My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

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Can you believe anything that you read? Damned little.

A couple of years ago, some people started what they called a "Back Letter," which was supposed to inform doctors of the latest scientific information on the subject of treating lower-back pain. For a price, of course.

Then shortly afterwards, they published a brief report that was supposed to provide doctors with all of the facts in regard to testing and treatment protocols available for back-pain patients. For this report they charged $300.00. While the actual value of the report was something less than zero.

Then, later, in an attempt to get me to advertise in their publication, they visited me in Florida, stayed in my home while here, and then stole several large towels when they left. Following their departure, when the maid cleaned up their rooms she found that all of the towels from three bathrooms were missing.

While they were here, I asked these people just why they decided to print a back letter, and they told me … "We conducted a survey among doctors in order to determine just which subject they were most interested in, and more interest was shown to be in regard to lower-back problems."

And how many was that? Seven. Which was a greater number of doctors who showed any interest in the other subjects that were suggested in their survey. Which raises an obvious question: just how many doctors did they contact when conducting their survey? Two dozen? Three dozen? Certainly not many. And, of course, these people are presenting themselves as "experts."

For the last twenty-odd years, Joe Weider has been publishing statements about the "Weider Research Clinic," well, be informed, no such facility ever existed.

If Joe ever told anybody the truth about anything it has not come to my attention. Many of his scams have been so outrageous that I am surprised that he has managed to stay out of jail; and if the laws regarding fraud had ever been reasonably applied, he would not have stayed out of jail.

For a period of several years, tens of thousands of ads were published in attempts to sell the "Mark Eden Bust Developer," and several million of them were actually sold to girls and women who hoped to increase their bust size. Which, of course, is impossible without surgery.

The instruction booklet that was sent with this device suggested a program of exercises that would have required 22 hours of exercise each week. So, when I eventually met the man who was selling this device, I asked him why such instructions were given.

And he said … "Well, you and I both know that a few minutes of such exercise a week will produce all of the results that are possible; but when we told women that, we were getting requests for a refund from about forty percent of the customers. But, since we changed the instructions, we are now getting requests for a refund from only about two percent of the customers."

Having found that they simply did not have time to follow the suggested program of exercise, most of the customers then assumed that the lack of results was their own fault, and thus did not request a refund of their money.

How many such scams have been pulled during the last fifty years? Hundreds. How many are being pulled at the moment? Hundreds.

So I will repeat the question stated at the start of this article: "Can you believe anything that you read?" And will also repeat the answer: "Damned little." Then why should you believe me?

You should not believe me. Instead, you should carefully read what I write and then think about it. Having thought about it, if it appears to make sense then try to apply it. Having tried it, look carefully at the results. If it appears to work, then continue to apply it; if not, then try something else.

In the end, if you learn anything of value on the subject of exercise, you will learn it from your own experience, from trial and error. All I can even hope to do is to point you in the right direction.

What I have learned in this field during the last fifty-odd years has been learned only from frequently bitter experience; you cannot learn to swim by reading about it, and you cannot learn much of any real value on the subject of exercise by reading about it; at most, by reading, you can learn a few basic facts, a few things to do and a few things to avoid.

About two years ago, a PhD in California sent me a letter which was an outright attack on some of our statements that he read (if he can read) in some of our ads; he said, among other similar things … "I hope nobody is stupid enough to believe your statements or apply your suggestions." (or words to that effect).

Copies of that letter were sent by him to several of the doctors who have been directly involved in our research for a number of years.

We were, according to this guy, a bunch of fools and frauds; an outright threat to the medical community. Well, there are certainly a number of outright threats to the medical community in existence at the moment, but we are not one of them.

Instead of replying in a similar vein, I wrote this guy a very calm letter and enclosed copies of research results that he obviously was not aware of, research results that are so simple and so clear that an average goat would clearly understand them. And I suggested that he should pay us a visit in order to determine the facts, rather than jumping to hasty conclusions in regard to matters that he obviously did not understand. And, eventually, he did visit us.

And what did he learn? Not a damned thing; his feeble mind was already made up before he ever came here. Afterwards he published a supposedly scientific book that purports to be the final word on the subject of muscle physiology; about which he knows something less than nothing.

"Friction in a muscle?" He not only does not understand it but refuses to admit that it even exists. But, after all, it was not his discovery. And what has he discovered? Not a damned thing. Fools do not even notice things, never mind discover them.

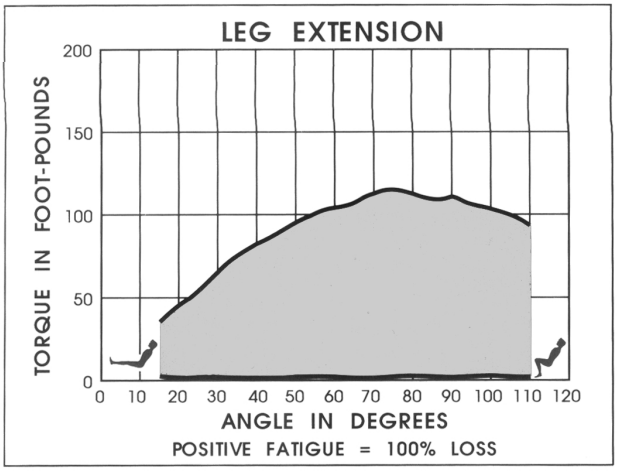
Everything in the Universe that has both mass and motion also has friction; have both mass and motion, a muscle is no exception. But, until you clearly understand the effects of friction during muscular function, it will be impossible for you to really understand anything of value on that subject.

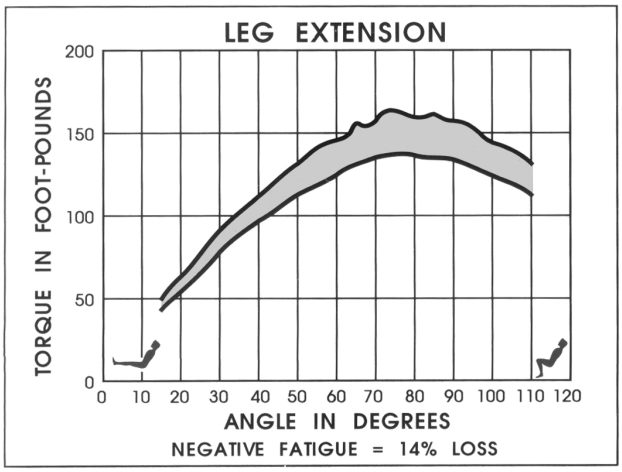
Most of the strength-testing attempts that have been performed during the last twenty-five years have used a dynamic testing procedure, and the effects of muscular friction during any dynamic test are such that the test results are utterly worthless. Tested strength will always be much too low during any test of positive (concentric) strength, having been reduced by muscular friction, while any test of negative (eccentric) strength will always produce an overstatement of the true level of strength, having been increased by friction.

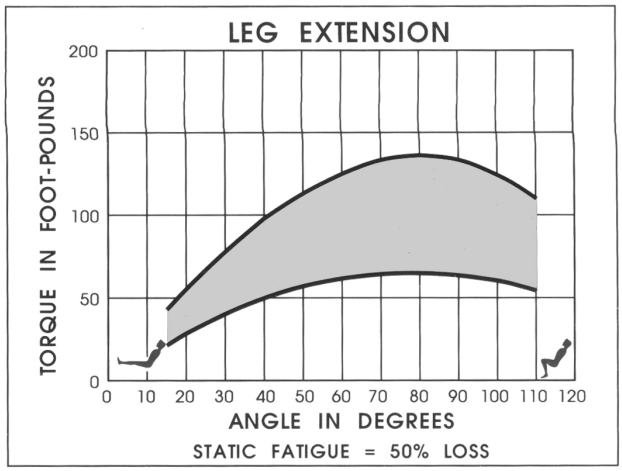
Measuring the fatigue that is produced by exercise is also impossible if the effects of muscular friction are ignored. Look carefully at the three following illustrations.

This above chart show two tests of full-range strength of quadriceps muscles. The highest curve shows the fresh level of positive strength. The lowest curve shows remaining strength after a very hard exercise. The shaded area between the two strength curves shows fatigue produced by the exercise. Remaining positive strength had been reduced to zero.

The second chart also shows two tests of full-range strength. The highest curve shows the fresh level of negative strength. The lower curve shows the remaining level of negative strength following the same exercise illustrated by the first chart. The shaded area between the two strength curves shows fatigue produced by the exercise. While fatigue had reduced positive strength by 100 percent, the fresh level of negative strength was reduced only 14 percent.







Again, with the third chart, we have two tests of full-range strength; but in this case we are showing tests of static (isometric) strength. The highest curve shows the level of fresh strength, while the lower curve shows remaining strength following the exercise. The shaded area between the two curves shows fatigue produced by the exercise. Fresh static strength had been reduced by 50 percent.

Tests of positive strength showed far too much fatigue, tests of negative strength did not show enough fatigue; the true level of fatigue was shown only by tests of static strength.

It should also be noted that the effects of muscular friction do not remain constant; muscular friction is increased by a faster speed of muscular contraction, and is increased by fatigue. The exhausted level of friction is three times as high as the fresh level.

Yet with damned few exceptions, the "experts" in the scientific community remain totally unaware of friction in muscles; continue to conduct tests of strength with tools that are utterly worthless and then publish supposedly scientific articles discussing the results of these meaningless tests.

Having already been given several clear examples of friction, that PhD from California then asked me … "Give me another example where friction helps something in one direction and hurts it in another direction?"

Having heard that question, a friend of mine later remarked … "I have grandchildren who are smarter than that, and they are retarded."

But, in an attempt to be perfectly clear, I will provide the readers of this article such an example: When you are trying to increase the speed of your car, to accelerate, then friction hurts you; but when you are trying to stop your car, then friction helps you. And exactly the same thing occurs with a muscle, or an airplane, or anything else that has both mass and motion.

The potential maximum speed of a car (or an airplane, or a muscle) is limited by friction. When the force that is attempting to increase the speed encounters an equal force from friction that is acting in an opposite direction you have increased the speed as much as possible. Which statement is not an "opinion," but is, instead, a fact that is clearly established by basic laws of physics. This PhD from California probably believes that physics are things which loosen your bowels.

Some years ago, in Seattle, a doctor performed a supposedly scientific study in an effort to determine if lower-back strength was related to lower-back pain. He did what he called "testing" the lower-back strength of several thousand people working for Boeing Corporation, and then followed them up to see which ones later had lower-back problems. The trouble being that there was no tool then in existence that was capable of testing lower-back strength; so his test results were utterly meaningless. Instead of testing lower-back strength, he was testing the strength of hip and thigh muscles; and was doing even that in a very poor manner.

Then, later, he announced that there was no relationship between lower-back strength and lower-back problems. In fact, he said, if anything the stronger workers were more likely to have later lower-back problems. Sure.

Now, this same guy has been appointed to the position of Chairman of a group of "experts" who are going to decide just what is "right" and what is "wrong" with current treatment for lower-back pain.

None of which group of "experts" could find their own ass if given twelve attempts, with a sign pointing the way, with a bright light on the target, and with an Indian guide leading them by the hand. I doubt if they can tie their own shoes.

While the strength of the muscles that extend the lumbar spine is not the only factor related to lower-back pain, it certainly is a very important factor; if it is an advantage to be weak in those muscles, as some of these fools would have you believe, then why not let all of your muscles atrophy to their lowest possible level of size and strength? Then, of course, you would never be at risk of hurting yourself, because you would not be strong enough to get out of bed.

Having strong muscles in the lower back does not reduce the changes of a later injury to zero, but it damned sure reduces the chances of an injury. There is, after all, a relationship between functional strength and structural strength, and increasing functional strength also increases structural strength; and a high level of structural strength will reduce your chances of injury. If the porch on your house collapses because the supports are too weak to hold up the weight of the roof, these people apparently would suggest that you use even weaker supports.

Proper exercise not only increases the strength of muscles but also increases the size of the muscles, and also increases the size of tendons, ligaments and bones; and such increases in size increase the structural strength of these important body parts. My wrists are now more than an inch larger in circumference than they were forty years ago, an increase in bone size produced by exercise, and thus an increase in the structural strength of the bones. Sure, they can still be broken, but being larger and stronger they are less likely to be broken.

And an inch added to the circumference of a wrist is an enormous increase in the cross-section of the bones, an increase in cross-section that greatly increases their structural strength.

Old women, and sometimes old men, frequently suffer from osteoporosis, which literally means "bones full of holes," having lost a large part of the mass of their bones; and this leads to broken hips, a loss in height, and the so-called "dowager's hump," where the person shows a decided change in both posture and appearance.

Research conducted at the School of Medicine of the University of Florida with our equipment has clearly shown that this loss of bone mass in elderly people can not only be stopped but can be reversed; thereby greatly reducing their chances of injury.

Existing equipment (not made by us) now makes it possible to measure bone mass in the lumbar spine, and thus it is now possible to determine changes in bone mass that are stimulated by proper exercise, and this has been done with a large group of elderly subjects; and the results clearly show the most exercises have no effect on the bone mass of the lumbar spine, but the proper (isolated) exercise for the lumbar muscles will increase the bone mass of the lumbar spine.

But don't hold your breath until the "experts" in the scientific community get around to noticing this. Instead, continue to read Joe Weider's magazines, he will tell you whatever you want to hear. Not that much if anything you read there will be true; but, what the hell, some of the pictures are interesting.

But wait! I may have spoken too soon: as I was writing the last sentence above, I was handed a letter from a man asking my advice on the subject of exercise, and he enclosed a copy of an article about me that was published in a Weider magazine; and, guess what? … some of it (not all of it, just part of it) is actually true. Miracles never cease.