

MOTIVATION

IN THE WEIGHT ROOM

Part One:

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Motivating your athletes to "pump iron" is not an easy task. If you have tried to get off-season athletes into your weight room you can appreciate that statement. Of course, most teams have those treasured few "iron men" who are so exuberant regarding weight training, that not even crutches can keep them out of the weight room. You've probably seen the type of athlete I'm talking about. They will workout on holidays, Sundays, throughout the summer and at 3 a.m. if you let them. But the harsh reality is that there are many more athletes who should be lifting weights, but aren't. Through education and proper motivational techniques any team can dramatically increase the number of athletes working out, and improve the quality of the program.

Here at Chamberlin High School we have motivated our athletes to the point where it is causing an overcrowding problem in our otherwise ample weight room facility. This, however, is a problem we love dealing with. Through the utilization of careful scheduling and use of equipment we have turned a real problem into something quite manageable.

I've discovered that the attitude and knowledge of the weight room instructor is the pivotal point for success of any weight program. The strength coach must be the kind of man who exudes a positive attitude. He must be giving and patient. His knowledge of weights and such also must be at least adequate enough to get young weight trainees started. However, the more knowledgeable he is the more success he will have. As a teacher in the iron room, the strength coach teaches, guides, encourages, sympathizes and congratulates. If he is weak in any area he should research it. I've personally seen coaches and/or weight training instructors who will teach a certain exercise or set-rep scheme only because it is the only one they know. The athletes are the ones who suffer because of such complacency.

The strength coach must be a real motivator. He can't give up on problem athletes who don't seem to develop as rapidly as others. Likewise he should strive to make good athletes into superior athletes. He should temper discipline with a sense of humor. He must never sit back and feel satisfied. Complacency is the beginning of the end in the weight room. The whole idea is to get better than you are. The strength coach must appeal to the athlete's desire to be the best he can be. Personal pride and personal records go hand in hand. He should



The whole idea is to get better than you are!

also teach his athletes to compare themselves only with themselves and not others.

Every little bit helps when it comes to motivating athletes. When working with young athletes we must remember that they will seek out role models. The strength coach should try to be in decent physical condition himself. The old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do", is not a particularly popular one with today's youth.

But regardless of the personal and physical attributes of the strength coach, there are several areas that can be worked on or improved upon to help ensure a productive climate in the weight room. I've divided these areas into five main categories. Each must receive attention. In the world of education, we know that every student responds to stimuli in different ways. Some stimuli bring on a stronger more favorable response, others are ineffective or less effective. By combining and varying the stimuli you can affect more athletes in a positive, productive manner. The categories are: 1) The Strength Coach 2) Proper Training Practices, 3) The Weight Room Atmosphere, 4) The Reward System, 5) The Wise Use of Examples.

The Strength Coach

No one influences more athletes in the weight room than the strength coach. The athletes being students are taught or conditioned to expect help or instruction from the adult in charge. When they seek help, the strength

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coach must also know when to help the young athletes apply the brakes to avoid injury, staleness or over-training. In him the athletes must see the value of hard work. Consistency and persistence are also key lessons the coach must take upon himself to teach.

The strength coach must also set an example by his attitude toward weight lifting. Young men are going to acquire a considerable amount of knowledge just by observing little things, like the positive attitude a coach pervades. Today's skeptical, inquisitive youth need to believe in what they are being taught and the coaches excitement or lack of excitement can be a determining factor.

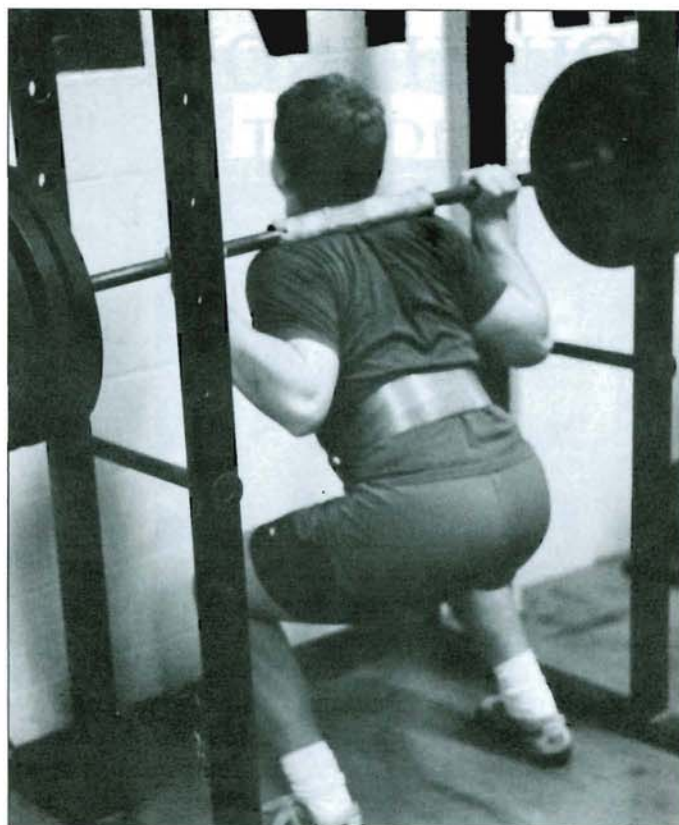
The coach sets the tone in the weight room. He is the motivator, teacher, coach, friend, father. He instructs, psyches up, congratulates, sympathizes, corrects, adjusts, re-inforces, fine-tunes and monitors all the happenings in the iron room. The success in the weight room is his, and his student's success. They work together to achieve a common goal.

The strength coach is also a confidant. He should strive to earn the trust of the athletes in his charge. Of utmost importance in this endeavor is a two way communication between coach and athletes. The concerns, problems, strengths and weaknesses must be known by the coach if he is to propel the weight trainees on to higher levels of conditioning.

Proper Training Practice

Probably the best single motivational device is success. The coach can go a long way to making the weight program successful if he can get the individual athlete to experience success. Here are a few tips to help the weight trainees experience more success.

1. The athlete must be instructed in the proper execution of exercises. The grip or stance, angle of execution, speed of the reps, amount of weight used, number of sets and reps.
2. Log the athlete's personal records in all lifts. Example: best Bench Press for five reps or best Squat for three reps. Note: it is not wise to go for limit lifts very often.
3. Set realistic short and long term goals. If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you've arrived? Daily, weekly, and monthly goals can be set. A good beginner's goal for a Squat would be five reps with body weight. A more seasoned vet might want to Squat 10% more than his present max.
4. Organize the weight room activities so every one is busy. Teach the athletes to share equipment and to help each other.



The Best Motivational Device: Success!

Weight Room Atmosphere

Obviously, the better equipped your weight room is, the more likely you will experience success. You really don't need a lot of fancy, sophisticated equipment. You should, however, strive to be as well equipped as possible.

Another key element is the look of the facility. The room should be kept in good repair and be clean. The coach should see to it that broken equipment is replaced or repaired. Weights should be kept off the floor. The floor and walls should be cleaned regularly. Walls can be painted as needed. Soft lighting is better than harsh, irritating light. The more pleasant the weight room is the more positive the psychological impact on the athletes.

Other things that can be done: A bulletin board with personal accomplishments and other pertinent information posted; posters, photos, slogans and exercise instructions on the walls. Muscle charts and diagrams help to liven the surroundings. The more pleasant and inviting the atmosphere the more likely that the trainees will return. They will come in, feel good and be proud of their weight room.

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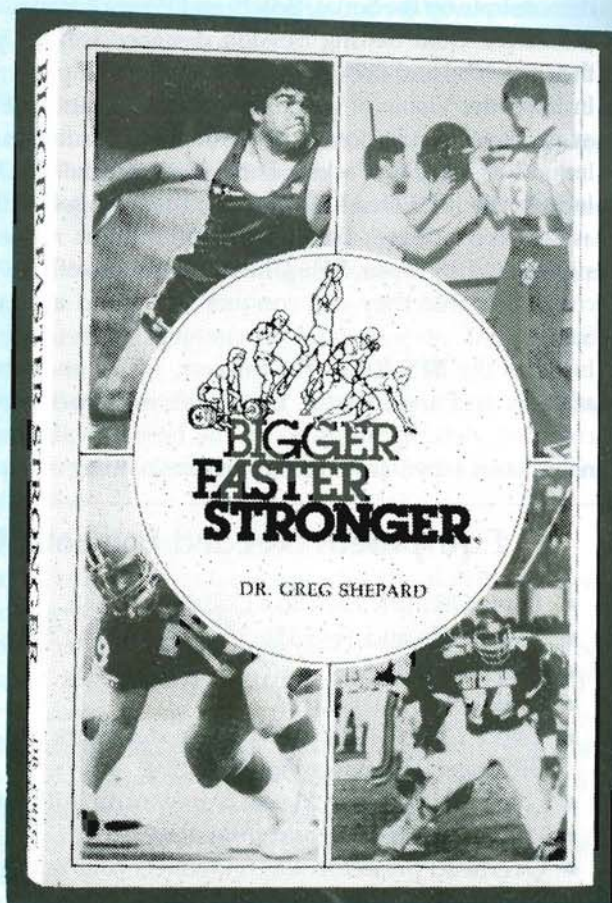
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