It's funny because it seems that now that I have my PhD, I read more. I like to think that no matter what I read, I will never get dumber, so I will either stay the same, or learn something. Moral of the story—I read a ton. With that said, with regards to “consumer” nutrition authors, I always like reading John Berardi's work, Tom Incledon, Joey Antonio, and Lonnie Lowery. In terms of researchers, Jeff Volek, John Ivy, Asker Jeukendrup, Don Layman, and others have done great work. In terms of training, Scottish folks really know what they're talking about, so Alwyn Cosgrove, of course, Craig Ballantyne, Bill Kraemer, Charles Staley, and Greg Bradley-Popovich, off the top of my head.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

CM: Don't fall for fads. There are a lot of "experts" spewing their "words of wisdom." You don't have to make this too difficult, but it does take some effort, meaning there's surely no quick fix.

**AC: Do you use or recommend any supplements?**

CM: I don't make blanket recommendations to folks; I think it depends on the particular situation or needs. For example, creatine is great, but I'm not going to suggest a 45 year old mom who is looking to improve her diet and make some changes in the gym take it. Most folks rely too much on supplements and don't focus on what is most important--diet and training. I personally take a multivitamin, post-workout supplement, omega-3's, and MRP.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

CM: Help people quickly and safely reach their goals. It's not always winning a gold medal; sometimes it's something simple like getting stronger to stand up out of a chair and play with your grandchildren. Seeing this actually happen is amazing and very gratifying.

**AC: Ok - you've got 8 weeks to get Mr Smith ready to be a Hollywood action hero. He's about 30lbs over-fat. What do you do?**

CM: Look at his overall diet to see his current dietary practices and habits. Figure out his caloric needs for fat loss and work with him to develop a program he can and will follow. He'd be hitting the weights several times a week, focusing on whole body movements (squats, deadlifts, chins, bench press, etc), add some interval work to his routine, along with some steady state aerobic activity and he'd clearly be monitoring his diet--30 lbs in 8 weeks is tough, so he can't waiver a bit in his efforts.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

CM: Never stop reading. You can learn something from everyone (well, almost everyone). If they at least cause you to think, the authors have done a good job and you've picked up something. Avoid the fads and focus on the basic principles, whether it's nutrition or training.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

CM: Check out [www.MohrResults.com](http://www.MohrResults.com) for info about me and my company. If you want to lose fat, check out [www.HumanInferno.com](http://www.HumanInferno.com). If you're goal is to pack on muscle, pick up [www.WeaponsforMass.com](http://www.WeaponsforMass.com).

**Chris Shugart**

**AC: Thank you for the interview, Chris. Let's start by telling my readers how you ended up as one of the big names on T-Nation.com?**

CS: Well, like a lot of folks, I was a big fan of *Muscle Media 2000*, back when Charles Poliquin, Dan Duchaine, and TC Luoma were with that magazine. When that publication was editorially castrated, I Googled TC's name and found T-Nation.com. It was like the second or third issue.

One week someone asked TC how to become a contributor in the site's Reader Mail section. I was a high school teacher at the time, but a real iron addict, and I thought it would be cool to write an article for my favorite website. I did, it was published (I squealed like a school girl), and a year later I quit my regular job and joined T-Nation as the assistant editor and a feature writer.

**AC: You've been in the trenches for most of your life, but you also have the unique viewpoint of probably having met every big-name strength coach in the field. What were the biggest changes you made in your own training when you started to meet all these "experts"?**

CS: I think each coach has taught me something. I'm still learning, seven years later. When I first started training, I did everything wrong. Mostly I followed the routines of pro-bodybuilders who were genetically gifted and using buckets of steroids and other drugs. This, I soon learned, just didn't work for the natural, normal guy.

Strength coaches taught me to train *smart* as well as hard. It's like the old analogy of chopping down a tree. You can use a sledgehammer or an axe. Both are hard, but only one is smart. The coaches and trainers gave me an axe, and they continue to sharpen it for me!

**AC: What was the most counter-intuitive thing you've ever read about training (that turned out to be true)?**

CS: As a newbie I wanted big arms of course, so I had an "arm day" of set after set of curls. Funny thing was, my arms barely grew. The muscle mags said to curl more. I did. Nothing much happened.

Finally I accepted the importance of full body, compound lifts. I started trained legs just as hard as the "beach" muscles. I did more chin-ups and fewer curls. Today I do less direct arm work than ever before, yet my arms are bigger than they've ever been. I would've never believed that as a newbie!

**AC: What are about nutrition? What would you recommend for lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

CS: For muscle gain, I'm a fan of lots of healthy foods. I don't go for the "eat a bunch of crap foods just to pack the calories in" approach. It's possible to eat healthfully *and* consume a lot of useful calories. It may require more work and preparation, but the gains are quality and they last longer. In a nutshell, I'm not wild about mega-calories with rapid fat gain to go along with the muscle. Some naturally skinny young guys and heavy steroid users can get away with it. Most of us can't.

For fat loss, I prefer a "smart carb" approach. It is reduced carb compared to the average diet, but it's not "Atkins induction phase" low. Carbs should come from a post and maybe pre-workout drink. That's about the only simple carbs you get. The rest come from oatmeal, veggies, and a little fruit with breakfast.

The rest of the day, eat lots of protein and healthy fats. I like multiple frequent meals and snacks about ever three hours. Even when dieting down, I get five or six meals per day. I also like to eat smaller meals at night with fewer carbohydrates, and a big breakfast with more carbs. This is key for fat loss and maintenance of fat loss.

Of course, you have to drop some calories to lose fat, but I usually like a smaller drop in calories combined with a small jump in activity (on top of your usual training schedule.) So, eat a little less and choose nutritious foods while doing a little more activity. This is better than dropping to 1000 calories a day and losing just as much muscle as fat! That's a recipe for yo-yo dieting and metabolism damage.

**AC: Supplements. T-nation.com is owned by Biotest – one of the top names in the sports nutrition field. What supplements do you personally take and if I limited you to only THREE products what would they be?**

CS: I couldn't live without a high-end protein powder or MRP. I use Low-Carb Grow! daily. Likewise, it's tough to simulate a properly formulated post-workout drink with solid food, so I rely on Surge.

Finally, I'm becoming a big fan of a supplement called Alpha Male. It's basically a blend of several different natural testosterone boosters. You won't get huge overnight, but having a "high normal" or boosted T-level will help you build muscle faster, get stronger, lose fat easier, and generally feel a whole lot better. Some gifted athletes are born "high normal" but the rest of have to supplement to reach that level. Alpha Male is great for this.

Yes, I work for Biotest's publishing arm, but I'd still use these supps even if they canned me!

**AC: Should females do anything differently with their training than males?**

CS: Generally speaking, you could take any *smart* training program and give it a more female-friendly name and it would work fine. Take a program written by a quality coach called "Ripped Freakin' Mass" and call it "Firm and Toned in Four Weeks!" The workout could be the same. Many times the difference in a good male program and a female's is just in the presentation of the material.

Many women make the mistake of thinking that free weights are for men, while selectorized machines and the stair stepper are for women. Women who "train like men" usually have the bodies envied by men and women alike!

There are a few minor things concerning females and training, but they're so minor they aren't even worth mentioning. Ladies, train like a man if you want to be a real woman! And no, you won't get big; you'll get *firm*. And men like that.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you personally go to for training advice?**

CS: I usually combine several T-Nation programs into one that fits my needs and equipment availability. I think Chad Waterbury has been the biggest influence on my training over the past few years. He's one of the few people I'd pay to train me. That Alwyn Cosgrove fellow is starting to peak my interests as well.

**AC: Stay away from Cosgrove. Guy is bad news. Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

CS: Along with my English degree I have a psychology degree. I just got it because I was interested in it; I didn't really plan to go into the field. Turns out to be the key to my success so far. I'd recommend that anyone go pick up a used college Psych 101 book and read a chapter a day. How can we study physiology and muscle without studying psychology and the mind?

I'm also a fan of the "rip 'n read" method. Your progress in the gym or in your career is often being held back by your lack of knowledge. You need to read more. "But I don't have time!" people say. Do this: Print out the articles that interest you or rip them from magazines and journals. Keep a file of these "rips n' reads." Never go anywhere without one or two in your pocket.

Read them at the dentist office, at the movie theatre waiting for the show to start, during foreplay, on planes, on the toilet, whatever. The more info you cram into your head, the more success will manifest in your life.

I used to do rip 'n reads all the time, but got out of the habit. It was Dave Tate who got me back into it. Great tip.

**AC: What is the last book you read?**

CS: The last fiction book I read was Tom Wolfe's *I Am Charlotte Simmons*. (Now there's a real writer!) The last non-fiction book was *One Bird, One Stone: American Zen Stories*. The last training book was *Muscle Logic* by Charles Staley. The last audio book was *Selling the Invisible*. I love audio books. They're another great way to cram more info into your noggin.

**AC: You've authored and edited thousands of articles on T-Nation. What would you say are your "must-read" articles from the site for the typical trainee?**

CS: Wow, that's tough! I guess some of the summary-style articles would be a good place to start. I suggest "The Top 30 Testosterone Nation Diet Articles" [[link: http://www.t-nation.com/findArticle.do?article=05-078-diet](http://www.t-nation.com/findArticle.do?article=05-078-diet)] or just visit our "High Impact" section. [[link http://www.t-nation.com/als.jsp?hiOnly=true](http://www.t-nation.com/als.jsp?hiOnly=true)]

**AC: What tips would you give someone who is trying to break into writing for sites like T-Nation?**

CS: Just type it up and send it in! For T-Nation at least, that works pretty well. And of course the old tip about reading the publication helps a lot. You have to be familiar with what a magazine or site publishes. "Vegetarian Dishes for Busy Mommies" is not T-Nation material. But really, the best thing to do is to just write the article and send it in.

Quick story: This big guy comes up to me at a seminar a few years ago and says he wants to contribute. I say fine and told him to shoot us an article. He did: a simple piece on grip training. Today, Chad Waterbury is one of our most popular writers and he has a couple of book deals in the works. It all started by just sending in a little grip strength article.

Attending seminars is helpful too. It's not just "who you know" but knowing a lot of people sure doesn't hurt!

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to anyone that is just beginning structured training?**

CS: You bet. One, don't leave out whole "sections" of your body. Train legs and back. Use compound exercises.

Two, find a gifted strength coach you like and simply do one of his or her programs. You learn by doing. While pre-written programs made for a wide audience are never perfect, they can show a new lifter what real training is like. He or she will have several "ah ha!" moments when they realize why a program is set up the way it is. They'd have never learned this just guessing about how to train or randomly walking from one station to the next at the local 24 Hour Fitness.

Put your faith in a good strength coach or trainer. Finish one program and start another from a different person. Pick something that's really different than the previous program. Pretty soon, you'll know what works and what doesn't and you'll be designing your own effective programs.

Three, diet is just as important as working out. I know you asked about training, but far too many people train hard but never make progress because of what they eat. They either stay overly fat or they don't build muscle. You only spend a few hours of the week in the gym. The rest of the time you need to be focusing on what you're eating. You can't out-train a poor diet!

**AC: If you could go back in time and change one thing in your training and nutrition history – what would it be?**

CS: I trained for a couple of years without deadlifting and squatting. Big mistake! As for diet, I was afraid of dietary fat for a while and that harmed my health and my progress. Today I get my fish oils, olive oil, and flax seeds!

I also didn't keep a food log, a diary of sorts where I counted my calories and macronutrients. How can you make progress if you don't even know how many grams of protein and how many calories you're consuming? Answer: You can't. You don't have to keep a food log forever, but it's essential for at least a short period of time. You'll learn more than you ever imagined and reach your goals faster than you ever thought possible!

**AC: Any one-sentence bit of advice or motto you'd like to leave the readers with?**

In life, bite off more than you can chew and chew like hell!

**AC: Thanks Chris!**

CS: Thanks! I appreciate the opportunity to speak to your readers!

**CJ MURPHY**



**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current training commitments**

CJ: Right now business is booming at TPS. We train one-on-one due to the facility's size (900 sq. feet). We are going to be expanding soon to a much larger facility where we will be able to offer group training for athletes as well as non-athletes.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous training background?**

CJ: I hold several training certifications through several agencies (ISSA, USA Boxing, USAQ). I am very pro-ISSA, due to their training philosophy. I have been in this field over 16 years and trained just about every type of client you can imagine including a large amount of special needs rehab clients as well as top athletes from many sports.

**AC: Who are your typical clients?**

CJ: The typical client at TPS is very unpredictable as we have a diverse cross section of the population. You can see someone's grandmother training for improved fitness right next to a 300 pound powerlifter or a football player training for sport. There really is no one type. The common thread is that we attract people looking to achieve results through appropriate methods for their goals and abilities.

**AC: What should a typical training day consist of?**

CJ: A typical training day for a client should begin with a general warm-up followed by the activity of the day based on their goals (strength, conditioning, etc), followed by torso/ab work and then some flexibility performed as part of the cool down. A typical day for our staff would be spent training clients, planning training sessions, consulting together on business development, and sharing progress reports on clients. The staff will also consult together to share ideas on training innovations and planning as well.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for the typical client? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**



CJ: I hate to make generalizations on topics because there are so many individual factors to consider but if I have to give a few generalizations, then I feel the average client makes the same basic mistakes which are: poor portion control, poor meal timing, and inadequate protein intake. Let me explain these briefly. *Poor Portion Control* means that most people eat the wrong portion sizes of the wrong foods. It's usually too much fat and carbs followed by too little protein. *Poor Meal Timing* means most people eat the wrong classes and portions of food at the wrong times. The average American eats a carb heavy dinner at the end of the day. That's really not the best thing and many clients don't fully understand the benefits of appropriate carb sources pre and post workouts either. *Inadequate Protein Intake* is as it sounds. Protein should be consumed based on lean body mass, goals and how many meals per day you are consuming. Let's say you weigh 200 pounds and are looking to put on some lean muscle. A general rule of thumb would be to eat 1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight, or 200 grams daily. If you are eating 5 meals per day, which means you'll need about 40 grams at each meal, then you are eating enough protein in each small meal to ensure success. As far as muscle gain and fat loss, we use Dr. Hatfield's Zig-Zag method. It is very simple and in our experience, it works 100% of the time for 100% of the people when properly applied and followed. The beauty of the Zig-Zag diet is that it is not a gimmick! Some key points are: vary your daily calorie intake, consume protein according to lean body mass/activity requirements, and eat at least 5 times per day. There are more guidelines, but you get the idea. Someone looking to loose fat will have more days that are fewer in calories while people looking to gain muscle will have more, higher calorie days. I could go on for 8 hours on this A.C.!

**AC: Is there anything that you do there that you'd do differently with females as opposed to males?**

CJ: Though there are some, I don't think there is a huge difference with males and females. We do pay special attention to the Ham/Quad strength ratio, which as you know, leads to a massive amount of female ACL injuries every year, and we also adjust the stances on certain exercises for women because of the angle of their hips.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push?**

CJ: We try not to be too 'guru-esque' with our training approach. Each workout will have an intensity target: low, medium, or high. To monitor intensity during the session, we are constantly engaging the clients in conversation - for several reasons. We'll ask them how hard the last exercise was (on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the hardest) and if it was too much we'll ramp it down a bit, too easy and we'll jack it up. Conversation is also good between sets as it lets you know when they are rested enough to continue. We have had very good success with this system as clients will not always be accurate when reporting exertion; some overestimate, some underestimate - so you need to be able to tell the difference.

AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?

CJ: I used to go to a lot of continuing-ed classes and read a lot, but as you know, I try to network more now with top shelf people who are actually working in the industry and getting results. Conference calls, email, and occasional visits are some of the best ways I have found to get advice and ideas. Too many of the guru's teaching at seminars can't squat 225 or run a shuttle drill. How are they going to teach me or my athletes how to get strong and fast if they don't do it themselves? I try and get my advice from people in the industry that are actually having success training people, not writing about training people. As far as studying, I'll read anything I can. I try to get information from a wide variety of resources. You need to learn to identify the good information from the bad and then apply it.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

CJ: I think we are all influenced by many people, sometimes without knowing it. Some of my best influences have been Fred Hatfield and reading Louie Simmon's stuff. Dave Tate and Jim Wendler have helped me a lot too. Some of the others you probably never even heard of, local guys, who have helped coach me. I think Fred Hatfield's teachings of strength and the importance of speed are huge as well as Westside's motto of 'finding your weaknesses and eliminating them'. Those would be my two biggest and probably best pieces of advice I can give you. Also, you should find exercises you enjoy. For example, if you hate front squats and dread doing them, don't! Find another variation that you like.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

CJ: I think one of the best tips I can give is to maintain consistency in your training. So many people will train for a few weeks or so and then disappear. Then they will come back a few weeks later and complain about the lack of progress. Training consistently for 2 days a week is far superior to going 4 days a week for two months and then skipping a month, and so on. Consistency is the key.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

CJ: We run everyone through a preliminary workout and test/evaluate them without telling them it's a test. By doing this and disguising it as a workout, we can gauge their strengths and weaknesses better than then if we tell them it's a test. As far as one sport standing out as better than another, I think, at least in our area, it's not so much the sport itself that stands out as better in terms of strength and conditioning, it's more how the coaches train them. There are progressive, intelligent coaches in every sport as well as the other kind who are not.

**AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven?**

CJ: A lot of our clients have goals that are appearance based and that's just fine. Whatever the motivation someone has is fine with us as long as the person is willing to do what is needed to accomplish their goals. We use the same basic evaluation for everyone; of course, we will look for specific things in different people. People are people, regardless of what their goals are and they need to be treated in a similar manner at first. It doesn't matter if they are a varsity football player or your grandmother, *everyone needs to have a basic level of strength and flexibility to begin a program*. Once the levels of strength, flexibility, speed, etc. needed to accomplish the goals are determined and attained, only then can the process of the 'real' training begin. For example, a person with an appearance based goal, say a 50 year old man who is 40 pounds overweight with a low level of strength and poor flexibility, looking to drop the weight and get back in shape, can't really go balls out in training until certain milestones are achieved. A reasonable starting point for some serious weight training would be say, 25 push-ups, 25 bodyweight squats and achieving a "normal" level of lower back-hamstring flexibility. That is just a very general description of a hypothetical situation.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

CJ: As a coach, I really only have one goal and that is to give each client/athlete the best training I am capable of so they can be the best that they can be.

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

CJ: I've mentioned my training philosophy already, albeit briefly, so I'll expand a little more: identify your goals, work hard, work your weaknesses, use compound movements, use goal appropriate training techniques, and balance your training (strength/conditioning/flexibility).

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

CJ: I could give you a 1,000 of them but let's see:  
Never sacrifice form/technique for weight.  
Train your whole body, not just beach muscles (chest and bi's).  
Do not take training advice or routine from mainstream bodybuilding magazines.  
These sound like simple, common sense tips but you'd be surprised.

**AC: What about recovery techniques ? Any suggestions?**

CJ: As far as recovery goes, **nothing** beats 8 hours of sleep and a sound nutrition plan that includes adequate protein and maybe some extra L-glutamine. Everyone is hung up on recovery methods and skips the big picture! Eat and get some rest first. As far as techniques go, sled dragging is tough to beat and you can read about its benefits in plenty of places like on EliteFTS.com. I'm also a huge fan of massage and ART therapy. I frequently use ART as a prehab tool as well.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

CJ: If you are interested in getting a sled for Recovery/GPP work, check out the strongman products page on my site. We have some great deals on sleds and other training equipment.

([http://www.totalperformancesports.com/tps\\_strongman\\_equipment.htm](http://www.totalperformancesports.com/tps_strongman_equipment.htm))

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

CJ: If you would like to read more, I have a few articles posted on my website (<http://www.totalperformancesports.com/articles.htm>). I also write for EFS (<http://www.elitefts.com>) and my tips are featured monthly in Men's Health magazine too. Who knows, maybe I'll be in Men's Fitness too – get it AI? You can also sign up to directly receive our TPS monthly e-newsletter for more on training, nutrition and other news ([www.totalperformancesports.com](http://www.totalperformancesports.com)).

AI, thanks for having me and if any of your readers have questions, they can feel free to email me: [murph@totalperformancesports.com](mailto:murph@totalperformancesports.com).

## **Craig Ballantyne**



**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?**

CB: Alwyn, I'm a Strength & Conditioning coach in Toronto, where I work with young athletes (primarily hockey, rugby, and basketball). I'm also a conditioning coach for Rugby Canada helping the National Team prepare for the 2007 World Cup.

And of course I coach men and women for fat loss and muscle gain using my trademarked Turbulence Training system.

Currently I'm coaching about a dozen on-line clients for future magazine success stories. You know the ones where you see a client make dramatic changes in 12 weeks? Well, I am helping these people achieve these goals and they'll be featured in Men's Fitness in 2006.

As far as the magazines go, I'm a member of the Training Advisory Boards for Men's Fitness and Maximum Fitness magazines. My fat loss expertise and Turbulence Training workout tips are featured every month in Men's Fitness and in the new magazine, Maximum Fitness and in various on-line newsletters.

My online coaching is done through my website, [Turbulence Training](http://TurbulenceTraining.com)

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?**

CB: I have an advanced research background, completing a Master's of Science Degree in Exercise Physiology from McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. And I continue to study the latest training, supplementation, and nutrition research that will help improve client's health and wellness as well as their physical and mental performance.

I probably receive about 500 emails per week from various health newsletters

that I subscribe to, as well as traditional scientific journals. If something is happening out there, or a new discovery is being made, I will not miss it!

**AC: And what is your training background?**

CB: I've trained myself for endurance (elite soccer as a kid), power and speed for hockey and soccer, and strength and bodybuilding. I continue to push my limits with my strength training, and of course, I always give my own Turbulence Training workouts a go in order to test them out.

My goal with my routines, and when preparing a routine for anyone else, is to make the most effective and efficient program possible. I believe that if you design the correct program, you can get a lot of results with less work than most programs suggest is necessary.

Using my training background, education, and scientific research, I came up with the Turbulence Training principles that guides the design of every program I create.

**AC: What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?**

CB: 2 broad categories really:  
a) Athletes  
b) Busy people that want beautiful bodies

With regards to athletes, I tend to work with high school athletes and University-aged athletes. I really enjoy this, and am very proud of my work with the rugby players that have gone on to make our national team. I look forward to helping this sport grow in Canada, and for our national program to jump up to Tier 1 performance.

My most popular achievement as a coach has been the development of my Turbulence Training system, and the results that thousands of readers have made with this style of workouts. My TT workouts have been featured in Men's Fitness 3 times now, so literally millions of readers have had a chance to use the program.

And a new magazine, Maximum Fitness, will be using a year-long TT-style workout series to guide their readers to their best year ever. I've created the main workout for each of the 6 issues of Maximum Fitness in 2006. Look for the first issue in January of 2006.

My main goal in life has always been to make a difference and improve the lives of others, and with TT, I know that I am doing that everyday.

**AC: Can you describe a typical training session consist of for your clients?**

CB:My Turbulence Training system can be adapted for any goal and any experience level.

I call the warm-up, Athletic Movement Training, and others might use the term "dynamic warmup" or "dynamic flexibility".

We use a general bodyweight warm-up to start, always trying to incorporate as much of the body as possible into each exercise. So for example, we would do a circuit of bodyweight prisoner squats (to include the upper back muscles), some type of pushing movement (pushups - modified to the trainee's level of difficulty), and some type of pulling movement (focusing on shoulder blade retraction). All exercises are "core exercises" - as we brace the abs and activate all of the core muscles while doing all exercises in the entire workout.

For an athlete, the number of exercises in the Athletic Movement Warm-up will increase in comparison to a client looking for fat loss or muscle gain, and will even differ depending on the amount of speed and agility training to be done in the athletes workout.

Then we work on actively increasing the range of motion for any problem spots - and this is individual to the client. So it depends on what we have learned from their assessment and previous training sessions.

If any work needs to be done on the foam roller, we do it now. Same with any exercises that are required for this individual in terms of injury prevention (i.e. rotator cuff exercises or other small muscles - again, determined through assessment and from previous workouts).

Next, it is onto the strength training, using the TT principles. Efficient and effective exercises are paired with other non-competing efficient and effective exercises in supersets. The repetition range, number of sets per superset, and rest intervals will vary depending on the clients goals but all are picked to create the appropriate level and type of turbulence in the person's body to stimulate the correct physical change.

I prefer to stick with a lower repetition range than that normally found in traditional bodybuilding programs. Therefore, I find it very easy to make a client stronger. All you need to do is stick to the basics.

Metabolic conditioning and/or fat loss intervals will follow the strength training.

We will complete the session with stretching for the tight muscles only. Another consideration - we won't apply aggressive stretching to a muscle that was trained hard during this session, or a muscle that is to be trained hard on the following day. We will only do light stretching for that particular muscle group.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition? For mass gain? For fat loss?**

CB: Fat loss nutrition is not the same as generic, health nutrition recommendations that you will get from a registered dietician.

When the dietician tells you to eat more brown bread and substitute special K for fruit loops, you will not make any progress in your advanced fat loss efforts.

It's only when you choose to eat even HEALTHIER that you will experience advanced fat loss.

To eat for advanced fat loss, you should focus on lean protein sources (preferably whole-food sources), all the green vegetables you can eat, raw nuts (not roasted in oil and salted), 3 servings of high-fiber fruit per day (increased if your personal metabolism can handle this and requires this), green tea instead of coffee, 6g of fish oils per day, and 3 servings of dairy products. That would be the starting point for an advanced fat loss food pyramid. Preferably all food would be organic.

I find it very satisfying when it finally "clicks" for a client and they realize how easy it is to eat for fat loss, and how that if they eat for fat loss 90% of the time, they can still enjoy some "non-fat loss" foods in moderation.

Plus, the list of fat loss foods I have outlined is healthier than the sugar-coated list of recommendations you get from a generic R.D. Instead of getting a vague recommendation to eat a little more salad and a vegetable at dinner, if you focus on eating at least 1 serving of a high-fiber, green vegetable at every one of your 6-8 mini-meals per day, you will be healthier and leaner.

Once you get the fat loss food habit down, you will be lean and laughing for the rest of your life.

Now on to gaining muscle. Take the same healthy recommendations, and then add organic, whole-grain products to increase your calorie intake to the necessary level for mass gain.

If you are not gaining mass, you are not eating enough. It is that simple.

Yes, you will be full all the time, and yes, you will be visiting the bathroom a lot, but you will gain lean mass (with the right program of course) and you will have an easier time getting really lean when you are ready to do so.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your clients?**

CB: It really depends on how far they need to be pushed to get the results. I don't think people need to puke after every leg workout or interval session.



You don't need to be sore for days.

And that is reflected in the volume of my training workouts. The volume does not need to be excessive to get results.

Physical training is analagous to re-constructing the house. You don't need to knock the house down to the foundation just to fix the bathroom. So plan the training session wisely. Use a high-intensity and use only the volume necessary to achieve your results.

As for measuring the actual intensity of the interval training session, we do so with subjective feedback (when doing fat loss intervals). Each interval is performed at a subjective level of intensity and followed by a recovery period of a very low subjective level of intensity (don't go too hard in the recovery phase!).

When working with athletes, we will depend more on heart rate monitoring, especially within the rest interval. After all, we know they are going to get to near max heart rate during the work interval. What we want to know is what heart rate they get to during the recovery interval. If the recovery interval is too short, or the athlete moves too fast in the recovery, the heart rate will not recover to a low level, and then they will not be able to train appropriately in the next work interval.

So again, don't go too hard in the recovery phase.

**AC: Do you train males and females any differently?.**

CB: Generally, no. Specifically, yes. But really, I train everyone individually as their assessment, goals, and past workouts dictate.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

CB: I still read scientific journals. There is still lots to be learned from academia - for without the strongest understanding of the foundations in the science of the human body, you are really just guessing.

As far as other coaches, the board at [www.elitefts.com](http://www.elitefts.com) is the best in terms of strength development.

I'm still learning a lot in terms of proper assessment, and go to Bill Hartman and Alwyn Cosgrove for that, as well as any chiropractor with common sense (Fortunately, I know a lot of good chiros here in Toronto).

For rugby, I go to my colleague Dave Smits in Victoria, as well as Davie Gray from the UK.

For basketball and speed development help, I go to Lee Taft (USA), Mike Gough (Tampa Bay), and Larry Jusdanis (Burlington, Ontario, Canada).

For hockey help, I'm lucky enough to know the Toronto Maple Leaf S&C staff (Matt Nichol and Anthony Belza).

There are many, many others (if someone has an online training newsletter, I guarantee that I am subscribed to it), but these coaches listed above are the ones I personally communicate with on the greatest frequency.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

CB: I like guys that keep it simple. And that is what Jim Wendler from Elite Fitness does.

Oh, and Martin Rooney as well (from the Parisi Speed School). Martin just might be the best coach (or at least have the best facility and coaching group) for athletic development in the USA.

And my most influential mentors were my professors in University, Dr. Digby Sale and Dr. Duncan MacDougall. These are the men that taught me the essentials of human performance and physiology - how the muscles respond to training, and how the central nervous system controls the body.

I truly believe that if someone is armed only with these foundations, that they can become an excellent trainer or coach, without ever having bought into the latest training gimmicks or fads.

The bottom line:

Keep it simple.

Get the athlete strong, get the athlete co-ordinated, and train the athlete safely.

Once you take care of those, then you can start to get fancy.

For all goals, emphasizing general mobility, mastering bodyweight strength exercises, and proper nutrition are probably the 3 key areas to start with.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

CB: Choose the right intensity and volume. Workouts do not have to be 60 minutes. They may be 20 minutes, they may be 90 minutes.

I call the right approach, OIHT training - Only If It Helps Training. Don't do something in the gym just for the sake of doing it.

Strength training needs to be respected as a skill and as one of the most efficient methods of training. You can get a lot of results and improvement in your body appearance from a small amount of training.

And keep it simple. Don't do stupid exercises standing on BOSU balls or

trying to stand on stability balls. It really bothers me when I see people and trainers falling for that nonsense.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

CB:First, I assess them as much as possible for co-ordination and a long list of performance measures.

If the young athlete is ready for workouts, then I train them to perfect Athletic Movement Training and bodyweight exercises. All programs are designed in the template of my Turbulence Training system.

I find that a lot of male teenage athletes need to work on co-ordination. And all young athletes will benefit from getting stronger.

I hate to see young athletes given training programs that include dozens of plyometrics in each session. That's a recipe for disaster. If you simply make a kid strong, he will improve his jump. You don't need to risk his or her knees with dozens of jumps. Most kids already get plenty of jump training from their seeming never-ending seasons.

Focus on strengthening the posterior chain muscles (glutes, hamstrings, calves, and low back). That will make every athlete a better athlete.

The best athleticism is often shown in gymnasts, because they have great kinesthetic awareness. Of course, specialization in any sport often comes with many negatives, such as overuse injuries and incomplete physical development.

Let the kids play as many sports as possible. If your kid is destined to be a superstar, they will probably be a superstar whether they start at 4 or 12. Just make sure they are active and fully develop complete athleticism and co-ordination at a young age.

Then keep them happy and fit. Let it be their choice if they want to take it to the next level. If they do, then it becomes really exciting for everyone involved, especially for me as a coach. I really enjoy working with dedicated, young athletes.

**AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven?**

CB:I really like working with people who have aesthetic goals. Lots of fun. Always inspirational to see the success stories and be involved with the journey.

I start the program by problem solving. Clients fill out an extensive feedback form and then I go through it and identify the obstacles to the

person's success. Then we fix them, either nutritionally or with training.

Like I said, it's fun, and honestly, I find it relatively easy to help people achieve their goals here. It all comes down to understanding the foundations of exercise science and nutrition.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

CB: I want to help people save time, avoid failure, and show them how simple this whole business of fitness, fat loss, and strength training really should be.

In addition to sticking to the Golden Rule, a couple of other directional quotes I like are:

“Give away everything you know & it will come back to you many-fold”  
“Add value to someone’s life”

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

CB: I take a big picture approach to training. Pick exercises and techniques that are efficient and effective. That way, people will get in and out of the gym in as little time as possible. Therefore, they can spend more time training their sport skill or more time enjoying their life. You don't have to live in the gym to get great results. You just need a great program.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to an athlete or client that is just beginning structured training?**

CB: Get your nutrition in order  
Get strong  
Train with intervals

If you are lean, strong, and fit, there isn't much that can stop you.

**AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?**

CB: Great question, and an area in which I have a lot to learn. For now, I just know that the basics work here as well as they do in training:

- 1) Get 8 hours of sleep per night, and a nap if you can. Do not fall into the Western Lifestyle trap of sleep deprivation. Being tired all the time is not a badge of honor.
- 2) Do some self-massage using a foam roller whenever possible.
- 3) Light recovery workouts might help recovery. Sled dragging or using light weights and lots of repetitions might help increase blood flow to a sore area and speed the healing process. This type of workout would be done in the 2 days following a heavy workout for a specific body part.

4) Nutrition - Eat the best that you can, all the time. Try and get as many nutrients you can from whole food. You can't eat too many vegetables.

5) When in doubt about an injury, see a health professional (such as a good physiotherapist or chiropractor).

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention ?**

CB: The interview manual (to be released soon) is full of good coaches...but there are some terrible ones out there. Let common sense dictate your training, not what's popular this month. Make sure you always have your B.S. detector on...

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

[www.cbathletics.com](http://www.cbathletics.com) - A training newsletter featuring professional development articles and expert interviews for trainers, coaches, and health professionals.

[Turbulence Training](#) - Advanced training tips and workout programs to help men and women gain muscle and lose fat fast.

[www.grrlAthlete.com](http://www.grrlAthlete.com) - Real training and nutrition information for real women lifters and female athletes. Craig is the training director for grrlathlete.com, the world's first female-only sport-specific training site.

[www.undergroundnutrition.com](http://www.undergroundnutrition.com) – Training and nutrition information for serious bodybuilding.

**Robert Dos Remedios****AC: Dos, Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?**

[dos Remedios] I am the Director of Speed, Strength & Conditioning at College of the Canyons. Basically, I am in charge of the year-round conditioning of all of our intercollegiate athletic teams. At present time, we have 17 competing teams. Our swim and golf teams do not have an 'organized' team training session but I do occasionally work with some of these athletes individually.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?**

[dos Remedios] I have always been interested in strength and conditioning since entering college and playing competitive football. I have a BA in Social Science from the University of California @ Berkeley and my MA in Kinesiology (with an emphasis in Biomechanics) from California State University, Northridge. I am also a CSCS and a USAW club coach. I have been an S&C coach since 1989.

**AC: And what is your training background?**

[dos Remedios] I have been training since I entered high school. I had the good fortune to be one of the strongest athletes in the PAC-10 conference when I played football in college. The funny thing is that if I only knew then what I know now, I would have been a lot stronger! I feel that the athletes I work with everyday have it so much better than I did as I never had someone like myself to guide me until my Jr. Year in college when I met my strength coach up at CAL. I learned a lot of my 'hypertrophy' style training from the gym rats at the local gym in Burbank when I was growing-up (your usual muscle and fitness lingo). I then started receiving some real insight into HOW to train properly when I met my strength coach in college. This was the first time I was ever told WHY I was training a certain way or WHY we used a periodization scheme like we did etc.

**AC: What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?**

[dos Remedios] My 'clients' are our community college athletes. I feel I have the best job in the world as I get athletes who are with us for 1-2 years who hope to get scholarships to continue at 4-year institutions. This usually results in many, many motivated athletes who are willing to do whatever you tell them to succeed at the next level. Our football athletes are the reigning USA national champions and we have many division one athletes who are with us due to lacking academics etc. We

have many kids come through our program that will have or will play in the NFL. Many people ask me if I ever want to move 'up' to the 4-year level to coach, I say NO WAY. I love it right where I am! As a bonus, I have been a finalist for the NSCA's College S&C professional of the year award the last 3 years which is pretty neat.

**AC: Can you describe a typical training day consist of for your athletes?**

[dos Remedios] In the off-season, I will get a team 2-4 days per week. Each session will consist of strength training plus one or two things I pull of my daily 'menu'. Menu items consist of things such as strongman training, linear speed, agility-chaos training, explosives and reactives etc. I try to do 1-2 things from one particular emphasis each session. In addition, the athletes will have off-season sport practice as well.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition? For mass gain? For fat loss? And I'd like your input for the vegan athlete (as I know you are) as well as your typical athlete.**

[dos Remedios] I am about as 'old-school' as they come when it comes to nutritional recommendations. For mass gain...EAT! You have to have a calorie surplus if you want to gain mass. Also, you need to train your behind off!

For fat loss...I am a big proponent of interval-style training. Whether its running a treadmill or spinning in a cycle class, you really need to get out of your traditional aerobic state when training. It just makes so much more sense to train this way as it is much more calorically challenging. I have only had a couple of vegan athletes in my career and both were females. I have some solid insight into this as I have been a vegan for over 16 years. For me, it's all about getting enough calories from varied food sources. Like any athlete, a vegan athlete should be eating all day long...snacking on fruits and vegetables, Clif bars, trail mix and soy or other vegetable protein shakes should become a part of your performance life. I have had no problem maintaining muscle mass and strength and power on a vegan diet. While I am no longer an athlete I do like to think that I train pretty hard everyday. A typical day for me looks something like this bowl of oatmeal and a banana for breakfast, post workout soy protein shake, CLIF bar, 2 soy meat sandwiches and a 1/4 cup of nuts for lunch, couple of pieces of fruit, HUGE salad with at least 2-3 types of beans, couple of cups of pasta with marinara sauce, fruit, pea-rice protein shake for desert.

**Ac: I KNOW there are some animals at COC. How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your athletes?**

[dos Remedios] I heard long-time Kansas Strength coach Fred Roll talk at a seminar a few years back and he said something pretty profound to me. He said that in all his years of training athletes, he had never been able to 'break one down' physically. He was not referring to running an athlete into the ground etc. He was, however, talking about running down an athlete from the prescription of 'x' amount of volume and intensity. He basically said push them and push them hard....when they look like they are getting there, push them a little more. He was all about building work capacity....and obviously some mental toughness as well. I like to think that this is also my training style....we hang our hat on our conditioning level and how hard we training year-round that it really gives us a mental edge in most of our sports (especially football). Bottom line, I rarely have to worry about one of my athlete

working too intensely. Don't misunderstand me though....I am a big believer in rest and recovery when it's warranted.

**AC: Do you train males and females any differently?**

[dos Remedios] Actually, no. If you look at my basketball or soccer workout on the board, it is for both the men's and women's teams. I don't believe that we need to train them differently at all....heck, they have the same identical sport performance needs! Now as far as how you might motivate the two, there might be some differences.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

[dos Remedios] I go to anyone and everyone who has something to offer! I have 'stolen' from some of the best minds in strength and conditioning. I believe that once you think that you've got it down and there is nothing else out there that can help you improve your programs, you're done. I am very fortunate as I host a yearly S&C clinic at our college and get to hold 6-8 speakers captive for a day or two to pick their brains. I have had people like yourself, Jim Liston (ex-LA Galaxy), Eric Burkhardt (UC Irvine), Bob Takano, Chris Carlisle (USC), Tom Storer, Tom Incledon, and many others up at our place and have taken things from all of them. I also try to come away with at least one solid thing that I can go back to my college and use immediately from any clinic I attend. Heck, I even had the chance to travel to Hungary and spend the day with their national weightlifting coach Imre Zsuga who gave me a TON of ideas of things to implement with our athletes!

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

[dos Remedios] Robin Pound my strength coach at CAL (and ex-Phoenix Suns S&C coach) was very influential on me. He taught me that conditioning was indeed a science and that to be a successful S&C coach you not only needed to study the science, you really needed to explore, ask questions, learn from others and constantly manipulate your programs to keep improving them. I also feel that YOU have given me so many great combination exercises that I use to add volume keep my training programs fresh for our athletes!

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

[dos Remedios] Similar sentiments as my old strength coach.....you MUST keep learning! Also, don't be afraid to admit that there might be better exercises out there for your athletes. Sometimes S&C coaches get pigeon-holed into outdated, stale training programs due to their EGOS.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

[dos Remedios] One of the first things we do it bodyweight full-squat. I like to see what I'm starting with and a butt-to-ankles squat can often tell you a lot about an athlete. From there we might look at a 1-leg squat as well! I was recently asked what I thought was the #1 exercise I could think of for ANYBODY....I said a 'full-front squat'. I don't think there is another exercise that can tax so many muscles AND work both upper and lower body flexibility at the same time. As far as a particular



sport that I think is good for youngsters, I like soccer. I like the idea of getting kids out their RUNNING plus you have the added bonus of reactive (open) agility training.

**AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven?**

[dos Remedios] Knowing that nutrition plays a much bigger role than training when it comes to weight loss, body shaping etc. I would have to say that DIET would be the first concern. Actually, I think aesthetically driven program are much easier to develop than performance driven programs.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

[dos Remedios] To build better athletes. My primary purpose will always be to help an athlete perform better on the field, court, or in the water through my comprehensive training programs. As long as our athletic teams are successful, I will always be happy!

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

[dos Remedios] Good question. I like to believe that my job is first to build work capacity and then to hone in on more specific performance strength and speed training. With many of our sports (especially football), there is also a very big discipline factor as well. I think that with my population of college athletes, my job as an S&C coach is very different from say a 'performance coach' who works with a few athletes who pay them etc. I have several variables that these coaches don't have to deal with such as motivation. Because of this, I often have to take much more of a disciplinarian approach in our training.

**AC: You are known in the field as one of the founders of CHAOS training. Can you tell us a bit about it?**

[dos Remedios] CHAOS is something that Jim Liston and myself came up with a few years ago. The concept is actually quite simple as we try to emphasize the use of 'open' agility drills or as we like to call it TRUE sport-speed. The premise is that while it is great to be able to change direction and maintain your center of gravity etc., it is more important to be able to do these things when you don't know when you might have to change directions! We use a series of drills using verbal, visual, and physical cues to have the athlete change directions, stop, reverse etc.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to an athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

[dos Remedios] 1) Don't rush into an exercise. Learn how to perform all exercises PROPERLY. 2) Use 'compound exercises' such as squats, presses etc. as these exercises will not only recruit more muscle groups, they will get your body used to using your muscle groups the way they will REALLY have to use them in life, and 3) Understand the concept of 'overload' but don't go overboard. Too often athletes get wrapped-up in how much load is on the bar so they cheat, forgetting the whole reason why they are doing the lift.....to get stronger.

**AC: What about recovery techniques ? Any suggestions?**

[dos Remedios] Well, as I said earlier, I am pretty old school and one of the oldest tricks in the book as far as recovery goes is ICE! We are BIG on ice baths and ice

packs for our athletes after hard training regardless of whether or not there is an injury. I can't think of a better restoration tool than rest+ice!

As far as training methods go, I feel like we do a good job of manipulating our volumes and loads so that we don't say over train during a long season or even the off-season. We also change-up exercises quite a bit so that we avoid overuse of a particular movement such as bench press, back squats etc.

***AC: Anything else you'd like to mention ?***

[dos Remedios] Thanks for interviewing me and Look for Alwyn and I in Las Vegas this July where we will be presenting our lecture on Combination lifts!!!

***AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?***

[dos Remedios] Our Cougar Strength website is  
[www.canyons.edu/departments/pe/strength](http://www.canyons.edu/departments/pe/strength)

**Tom Venuto**

Tom Venuto, CSCS, NSCA-CPT

**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us about your educational or previous career background? How did you end up as a fat loss guru :) ?**

My educational background started with an undergrad degree in exercise science in 1990. The year I graduated, I received my first certification from the American College of Sports Medicine as a Health Fitness Instructor and I started working in health clubs as a personal trainer. I later became a certified strength and conditioning specialist (CSCS) and certified personal trainer (CPT) through the National Strength And Conditioning Association. I also became heavily involved in health club management.

I think I came to specialize in fat loss because I had such a hard time losing fat myself. I started training when I was 14, but never had ripped 6-pack abs until I did my first bodybuilding competition at age 20, even though I tried for years. That fueled my desire to learn everything I could about fat loss – especially nutrition. I became a voracious reader, and I experimented with diets to the point of becoming a “human guinea pig.”

Even after I understood the process, I was fascinated with pushing myself to further extremes of low body fat - without drugs. Many people say you can't get ripped to shreds without drugs, but that belief is totally false. It's very difficult, but not impossible. Being a natural competitive bodybuilder and not having freak genetics forces you to learn what really works for fat loss, and you can't “get away with” dietary and lifestyle indiscretions because you don't have those crutches to lean on. It's just you and your diet and your training.

**AC: What is your training background?**

I started training in 1983 and I started competing in bodybuilding in 1989. Since then, I've entered 28 competitions in many of the natural (drug-tested) federations and also in the National Physique Committee (NPC), and I still compete today.

I was literally brought up completely immersed in the competitive bodybuilding culture. Try not to cringe, but in my teenage years, my only source for information was bodybuilding books and magazines like Muscle and Fitness, Muscle Mag International, and Ironman, as well as gym owners and other bodybuilders. The first book I ever read on the subject was Arnold's "The Education of a Bodybuilder," and the first workout routine I ever followed was Arnold's routine straight from the back of that book.

It wasn't until college when I took courses in exercise physiology, program design and nutrition that I was exposed to anything other than bodybuilding dogma, and it wasn't until years later that I openly embraced the idea that there were other ways to train than with bodybuilding style routines.

My indoctrination into the bodybuilding world was a curse in some ways, as it took me a long time to work through my bodybuilding biases in order to better serve my non-bodybuilder clients. However, it was also a blessing because having a more balanced and broader education today, I still have the advantage of 23 years of bodybuilding experience, which gives me a perspective on building muscle and losing fat that most traditionally educated non-bodybuilder trainers don't have.

**AC: And tell us little bit about your current coaching commitments?**

My current coaching commitments are different from what they were years ago. For the first 6 or 7 years I was in the business, I made my living as a full time personal trainer. I also created a 12 week coaching program which expanded my geographical reach and the number of people I could work with, because my clients not only met me in person at my club, but also worked with me by phone and later through the internet and email.

As the years went on, I got more involved in the health club business, including management, sales, marketing, and ultimately becoming a co-owner and operator of a chain of clubs in New Jersey and New York. As my health club business commitments increased, my personal training commitments decreased until at one point, I completely phased out of personal training with the exception of managing our staff of trainers.

It wasn't long before I realized that as much as I enjoyed the business side of fitness, I wasn't doing what I really loved so I began to take on a few clients again. However, personal training is a very small part of what I do today. I now spend the majority of my time helping my clients with their diets, especially fat loss and contest preparation. I'm also a fitness writer and publisher on the Internet and in print, and I'm a marketing consultant for health clubs and personal trainers.

**AC: What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?**

I work with anyone interested in losing fat or gaining muscle, but my specialties are fat loss and bodybuilding, fitness and figure competition prep.

During the earlier years of my career, I personally trained hundreds of people, and more than 600 people have completed my 12 week personal coaching program.

I've also been able to help educate a lot of people through my writing and online publishing. I've written over 170 articles, my Fitness renaissance website ([www.fitren.com](http://www.fitren.com)) has had nearly three million visitors since it launched in 1999, my burn the fat website ([burn the fat](#)) has had more than two million visitors just since 2003 and tens of thousands of people in 123 countries have used my "Burn The Fat" program to lose body fat.

I've never been heavily involved with sport specific training. I remember reading something you wrote that said a bodybuilder probably wouldn't have much to offer in the way of training a professional athlete. I know some bodybuilding trainers who might have taken offense to that, but when I read it, I had to nod my head in agreement.

For sure, there are some bodybuilders who are also great strength coaches for sports, but competitive bodybuilding training is in some ways the exact opposite of training for sports, and proficiency in one does not necessarily mean the reverse. My achievements have been primarily focused on the fat loss and bodybuilding areas.

**AC: Can you describe what a typical training session consists of for your clients?**

What I do the most today is coaching and nutritional counseling for fat loss and physique contest prep, so a typical "session" might be over the phone or in the office, not just on the gym floor, but I still work with a handful of personal training clients. By choice, almost all my training clients today are bodybuilders or fitness/figure competitors, so naturally, the programs are bodybuilding style workouts. I typically use a 3 or 4 day split routine with a 2 days on 1 day off schedule, although frequency is highly variable depending on the individual.

We start with warm up and dynamic flexibility, then hit two or three body parts per workout for advanced bodybuilders. Rep ranges vary from as low as 4-6 on strength days to 8-12 on hypertrophy days, with high reps thrown in occasionally, especially for lower body. I often mix heavy and medium work in the same workout as well. I use a lot of supersets as I think it's one of the best techniques because of the way it increases results while improving time efficiency. I also use a lot of my own unique intensity techniques as opposed to just doing straight sets of straight reps. I try to expose the body to some type of new stimulus at every workout while also maintaining continuity and progression over the previous workout at the same time. I finish with static stretching. Workouts usually last 45 minutes to an hour.

**AC: Tom you are known in the industry as a FAT LOSS superstar. What are your thoughts on nutrition for fat loss?**

A lot of people debate over the question, "Which is more important, training or nutrition." Some people have put a number on it, like Vince Gironda who was famous for saying that bodybuilding is 80% nutrition. I think it's difficult to pin it down to a specific percentage, but if nutrition is not in place, then there's no question that

nutrition is the most important factor of all for fat loss. The ideal approach combines nutrition, strength training and cardio, but even one major mistake in your diet can completely prevent you from cutting body fat and fixing a poor diet alone can create some rapid and dramatic changes in the physique.

**AC: Can you outline a very basic fat loss routine for our readers?**

Any good fat loss program consists of three components –strength training, cardio training and nutrition. Unlike highly motivated athletes or competitive bodybuilders, for most overweight people, the psychological aspects of behavioral change are also every bit as important as the training and nutrition, so you could say that motivation makes four components to successful fat loss. Addressing fat loss with diet alone is a very common and very big mistake. The synergy created between diet, cardio and weight training is powerful.

The strength training will vary depending on each person's goals and physical condition. For example, I would train a bodybuilder with a split routine working two or three body parts per session, using a lot of supersets and keeping rest intervals brief most of the time. If my client is not a bodybuilder, and simply wants fat loss and general fitness, I might use a two day split routine training half the body each session or even a full body workout, with 3-4 workouts per week, utilizing a lot of supersets and tri-sets.

The cardio training is highly variable. I don't believe in one prescription and I'm not afraid to do no cardio if it's not needed or to increase cardio to as much as every day if it is needed. I prefer to eat more and do more cardio than the reverse.

The nutrition program for fat loss will also vary a lot from person to person based on goals, genetics, current fitness level, body type and metabolic type. My favorite way to knock off body fat is to use a cyclical low or medium carb diet with a caloric deficit for 3 days, then a small caloric surplus for at least one day of high carb, clean food "refeeding", then repeat the cycle. Carb tolerance is a very individual issue, but generally I see maximum fat loss results by getting the carbs down to 20-30% of total calories on the low carb days, but rarely lower. I don't like zero carb or ketogenic diets, but there's no question that carb restriction accelerates fat loss.

**AC: What are the three best tips for fat loss?**

My #1 tip for fat loss is to cycle your calories and your carbs. Some people call it the zig-zag method, or you could describe this as nutritional periodization. It's not only powerful, it's physiologically and hormonally correct. Your body has a weight regulating mechanism that could be compared to the thermostat in your home. When your body detects a chronic deviation in the normal levels of food intake (calories too low), and/or there is a deviation in the normal levels of body composition (body fat gets too low), your body makes adjustments to bring you back up to normal just as the thermostat automatically adjusts temperature to bring it back up to a comfortable, pre-programmed level. Carb and calorie cycling is how you bypass your body's normal adaptive starvation response.

The #2 tip is to understand your level of tolerance to carbs and eat accordingly. Why is it that some people lose weight and feel great on a high carb, low fat diet while others are most successful on an Atkins-style low carb, high fat diet? Obviously there are great differences in metabolism and the way each person processes food. Avoiding extremes and balancing the macronutrients evenly might be the best approach for the long term for most body types, but adjustments must be made for each individual.

The #3 tip is to eat natural foods and avoid refined foods. In my opinion this single tip will give more people more mileage than any other nutritional advice, and it's so embarrassingly simple, it's almost like something your mother would tell you (in fact, your mother probably did tell you this!) Jack Lalanne has been preaching it for decades: "If man made it, don't eat it." Regardless of your metabolic type or genetics, everyone can and should follow this advice, and the results can be incredible.

### **AC: And the three biggest mistakes?**

**Mistake #1:** Too severe of a calorie deficit and too rapid weight loss. This is the fatal flaw in almost all popular diet programs and it's the reason most diets work in the beginning but don't work for long. Most diets put calories at starvation level and encourage weight loss greater than two pounds per week. Ideally, you should use a conservative calorie deficit (15-20%) and lose weight slowly (1-2 lbs per week).

**Mistake #2:** Too prolonged of a calorie deficit. More than 12-16 weeks of dieting in a significant caloric deficit will almost always result in a decline in metabolism, a fat loss plateau and or a loss in lean body mass. This makes the case for "nutritional periodization" or "cycling" calories and carbs

**Mistake #3:** Over-training while under-nourished. A lot of people believe that doing too much cardio is the primary cause of muscle loss. On the contrary, I believe that over-training, especially when you are very lean, in a severe calorie deficit, on low carbs, or have been on a diet a long time, is by far the most guaranteed way to lose muscle, because you break down muscle tissue but the raw materials to rebuild it are simply not provided. You can sustain a surprisingly high exercise volume without muscle loss if the proper nutritional support is provided.

### **AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your clients?**

I prefer to keep workouts very brief and very intense. You can't train long and hard – it's one or the other. Nearly all my sessions are less than an hour and if you train with intensity and keep your tempo, you can often finish in as little as 30-45 minutes when time efficiency is a priority.

With my bodybuilder clients, I do have them train to failure often, but in bodybuilding we have to be careful not to worship the lift til you puke, squat til you can't walk for days mentality. It's almost comical, but many bodybuilders really do believe that it's a sign of a good leg workout if you throw up afterwards.

Progression is the name of the game and in the end, results are the bottom line. If your strength is increasing and you're gaining lean body mass, then you know you're

not pushing too far, although you also have to step back and keep your eye on the big picture. You can see great results from a high intensity program for a week or two, and then rapidly see a decline in results as overtraining set in. Intensity of effort needs to be factored into the periodization cycle just like sets, reps, rest intervals and poundage.

**AC: Do you train males and females any differently? Particularly in regards to fat loss?**

I train men and women the same, relatively speaking. I train people differently based more on goals and body types/metabolic types than on gender. If men and women should train differently, it is because women in general have different goals than men. If a man and a woman have the same relative strength and fitness level, the same goal and the same body type, then I will train them the same. The fact that women want “workouts for women” is more influenced by marketing and perception than anything else. Women in general want “toning,” “firming” and “shaping” and they are still terrified of getting “too big.”

**AC: I'm known for not recommending much in the way of steady state aerobics for the general population (I prefer interval work). However - for the competitive bodybuilder - it's a different story. How do YOUR recommendations change when we're talking about "beyond lean?"**

A lot of people snub cardio just because they hate doing it. Believe me when I tell you, I don't enjoy cardio any better than the next guy. I think the ideal amount of cardio is the absolute least you can get away with, but more cardio is often a necessary evil. Getting better than average body fat – such as 12% for men or 18% for women - is one thing, but getting men to low single digits and women to high single digits usually requires more cardio combined with serious weight training and an extremely strict diet.

High Intensity Interval training (HIIT) is becoming more popular even among bodybuilders, but most of them still do steady state cardio. There are plenty of bodybuilders who successfully get ripped for competitions by walking on the treadmill 30-60 minutes a day, so I don't think it's fair to say that conventional steady state, long duration cardio “doesn't work” or is “worthless,” only that it's the least time efficient and most boring way to do it.

I often recommend brief infrequent HIIT to bodybuilders and the general population alike because it's effective, engaging and time efficient, but I also recommend more frequent and longer duration cardio when I think it's necessary. Regardless of frequency and duration, I almost always favor moderate to high intensity over low intensity cardio.

Intensity and duration are inversely proportional, so as duration increases, intensity must decrease, but that doesn't necessarily mean “steady state” and “low intensity” are one and the same. Steady state cardio can be maintained at a moderate to moderately-high intensity level and this can be very effective for fat loss. You can also increase the duration of your interval training.



Where people go wrong is by keeping their intensity too low because they believe this helps them stay in the “fat burning zone.” This is a myth based on the fact that you burn more fat at low intensities, and more carbs at high intensities, but the problem is, low intensity cardio doesn’t burn very many calories. Higher intensity burns more calories, and more calorie burned equals more body fat burned.

You can also burn more calories by increasing frequency. HIIT is most often recommended by trainers only three days a week for brief workouts of 20 minutes or even less. If your 3 days X 20 minutes of cardio doesn’t work, what then? Are you going to cut calories? If so, what if that doesn’t work, or another plateau is reached quickly, what then? Cut calories some more? How many times can you repeat this before you’re starving? Under-nutrition, in my opinion, is far more dangerous than a little extra cardio. Remember, with every cut, you’re not just reducing your caloric intake, you’re cutting your macronutrients and micronutrients as well.

The need for cardio can vary so much from one person to the next, and the body adapts so quickly, that it doesn’t make sense to give the same prescription to everyone and never change it. I believe that cardio frequency, intensity and duration must be prescribed (1) on an individual basis, (2) in response to weekly results, (3) in a periodized fashion, (4) progressively, and (5) according to the need for time efficiency.

What’s most important to me in a cardio program for fat loss is not whether it’s done in steady state or in intervals, but the total amount of calories burned, including the caloric burn that comes from increased metabolism. You can increase the calories burned each week by manipulating all of the variables: type, duration, frequency or intensity. Why limit yourself by only manipulating intensity?

I will usually add a 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> day of cardio before I will cut calories below the initial starting deficit. If necessary, the duration can increase progressively to 25, 30, 35, 40, 45 minutes and in a few cases I will even recommend two brief cardios a day for physique athletes during very short periods of peaking before competition. After the competition, cardio is gradually tapered off to a minimum maintenance level. Year round high volume cardio is a bad idea – cardio must be cycled – and when it is cycled, it’s all the more effective when you do increase it.

For the general population, you can improve time efficiency and reduce the need for cardio by maximizing the fat burning effects of weight training using short rest intervals and emphasizing loads which increase lactic acid production and GH release, by supersetting or tri setting exercises and by selecting high metabolic cost, big “bang for your buck” exercises. Your Afterburn training is a perfect example of this.

For bodybuilders however, the problem with using strength training as the primary fat loss tool is that the more you turn your weight training into cardiovascular or fat burning exercise, the less effective your weight training becomes for building muscle and gaining strength. You’ve sacrificed one thing for another. As a general rule, you should never compromise your primary objective. That’s why bodybuilders use weight training for muscle development and use cardio and diet to cut the body fat.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

I study anything and everything I can get my hands on and I often read 2 or 3 hours a day. I have a huge library and there are training books and or videos on my shelf from Ian King, Charles Poliquin, Paul Chek, Charles Staley, Mike Boyle, Juan Carlos Santana, Gray Cook, William Kraemer, Ken Kinakin, Vladimir Zatskiorsky, JP Catanzaro, Mel Siff, Fred Hatfield, Frank & Victor Katch, Michael Stone, and of course there's that guy, Alwyn Cosgrove! In the nutrition field I've read material from John Berardi, Jose Antonio, Udo Erasmus, Eric Serrano, Lonnie Lowery, Mauro DiPasquale, Thomas Incledon, Doug Kalman, Jeff Stout, Lyle McDonald, Chris Aceto, Will Brink and many others. I also read textbooks and I even read all the popular best selling diet books and magazines too – even the ones that suck – just to stay current on the nutrition trends.

I'm also a member of the National Strength and Conditioning association (NSCA), the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), and the international Society for Sports Nutrition (ISSN) and I read the publications and attend the events of these organizations regularly.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

In the bodybuilding field, I think I've learned more from studying the top bodybuilders than any guru or academic expert. Every time I meet a *successful* bodybuilder, even if they come to me for advice, I pick their brain:

What is your off season versus pre contest body weight and body fat?, how many carbs do you eat off season and precontest?, Do you keep your calories and carbs stable or cycle them? How much cardio do you do precontest and off season?, What do you do with your water intake the last seven days before a show?, How often do you train each muscle group?, How much weight do you use?, How do you split your routines?, How many sets and exercises per muscle group?, How often to you train to failure and beyond? and so on.

I've learned that there is great variation in what works for each person, and since all of these people are successful, there is obviously no single best way to train or diet, so I like to look for common denominators. I find it fascinating to see that there are certain nutrition and training methods that virtually all successful physique athletes use. By focusing on those commonalities, I've come up with some very dependable principles that will work virtually 100% of the time in 100% of the people.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

Don't feel that you have to accept one person's teachings completely or not at all. Take what is useful and ditch the rest. For example, I was exposed very early to the teachings of the late bodybuilding guru Vince Gironda. I learned a tremendous amount from studying his books and courses over the years. On the other hand, some of what he taught was later proven to be scientifically inaccurate, dangerous or you could say, just plain "weird." But if you were to discard *everything* he taught just on the basis of a few things he said that you disagree with, you would be throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

**AC: Do you use any supplements?**

When it comes to supplements, I think it's important to look at the research, but not without also looking at real world results. This is very important because: A) I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that much of the supplement information and research that makes it into the magazines is thoroughly "bought and paid for," in more way than one, and B) many supplements that look good on paper have fallen flat in the real world.

I'm very much a supplement minimalist, but I do take the basics and use some products occasionally for convenience, for example:

Multi vitamin

Flax oil, an essential oil blend and or fish oil

Creatine

Post workout drink (whey/simple carb) during off season on mass building programs.

I use meal replacements and protein powder occasionally, but I have no problem eating 6 whole food meals a day, so my use of powders is minimal. I recommend them to clients for convenience only. The importance of real food as the majority of your calories can't be emphasized enough.

If you think about it, shakes and definitely the bars can fall under the category of processed man made foods, which violates #3 of the top three fat loss tips I mentioned earlier.

I don't doubt that there are many other supplements that have benefits, including health benefits, but I believe that most supplements are overrated and over hyped, especially when muscle growth or fat loss claims are made.

On the other hand, if I were an elite professional athlete, I'd probably be taking every product I could get my hands on which was legal and had any scientific support behind it because at the elite level, the line between winning and losing can be as fine as a razor's edge. But since I 'm not in a position where a tiny fraction of a percent improvement in my performance will matter that much and I don't have a multi million dollar sports contract at stake, then I don't bother with all the "might work" supplements, because the cost to benefit ratio is not in my favor and I think that popping pills all day long is a royal pain in the ass. I'd rather eat the food than pop a pill to get what's already in the food anyway.

I'm not a fan of weight loss supplements at all and the advertising tactics used in this segment of the industry make me sick. The entire concept of taking a pill to lose weight leaves a very bad taste in my mouth. No matter what the reputed mechanism involved (thermogenic, thyroid-stimulating, insulin managing, appetite suppressing, whatever), you're treating symptoms, not causes. Many "fat burners" are complete scams, and even those with some scientific support are overrated in my opinion. With the right training and nutrition, you can get as lean as you ever want to be and save a lot of money in the process.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

My goals are to remain a completely objective, unbiased source of information and to bring science and common sense into bodybuilding while helping to take the drugs out. I'd like to have an influence on young bodybuilders and athletes in making the right choice about drugs. Scare tactics rarely work, but role models do.

If people see with their own eyes what kind of results can be achieved naturally, that's proof that it can be done. But there aren't enough drug free bodybuilders or athletes who are stepping up and saying, "I am natural" and, "this is what YOU can achieve naturally."

I believe that more coaches, personal trainers and fitness professionals should realize what kind of statement they're making with their own actions, with the way they live their lives and the way they look. Their clients, students and fans are watching their every move. They're looking at what they DO, not just what they say. You have to BE what you teach.

**AC: Ok - you've got 8 weeks to get Mr Smith ready to be a Hollywood action hero. He's about 30lbs over-fat. What do you do?**

THIRTY POUNDS in 8 weeks? I send his fat ass to you! Seriously though, if Mr. Smith were a bodybuilder or seasoned athlete, I would first chew him out for getting 30 lbs out of condition. No athlete should allow himself to get 30 pounds out of peak condition, let alone expect to get back into peak shape in 8 weeks.

I would help Mr. Smith lose the most fat possible in 8 weeks and push hard for a "results not typical" type of transformation, but I wouldn't guarantee 30 pounds of "fat loss." That would be quite a feat for a genetically average person who is not using drugs. If he wants 30 pounds of "weight loss" and he doesn't care if a lot of it is muscle and water, that would be easy, but I would be sure to explain the difference between fat loss and weight loss before we started.

I would tell Mr. Smith that if we achieve 1.5 - 2 lbs of fat loss per week we are doing well and if we have a week with 2.5 - 3.0 lbs of fat loss, we are doing fantastic and that would be better than average results. In the first week going on restricted carbs, greater weight loss would be likely, but that initial weight loss will include water weight.

Given the time restriction, I would start from the first day with an aggressive and strict program - there would be no gradual "break-in" or "clean up" period. Essentially, it would be almost the same as a bodybuilding competition diet. We'd dive right in with a carb cycling program 3 days on low carbs with an aggressive deficit followed by 1 higher carb, higher calorie re-feed day at maintenance or a small surplus. Carbs and calories would be tweaked weekly based on results and how Mr Smith feels.

All processed and man made foods would be off limits. No cheat days. Not when there's no time to lose - he has to suck it up! He gets to eat a lot more every 4<sup>th</sup> day, but it's clean carbs, not junk. Most days would consist of 5-6 small meals of lean protein, green veggies, good fats with starchy carbs and grains limited and included only early in the day and after workouts. Calories and carbs would be tapered, with only fibrous carbs and lean protein in the evening and no high calorie meals of any

kind at night. I would use as much whole food as possible and limit powders and meal replacements to what Mr. Smith needed for convenience.

Weight training would be 3-4 days a week and we would maximize it for fat loss with brief rest intervals, compound exercises and a lot of supersets. Cardio would probably be 6-7 days a week at 30 minutes, but that would depend on his rate of fat loss. Based on weekly results, we would adjust the frequency, intensity and duration of the cardio. All the training – even the cardio – would be done with progression, so we built him up to his peak condition for the day filming starts, the same way we would peak a bodybuilder for the day of a contest.

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

Results are what count. You can never argue with results even if they were achieved with methods that you consider “weird,” unconventional or which don’t fit in with your personal paradigm. If what you’re doing is not producing results, do something else! If what you’re doing is producing results, do more of it and don’t second guess yourself - regardless of what anyone else tells you.

**AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?**

Aside from all the usual stuff such as overall nutrition, post workout nutrition, massage, stretching, quality sleep and stress reduction, I like to pay close attention to training frequency as a recovery variable. Out of all the training variables, this is the one that I’ve seen have the biggest variance from one person to the next. One extra day of recovery can have a major impact on results, especially for the drug free trainee. You have to consider not just how many days before working the same body part or movement again, but also how many days in a row of training it takes to get complete systemic recovery, keeping in mind that this can change with age.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

I’d just mention that it’s extremely important to train appropriately for your sport and your specific goals and not be swayed by absolutes or by “gurus” who claim that their way is the only way to train and that everyone else is wrong. There are many ways to train depending on what your goals are, and there are even multiple pathways to achieve the same goal. Four people can start from the north, south, east or west side, respectively, and still reach the same destination at the center of town even though they all take different routes.

Bodybuilding, for example, has become the “red headed stepchild” of the strength training community. Bodybuilders are often stereotyped and criticized as being vain, non athletic and non functional drug addicts. The truth is, some of this criticism is valid, but most of it is not. For every bloated steroid using bodybuilder you can point your finger at, I can introduce you to an aesthetically-built all natural bodybuilder that most men would die to look like and most women would drool over. I can also show you just as many steroid-bloated football, hockey or baseball players. The drug use is there in all sports, it just happens that bodybuilders wear it on their shirtsleeves. And for every “stiff, bulky, non athletic” bodybuilder you can point your finger at, I can introduce you to a lean, massive bodybuilder with multiple black belts who is

lightning fast, can do full splits, smash cinder blocks with his bare knuckles and bench press more than 400 lbs.

It has reached a point where some trainers and coaches are calling bodybuilding workouts “faulty,” or even “worthless” in general. The fact is, bodybuilding programs can be very intelligently and effectively designed and a bodybuilder *should* train like a bodybuilder, just like an athlete should train like an athlete. In some respects, the methods may be completely opposite each other, but it doesn’t make one right and one wrong, outside of the context it is being used in.

Every modality has its place and its benefits, and the secret to knowing which methods are best suited for you is to have total clarity about why you are in the gym in the first place. If you’re 100% clear about your goal, then creating the right program is easy.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

You can read my articles, subscribe to my newsletters or find out about my products and services at:

Fitness Renaissance [www.fitren.com](http://www.fitren.com) (currently a free informational site for general health and fitness)

[Burn The Fat](#): (fat loss website with information on Burn the Fat, Feed The Muscle ebook)

Bodybuilding secrets [www.bodybuildingsecrets.com](http://www.bodybuildingsecrets.com) (competitive bodybuilding blog – where I will soon release a series of training courses specifically for bodybuilding and hypertrophy training)

**JASON FERRUGGIA**

**AC:** *Jason, Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments at your gym?*

**JF:** Currently I work an insane schedule, somewhere in the neighborhood of seventy hours a week. I work a few hours each morning with clients followed by a "break" around eleven which is when I start writing articles and answering questions and doing consultations. Things really pick up at around 2:30 when school gets out and then I usually go nonstop with 6-12 athletes per hour until 8 or 9 o'clock.

**AC:** *Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?*

**JF:** Besides the usual jobs you work as a high school or college kid, this is all I have ever done. During the second semester of my sophomore year of college I got my first personal trainer certification and started working with clients that summer. When I went back to school I knew what I wanted to do and started studying exercise science at Arizona State University. For the next few years I went to every seminar I could, read every book I could, did internships and experimented with every training variable imaginable on myself.

**AC:** *And what is your training background?*

**JF:** I have basically done it all. I started training during my sophomore of high school doing typical high volume bodybuilding that you read about in the muscle magazines. After paying the "Weider Tax" like many of us do, I graduated two years later weighing only 145 pounds at six feet. So obviously I was overtraining. From there I got into HIT stuff because it was the exact opposite of what I had been doing and, of course, worked for a while because I was so overtrained. Over the next few years I tried every system imaginable and eventually found Louie Simmons and Westside. Since that day I have taken many of the "Westside Principles" and applied them to my own training system. Since doing this my own results have been outstanding and the results I have gotten with my athletes have far exceeded anything I was doing in the past. I must point out though, that Westside is only Westside if you train at Westside, everything else is just a form of conjugate/concurrent

periodization and that is basically what I do.

**AC: *What are your typical clients and personal achievements as a coach?***

JF: The majority of my clients are athletes; high school, college and professional. I work with athletes from a wide variety of sports but baseball players seem to make up the predominance of my clientele followed next by football players and combat athletes. A lot of my closest friends are some of the pro baseball players I train so I think that has something to do with the steady stream of baseball players walking through my door. As far as personal achievements go, I have routinely helped athletes get scholarships, win starting positions and dominate their team's strength and conditioning tests, but I can only do that with the right person. So even though I help, all I am really doing is giving them a map to follow, the rest is up to them. So I can't take too much of the credit. Although when any of my athletes succeed in any way, it's the best feeling in the world for me.

**AC: *Can you describe a typical training day consist of for your athletes?***

JF: After everyone arrives and we make small talk and joke around and have fun for a few minutes, we crank up some metal or hip hop and get at it. Most of my guys train in small groups. Every training session starts with a dynamic warm-up and usually PNF stretching. Although I don't think PNF stretching is necessary before every workout, I would rather see my guys do it in front of me rather than tell them to do it on their own so at least I know they are doing some stretching. The actual workouts can vary widely depending on the athletes training age or sport. The main thing that always remains is the serious, hardcore environment, the fierce competition and the camaraderie and the fun. When athletes come to the gym they want to compete and they want to have a good time. So we have record boards and training levels and contests and this keeps everyone motivated at all times. It's a great atmosphere and people love it.

**AC: *What are your thoughts on nutrition? For mass gain? For fat loss?***

JF: You usually have two types of guys trying to gain size; one is the typical skinny high school or college kid who can eat anything. For these guys I have them eat as much as possible. The only rules are we try to avoid most junk food and eat every two to three hours. I let them mix carbs and fats and even throw some ice cream in their weight gain shakes. I don't have them count grams of protein or anything like that because they just need a ton of calories regardless of where they come from. I was once one of these guys so I know how much they have to pack in to build muscle. In my book, *How to Get Jacked*, I detail a full seven day diet and training program for these kinds of individuals. The other type of guy trying to gain mass is the kind of guy I am now. He has to be strict and watch his diet in order not to gain too much fat along with the muscle. With these guys I never allow them to mix carbs and fats and I have them take in most of their carb meals at breakfast and during the few hours after training. These guys do have to count protein intake and keep their carbs a bit lower. For fat loss, it's usually the same thing except I



would cut out most carbs except fruits, vegetables, legumes, and oats and of course, a post workout shake.

**AC: *How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your athletes?***

JF: I monitor it on a daily basis just by asking the athlete every day how he feels and watching him during his warm up. If I see that he isn't feeling great that day and weights are starting to look heavy that shouldn't, I will immediately reduce his volume for the day. I also monitor training logs on a regular basis and make sure the athlete is progressing like I expect. Motivation, appetite, etc. are also some other things I look at. No matter what you do, everyone is going to have that occasional day when they come in and even the bar is heavy. On a day like this they may only do three or four sets or I may just send them home after the warm-up, it's just not worth it.

As far as pushing them goes, most of the guys I train actually have to be held back a bit just because of the atmosphere we train in. Everyone has the tendency to want to train too hard too often and I have to keep that in check. I make sure that going to failure is avoided.

**AC: *Do you train males and females any differently?***

JF: I don't train a great number of female athletes but the ones I do train do the exact same stuff the guys do, the only difference is they may do a few more sets and slightly higher reps. I have a 130 pound Division I field hockey player who dead lifts 290 without straps and has broken the legs or ankles of three girls with her slap shot. There are some minor differences but overall it is pretty much the same kind of training.

**AC: *I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?***

JF: Louie Simmons- the master  
 Jim Wendler- my good friend who has a great way of simplifying everything  
 Dave Tate- another friend who has tons of experience and great ideas  
 CJ Murphy- a lunatic like myself who knows a ton about strongman training  
 Alwyn Cosgrove- I always read your Q&A and listen to you speak whenever I can and I am always impressed  
 Buddy Morris and Tom Mslynski- the two best in the NFL, and amazing with the science of strength and conditioning  
 Joe Kenn- I have taken a lot from him and use modifications of the tier system with some of my guys  
 Brian Grasso- unbelievably knowledgeable about the training of young athletes  
 Chris Scarborough- a friend who has spoken with everyone in our industry and always has great tips to share  
 Joe DeFranco- a fellow Jersey boy who has a very similar training philosophy to mine

**AC: *Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?***

JF: I don't want to name names but I have learned a lot about how not to train and how not to do business. From these guys I have learned that most supplements don't work, no carb diets suck for building size, leg curls suck for athletes, arm days are ridiculous for athletes and overtraining is the biggest mistake you can make. As far as how not to conduct business goes, I have learned not to be an asshole and not to think you are a bigger star than you really are. Honesty is still always the best policy.

It always stuck with me when you, Alwyn, said in an interview, that training should be fun for young kids and that they have enough stress in their lives without needing more in the gym. So I always try to keep that in mind and make the hour that they spend with me the highlight of their day. Every one who comes to my gym becomes like family to me and I do whatever I can to take care of them and make sure they are ok.

Dave Tate has also been incredibly helpful in that regard and has given me great ideas on how to facilitate that kind of fun, competitive gym environment.

For a lot of business questions related to this field I always go to either you or Dave.

**AC: *What tips could you add of your own?***

JF: Here are a few random, less commonly heard tips:  
Don't train at high volume for more than three weeks without taking a low volume week. Sometimes even two weeks of loading followed by an unload week works better for advanced athletes.  
Don't perform max effort singles for more than three weeks straight.  
After hitting a 1RM be sure that you have done at least three sets above 90% and even a few more if you are a relative beginner. Sometimes it's a good idea to do a few down sets after you hit your 1RM to work on technique with heavy weights.  
Beginners don't need a ton of speed work, if any.  
When you start doing dynamic effort work for the first time, use a heavier percentage and work on technique.  
Always include prehab movements in your training, your body will thank you later on.  
Make sure you balance out your pressing and pulling.  
Even though posterior chain strength is the key to speed, you still have to do some quad work.  
Always train your grip.  
Always train your neck.

If it hurts stop. Take this one from me. I would be a lot better off right now if I would have lived by this advice.

You will always learn more in the weight room and on the field than you will in the library or on the internet. Do all the reading you can but don't neglect the importance of experience.

If you don't train, don't try to train others.

**AC:** *Great advice. When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?*

JF: I put them through some basic strength and flexibility tests. We also look at posture and obvious imbalances and then go ahead with a dynamic warm up to see where their level of conditioning is and then I watch them run. This gives me a good idea of what they need to do.

**AC:** *What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven? Fat Loss for instance?*

JF: I would go over their diet and previous training experience and test body fat. From there the training would be very similar to that of my athletes; they would still do strongman stuff and still lift heavy. The only difference might be that they may actually do a bit less volume because of the fact they will be in a calorically deprived state and thus have less recovery ability.

**AC:** *What are your goals as a coach?*

JF: I would like to continue to grow, continue to learn as much as I can and continue to take my business to greater heights. A basic principle of nature is that things are either growing or they are dying so I try to grow and get better on a daily basis in every way I can. I would like to be remembered as a great coach that motivated my athletes and that they always had fun with and always looked forward to training with and made a small difference in their lives.

**AC:** *I'm sure you will. In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?*

JF: Train hard, heavy and smart, keep workouts shorter than an hour, don't go to failure, use compound movements only and as many non traditional exercises as you can, i.e. strongman lifts. Also be sure to use all three methods of inducing muscular tension; the dynamic effort, max effort and repetition method.

**AC:** *Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to an athlete that is just beginning structured training?*

JF: Do full body workouts three days per week  
Use only compound lifts and strongman exercises  
Do not train longer than an hour

**AC:** *What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?*

JF: Post workout nutrition is key. Sleep is next. Icing and stretching also help a ton. Avoidance of stress is another major factor in recovery. Also recovery workouts can help, and by workouts I may just mean one set of 100 reps on a

band leg curl to help your hamstrings recover quicker.

**AC:** *Anything else you'd like to mention?*

JF: I would just like to thank you for this opportunity - it has been an honor and a pleasure.

**AC:** *Seriously – thank YOU. This has been some great info. Where can people read more about your theories and programs?*

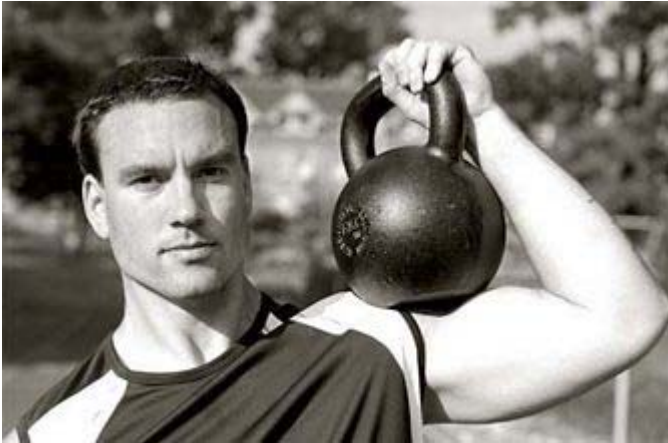
JF: On my website [www.J1Strength.com](http://www.J1Strength.com) , I currently have two e-books available. The first is entitled *How to Get Jacked: Your Guide to Gaining 30 Pounds of Muscle in 12 Weeks*. This is a great back to basics mass gaining book. The other is called *Tap out: Strength & Conditioning for Combat Sports* and is aimed at wrestlers, submission fighters and martial artists and goes into great detail about the specific exercises and workouts that I prescribe for these types of athletes.

Through my website, athletes can contact me for consultations or training programs.

I am also a member of the Q&A staff at [www.EliteFTS.com](http://www.EliteFTS.com) where I answer questions on a regular basis and have quite a few articles posted.

And thanks to your help, Alwyn, I will have my first piece in Men's Fitness in the June/July issue. Thanks again.

**Jason C. Brown**  
**Kettlebell Athletics**



**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?**

JCB: Currently, I'm working with a youth Hockey league near Philadelphia. I can see anywhere from 30 to 60 athletes per week. I also coach at a local high school that started up a Hockey program this year.

Scattered throughout the week I have some grapplers, martial artist and runners that I work with.

Besides that, I'm busy working to promote my products and create new ones. I just finished a great DVD/book series with Coach Dan Huff. It's called "Kettlebell Training for Baseball" and we're very excited about it's release.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?**

JCB: I earned my B.S. in Kinesiology from Temple University in Philadelphia. Outside of that I hold way too many certifications to list.

I know its cliché to say this but I do consider myself a life long student of physical culture and training modalities. I can't remember a period in my life when I wasn't interested in improving strength or endurance. I remember being about 6 years old and reading about the training methods of the Samurai. I've been hooked ever since.

I feel that's the thing that separates this profession from most others. Even after a long day of training I still go home and read up on a new technique, training philosophy or program.

**AC: Can you describe a typical training session consist of for your clients?**

JCB: I always start with some bodyweight drills. This can range from Squats and Push-ups to Jumping Jacks and Skipping. It all depends on the abilities of that particular client.

Although I'm known as a kettlebell coach I do include any tool that will improve the performance of my athletes. I do like to keep the pace fast and use heavy doses sandbags, kettlebells, medicine balls and bodyweight drills. Rarely do we perform any one movement by itself. I usually combine drills to shorten rest time, work opposing muscle groups or actions or to work on weak areas between more complex drills.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition?**

JCB: I don't get into nutrition too much. I found that talking to people about nutrition is like bringing up politics or religion. I've also found that most people just aren't honest about what they eat. I do encourage my clients to eat cleanly though. That's best accomplished by avoiding foods with nutritional labels and staying on the perimeter of your supermarket.

If it has a shelf life it is not food, it's food product and should be avoided if possible.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your clients?**

JCB: Mood plays a very large role in training intensity. I feel a coach must be very sensitive to their clients' mood prior to the training session and take it from there. During the session I rely on feedback from the client. Facial expressions, perceived exertion, motivation and drive will dictate if I need to back off or increase the workload.

I do push my clients very hard but I also know when to call it a day. I have no problem telling someone to go home if they're too tired to train or lack drive on that particular day.

Often times we'll use these less energetic days to focus on a skill or an area that needs some special attention without using up too much energy.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

JCB: My library is loaded. You're there, Mike Boyle, Gary Gray, Grey Cook, Pavel, Zach Even-Esh, Josh Henkin, Dan John and Greg Glassman.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

JCB: So many coaches have helped me along the way. I find that most coaches are more alike than different. Probably the best piece of advice I've taken in was to perform the common extraordinarily well. And by mastering the basics you'll be steps ahead of others that take to the newest, fancy gadgets and trends.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

JCB: Just enjoy your training. Enjoy the process. That doesn't mean take your training for granted or lightly but you're training shouldn't be all drudgery either.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

JCB: First thing I look at is their Squat, Lunge, Push-up, Plank and Pull-ups form. If any one thing is lacking I know where to begin and go from there. I also have them perform basic agility skills just to see how coordinated the athlete is.

Wrestlers always seem to be the most well rounded athletes I work with.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

JCB: To reintroduce authentic human movement back into our lives. To offer an alternative to a fitness industry that misleads the public and offers a stale and ineffective approach to health and strength.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

JCB: Just to say thanks for the opportunity to speak with you. You've been an inspiration and a great help and I'm honored to take this moment and chat with one of the brightest leaders of our field.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

JCB: For more info they can visit <http://www.kettlebellathletics.com>. I try to post a new video each week along with new articles and training tips. Also be sure to check out <http://www.kettlebelltrainingforbaseball.com>. Thanks again.

**JOSH HENKIN**

**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current training commitments?**

JH: I often start training at 5:30 or 6:30 in the morning, usually 8-12 sessions a day. That is a packed day! I also make sure to get some training in for myself. This can be active recovery, core training (and I don't mean ab work), or field work. There is always some purpose behind my training, which I perform 6-7 days a week.

Currently I am working on several projects that include new informational manuals and DVDs. I always devote additional time to writing magazine articles and reading up on the newest techniques in the field. Amazing what can be fit into a 24 hour day!

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous training background?**

JH: I earned my degree in Exercise Science from Arizona State University. I couldn't imagine a more beautiful campus to go to school at. My goal in college was to become a high school basketball coach. I had always enjoyed teaching and have an extensive background in competitive basketball.

Through a series of odd events I actually ended up walking onto the ASU basketball team, where I learned "the business" of college sports. The sport was no longer enjoyable, and I gained a better understanding of why professional athletes behave the way they do. I don't condone it, but it makes more sense.

My basketball career was cut short after re-aggravating an old back injury causing the loss of feeling in my legs during sprints. The medical staff quickly retired me and I had to move on to something quickly. Having become extremely disenchanted with



basketball, I looked for something totally different. Simultaneously, I was working hard to recover from my injuries, and quickly became interested in all aspects of conditioning.

I had been training myself for years, but mostly using bodybuilding methods. Like most young men, I didn't know where to go for quality training information so I hit the magazine stands. I started reading *Muscle Media 2000* where I was introduced to people like Charles Poliquin. I was so blown away by his innovative ideas, that I started consuming every book he talked about and began attending a multitude of seminars.

Since then I have interned with Charles Poliquin, become a C.H.E.K Level 1 Instructor, become certified by USA Weightlifting as a club coach, obtained my CSCS from the National Strength & Conditioning Association, become certified as a Russian Kettlebell Instructor, and was one of the first to become a certified Z-health instructor. Whew, that wiped me out!

What all of these programs have taught me, is that no one single person or method contains all the answers, and that what makes a great coach is the ability to take different ideas and concepts and apply them to the appropriate individual or situation. It isn't blindly following any one set guideline or someone else's program just because you became certified by them.

**AC: Who are your typical clients?**

JH: My clients include general population, post rehabilitative, and high school athletes, all of which present unique challenges. I love to help anyone who really wants to make a serious change in their life. Whether their goal is to come back from a nasty injury, improve their athletic ability, or just feel good about themselves, if they are dedicated I am happy to help.

**AC: What should a typical training day consist of?**

JH: I believe success in training stems from the fundamentals. Coming from a sporting background I can't tell you how many amazing athletes I've come in contact with that never made it because they lacked the ability to perform the fundamentals at a high level. People often hear the word fundamentals and confuse the term with easy, which is far from the truth. It is only by mastering the fundamentals that a person can progress.

Let's start with sleeping habits. I know you said training day, but I believe it starts even before that. If you have inconsistent sleeping patterns you will find yourself unable to recover from your training, and your progress will be severely hampered. Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get between 6-8 hours of sleep, I prefer eight, but I am a realist. Turn the television off, and begin winding down your day about an hour before you need to be asleep.

Next, focus on proper meal planning. It is not realistic to expect success without planning ahead. Just as any business needs a plan, so do our personal lives! Know when you should be having your meals, have an idea about what you are going to

have, and recognize any obstacles you may encounter. Let me touch briefly on the last two points.

I encourage clients to prepare their own food whenever possible. The more you eat out, the less likely you are to lose weight or make progress in training. Even if you eat “healthy” in a restaurant you are still subjected to their style of cooking. With many of my clients, I witness bloated stomachs, feelings of sluggishness, and weight gain after they have eaten out. Cooking oils, seasonings, preparation methods, etc. often affect how you feel and what happens to your body. It doesn’t take much to throw your system for a loop.

Being a realist, I recognize that people have meetings, dinners, luncheons, etc. If you know you are going to be in a meeting(s) for hours and hours, bring some food that will help you last through the meeting without falling prey to the invariable doughnuts, muffins, and bagels often offered at business events. If you are going to be running around dropping-off and picking-up your kids, have something healthy easily available so that you don’t end up at the drive-thru window. You will be doing you and your children a big favor!

After getting your sleeping and eating habits under control, I recommend scheduling training sessions into your day. Even if you don’t work with a trainer or go to a class, make an appointment with yourself and try your best (yes, life does happen) not to reschedule that appointment. Consider this appointment time to focus on yourself, and enjoy time away from the everyday rush of your busy life.

Alright, you know when you are going to train, but you should also know what is going to be involved in your training session. You can save valuable time and improve your results by having a plan before you ever enter the gym. While you don’t have to be a slave to numbers and percentages, you should always have a good idea of the goal of the training session and what will be involved.

After training, partake in some post-workout nutrition, whatever is appropriate for your goals, and go about your day. If you train at the end of your day, make sure to make time to relax before heading off to bed. You need time to enjoy life and reap its benefits, training is about improving your life not consuming it.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for the typical client? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

JH: I actually think they are very similar. I have never met anyone that wanted to lose fat, but not add any lean muscle, or increase size without muscle gain (ok, powerlifters don’t count).

A core belief is having consistent meals throughout the day. We hear this all the time, yet very few people apply the concept. Stabilizing blood sugar levels, maintaining a healthy metabolism, controlling binge-eating, and repairing the body are just a few reasons eating consistently throughout the day is so important. Below are some additional musts for achieving fat loss or gaining muscle.

1. You must drink enough water.
2. You must eat breakfast.

3. You must consume essential fats.
4. You must consume adequate protein.
5. You must avoid sugars and artificial sweeteners.
6. You must keep processed foods at minimum to zero.

I know this must seem strict, but it really isn't. Most people have the hardest time with avoiding artificial sweeteners and processed foods. Why no sweeteners? Number one, they are chemicals and I don't care what anyone says, consuming chemicals is not good for you! They still raise insulin levels and inflammation in the body, which often appear in the organs, joints, or muscles. It is sad, but many people are used to having minor aches and pains, which are probably related to their nutrition and subsequent inflammation. This is why I stress zero tolerance for artificial sweeteners and processed foods.

It sounds odd, but I can't even count how many cases of back, knee, and shoulder pain I have mitigated by helping people decrease consumption of artificial sweeteners and processed foods, and increasing consumption of water, breakfast, essential fats and protein. I worked with one gentleman in particular that was ready to go for a MRI on his low back, when I convinced him to try eating differently for one weekend and see what happened. He came back Monday a new man, pain-free. It has only been an issue now when he travels or eats badly at home.

Why is fat loss and muscle gain so difficult? The most obvious reason is that if your body is not functioning correctly, digestion will be poor, fat burning will be diminished, and immunity decreased. Not an optimal setting to lose fat or gain muscle.

We also know that high quality foods can promote the production of anabolic hormones (the ones that build up our bodies) and help control catabolic hormones (hormones that break down our body). Since recovery is key in successful training, this is critical in consideration of proper eating habits.

After saying all this I know people want to hear the usual: how much protein, how much fat, how much carbs, and so on. I never go this route because I think it makes people too crazy for minimal gain in their training. If you start your day by eating breakfast and have a good source of protein, carbs, and fats, you will jump start your metabolism and be on your way. If every meal you eat for the rest of the day is the similar in that you eat high quality proteins, carbs, and fats you will see progress in your training.

If you are applying these principles, but want to see better weight loss I suggest the following:

- Make protein the cornerstone to your meals.
- Eat 4-5 meals a day.
- Use fruits and vegetables as the staple for your carbohydrates (more fibrous the better).
- Limit any carbs after three unless they are vegetables.
- Do not eat within two hours of going to bed.
- Make great use of Olive Oil and Flaxseed Oil.

For those that want to gain more muscle I would recommend something very similar, but higher quantities. I would go on to allow foods such as yams, sweet potatoes, and other root vegetables. I am not a big believer in wheat or products that contain gluten. I have seen far too many problems in people that consume these products. People can argue the science of this with me all day, but I work with far too many people to deny its influence.

**AC: Is there anything that you do there that you'd do differently with females?**

JH: I don't think in terms of male or female. I think in terms of their goals. People will often talk about the varying joint angles of women versus men and blah, blah, blah. Does it mean one won't squat, press, deadlift, etc.? Of course not! I place many other factors above the sex of the person. Their age, training background, goals, injury history, and others that help determine the program they will be using.

The only point I will bring up is that women are usually much more flexible than men, both dynamically and statically. Women tend to drift to flexibility types of training such as yoga while men will many times be on the polar opposite end. For women I will often perform a shorter dynamic joint mobility warm-up and only use a few PNF drills to help their flexibility. For men, we may spend more time in this area because of their training history and their general body tension.

It is well worth the extra time though, if you are hurt you can't train! You definitely won't make any progress then. If you also improve range of motion (especially dynamically) you will be stronger and be able to lift more weight which should lean to greater lean muscle gains. Something most men would not be against.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push?**

JH: Great question! This is really tough because everyone can handle stress and discomfort differently. Some thrive on working through this area some fold the minute such issues arise. My number one rule is if there is technique is compromised they are done. I don't care if they think they could have done two more, the movement is over.

Many coaches and trainers use RPE (rate of perceived exertion) for their intensity of the movement. In other words, how hard the work feels from a scale from 1-10. One day a 200 pound squat could feel like a feather, other times it could feel like 800 pounds. This gives a lot of feedback upon one's recovery for the day. We may have to deviate from the plan and go perform other work or modify the intensity and volume for the training session.

I like this concept, but also employ an idea from the late Dr. Mel Siff. He not only recommended the standard RPE but also a rating of technique. Since I have implemented this technique I have become more and more of a fan of more sets, less repetitions protocol. I can still achieve my goals by manipulating other variables, but the quality of work stays much higher. I really like the Russian mindset where you don't look at training as a workout, rather as a lesson. We are constantly trying to reinforce quality movement. As the old saying goes, "garbage in, garbage out."

If there is pain we stop, this is tricky though. Some people misinterpret fatigue or discomfort as pain. For example, most people are terribly weak in the low back. Once we start training this are they may quickly jump up and say "I feel this in my back!" I'll ask them what do they feel, pain or the area actually working. If it is pain we will stop and go to a variation of the movement. Most of the time though people have just never felt their low back work and it throws them for a loop. They assume anything in the low back must be bad.

Kids can be a whole separate issue as well! Some kids handle fatigue very well and others will absolutely collapse when they feel uncomfortable. This is tricky because even if you know the kid could handle more you don't want to get sued! Let me tell you, parents are not afraid of this, I have heard some horror stories. If you think the child is dogging their work then I recommend having a meeting with the young man/woman as well as the parents. This is always my first resort and works very well because the parents are informed of the situation as well.

My second option is actually more effective, but because it is always good to involve the parents I recommend it last. One of the best ways to get kids to work hard and to their potential is by having them regulate themselves. For example, if we run sprints and everyone must run it in a given time or they have to do it again you will see the dynamics change greatly. All of a sudden no one wants to be the reason they have to do the activity again and they don't want everyone to be mad at them. This is NOT to say you give them unrealistic situations, you give them the opportunity and environment to succeed and make them take advantage of it.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

JH: Alwyn Cosgrove is the best! Ok, honestly, you are great, but I go to so many different people. Some are really well known others no one has ever heard of, I think there are so many great strength coaches out there that do not have the big time exposure of magazines or videos. The more I meet people and the longer I am in the field the more I realize that there is so much to learn. I have confidence in my system, but I hope it will always evolve into something better.

The great coaches to me are the ones that aren't afraid to share their information, or spend time with a colleague. I know what it is like to be new, full of questions, and not knowing who to ask. I know I would always want to be a resource for other professionals as there is plenty of business for everyone and if we were to make a better sharing environment we could probably solve many of the issues that face our industry.

I also enjoy listening to professionals in different areas of this field, massage therapists, physical therapists, orthopedic surgeons, and sporting coaches. Two things always happen when I talk to others. One is that I will gain new insight into the body and its complexity. This often causes my own beliefs of training to change. Or, I may be reinforced that my beliefs are correct because the opposing view point has little support.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the**

**best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers**

JH: My clients are huge for me. They make me get better all the time. They teach me more about how to train and to work with people more than any book or course could possibly provide. They are real people, even if they are high level athletes or a grandmother, they all pose their own needs and strengths. This definitely makes me a better coach.

Number one thing you have to be is happy with your life. Almost every single person that sees me is unhappy. It may be the way they look, run, jump, eat, or a host of other issues. However, as one of my clients loves to say, "is it cancer?" Meaning, is it really that horrible? Sure, if your health is compromised you have to be very serious. And yes, cosmetic goals are important, but you must see how it relates to your overall life. What are the real causes and it will often take more than just exercise and nutrition to get people to their goals.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

JH: Be a doer and not a talker. I HATE people that tell me how much they want to be "in shape", leaner, stronger, healthier, but then do absolutely nothing about it. If it really is important to you then make a commitment to achieving that goal. It is amazingly empowering for your whole life when you can take control of something so personal and achieve it!

Be willing to spend money for expertise. People are often shocked by how much my business charges, but they are often willing to spend money on supplements, lavish dinners, vacations, clothes, and a host of other items that give them some temporary happiness, but do nothing for the long-term nor do they really provide them with some deeper satisfaction.

Don't be willing to receive the answer of life from one person. There are many people in this industry that claim to have "the answer." While their system may be good, you can't end up with anyone becoming your guru. You must learn to become a critical thinker and ask the right questions.

Have fun!! Life is too short not to enjoy what you are doing. Being physically active is suppose to be fun. If you are not enjoying what you are doing then seek out other options or instructors. I have had many people start with me claiming they hate a specific form of exercise, but when I show them the variety and benefits they become raving fans.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

JH: When an athlete comes in I first want to know their strengths and weaknesses, not in the weight room, but in their sport. Their issues may be strength related or not. I have worked with athletes in numerous sports that could not excel because they didn't know how to perform fundamental skill components in their chosen sport. All the strength in the world won't help them further their career if they don't understand the sport.

I will ask them what they do for their current training. This gives me an idea of what we need to fix first. Hardly anyone comes to me because things are going really well for them on their own.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

JH: I always feel an obligation to my clients to provide them with the best programs for their goals that will give them the fastest results. This has to be done in a manner that leaves them with a very positive feeling about being active and will allow them to continue with their success. I am very against “quick fixes” because it tells me these people are not really dedicated.

People that are focused will be willing to plan and see the long-term as well as short-term benefits of their actions. I sometimes receive phone calls or emails from athletes that want to improve their speed or strength for their sport that starts a week later. They want to know what they can do and I tell them nothing! That is the truth, if they were really dedicated to their performance they would not have waited to the last minute. Remember your parents yelling at you about not doing your homework at the last minute? Have you ever heard of a successful business that lived off of planning at the last minute?

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

JH: Relatively simple, use the most effective and efficient means to get the client to their goal. My personal bias of what I enjoy in training is not important. Too many coaches let their own training dictate that of their clients. Sometimes that may be appropriate, but I let my assessment determine the type of training prescribed.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

JH: You may find some of these actually against the grain.

1. Don't be married to a type of system or form of training. Just because others tell you it should work doesn't mean it will. You should be able to adapt according to your needs and response to the various training means. Sometimes something that seems completely opposite of what you would normally think to be effective is just what you need. I often refer this to the Costanza Principle after the Seinfeld character.
2. Know why you are doing what you are doing. I still get people that tell me all types of things they are doing and when I ask them why there only response is some other expert told them to do it. For example, when women tell me they need to perform more yoga I ask them why? They often reply because they feel as though they want to lengthen and tone their muscles rather than build them. After I pull my hair for awhile I go on to explain to them why this rationale is false and how they may use their time more effectively.

Athletes can be worse than anyone. I will always get coaches, athletes, or parents tell me what they need. They will tell me something like, “we need our team to perform plyometrics because we need to be faster.” When I ask how much range of motion work they perform, how their hip speed is, how much training they do for the posterior chain, their eyes start to glaze and they realize one single training method isn’t the answer. It is always about how all the variables influence each other and what is really needed by the individual.

3. Give it time! Don’t be in a rush to find the coolest new thing. If you are following a coach or a program then there was a something that initially appealed to you and you must give it time to work. If after a designated time frame it doesn’t then you can move on, however, more times than not I see athletes jumping from program to program, coach to coach, looking for “the answer” when in reality it probably has to do more with them than the program or coach.

**AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?**

JH: There are a lot of basics that people take for granted. For example, proper nutrition is one of the most effective and basic means in which people can assist in their recovery. However, they constantly ignore this factor and rationalize their poor choices in foods by the latest diet they are following.

Massage is also key, if you are going to dedicate time and effort to your body you are going to need to take care of it. Unfortunately, it seems that ART has gotten so much publicity people think it is the only game in town. In fact, there are many great techniques and practitioners such as Neuromuscular Therapy, Rolfing, Feldenkrais, Myofascial, and many more.

This helps increase blood flow, speed up the recovery of aches and pains, improves posture, relaxes the mind, and can accelerate progress in the gym. At least every other week is something that I recommend to all clients. I try to hit once a week myself because of my intense training and dedication.

I would also like to suggest static stretching. This form of stretching has come under heavy criticism as of late, but I think some is unjust. Static stretching can take on many forms including some types of yoga. The benefits are similar to massage, but for different reasons. For many static stretching sessions help relax the mind that is often responsible to many tension holding patterns and chronic tightness. This is also a form of strength-endurance that is hard to replicate in most training programs. Such static strength-endurance can help with the stabilizers and muscle imbalances.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

JH: People can read all my work or learn more about my programs at [www.joshhenkin.com](http://www.joshhenkin.com). You can sign-up for my free newsletter there as well.



**LEE TAFT**

Lee Taft is fast. I mean BEYOND what you are picturing right now. Fast like the Matrix. Lee was one of the speakers at the Ryan Lee Bootcamp, and when he hit the stage and demonstrated a few exercises - jaws dropped. A lot of guys talk about who is the best speed coach today. For multi-directional speed, change of direction, lateral acceleration - Lee Taft is my personal go-to guy. I can't give a higher testimonial than that. He's the guy I use.

Lee has just released a basketball specific speed training DVD. If you are a basketball player, work with basketball or are even thinking about getting into speed training with any athletes - make sure you check out Lee's site at [www.sportsspeedetc.com](http://www.sportsspeedetc.com)

Lee took time out of his FAST paced day to answer a few questions exclusively for this newsletter:

**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current training commitments?**

LT: Thanks for having me Alwyn! I am presently training several young athletes at a local facility here in Indiana. I also spend time consulting with coaches and trainers in this area and around the country. A large part of my business is and training at this time is in the form of camps and clinics.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous training background?**

LT: I have a BS in Physical Education and a MS in Sports Science. I have been coaching athletes since 1989 in the form of a sport coach, strength coach, and clinician. I have been certified through the NSCA, USAW, USATF, and IYCA (standing). I have owned and operated 3 training facilities in the New York area over the past 12 years. Living in Indiana I presently use another facility to train out of.

**AC: Who are your typical clients?**

LT: I normally train younger athletes (high school and below). I do train collegiate and professional athletes, but much less frequently now than in the past.

**AC: What should a typical training day consist of?**

LT: I have a system that I have run for years to make my business run more smoothly. My athletes train for one hour and that hour consists of Dynamic mobility and activation exercises, Lift mechanics to concentrate and educate the arm and leg action for acceleration and sprinting, fast feet drills to work on quickness and nervous system firing, then we move into the key focus of the day for multi-directional movement. For example; we may be focusing on lateral change of direction skills. I will emphasis technique and execution of the drills. We then move on to medicine ball and strength exercises in the weight room. This has been a successful system for the past 12 years of having a facility to implement it in. I try to teach the athletes in a setting that has some chaotic nature- much like sport.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for the typical client? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

LT: Working with young athletes' nutrition is always a concern. The biggest obstacle for them to overcome is food choices. Once I get them eating the correct healthy foods, then I start to work on the individual goals.

Many of the athletes need to increase lean muscle mass without reducing too much weight. To do this I give them proper protein choices and increase the times they eat per day. I want their blood sugar levels to stay consistent as much as possible. I also encourage them to eat proper carbohydrate and protein mix following exercise to take advantage of cell absorption. Most people don't eat enough of the right foods at the right time. Getting the athletes to understand this goes a long way in achieving goals.

For the athletes that need to drop fat. It is about getting them to choose better foods. Eat them at the correct times. Eat more often with correct foods. Stop eating junk food and soda as snacks. I really push the water consumption as well. Most athletes' bodies are toxic due to the poor nutrition, so by getting them to flush their system will help rid some fat from their body. I try to educate them on the concept of calories in and calories out. If they are taking in more then they are burning off- they will gain fat.

**AC: Is there anything that you do there that you'd do differently with females?**

LT: Not really! Dealing with young athletes it is important to hit developmental stages properly and make sure they are learning. This is the case for my males and females. I am more aware of female issue with leg strength and potential knee injuries, but for the most part, not really too much difference with this age. I assess each athletes needs and go from there.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push?**

LT: In the case of speed and movement training I monitor a few ways. I look closely at the sport energy system requirements, I look at the technique of the athlete, and I look at the age.

In terms of the energy requirements, I want to make sure my athletes can work and recover in the time frame they need to for their sport. I also never allow the athlete to continue a drill/exercise if the technique is poor. I don't want injury and I don't want to train poor movement patterns. So I do monitor movement technique pretty closely. Lastly, in terms of age, I will be more focused on specific details of energy system training with my older athletes than I will with my younger. The young athletes I try to monitor the intensity of the workout on many levels. I don't want it to be too physically or mentally demanding, I don't want them overly conscious of exercise intensity at a young age... So I monitor the intensity of the workout with young kids by not letting the intensity get too high.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

LT: In terms of multi-directional speed training I try to research biomechanical and physics information, not really any individual per se. For pure speed/sprinting I like Charlie Francis. For program design- You're the man- I love your stuff. For strength training- I follow many people, but Bill Hartman is one of the best at explaining why and how it works the way it does. For nutrition, I use Nick Theodorou a lot, John Berardi, Tom Incledon to name a few. I also have followed Mike Boyle for years. He put information together well.

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are learned tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

LT: When it comes to training young athletes; Brian Grasso is extremely innovative. I have picked up many ideas from Brian. Tony Reynolds is another performance coach that is extremely creative and sound. Charles Poliquin has some great ideas on strength training that has helped me. I must say that Mike Boyle's form of training has helped me the most, because years ago, before I even followed Mike, I did many similar things and was getting great results, but wasn't sure about if it was accurate training. By seeing what he did it confirmed in me that I was on the right track and I learned much more from him. One other coach that influenced me a lot and helped me is Leo Totten. Leo is one of the coaches for the US Olympic weightlifting team. He has helped me more on a technical basis.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

LT: Don't ever think you have got it figured out! I have been training for many years and still feel like a novice at times. This is due to delving deeper into the components of training. I am trying to learn more about how the anatomy function stabilize our body and stabilize it and the relationship to athletic performance and injury reduction. Don't be afraid to question things that don't completely make sense. Multi is how I developed my multi-directional techniques- because the stuff being taught didn't make sense to me.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

LT: I observe what they do when moving. I watch for dysfunction, balance, body control. I look at postural issues. I do this more in an open assessment. Because I work in groups; I watch the kids move and make notes as I see things. I also look for posture issues and address them in their programs for strength.

I used to get many hockey players. They are tight in the hip flexors and have messed up shoulders due to the pounding they take. I also get many throwing and serving athletes that have postural dysfunction. They are unable to get proper shoulder ROM many times due to lack of thoracic immobility. Basketball players have the knee and ankle dysfunction usually due to weak stabilizers of the hip and poor movement mechanics.

The reason I like to assess in an open environment is because I get to see if they correct posture issue when they are in live movement, meaning is usually lazy habits. I also get a real look at them rather than them trying to assume what I want to see and make corrections rather than be natural.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

LT: To change the mindset of parents and coaches that don't understand proper development. Try to get the specialization away from young athletes (until they reach later teens), and to empower other trainers and coaches to carry this goal on to the people they come in contact with.

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

LT: My training philosophy for the young athletes I train is: Give them what they need to reduce injury, perform better, and enjoy training.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

LT:

1. Aim to improve from where you are, not where someone else is.
2. Don't look at training as difficult, look at how difficult it is if not training.
3. Don't try to hit a homerun on your first day. Be patient and understand the journey.

**AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?**

LT: Must have great nutrition (water, protein/carb..., and quality supplements). Perform foam rollers to get rid of muscular tension and waste. Allow your body to rest.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

LT: I think many trainers/coaches allow their job to overshadow the goal of the athlete. Most athletes want to perform better in their sport. They don't want to

become professional “workout athletes”. Keep in mind our job is to supplement what they already do. Keep it fun and well organized! Enjoy the success you bring to people.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

LT: I just want to thank you Alwyn for the opportunity and for being a great influence on so many of us with your knowledge and courage.

You can read my weekly newsletter at [www.sportsspeedetc.com](http://www.sportsspeedetc.com) and my articles and audio interviews at [www.sportsspecific.com](http://www.sportsspecific.com). Thanks for the time Alwyn. Lee Taft.

**LORI INCLEDON**



**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current commitments?**

LI: Because of the success of my book, *Strength Training for Women*, I am busy with speaking engagements, demonstrations, and requests for articles. As far as my own training goes –it's pretty basic: I am lifting weights 3 days/week, doing Strongwoman training 1 day/week, and a yoga class 1day/week.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous training background?**

LI: My academic background includes an AA in Liberal Arts and a BS in Public Relations from the University of Florida, an AS in Physical Therapist Assistant from Broward Community College, a National Athletic Trainers' Association Certification in Athletic Training, and a National Strength and Conditioning Association Certification in Strength and Conditioning and Personal Training. Additionally I am licensed in the states of Florida and Arizona as a physical therapist assistant and as an athletic trainer.

I was never an athlete, so my training background started in the early 80's doing high-impact aerobics and working out on Nautilus machines. In college I was introduced to lifting free weights and have enjoyed that ever since.

**AC: Who are your typical clients?**

LI: My personal training clients are mostly women and vary in age from young to older adults. Because of that specialty, it was easy to incorporate my experiences into my book, *Strength Training for Women*. For rehabilitation clients, they run the entire spectrum!

**AC: What should a female's typical training day consist of?**

LI: I like a dynamic warm-up, some core exercises to ready the body, and then a free-weight or body-weight program that has a woman challenging herself. I think that high-intensity exercise for short periods of time is superior to long, slow endurance sessions for most women's goals.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for the typical female client? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

LI: I think that the typical female client doesn't have a well thought-out or adequate nutritional plan and just eats haphazardly. Nutrition should be planned out and written down just like a training program. You need comprehensive testing by a competent nutrition professional to know what you need and don't need as far as micronutrients and the exact amount of macronutrients to help you reach your goals. Training for lean muscle gain and fat loss go hand in hand and so should nutrition for lean muscle gain and for fat loss. Most women probably need to eat more red meat and less complex carbohydrates like breads and potatoes.

**AC: Is there anything that you do there that you'd do differently with males? (now that's a nice reversal of my typical question)**

LI: Not really. All of my training programs are unisex because I feel that women need to train more like men anyway. Men typically don't mind lifting heavy weights and working as hard as possible. Sometimes it is tough for women to realize their potential in training is so much more than they will allow themselves!

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your clients?**

LI: I push pretty hard, Alwyn! There is an excellent article on intensity called "How Hard Should You Train?" on my website [www.loriincledon.com](http://www.loriincledon.com) that was published by Muscle & Fitness Hers a few years back. Generally I vary my intensities during a workout and a training program to minimize injury and maximize muscle stimulation.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

LI: I have the utmost respect for you Alwyn and your lovely wife Rachel. I have a built-in advisory board with my husband, Thomas Incledon. I also like to pick the brains of Lorne Goldenberg, Ian Pyka, Tim McClellan, Diane Vives, and John Gray.

**AC: Some big names there. I can second the stuff about Tom. Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

LI: I like to pick something up from everyone I meet, read, or see. My original mentors were in the rehab and athletic training disciplines. But my greatest influence and help has undoubtedly been my husband. Tom's best advice is to ignore anything that is holding you back or that you might consider a hindrance and just go for it. Have a strong mind and that will lead to a strong body.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

LI: Katherine Hepburn once said that "If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun." I think that applies to life and training very well. Don't be afraid to shake things up and do something different. Just because everyone is boring themselves to sleep on the treadmill, doesn't mean that you have to as well.

**AC: When young female athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? Does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

LI: I do a comprehensive orthopedic evaluation first and then concentrate on functional tests and flexibility. I like to find out their training history and their history in their particular sport. It is also important to get a feel of the family dynamics and what exactly is pushing the female athlete – herself or her family. As far as a particular sport standing out, I've had a lot of experience training female soccer players and although I love them as people and athletes, the rigors of the soccer schedule are just crazy. The kids can play everyday of the week throughout the entire year which leads to a lot of overuse injuries and burnout.

**AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven?**

LI: I see this goal more common with non-athletes, but my evaluation remains the same. Because my background is in rehab, I have a tendency to focus on that first. I feel that if I can eliminate any potential for injury then my training program will be much more successful.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

LI: My goals as a coach are closely integrated with my client's goals. Before I train anyone, we always have an introductory session to discuss their goals, realistic assessments.

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

LI: My main philosophy is that everyone is different and needs to have an individualized approach to their training. I've trained kids, older adults, professional athletes and average people. The one thing that I've learned is that a cookie-cutter system absolutely doesn't work. There will always be similarities throughout training programs, but ultimately they have to be personalized.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

LI:     1. Keep a training diary  
          2. Don't be afraid to voice concerns, especially joint and muscle pains, to your trainer.  
          3. The beginning is the hardest part – it WILL get better from here!

**AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?**

LI: It seems like most people prescribe to the “more is better” philosophy – if an hour of weight training is good, then two hours will be even better! I have found throughout the years that allowing your body to recover is just as important as making it exercise! I think that recovery should be planned into a training program just like the particular exercises, reps and sets. Recovery could be as simple as a day off of all exercise or could involve a day of stretching, gentle yoga or light swimming. Sometimes it's tough to convince people that the body needs that recovery in order



to grow, repair and stay healthy. But I like to train my clients pretty tough so that they will welcome the recovery sessions!

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

LI: I think we've got it covered!

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

LI: I've got lots of great stuff on my website at [www.loriincludon.com](http://www.loriincludon.com) and in my book, Strength Training for Women, published by Human Kinetics.

*Lori and her husband are two of the nicest people in the fitness industry, if either of them are speaking in your area make sure you get out to see them. And whether you're male or female – you NEED to pick up Lori's book – some great stuff in there, regardless of gender. Thanks for the interview Lori.*

**MIKE BOYLE**

Mike Boyle has been in the field working with real athletes and real people long before it was trendy to do so. Mike was a competitive powerlifter who took his real world experience into the strength coaching realm and has helped the industry advance our theories ever since. One of the industry's good guys, Mike has taught me a lot and I really appreciate his giving his time to do this interview.

For Mike's latest product - the Functional Strength Coach series - [click here](#)

<http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?Clk=1036576>

**AC: Mike, Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current training commitments?**

MB: I'm currently training the Boston University Hockey team, a few NHL players, as well as a handful of personal training clients.

**AC: What should a typical training day consist of?**

MB: I don't have a typical day. It varies based on time of year. I train 3-4 clients on Tue-Thur and in addition, teach two courses at University of Massachusetts- Boston. I teach Strength and Conditioning and a class called Fitness Concepts. On Mon-Wed-Fri. I primarily work with college athletes, and work on my other business ventures. From October through April it's either seminars or hockey games on the weekend.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for the typical client? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

MB: I try to get my clients to eat better quality food and to eat more often. My personal training clients tend to be educated, high achievement oriented males. Most are not looking to loose weight to any significant degree. The youngest is 39. The oldest is 58.

I guess I would classify myself as a Zone guy. 40-30-30. The big push is to eat regularly and make better choices. I don't really do enough in this area. I hate to flatter you but, you have really made me rethink some of this.

**AC: Is there anything that you do there that you'd do differently with females?**

MB: I treat females the same as males. No light weight (an oxymoron by the way), high rep crap.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push?**

MB: We record everything we do. Training intensity will be based on how the client feels if I am personal training. Age and energy level is an issue. Injuries become a factor. It really is different every day with every client. Most came to me because they had some type of orthopedic issue. With that said, I'm a big PRE fan. I always try to do more than I did in the last workout. More reps, more weight, something. I love Stuart McRoberts HardGainer and Brawn. Two great simple books.

With my college guys, we test in a number of areas. VJ, %Fat, 1 RM Hang Clean, 1 RM Front Squat, 1 RM Bench Press, RM Pullups, 300 Shuttle, 2 mile run, 10 mile AirDyne, to name most. We can base lifting on percent of max. With conditioning we do lots of interval stuff, much of it based on heartrate.

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

MB: Obviously you mean besides you! I love the Athletes Performance guys. Although I may not agree with everything they do, they are like a training think tank. Most of my best conversations are with Mark Verstegen or with any of his staff. Craig Freidman, Darryl Eto, Anthony Slater, Shad Forsythe, Omi Iwasaki. They just have lots of good minds. I also love to listen to the top PT's. Gray Cook, Kevin Wilk, Shirley Sahrman ( who I have read but never met). I always say "If you want to get smart, hang with the PT's".

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are tips you learned from them and can pass on to our readers?**

MB: I'm a lucky guy in that regard. When I was an undergrad at Springfield College my dorm director was Mike Woicek, the current NE Patriots strength coach. He now has 5 or six SuperBowl rings and was a huge help to me starting out. Another guy at Springfield at that time was Rusty Jones, now with the Chicago Bears. Mike was my first big influence and role model. Also at Springfield our weight training class was taught by a student of Bill Starr. We learned huge amounts of really progressive info from Bill's The Strong Shall Survive. In the seventies when that book was written, it was really a landmark work. I've also been lucky enough to spend time with Al Vermeil and Johnny Parker, two incredibly knowledgeable and experienced coaches.

My work for Perform Better (you'll be joining us soon), gives me access to Gray Cook, Mike Clark, Gary Gray and a host of other experts. It's an information junkies

dream. Chris Poirier at Perform Better has been providing some of the best education in the field for almost a decade now.

**AC: What tips could you add of your own?**

MB: Read more than you speak. I'm fond of saying "don't believe everything you read and more importantly don't read only what you believe". Don't be a lemming, following all the other idiots off the cliff. Look for common denominators, not differences. There is a line in a James Taylor song called Lonesome Road, "if I had stopped to listen once or twice, if I had closed my mouth and opened my eyes... I'd not be on this lonesome road". It goes back to the two ears and one mouth idea. The cliché says "it's what you learn after you think you know it all that counts". I was an incredibly arrogant fool at 25. At 45 I'm slightly less arrogant. Mark Verstegen had a great line at the NSCA this year. He said "if anyone out there thinks they know it all, could you please stay after. I have a few questions"

Best advice. If you have questions, ask them. There are very few in the field who won't take the time to answer a sincere request. (you know the ones that won't). Just don't ask stupid questions. Some people call and say "can you send me copies of your workouts" etc. Be realistic, be professional. If people help you, write a thank-you note.

When you come to visit, don't show up looking like a homeless guy. Remember, people are judgmental. I judge people based on appearance, voicemail message (Yo-leave your digits? –come on), email address (get a professional address if you want to be treated as a professional). I once interviewed a guy with two earrings and a tongue stud. You can guess he didn't get the internship. You might say that's not fair. Guess what. Neither is life. Better you figure it today than next week.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them?**

MB: Teach the basics. No sport-specific bullshit. Teach them how to lift, teach them about conditioning. Football players are the worst. I usually won't work with a high school football player. All they care about is weight. Football and the bench fascination play right into the male ego. Truth be told, I'd rather coach females. They only care about what they are doing. Males are always looking to see what someone else did and then they try to figure out how to cheat to keep up appearances.

**AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetic driven?**

MB: If they are male, I won't usually train them. I have a personal training policy "no \_\_\_ holes". I have to want to spend an hour of my life with you. Aesthetically driven males usually aren't my cup of tea. If it's a female, no big deal. All females are aesthetically driven. They just want to lose weight. Unfortunately it doesn't matter if they weigh 210 or 110, they still want to lose weight.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

MB: Hopefully to know it all before I croak. I really want to know the best, fastest way to get whatever result my athlete or client is looking for. I'm not even close.

Personally, I want to be a better educator of coaches and have some impact on the field. I'd like people to think I was humble, honest and worked hard. Most importantly. I want to be a good husband and a good dad. I'm leery when people say "I work all these hours for my kids". My daughter could care less if I'm the best strength coach in the world. She cares if I want to play Connect Four or Monopoly Junior.

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

MB: Train hard, not cute. Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. Be balanced. Be strong, be powerful, be fast, be in great shape. I see too many pre-hab cute programs where the athletes are weak as kittens and in lousy physical condition. I want my athletes to survive collisions. For that they need to be strong. I want them to impact the game at the end, for that they need to be in great shape. If you watched my athletes train I would hope you would say "Wow, they work hard, have great technique and are in great shape". If you said that I would sleep well. Make changes when they are obvious but, as my friend Alwyn says don't switch "big rocks" too often.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

MB: 1- Find a real coach who will teach you how to perform the basics well. Learn to front squat, clean and snatch  
2- Get in great shape. I have a quote in my facility that says "it does not take one ounce of talent to get in great shape"  
3- As a beginner, forget anything you think you know about training. It's probably a lie made up by some moron on drugs.

**AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?**

MB: 1-Buy a foam roller. Roll and stretch before every workout. Tissue quality is the most underappreciated aspect of recovery. Don't worry about length ( stretching) until you've taken care of quality ( foam rolling).  
2- Drink a post-workout shake. I don't care if it is nothing more than chocolate milk, it will be the single best thing you do for strength gain.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention?**

MB: Yes. Read about self-improvement. Not just physical, but mental. Stephen Covey, Brian Tracey, Dale Carnegie, Og Mandino. You may not become the best but, you can be a lot better.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

MB: To read more go to <http://www.michaelboyle.biz/> or check out the functional strength coach series [HERE](http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?Clk=1036576) : <http://www.1shoppingcart.com/app/?Clk=1036576>

**MIKE MAHLER**



**AC: Mike, Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current coaching commitments?**

**MM:** Thanks for doing the interview. Right now I spend a great deal of time doing kettlebell seminars around the country and overseas. In the last 2 1/2 years I have done 43 seminars. These workshops are open to the public and I offer two levels. Level 1 for beginners and intermediate and Level 2 for advanced trainees. In addition to seminars, I offer online personalized training program services. I tailor programs for people based on their goals, lifestyle, stress levels, and what access they have commitment to.

**AC: Can you tell the reader your educational or previous career background?**

**MM:** I have a B.A. in religious studies. I have been into strength training for twelve years and got hooked when I was 18. Since then, I have tried dozens of programs, read a ton of material, and realized what works and what does not. The majority of my training knowledge is from experience and I never recommend anything that I have not test driven personally.

**AC: And what is your kettlebell background?**

**MM:** I got certified in Kettlebell training by Pavel Tsatsouline back in Feb 2002. In 2003 I earned the status of Senior Kettlebell Instructor and I have taught at the last 7 kettlebell certification courses. I am responsible for re-certifying all KB instructors on the west coast.

**AC: Can you describe a typical training day consist of for your clients?**

**MM:** I do not do a lot of private training and mainly work with my clients through my workshops and online services. My clients come from a variety of backgrounds. I work with doctors, house wives, martial artists, members of the military etc

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition? For mass gain? For fat loss? And I'd like your input for the vegan athlete**

**MM:** My thoughts on nutrition are very simple. If you want to lose weight, you have to reduce calories and if you want to gain weight you have to increase calories. That said you want the increase in calories to come from good sources of protein, fat and carbs. In other words, do not eat a pint of ice cream to pack on some quality size. Get some EFA's in your diet and get most of your carbs from fruits and veggies. For fat loss, cut out all overly processed food such as most starches, junk food etc. Again, get all carbs from veggies and fruits with an emphasis on veggies especially green leafy vegetables. Increase water intake to 96oz of water per day and drink 2-3 cups of green tea per day to ramp up the metabolism.

I follow a vegan diet which means that I do not consume any animal products. Regardless, I think like a meat eater in the sense that I make sure to get protein and fat in every meal. Thus, the macronutrient profile in my diet would be similar to a meat eating athlete. Vegetarian athletes need to make sure to get enough healthy fats in their diets as vegetarian diets are naturally low fat. Flaxseed oil, coconut oil or milk, almonds butter, peanut butter, etc are all good sources.

**AC: *How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push your athletes?***

**MM:** All of my online clients are required to keep training journals and to send those journals to me once a week for my review. During periods of stress, training intensity and volume is reduced. Otherwise, I like to have people train hard for three weeks and then have one back off week.

**AC: *I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?***

**MM:** I am a big fan of Pavel Tsatsouline, Louie Simmons, Brooks Kubik, Charles Staley, and Charles Poliquin. I am also a big fan of your work. In addition, I am good friends with some of the best coaches around such as Steve Maxwell and Steve Cotter and talk to them frequently about training.

**AC: *Who else in the field has influenced or helped you? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?***

**MM:** Pavel Tsatsouline, John Davies, and Steve Maxwell have all been a great help. The best advice that I can give others is to associate with people that have integrity and are doing what you want to do. Ask yourself what you can do to help them out rather than what they can do for you.

**AC: *What tips could you add of your own?***

**MM:** Don't just follow others or try to be like someone else. Try things out on your own, personalize training programs for yourself and be yourself when you teach others rather than being a clone of someone else.

**AC: *When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them?***



**MM:** Find out what their weaknesses are. Most people tend to gravitate towards their strengths and ignore the weaknesses. If you have a strong upper body and weak legs, then you are weak and will not be strong until you address the imbalance.

**AC: *What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven?***

**MM:** Most trainees want to look good whether they admit it or not and there is nothing wrong with that. Proper training and diet should allow someone to get strong and in shape and look good as well. Regardless, the focus should be on productive training and factors that measure progress well such as strength and endurance rather than how you look in the mirror.

**AC: *What are your goals as a coach?***

**MM:** To teach people how to not only get stronger and in better shape physically, but teach them how to transfer that strength and conditioning to other areas of life. Real strength is a combination of mental, spiritual, and physical. Having one to the exclusion of other is not real strength.

**AC: *You use non-traditional methods in your training such as kettlebells a lot. What can you tell the reader is the extra benefit from these methods as compared to regular strength training?***

**MM:** Kettlebell are a great supplement to training and work the muscles in a different way. The off centered weight forces you to use more stabilizer muscles and you are constantly working to maintain control on KB drills. The thick handles turn just about every exercise into a grip exercise. In addition, the off centered weights help build shoulder flexibility and stability, often weak areas in many trainees. Kettlebell reveal your weaknesses and people are often surprised with how many weaknesses they have after a Kb workout.

**AC: *Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to an athlete that is just beginning structured training?***

**MM:** 1. Focus on basic compound exercises rather than doing ten different drills for one muscle group. Focus on exercises that you give you the most bang for your buck such as deadlifts, squats, power cleans, overhead presses, rows, dips and pull-ups

2. treat strength training as a practice and focus on getting good at doing the exercises rather than compromising form to lift more.

3. Keep a training journal and know exactly what you are doing at each workout you should never get to a workout and wonder what you are doing that day. Keep track of what works and what does not. It is amazing how many people do not do this and you will find very few people that make progress without some accountability.

***AC: What about recovery techniques? Any suggestions?***

***MM:*** I am a big fan of cryotherapy. Ice down muscle groups after training for faster recovery. 15 minutes will get the job done. Make sure that you have a protein/carb shake within an hour after training. I am also a big fan of supplements that enhance cognitive function such as Tyrosine, Aceyt I Carnitine and phosphatidylserine. They come in hand especially during periods of stress.

***AC: Thanks Mike ! Where can people read more about your theories and programs?***

***MM:*** At [www.mikemahler.com](http://www.mikemahler.com)

**Tony Reynolds**

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**Tony Reynolds, MS, CSCS, IYCA Level II**

Tony Reynolds is founder and Director of Performance for Progressive Sporting Systems in Terre Haute, IN.

Currently, Tony is serving on the Executive counsel and board of directors for the International Youth Conditioning Association. Tony is a chapter author for the IYCA's level one certification textbook *Developmental Essentials*, and is one of three elite lecturers that present and certify the IYCA's very prestigious Level II certification. Tony has helped or is helping to design all three levels of the IYCA's certification exams.

Prior to founding Progressive Sporting Systems, Tony served as Head Strength and Conditioning coach for Rose Hulman Institute of Technology where he worked with football, baseball, volleyball, soccer, softball, wrestling, and track and field. In addition to duties at Rose Hulman, Tony has worked extensively with Indiana State University and St. Mary of The Woods University providing sport performance enhancement for numerous teams.

In 2000, Tony served as the Head Strength and Conditioning Coach for the Cincinnati Reds Double A-team, the Chattanooga Lookouts. Prior to his stint in Chattanooga, Tony completed an assistantship with the International Performance Institute in Bradenton, Florida where he worked with professional football, baseball, soccer, tennis, and golf.

Tony is a featured author and sport performance expert for many strength and conditioning resources, including [sportspecific.com](http://sportspecific.com), [athlete.com](http://athlete.com), [bodybuilding.com](http://bodybuilding.com), along with many other industry resources. Additionally, Tony has written several books on functional athletic development.

Tony received his undergraduate in exercise science and his master's degree in Biomechanics in Human Performance from Indiana State University (ISU)

Additionally Tony is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist through the National Strength and Conditioning Association, and a Level 2 Youth Conditioning Specialist through the International Youth Conditioning Association.

**AC: Thank you for the interview. Why don't you start by telling us a little bit about your current training commitments and who are your typical clients?**

TR: My typical client is a 12-18 year old multi-sport athlete. We see everything from swimmers to football players, male and female, injured and healthy. Mostly these individuals are looking to improve performance and prevent injury. Several have come for injury recovery purposes.

**AC: What should a typical training day consist of ?**

TR: what SHOULD a typical day consist of? In an ideal world, it would consist of full night of restful sleep. Adequate nutrition divided up into healthy rounded meals. Managable levels of stress. I cannot say there is a "typical" training workout to go along with the typical training day. If I had to force our training into a template it would look something like this:

Warm-up: Dynamic only unless there is reason to statically stretch something; We have several different jump rope, medball, dumbbell, tubing, bodyweight, and combo warm ups that we do.

Neural Acceleration exercises (sometimes plyometrics)

Box drills, agility ladders, agility hoops, lines, dots, free space, combo drills

Strength Training- totally dependant on the athlete. With younger kids we keep things more game oriented and include a lot of playground activites-i.e wheel barrow hand walks, light hopping squat, lunges, crawling and climbing, throwing and catching, etc.

Older kids we get a lot more structured and tend to focus on the posterior chain and other non mirror oriented muscles. We get good a developing high levels of force and at applying that force rapidly and in multiple directions and planes.

**AC: What are your thoughts on nutrition for the typical client? For lean muscle gain? For fat loss?**

TR: I work with kids, so this is not typically a concern of mine. For my older teens, I tell them to spend their money on health food rather than supplements. Kids develop like weeds and will typically grow from anything. For lean muscle gain, I typically suggest that they eat everything the can see. If it cannot run away from them, eat it. I tell them to avoid eating candy, a lot of fast food, and or greasy foods, but everything else is fair game. They are also told that they need be training equally as hard as they are eating.

For the heavier late teens, we look at their diet, we look at their training, and we try to moderate. I think kids have very few choices when it comes to what they eat. We just need to make sure they understand what good or at least decent choices are. Just because mom and dad eat a bag of cheetos at night, doesn't mean its okay. Most kids just don't know this stuff.

**AC: Is there anything that you do there that you'd do differently with males?**

TR: I approach weight loss much more cautiously with females than males (remember that I am talking about middle school and high school kids here). I think males are much less apt to develop many of the eating disorders that we see, and are less conscious of weight problems. I tend to focus more on the parents with the females, and more on the athlete with the males. I don't do anthropometrical measurements with any of my younger athletes, unless there is a direct request and the request makes sense. The older males I like to do them to show the kids how they are growing. Most young females will never step on a scale or get measured in my gym.

**AC: How do you monitor training intensity - how far do you push?**

TR: I design all of the programs that are implemented in my gym. I spend a lot of time at my desk in the planning stages to insure a safe progression. With teens, this tends to be nothing more than a developing a starting point. They grow and change so quickly that it is impossible to quantify future volumes and intensities in a plan. You just have no clue what that kid will be able to do in a month. I also find that young athletes are never the same two days in a row. With school, homework, practice, work, chores, growing, and all of the other things that go into being a kid, they tend to be either mental or physically exhausted on occasion. On these days we scrap anything structured and go with the flow..

In general, I like to have a general game plan that is designed to fix development problems for the kid, and let the program grow into more of a performance-based program as the kid matures. "Sport specific" does not exist for kids and many times for teens. The need a good foundation to build off of before you go to crazy with specialization. When it is time, we look at the sport and the issues of the athlete and draw them into the weight room. This is when program development gets real time consuming

**AC: I know you study the field a lot. Who do you go to for training advice?**

I look everywhere. I have volumes of copied old Soviet Sports Reviews in my office. I have almost every article Louis Simmons and Dave Tate wrote. I love Verkoshanski, Siff, and all of the other greats. I also love to study guys like Santana, Mike Boyle, Brian Grasso, Alwyn Cosgrove, etc. I love to view multiple perspectives and derive my own methods. I have books and videos on everything (except bodybuilding, yoga, pilates, and anything that combines them) from physical therapy topics, massage therapy, powerlifting, general strength training, martial arts, speed development, agility, plyos, and on and on.

So it's not just one main influence-Louie and Dave for their influence on band and chain training and powerlifting programming, C. Santana for creative training techniques, Lee Taft for speed development, Siff and Verkoshanski (spelling) for scientific perspective

**AC: Who else in the field has influenced or helped you ? What are the best tips you learned from them and can pass on to your readers?**

I think this is covered in the last question. My golden rule is the following:

Learn, understand, practice, play, and justify.

If you live by this rule, your programs and training will be great. If you are nothing more than a person who jumps on a bandwagon and blindly follows the masses, you will never be a great coach, and you will probably hurt a lot of people in your path.

**AC: When young athletes come to you for training, what's the first thing you do with them? does any particular sport stand out as being better than another?**

The first thing I do is watch them walk in the first day. I will watch them from a far to see what they look like in their natural environment. At this point they have not been influenced by me, and are not thinking about being assessed. I will be taking either mental or physical notes on them at this time. I will then sit them down and discuss their goals, injury histories, our policies etc. We typically then go into the gym for assessments. I rarely test athletes anymore. Rather I assess how the move. How do the jog, sprint, shuffle, skip, cut, stop, turn, jump, land, lunge, squat, balance, focus, exert themselves, etc. From this I typically begin the process of program design. What looked weak, what looked strong. Were their problems nothing more than mechanical or were the strength and mobility oriented.

As I said earlier, sometimes I will do some anthro measurements with my older kids. But we don't train for aesthetics, so what is the benefit.

**AC: What about someone who's goal is primarily aesthetically driven ?**

I can honestly say, I don't typically work with these people. It is not something I enjoy so I don't do it.

**AC: What are your goals as a coach?**

My goal is to be touted as the best strength coach ever. I know it sounds cliché, but it is true. I want to be the best, and nothing less. When someone says strength and conditioning, I want my name to come up.

**AC: In a nutshell - What is your training philosophy?**

I am going to use your phrase here Alwyn, because it summarize my training philosophy much more concisely.

Part one: Make the Program Fit the Athlete, Not the Athlete Fit the Program

Part two: Learn, understand, practice, play, and justify

Part Three: After part two review the athlete, review the program and go back to part one.

This is an endless cycle.

**AC: Could you list the 3 top tips you could give to any athlete that is just beginning structured training?**

1. Don't forget that you get strength and better during recovery, not during training.
2. There is more to your body than what you can see in a mirror.
3. Learn about the different types of training and don't just do what you see others doing. Be proactive in your learning. Also, remember that you are training to become more athletic. Preacher curls are not going to really help you that much, so avoid "Guns" and "Buns" magazines and get info that will improve performance.

**AC: What are the most common mistakes that you see strength coaches and trainers make?**

I think this industry still tends to harbor too many bodybuilding philosophies. Many coaches still have the “train muscles” rather than the “train motions” mentality. Their focus is too often on isolative machine type training with open chain exercises (leg extensions and curls). I also think there is a tendency to jump on the neatest and newest fad bandwagon that is coming around the corner. Every coach should constantly study their craft and be able to justify every element of their program.

**AC: What mistakes have you made as a strength coach or trainer?**

I find that I make mistakes on a daily basis. I think the biggest mistake that I have made in the past was that I thought I knew everything. In retrospect, I was, and still am truly very ignorant about what I do. It don't know how many times I have learned that major cornerstones of my program were absolutely wrong. I thought I knew speed development until I met Lee Taft. After 5 minutes of talking with Lee, I threw every program I had ever written into the trash and started over. My athletes have benefited exponentially. I thought I understood assessments until I met Bill Hartman. Once again, I realized that I had a lot of work to do and a lot to learn.

**AC: How do you explain your system/program to your athletes so that they understand what they are doing? Or do you do this at all?**

I am an educator at heart. I love to learn and to teach. I truly feel that knowledge is power and that the more the athlete knows about their body and what they are doing to it, the better their results will be. I explain the purpose and the rationale behind every exercise and drill they do. I always refer back to their sport and demonstrate how everything is related to development of their specific needs. I try to get them to the point where they can coach me and explain to me why they are doing the things they are doing. Most of my athletes could work for me after the first year of their training.

**AC: What about recovery techniques ? Any suggestions?**

First and foremost, you need to work harder and recovering than you do at training. Address your sleep. Make sure you are getting plenty of sleep. This will help your recovery.

Address your daily nutrition.

Eat an easily digestible carb and protein within 20 minutes post workout.

Stay active on your off days. This does not mean do a squat workout on your recovery days for your legs. Rather do some GPP work (ie sled dragging, dynamic warm up). Play a game of basketball. Ride your bike.

Sit in the hot tub

Do some hot cold treatments.

Get a massage or at least a massage stick.

**AC: What tips and tricks can you share that have made your strength and conditioning program better?**

Be hungry for new knowledge. Never be satisfied with what you know. There is so much cool stuff out there that many of us do not even know exists. Read books and articles, watch videos, go to conferences, call other coaches, take time each day and go into the weightroom and PLAY. Hell it's what we do for a living, take advantage of it. Everyday I try to find at least 20-30 minutes to play and be creative. Many times, I come up with a bunch of nonsense, but occasionally I come across a keeper. It also

keeps my interns and coaches learning and growing as professionals.

**AC: What are the most glaring weaknesses you find in athletes?**

They are "strong" in the wrong places. They tend to train like bodybuilders and do not develop strength that will augment athleticism. I see too many quad, pec, and biceps dominant athletes. They lack strength in their posterior chain, triceps, upper back and posterior shoulders. They have very poor rotational strength and stability through their core. Many cannot activate their glutes properly. They tend to have weak tight hips all the way around. I call it the "if you can't see it in a mirror while you are doing curls it ain't important" syndrome. The athletes tend to be "strong" in one plane and that's it...

**AC: Are there any exercises that you feel every athlete, regardless of sport, should do?**

I like squats and just about every variation of squatting I can think of. I also like to do a lot of horizontal loading with adjustable cable machines. I also like glute ham raises, pull throughs, different variations of step ups, upper back work...

**AC: What is the biggest obstacle you have to face as a strength coach or trainer?**

COACHES!!!! Their training programs are still from the 70's, and they are not interested in changing.

**AC: How do you deal with hesitant and/or stubborn coaches that don't agree with your program?**

Prepare for a rant...I don't. I am past the proving myself stage, and I no longer have the energy to fight what usually tends to be losing battle. Most of the coaches that have any sort of hesitation or problem with what I do, are usually not going to change their mind. If they have a true question about something, I will happily sit down and have a discussion. However, the ones that just want to point out: 1. How they have been doing the same program for 100 years and it has always worked fine 2. And they don't need any help, after all...it's just weight training and speed development, not brain surgery 3. And they did this program in 1972 when they played in college so it's all they need These coaches, more than likely are not going to sit down and listen to my "all but traditional" type methodologies. Bands and chains? 1 legged what? Rotational? Its not normal it must be wrong. One other thing, I also have discovered what I call the "you must live 200 miles away to be an expert" syndrome. To this day I cannot get a local coach interested in anything I have to offer. Yet, I get emails everyday from coaches, parents, and athletes from all over the world. (sorry but this is a sore spot with me). I am busy and I make a good living, so...I have learned to just focus on the people that are interested and that do care about getting better.

**AC: What advice would you have for those wishing to become a part of the industry?**

Figure out whom you truly want to work with. Young athletes, college athletes, professional athletes, bodybuilders, weight loss and fitness clientele, elderly, whatever and learn everything you can. Once again, educate yourself daily and take time to play. A big tip is to go train under the best that you can find. Spend time picking the brains of the Louie Simmons, Dave Tates, Carlos Santanas, Lee Tafts,



Brian Grassos, Paul Cheks, and Tony Reynolds of the world. Learn as much from every person you can and develop your own philosophies. Practice what you preach and get in the trenches and try your newfound knowledge on yourself before you sick in on a client. Learn your craft, thoroughly, make good connections with great coaches, work hard, and never settle. You will do great in the industry, and you will help many very needy clients.

**AC: Anything else you'd like to mention ?**

First and foremost, you got to love what you do for a living. If you don't, why are you doing it. Second, look at life as an opportunity for discovery. We tend to live in little bubbles and forget all of the really unbelievable stuff that exists. Expand your knowledge and expand your experiences. The more you learn and experience the more you will realize that you don't know that much. It's a big world, and you will never know everything there is know about everything, but you can know more than you did yesterday. So be proactive in your education.

My wife says to make life a journey, not a destination (as she writes her 19 different check lists). I agree with this whole heartedly. For this reason I no longer worry about the future.

**AC: Where can people read more about your theories and programs?**

My website is [www.pssathletics.com](http://www.pssathletics.com). On this site you can sign up for my mailing list, read my articles, talk on my forum, and best of all...Buy my products.

## **Interview with Female Strength Coach Rachel Cosgrove**



**Hi Rachel, and thank you so much for the interview. Let's start by discussing your training background. What sports and activities did you participate in while you were growing up? Was there one in particular that you concentrate on?**

RC: Growing up I competed as a dancer in jazz, ballet and tap. I spent the majority of my time in the dance studio. I went on to become a professional dancer when I was sixteen and danced professionally until I was 23 when I started my career as a strength and conditioning coach.

**How did your participation in sports lead to a career in strength and conditioning?**

RC: I learned how to lift weights when I was 10 or 11 years old from my dad. We would go to the gym together 2-3 times a week. I was hooked on working out from then on. I went to college and earned a B.S. in Exercise Physiology from UC Santa Barbara but this was just the beginning of my knowledge as a strength and conditioning coach. As my dance career progressed I realized how much strength training played a part in making me a better dancer.

I moved to New York after graduating from college to continue my dance career. While living there I also got a job working as a personal trainer. That's when I met Alwyn Cosgrove, who later became my husband. He was the first one to open my eyes to the science behind program design and how you can design a training program specifically for your sport. My own training programs took a huge jump and I noticed a big difference in my dancing. I also started to experiment with my own clients and saw amazing results.

Fitness and strength training soon became a passion of mine as well as my dancing and I entered the world of Fitness Competitions where I could do both. I got extremely involved with the gym and training my clients and my own workouts and realized that this is what I wanted to pursue as my career.

**What is your current job? Would you describe your typical day for us ?**

RC: Currently my husband, Alwyn Cosgrove, and I run our own fitness and sports training center in Santa Clarita, California. So I am a trainer, a manager, a secretary, an accountant and my own boss. I train between 20-25 clients a week. A typical day... wake up at 5:30am (I'm a morning person), train my first client at 7am and train clients until about 2pm. This is when I do my own training and I'm home by 5:30ish most days. My day consists of all shapes, sizes and ages of clients. I love my job and I love helping people achieve their goals

**What qualifications do you have?**

RC: I have a bachelor of Science in Exercise Physiology and am a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist with the NSCA. I also hold many other certifications such as with the International Sports Science Association, Ian King's Foundations of Physical preparation certification and with the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America. I am currently in school earning my masters in dietetics and nutrition. I have also taken seminars with Charles Staley, Ian King, Charles Poliquin, Eric Serrano and Charlie Francis.

**Who has influenced you in your career ?**

RC: My dad is the one who first introduced me to the gym and weight training, we used to get up at 5 am three mornings a week and ride our bikes to the gym before work. He use to teach me all of his "old school Charles Atlas" training techniques. Alwyn Cosgrove hired me for a job at Golds Gym in Times Square when I first decided to become a trainer and I thought I knew all their was to know.... He opened my eyes to how much I still had to learn. He taught me a great deal about program design and introduced me to people such as Charles Poliquin, Eric Serrano, Charles Staley, Charlie Francis and Ian King who have all been influential in my career. I have taken extensive seminars with all of them and have furthered my knowledge of training even more.

**How have you furthered your career?**

RC: Since entering the field of strength and conditioning I am one of the few females who has earned my CSCS as well as become certified as a USAW Olympic Weightlifting coach and become a CHEK Nutrition and Lifestyle Coach. It surprises me how few females there are in this industry. I have also worked closely with Charles Poliquin, Ian King, Dr. Eric Serrano and Paul Chek. I have read numerous books on both strength training and nutrition and have become very involved in the industry.

Nutrition has become my new passion and I have been taking courses and studying more and more about nutrition and how it affects an athlete's performance. My husband and I moved to California in 1999 and opened our own place where we train athletes as well as clients of all levels. I also run a separate nutrition program out of our facility.

**That's an incredible motivational path for our readers. Where did you begin with your first training job? Were you immediately involved in the training of athletes?**

RC: I actually started in the industry teaching aerobics at a YMCA while I was in college. When I moved to New York I worked as a personal trainer at various gyms and eventually had my own independent clientele. I didn't work with any athletes until after I got my CSCS and my husband and I opened our own place in California. But I believe everyone is an athlete.

My very first client I ever trained was a lady who had never worked out in her life and was extremely unfit. I worked with her for two years and by the second year she was competing in horse back riding. This was something she used to do when she was young and we worked on getting her fitness levels up to the point where she was able to compete again at 47 years old! I have also worked with a woman who wanted to run a marathon. She had run one before but hadn't run in years. During a twelve week period of strength training and running she was able to get a personal best in her marathon! Anyone who runs a marathon is an athlete!

So I guess I would say I was immediately involved in training athletes because I believe everyone is an athlete whether they are a housewife or a full time training athlete. Everyone should train like an athlete. Now I work with some full time ice skaters and marathon runners but to be honest I would rather help someone achieve something they never thought they could do. I leave most of the full time athletes to my husband but I do train some of them. I do work with a lot of the athletes on their nutrition.

**Do you feel there is a shortage of good females in the Fitness Consultant business ?**

RC: There isn't a shortage of females but there is a shortage of qualified, knowledgeable females. Too many females get away with not knowing anything about training because they are in great shape themselves. At most of the seminars I go to I am always one of 2-3 females in a room full of men. Sometimes I have been the only female. There don't seem to be too many female trainers learning and expanding their knowledge of training.

**Any advice in particular for females in the field ?**

RC: Read, go to seminars, and learn everything you can. It is important to keep up with such a fast changing industry, never stop learning. Don't feel like you have to prove yourself because you are a female in this industry, as long as you are knowledgeable and know what you are doing you will gain respect. Most men think they know more about weight training than any female no matter how much experience they have. I have had male clients who didn't want to train with a female but eventually trained with me reluctantly. Because I knew more about training than they did I have kept them as clients and they refuse to train with anyone else. Just be knowledgeable.

**What do you see as the biggest problem in this industry today ? And what can young would-be trainers/coaches do to avoid these pitfalls ?**

RC: The biggest problem is a lack of standards in our industry for fitness trainers. There are so many trainers who don't know what they are doing, injuring people and giving us the stereotype of a "personal trainer." There are still gyms who hire underqualified individuals without any certifications or experience. This makes it hard to gain respect as a trainer. To overcome this, trainers need to become much more

then this stereotype and create a standard far beyond that of the typical trainer. Take continuing education, learn about rehabilitation, gain knowledge that will set you apart from an industry that has a low standard currently in place. We need to change that standard.

**What specific problems do you see that women have with their own training ?**

RC: Most females are scared to lift too much weight and prioritize aerobics over weight training. They don't want to "bulk up" so they lift light weights for lots of repetitions. This is the biggest mistake because if they don't lift enough weight they will never get lean. Females don't realize how hard it is to bulk up. Two years ago I started competing in fitness competitions and a judge told me I needed to add some muscle to my shoulders and my legs. For two years I have been trying to "bulk up" my shoulders and legs and let me tell you that getting too bulky is not a problem. Also when you have more muscle and less fat women don't realize that they are actually smaller, too much muscle is a good thing. Doing a lot of aerobics is also a common mistake most women make. Aerobics is actually counterproductive. Doing too much will result in burning up muscle tissue and slowing your metabolism down. So women— Make sure you lift heavy and stay away from the aerobics classes.

**How did your experiences as an athlete help you work specifically with other young female athletes?**

RC: We work with a lot of full time ice skaters at our facility and being a dancer I experienced many of the same pressures they experience. There is so much pressure on these young girls to look a certain way and I always struggled with that as a dancer. I never had a ballerina type body. I was always more muscular. I had to learn to work with what God gave me and strength training helped me to do that. I could change the way my body looked with exercise. I also learned about nutrition at a young age and I think it is so important for these young girls to learn how to eat properly.

I also like to emphasize with the athletes that it has to be fun! If they aren't having fun and don't love what they do then they shouldn't continue doing it.

I also realize the importance of their sport. Strength training is to supplement their sport and if they aren't getting better as an athlete then I am not doing my job. They are not here to lift weights; they are here to improve their sport whether it be ice skating, golf or running.

**Let's talk about the athletes you work with now in more detail. What types of sports do they play?**

RC: I work with many different athletes with many different levels. Most of the clients I have now have been with me for years. I haven't taken on any new clients in the last year. I train a few marathon runners, a golfer, a soccer player and some ice skaters.

**Do you have a specific training philosophy that shapes your programs?**

RC: Women need to lift heavier weights and stop being afraid of getting "big and bulky." Train for a specific goal whether it be a vertical jump, to run faster, or to change your body composition. Your program needs to have a specific goal in mind. Work on one thing at a time.

**On a general level, what are the two top tips you would give a young female athlete that is looking to improve their sport performance?**

RC: 1. Believe in themselves. Conceive, Believe and Achieve! Goal setting is very important with young athletes so they know what they are working towards.

2. Work toward one goal at a time. Don't try to do too many things at once. Pick one goal and put all of your energy toward it.

**When female athletes come to your gym, what are the typical strengths and weaknesses of these athletes? Do they excel in aerobic capacity and have a lack of upper body strength?**

RC: Most female athletes don't know their own limits. They don't realize how much harder they can work until they have a coach to teach and coach them. I would say that is their biggest weakness. As far as physical weaknesses it really depends on what sport they play. Before training them we do an extensive evaluation to find out where they are weak and everyone is different depending on their background. The same goes for strengths.

**What do you know now that you wish you knew five years ago ?**

RC: I wish I knew as much as I do now about personal development, goal setting and developing a plan for my life. I have always had a philosophy of "Jump and the Net will appear." So taking risks was something I was never scared to do, I just never had a plan once I jumped. I have recently learned how to direct those risks and chances into a plan for what I want out of life and accomplishing what I set out to do. I have learned that if you set a goal you can achieve it. Anything is possible!

**Rachel, we appreciate all the time you have given us. Can you let the readers know more about your facility, your location, and how to contact you? Thanks again so very much and best wishes in your career!**

RC: Our facility is located in Santa Clarita, California. We offer individualized training programs that produce results as well as a specific nutrition program. Both of these programs are also available online or over the phone. Please check out my website at [www.rachelcosgrove.com](http://www.rachelcosgrove.com). Feel free to contact me with any questions at [rachel@rachelcosgrove.com](mailto:rachel@rachelcosgrove.com).

**Interview with Alwyn Cosgrove**

By Jason Ferruggia



In our continuing effort to bring you the best training information available anywhere on the web, this week we are proud to introduce the newest member of our staff, Alwyn Cosgrove. A highly sought after expert, Alwyn has been training athletes for over sixteen years and has developed a reputation as one of the leading authorities in the strength and conditioning industry. Although he is nationally recognized and writes for several of the top mainstream magazines in the fitness industry, fear not my friends, because Alwyn shares the Darkside attitude of everyone here at EliteFTS.com and always tells it like it is. He is not afraid to speak his mind and call bullshit when he sees it. Aside from being a great strength coach, Alwyn Cosgrove is one of the most genuine people I know and probably wouldn't hesitate to take a phone call from me at four in the morning to discuss my new found way of tying my shoes faster; that's just the type of person he is. Recently, after one such call, I had the opportunity to interview Alwyn and welcome him to the staff. Although he wished I had called at a normal hour, he was more than willing to speak his mind.

**Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your background and how you get started?**

AC: I was a competitive martial artist – LOVED to fight. After winning a few fights, and losing a few I realized that the people I beat, or didn't beat knew the same martial art as I did. This fascinated me. How could one man beat another man, who had the exact same knowledge about fighting? Strategy plays a part, but that's part of what you should already know.

It kind of hit me that the only thing separating the winner from the loser was how they applied the techniques. How fast they moved. How hard they hit. How long they could go for. When technical skill was identical between two competitors, the strongest and fastest athlete will win almost 100% of the time. In other words it was fitness and conditioning that would end up determining who took home the gold.

With this in mind, I started studying physiology, and the methodology of training. This engulfed me. I went to college in Scotland to study it, continued on to a college in England to study some more, and to this day over 20 years since I first walked into a martial arts class I still spend about an hour or so each day still researching the best physical preparation methods the world has to offer.

**Q: I know you competed for years in martial arts, can you tell us a little bit about that?**

AC: My career ended with seven national titles, five titles in five different weight classes and several international medals. I was prepared to fight anyone, at any

weight, confident that my superior conditioning methods would carry me through. It usually did, and as a light middleweight fighter I managed to beat the national champions at both middleweight and at light-heavyweight in the same year. My training was actually ahead of it's time back then. My only mistake was I did way too much endurance training and not enough raw strength work.

**Q: When did you decide you wanted to do this for a living and how did you go about embarking on this path?**

AC: It was while in college I started being approached by other athletes to help them, with their training including a National level rugby player, and the captain of the track team. And then two Taekwon-do fighters moved to where I was enrolled in college to have me advise them on their training. They both won the nationals that year.

This was a good time for me – as I was learning training theory and methodology academically, and actually applying it at the same time –figuring out what works in the research may not work as well with real athletes in real situations – not too many people get to experience both approaches at once. It really helped ‘fast-track’ my development. I think that's when I realized that my obsessive studying and note-taking wasn't normal. Maybe I had something to offer. I continually researched and refined what the science showed would work, what the real world showed did work, and what the top strength coaches in the field had shown had worked. This concept of continually refining the training methods continues with me to this day.

After graduating college I left the shores of Great Britain and headed for the United States. I ended up at the US Athletic Training Center in New York City, where my learning continued under Gary Guerriero – the owner of the center. With his help I was exposed to the training of Olympic Athletes, Professional football players, dancers – a whole new world. Now I was getting paid for something I'd do for free!

**Q: Who were some of your biggest influences when you were getting started and who continued to guide your path as you went?**

AC; I studied under anyone and everyone Jay. Seriously I own more training books than most Borders or Barnes and Noble stock!! I fell into the guru worship BS for a while (i.e. brainwashed) but I regret nothing – it was all a learning experience. I've been guided by a ton of people. There are those that really helped me, and there are those who are nothing but scum. They all know who they are.

**Q: Who do you respect in this business, who do you learn from?**

AC: I learn more from conversations or emails from guys like you Jay, than I ever get from a book or a science journal. Guys that are in the trenches, who's income depends on getting results – these are the guys you need to listen to. They give me more info than you could get in a year of reading books. There are a LOT of top “names” in this industry who don't have any athletes training under them. In fact they have no clients at all. Yet – with the birth of the internet – these guys have the guru status.

**Q: How has your approach to training evolved over the years?**

AC: To quote Bruce Lee – Absorb what is useful, Reject what is useless and add what is specifically your own. It has evolved to include more non-traditional types of



training – but don't misinterpret this – the basics are still the single most important part of any program. If you don't have the "big rocks" in place – your squats, your rows etc, the rest is just details.

**Q: How does your approach to training differ from the norm and what do you do that stands out as a major difference from how most people train athletes?**

AC: Every athlete needs flexibility. Every athlete needs strength. Every athlete needs speed. I've never seen an athlete who was too fast, too strong or too flexible. What do I do that's different from the norm? The "norm" is so f-ing bad that the main difference is I get results. No bullshit. What do most people do? Aerobics for fat loss. Body part split routines etc  
I think aerobics is one of the biggest lies in the fitness industry.

**Q: For many years, when we were young and innocent, you and I were suckered by many of the same scam artists in this business, if you learned anything from that experience what would it be and what can you take away from that experience as a positive?**

AC: Ashwagandha in 3g divided doses does NOT increase your Scott Curl 11.5% (in-joke there).  
I learned that the Wizard of Oz is nothing but a little man hiding behind his ego. When you pull back the curtains – the mystique is gone.

**Q: Ha-ha, I couldn't have said it better myself. Speaking of that, what are the biggest scams and worst training gimmicks out there today?**

AC: Far and way the winner is aerobic training for fat loss. My opinion on most training methods is they have their place (as long as you respect the BIG rocks theory). It's just that crappy trainers tend to overemphasize them. There's always an overemphasis in the short term and an under-emphasis in the long term. Think about stability ball work for example. Can it be useful? Absolutely. Should you do every single exercise in your routine on a ball, on one leg and get so good that you could make Cirque de Soleil but still not be able to lift ½ your bodyweight in a Deadlift? Of course not. (And no disrespect to the Cirque De Soleil performers. Those guys are strong.). The overemphasis by certain idiots is a bigger problem than any of the methods themselves.  
And anything written by \_\_\_\_\_. (Name deleted in order to be politically correct) That guy's a complete clown. I can't believe he's still around. His big comeback a few weeks ago made my stomach turn.

**Q: What are some of the most important tips you could share for some one looking to get into the business?**

AC: Commit to being a student. Learn from everyone. If you don't learn something about your craft everyday – you're going backwards.  
Just yesterday I purchased two training books and a DVD. It only takes three years of studying an hour per day, to become an expert in anything you want. And the sad fact is, most of us spend an hour a day doing something. So in three years you'll be

an expert on that same something. So it's your choice – sports conditioning, business? Or maybe it'll be 'Friends' or 'Seinfeld' reruns!

Interning with people is the fastest way to get to where you want to go. You'll learn more in a one-on-one conversation with a good professional in the field than you'll learn in a year on your own. And remember – you have to invest in your own education. You're going to have to spend money to learn. But you'll make it back tenfold.

**Q: I know you are big into assessment and body weight training. Why is this so important and what impact does it have, etc?**

AC: Assessment – if you're not assessing – you're just guessing. That's the key. I look for certain things when I assess a client, use certain tests. All it does is fast track my program design to get the most bang for your buck. A power lifter has the numbers that they lift – an MMA fighter for example doesn't have that same feedback. So I've developed a system of checks and balances that can really help me get results fast.

As for bodyweight training – I'm constantly amazed by how many people I meet who can bench press whatever pounds of weight, but are unable to perform 10 correct push ups (typically due to a lack of core strength and synergistic muscle stability. As far as I'm concerned – unless you can do an easy twenty push ups, you have no business getting under a bar for bench pressing. In my training facility everyone begins with bodyweight exercises. You have to *earn the right* to lift weights in my facility.

**Q: I couldn't agree more. If an athlete wants to get faster, what are the five most important things he must focus on?**

A: The ability to stop (seriously if you can't decelerate – your body will not allow you to accelerate) so training the antagonists is key. Maximum strength. Relative Strength. Posterior Chain strength. Explosive Power.

They are in no particular order but if I had to choose only one to focus on – it would be maximal strength. You get a guy stronger and pretty much everything else improves.

**Q: Jim and Dave have said that if you over think it makes your program stink. I, for one, feel the exact same way. What is your take on this? Do you think some people take the science end too far and analyze everything to death and suffer from paralysis by analysis?**

AC: Absolutely. But people need to remember that guys like Jim and Dave are instinctively writing GREAT programs because of years of experience and years of study. If *they* over-think it, it will suck, as their initial gut feeling was usually correct. So I totally agree with that.

However some of the programs I see out there – over-thinking it isn't the problem. I wonder if some of these guys even think at all!!!

You need to focus on training the qualities that are:

- 1- Needed: for example: is maximal strength necessary?
- 2- Underdeveloped: maximal strength is usually underdeveloped and could likely use some improvement.
- 3- Highly trainable: maximal strength is fairly easily improved for most athletes
- 4- Foundational to other qualities: maximal strength is foundational to speed strength and to strength endurance.

So we can make the assumption that maximal strength training for most would be a good choice in where to focus your efforts. It is needed, usually underdeveloped, easy to improve and will also improve other qualities. A no-brainer in where to spend most of your training time in other words.

This 'streamlining' of program design is what I refer to as the BIG ROCKS theory (rocks in a jar). I get asked all the time – what do you think of the Swiss Ball, of chains, of rubber bands, of plyometrics, of speed ladders etc. My answer is the Big Rocks theory.

Picture a jar packed to the brim with big rocks.

Can you fit anything else in the jar?

At first glance, no but if you think about it – you can fit some small rocks. Is it full now?

No – you can still fit some pebbles in there. Is it full now?

No – we can still add some sand – is it full now?

Still no – we can now pour in some water. Now it's full. So understand that all these bells and whistles and magnificent pieces of equipment are like the water. Its fine, it fits and it can serve a purpose – as long as you didn't forget to put in the big rocks.

By the way – even after you fill the jar with water – there's still some room for beer☺

Which just goes to show you – there's always room for a couple of beers !

**Q: That's what I always say. Before we wrap this up here, Alwyn, I would like to play a quick word association with you. I'm just going to throw some stuff out there and you say the first thing that comes to your mind.**

AC: Okay.

**Q: Stability/ balance training?**

AC: Water in the jar (See above). But still the single most over rated training factor ever.

**Q: Louie Simmons?**

AC: Probably the greatest strength training mind on the planet. The first guy who made me rethink everything I'd read.

**Q: Ten sets of ten?**

AC: A waste of time and likely to get you injured.

**Q: Drug testing in sports?**

AC: Behind drug usage. An exercise in futility.

**Q: Rap or rock?**

AC: Rock.

**Q: The number one thing some one can do to gain size?**

AC: Eat, lift, sleep, and repeat. Add weight to the bar and food to the plate.

**Q: As the newest member of our staff, what is it that our readers can expect you to bring to the table and deliver to us on a monthly basis?**

AC: A Scottish accent? Hopefully a slightly different approach to training, delivered with no bullshit and no holds barred. I'm not the most politically correct guy in the World so it will be nice to be able to let rip on a censorship free website, instead of a mainstream magazine (where I have to bite my tongue). So if you don't like what I have to say – you can kiss my hairy Scottish arse.

Seriously, if the elite readers want to see anything specific, and think I'd be the guy to go to then drop me a line. In the meantime you can reach me through my site at [www.alwyncosgrove.com](http://www.alwyncosgrove.com) or [www.martialartsconditioning.com](http://www.martialartsconditioning.com)

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