

MOTIVATING ATHLETES TO LIFT

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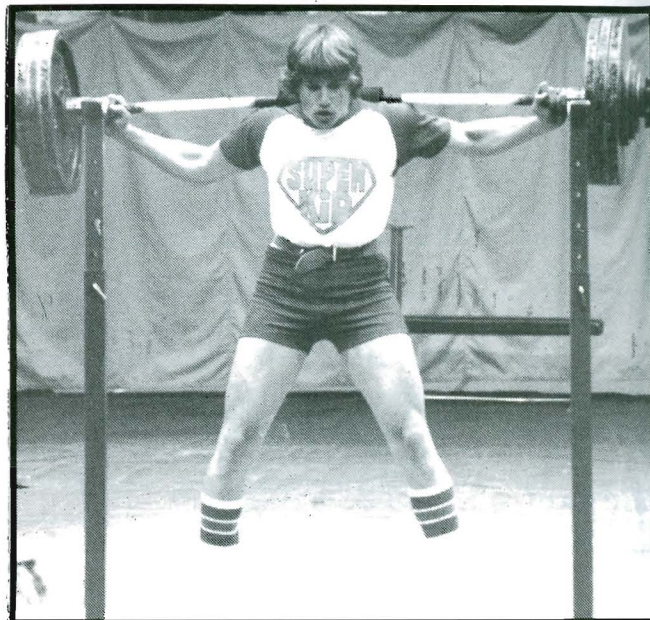
EDITOR'S NOTE: Coach Trimble has been coaching and teaching for 12 years. He holds a M.A. degree and has had a number of previous articles published.

One of the big problems faced by high school coaches is the motivation of their athletes to train with weights in their respective off-seasons. Progressive resistance, dynamic variable resistance, and weight training have finally come into wide acceptance and many coaches like to incorporate this into their programs. The problem is that we sometimes have difficulties selling this to our athletes.

It is fundamental that our high school athletes train with the idea that they are laying a foundation for the future. Train them in the Olympic and/or powerlifting styles rather than in definition-rendering bodybuilding exercises. These can come later. By training the big muscle groups, the athletes will see and feel themselves gaining strength quicker and thus will be more enthusiastic in their training. I have seen all too many high school lifters waste time with a hi-rep training program designed by a steroid-laden professional who can no more relate to our athlete than can oil relate to water.

Once we get into the weight room, describe our program, and of course, fully demonstrate each lift and its coaching points, now comes the external motivation from you, the coach. First of all, I am a firm believer in lifting with the kids. Having coached high school weightlifting for over a decade, I can distinctly point to a year when an injury prevented my training. The atmosphere in the weight room was definitely not up to standards; attendance fell off. Conversely, there have been other years when we have had three teacher colleagues working out and the student involvement was greater.

School records: Posted on the wall of the weight room and maintained regularly, these attract considerable interest. We keep records for the squat, bench press, and deadlift as well as the high-pull, curl, and clean-and-jerk. The first three are official only if they are set in our annual school-wide meet or if the lifter competes in an officially sanctioned AAU or coach-approved meet. The latter three are set during what we call our Challenge Meet, also held yearly. In this meet, a lifter must lift the school record to qualify and then is given the chance to set a new record. We also keep records for each of three weight classes selected for our purposes as heavyweight (body weight above 175 pounds), middleweight, and lightweight (below 150 pounds). Remember, the more records, the greater the motivated field. *Editor's note: We recommend 10 weight classes to give more athletes a chance at records: 115, 125, 135, 145, 155, 165, 175, 185, 200 and Heavyweight.*



External motivation can help the high school want to lift.

Awards: We give out patches to every lifter who bench presses 200 pounds or more. This individual also qualifies to have his name listed on a wall plaque for what we call the "200 Club". Similarly, we give out staff shirts with a "300 Club" logo for those lifters who bench this weight. They too, have their names recorded on an all-time listing. A new plaque is made up for the 200 Club each year. This latter weight is an excellent motivator in that it is a goal that most high school lifters can achieve with training. We give out win, place, and show trophies for appropriate winners in each of our three weight classes in the school-wide powerlifting meet. In addition, we give out a trophy called the Coaches Award which is given to a senior who doesn't place in the meet, yet exemplifies dedication by his work throughout the three-month lifting season. We have occasionally given a subscription to a top-rated nationally-known lifting magazine as an award for outstanding training efforts, too. *Editor's Note: We also recommend patches, plaques of awards for a 300-400-500 squat, 400-500-600 dead lift and a 175-235-300 clean.*

Apparel: We are big on t-shirts, shorts, jackets, sweat-shirts and so on. The kids love them and it helps sell the program.

Competition: Although many high school lifters are reluctant to enter formal competition, a coach can help foster the competitive attitude by scheduling informal meets in the weightroom. Since our winter lifting season lasts from December through February, we try to hold at least one meet per month. In December, we combine competition with overload training in our "Iron Man Meet." Here the bar is set at a given weight in the bench press, curl, and squat and the lifter reps it as many times as he can. The highest weight total wins — that is, the aggregate total of weight x reps in all three events. We of course, divide our

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and retaining physical skills. Regardless of the intervention utilized, this mental training is an ongoing process that does not start or stop with the parameters of one season. Ultimately this program works best if the coach uses a sport psychologist to conduct the interventions. The intervention phase of the program is a direct result of the testing. It is not good enough to just identify psychological needs; rather, ways should be found to meet these needs: Thus the use of the aforementioned interventions is recommended.

The final portion of the psychological program is the area of group dynamics. This topic is so extensive and important that an entire article will be devoted to it in the next issue of this journal.

In summary, the reward of this psychological profiling program are many: witnessing the athletes pulling together as a team; developing each individual athlete as a strong psychological entity; and developing a profile for each athlete which is the basis for future training. This program establishes a psychological profile for each athlete which aids both the coach and the athlete in the present and in the future. Good luck on the profiles of your athletes.



The rewards of psychological profiling can result in the athlete competing with top proficiency on a consistent basis.

EDITORS NOTE: *After reading this article, I thought how could I use this information as a high school coach. First, it is important for me to realize that dealing with the athletes innerself is as important as their physical development. Second, recognizing that I am not an expert in this area, I would be on the lookout for someone who is an expert. Personally, I would not feel comfortable with testing and interventions. However, I would not hesitate in utilizing someone who has a knowledge and an interest in this area. This person might even be in your own school or at a nearby university. Since Sport Psychology is relatively new, I believe most people would be eager to help. You may be able to get valuable assistance with just a phone call. I also recommend to screen potential people carefully.*

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people into the three aforementioned weight classes and set the bar at the appropriate weights. Since the totals tend to be astronomical, and no one fails, this is a great confidence builder. We also schedule a bench press meet with another school, hopefully in January, to prep the kids for the judging criterion and three-lift strategies that they will face later. At the conclusion of the weight training season we schedule our all-school meet. This is held at night and admission is charged. We obtain media coverage both before and after the event; we publish the results and a very thorough program sheet for fans. We bring in alumni lifters to help spot and judge the event. This meet is a big event in the lives of many of our lifters who may not participate in other school sports; and even among those who do, is a great leveller as the athlete who may have had his share of the limelight in other sports is brought to parity with the kid who struggles and works hard. We keep it in our own school because of the positive incentive of "staying within the family." However we do advocate and sponsor our lifters to compete in extra-school lifting events. Modified AAU rules prevail in the three powerlifts.

**I am not afraid of failure, only
the failure to try**

Coach Shepard

Pictures: Each year we photograph the highlights of our February meet and frame 8x10 glossy pictures of the senior winners along the wall of the weightroom as a sort of Hall of Fame. The school newspaper and yearbook give us a good lay-out, too.

Bulletin Board: This is a useful device in that it keeps the group informed of upcoming events, training blurbs, alumni and their progress, and so forth.

Diaries: We use training diaries in the form of either 4x6 cards or file folders. In these the lifters will keep a progress log. As coaches, we can check their routines and their progress. All is kept confidential.

Music: A must for the high school weightroom. Rare is the introverted, concentrating teenage lifter. Play the music loud and keep the place moving.

Supplements: We sell protein supplementation and weight gain formula to any athlete who wants it by having them pay 25-cents a week for powder additive. They are to bring milk from the cafeteria and use it as desired. Ideally, we would like to store and sell canned drink, but storage problems limit us. Even small things like this help foster a sense of unity and purpose. In the case of supplements, even if the result is only placebo, it still serves a purpose.

All told, we feel that these extras help bring more athletes into the weightroom, charge up those we have, and take a little drudgery out of a sport that many have not yet grown to love, but will.