

Nautilus Bulletin #2

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Basic Considerations

The human body is a unit – and must be treated as such; you do not feed your body in sections, and you sleep the entire body at the same time – yet most current weight-trainees are firmly convinced that a so-called "split routine" is an absolute requirement for producing the best rate of progress. While the weight of all available evidence clearly supports the contention that more than three weekly workouts will result in a condition of overtraining – in all cases.

On May 16, 1971, Casey Viator won the Junior Mister America contest, and four weeks later, on June 12, 1971, he won the Mister America contest in the most spectacular fashion in the history of such contests – in addition to the Mister America title, he won the Most muscular Man in America title and the subdivisions for Best Arms, Best Back, Best Chest and Best Legs. And –at 19 years old – he is the youngest Mister America winner up to this point in time. More than thirty of the leading bodybuilders in the country competed against Casey in that contest – and I would be willing to bet that almost all of them trained at least twenty-four times during the four weeks immediately prior to the contest; during the same four weeks, Casey trained a total of SIX TIMES – he didn't train at all for two weeks after the Junior Mister America contest, and then he trained only three times weekly during the last two weeks before the Mister America contest. Three weekly "total body" workouts – for the legs, the back, the chest, the shoulders, the upper arms, and the forearms. Workouts requiring less than one hour and twenty minutes each – a total of less than four hours of weekly training.

Dr. Elliott Plese of Colorado State University was in DeLand, Florida during the last week of Casey's training for the Mister America contest and can certify to the frequency, duration and intensity of the workouts. Ellington Darden of the Florida State University was present during Casey's final workout on Thursday, June 10, and can also certify to the facts; during that last workout, Casey's primary leg routine consisted of only three exercises performed within a period of approximately three minutes –one set of leg presses (20 repetitions with 750 pounds), one set of thigh extensions (20 repetitions with 225 pounds), and one set of full squats (13 repetitions with 502 pounds). Each set of every exercise was carried to the point of absolute failure – and there was no rest at all between sets.

In addition to the above-outlined routine, Casey performed two sets of thigh-curls and three sets of calf-raises – thus the entire leg portion of his workout required approximately nine minutes.

And for the benefit of those people who might be led to believe that Casey is an unusually responsive subject (which, of course, he is), I will mention that all of our trainees are following an almost exactly similar program; the bodybuilders are using the leg program outlined above, the power-lifters, Olympic lifters, and football players are using the same routine during two of their three weekly workouts and then performing three sets of heavy squats during the third weekly workout (using the 10-8-6 system).

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Very similar – that is, VERY BRIEF, BUT VERY HARD – routines are being used by all of our trainees for all body parts; the entire arm routine (for both upper-arms and forearms) requires exactly seven minutes and twenty seconds – three times weekly, a total of twenty-two minutes of weekly training for the arms. Additional training is not only not required but would actually reduce the production of results; and in many cases, best results are being produced with only two weekly workouts – or with even shorter routines involving fewer exercises and-or a lower number of sets.

Most of our trainees never perform more than two sets of any one exercise –and none of our trainees ever perform more than three sets of an exercise –and some of our trainees use only one set of each exercise.

Such brief and infrequent training is an absolute requirement for the production of best-possible results from exercise – yet almost all currently active trainees devote at least five times as much weekly training time to their workouts, while producing little or nothing in the way of results in return for their efforts.

If every individual weight-trainee in the country suddenly cut his training in half – merely reduced his weekly workouts by 50 per cent, while making no other change in his training – it is my belief that overall results would be at least doubled.

Overtraining – overtraining insofar as "amount of training" is concerned –is so common that such a 50 per cent reduction in training on the part of ALL trainees would result in an immediate improvement in the rates of progress being produced by MOST trainees; an improvement that would probably double average overall results. And since such doubled results would be produced by only half as much training, the rate-of-progress would be quadrupled – a four to one improvement.

Obviously – if everybody cut their training by half – some trainees would suffer a reduction in their rates of progress; since a few people are now training properly, these few would suffer from a reduction in their training time. But for every individual that is presently training right, there are probably a hundred that are training wrong – usually overtraining; thus, for each trainee that lost from such a reduction in training time, a hundred would gain – and on the average, the overall results would be strongly positive.

If – in addition to the overall average reduction in training time suggested in the above example – everybody simultaneously started training properly insofar as "intensity of effort" is concerned, then at least another doubling of average results would be produced; so that the average rate of progress would be increased from its present level by a ratio of approximately eight to one.

If nothing else of any value is gleaned from this bulletin – but if the above point is clearly understood and put into practical application – then a long first step will have been taken in the direction of sensible training.

Barbell exercises are more productive than free-hand exercises for only one reason – because barbell exercises are HARDER than non-weighted exercises; but as you increase the "intensity of effort of an exercise, it is necessary to reduce the "amount" of exercise – Japanese wrestlers do as many as 3000 repetitions of non-weighted squats almost daily, but try doing that many squats with a heavy barbell on your back and see what happens.

I will not even suggest that we have tried literally "everything" – nor that we fully understand all of the factors involved – but we have tried a lot of things, under carefully controlled conditions and with hundreds of trainees; and the evidence always points back to the same basic conclusions – more than three weekly workouts, or more than two sets of any one exercise in the same workout, or more than a total of four hours of weekly training will almost always result in overtraining, and a reduction in the production of results.

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But in the face of widespread belief that such a brief training is of little or no value for anybody except a beginner, I have little confidence that most experienced trainees will ever be able to bring themselves to an acceptance of the truth.

The above examples on the subject of improvements that are possible by a reduction of the amount of training and an increase in the intensity of training are based on barbell exercises – such rates of improvement can easily be produced by almost any trainee, without the need for any new types of equipment; if Nautilus equipment is available then even greater degrees of improvement become possible. Most of our trainees have shown increases in their rates of progress of at least 3000 per cent – and a few outstanding trainees have improved their previous rates of progress by as much as 14,000 percent. In a few cases, the improvement has been literally infinite.

After ten years of steady training, and after having produced a physique that placed him very near the top in national competition, one subject spent only nine days training in DeLand, Florida – and during these nine days he produced more results than he did during the immediately preceding three years of training with conventional equipment. For a period of two years of steady training, his results had been exactly zero – but then, in nine days, he gained nearly seven pounds of body weight, improved his existing degree of muscularity, added 13/16 of an inch to his "cold" upper-arm measurement and 3/4 of an inch to his calves, and increased his curling strength by 50 per cent.

Since nine days will go into two years approximately eighty-one times, and since zero will go into seven an infinite number of times, it obviously follows that this trainee improved his rate of progress on a scale beyond calculation. But even that doesn't tell the whole story; during the two years of steady training that produced no results, he was training approximately fifteen hours a week – but later, during the period when he was producing such good results, he was training only about four hours a week.

In spite of his previously-established misconceptions, this man was willing to listen – and to at least try the training methods that we suggested; and his results speak for themselves. Unfortunately, some other long-experienced trainees won't listen; one famous bodybuilder on the west coast complained that he wasn't getting spectacular results from the use of a Nautilus Pullover-type Torso Machine that he had been using for two or three months – so I asked him HOW he was using it.

"Nine sets a day," he said, "every day; just like you told me."

But in fact, I told him, "...not more than NINE SETS A WEEK; and if your results aren't what you expect, then try SIX SETS a week."

I didn't have to ask him how he was doing the sets – that was obvious, he was doing them WRONG; nine PROPERLY PERFORMED sets on a Pullover-type machine would kill an adult gorilla. This man was trying to use one of our new machines as if it was a barbell – or even worse than that, as he thinks a barbell should be used; and since he has failed to learn the proper method of using a barbell during his twenty-odd years of experience, I suppose it was expecting a bit too much to even hope that he was capable of understanding the new machines.

But if any lingering traces of doubt remained regarding his inability to understand the machines, he quickly put them to rest; he altered one of the machines in such a manner that its function was utterly destroyed – and then tried to justify the changes on the grounds of improving the convenience and safety of the machine. Which action would be equivalent to installing square wheels on your automobile – and then complaining about the poor performance.

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When such an individual has produced better-than-average results from his training – as this man has – then it is only natural for many people to consider him an expert; but it should be clearly understood that final results are no proof of good methods – particularly when such final results are viewed without consideration for the amount of effort that was required to produce them.

So – in all fairness – several factors of actually very great importance must be considered before it is even possible to view final results in a rational manner; and while the individual mentioned above who altered one of our machines has certainly produced good final results, it does not follow that his training methods were good – nor that his rate of progress was even satisfactory.

A recent quotation seems to cover the situation fully, "...there are two common mistakes; some people think that intelligence is a substitute for experience – and some people think that experience is a substitute for intelligence."

People are individuals, and possible variations in the individual response to training are literally infinite – so a program that is exactly right for one man will seldom if ever be perfect for another man; but while the total number of possible variations is certainly great, the "range of possible variations" is quite small – and the limits of that range are clearly known. Because of the great number of possible variations in response to training, it is impossible to outline a program that will be "right" for everybody; but if the primary points to be covered in later chapters are clearly understood, then almost any reasonably intelligent trainee will have the knowledge required for outlining a program to suit his particular purposes.

In short, this bulletin is intended to point intelligent trainees in the direction of logical training – nothing more is even possible.