My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

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20

A few hundred years ago, William Shakespeare said … "The evil men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones." A statement that was true then and is still true today: once believed, myth is all but impossible to correct. And, once published, such myths will be believed by many people.

I seldom read any of the current crop of muscle magazines apart from IRON MAN, because I have long since learned that most of what is published in such magazines is nothing apart from bullshit, and have also learned that a much better source of such bullshit can be found by listening to the statements of politicians, beaurocrats and other supposed "experts." There, at least, you can be sure that it is pure bullshit, is never confused with anything that is even partially true. But even IRON MAN is not free of bullshit, and the supposedly "scientific" literature on the subject of exercise contains little if anything apart from bullshit.

Most scientists seemingly have a strong desire to measure things in an attempt to prove their own theories, and continue to attempt such measurements in spite of the fact that the tools required for such measurements simply do not exist, and the tools they do use are worthless for any purpose. A current article in the New England Journal of Medicine, generally the most respected journal in the field of medicine, is an exception to the general rule: it clearly spells out major problems that are results of using MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) tests in an attempt to diagnose lower-back problems. The machine required for such tests costs more than $1,000,000.00, and a test with such equipment usually costs somewhere between $1,000.00 and $2,000.00; yet the results of such tests are generally worse than worthless, worse because they are misleading.

If a group of 1,000 healthy individuals are tested with an MRI machine, it will appear that more than sixty percent of them have major spinal pathology of one kind or another; and a high percentage of such healthy individuals would then be diagnosed as being in need of very expensive and dangerous spinal surgery, when in fact they are perfectly normal. And even people who do have spinal problems seldom learn anything of value from such tests; are usually told that they require spinal surgery when in fact the actual problem still remains unknown.

Spinal surgery is performed in this country at least ten times as often as it is in other developed countries; generally to no good purpose, since the results are no better here than they are elsewhere, and are frequently worse. As a direct result of such confusion in the field of medicine, the total cost of lower-back problems in this country has reached a level that is utterly ridiculous: lower-back problems are now the single most expensive, generally nonlife-theatening problem in this country, may have reached a level of more than $100,000,000,000.00 a year; that being BILLIONS (a thousand million) rather than MILLIONS of dollars. And, you can be damned sure, when that much money is at stake, a lot of people will take advantage of the situation.

Yes, spinal surgery is sometimes required; but, no, it is not required anywhere near as often as it is being performed.

In addition to grossly misleading results produced by MRI testing, several other testing procedures now in widespread use are also equally worthless in almost all cases: any test performed with a Cybex machine, or any other so-called "isokinetic" tool, is worse than worthless and is frequently very dangerous. Also, tests based upon EMG procedures, attempts to determine the electrical activity of muscles, are usually an exercise in futility; nobody has any real idea just what, if anything, the results of such tests indicate. Nevertheless, in one recent article that I read the author of the study based upon EMG tests stated that the use of so-called "wide grip" exercises were more productive than "narrow grip" exercise; that is, that using a wide grip during "chinning" or "pull-down" exercises was more productive than using a "narrow" grip for the exercise. Which is pure bullshit, at best. Using a wide grip does NOT provide more stretching of the muscles involved; in fact, it literally prevents much in the way of stretching, limits the range of movement and turns a potentially very productive exercise into a very poor exercise. A wide grip during a "pull-down" exercise will limit the total range of movement to about 45 degrees of rotation around the axis of the shoulders; whereas, a much narrower grip may provide nearly 180 degrees of movement. The wider grip literally prevents you from reaching either a fully-

stretched position or a position of full contraction of the involved muscles; thus leaving a large part of the same muscle unworked. The same thing being true in regard to wide-grip bench-pressing exercises in comparison to narrow-grip presses. The narrower grip is far better in both cases. A wider grip may be better for the purpose of lifting a heavier weight during competition, but is far worse for the purpose of increasing either muscle mass or strength.

Other worthless testing procedures performed for the purpose of trying to determine the actual effects upon muscles produced by hard exercise have produced nothing apart from confusion on the subject of "negative" exercise versus "positive" exercise; in effect, which is better, "lifting" a weight or "lowering" a weight. Some authors now are stating that negative exercise is BAD, should be avoided like the plague, causes INJURY to muscles; all of which is pure bullshit.

The negative part of exercise, instead of being something to be avoided, is in fact the most productive part of exercise. Without negative exercise it is impossible to provide any form of stretching, and is equally impossible to provide any exercise in the fully-contracted position of most muscles; thus, again, without negative exercise you are limited to a "midrange" of possible movement against resistance; which will develop part of the muscles, but will not develop other parts of the same muscles.

At least a few members of the scientific community have been aware of the fact that your negative strength is always higher than your positive strength, and some people knew this at least sixty years ago; yet, even today, none of them understood just why this is true. Remained ignorant on this subject because they overlooked a simple law of basic physics that should be obvious to a goat: FRICTION. Everything with both mass and motion has friction; and since muscles have both mass and motion they also have friction; friction which reduces your positive strength while increasing your negative strength; that is, friction "HURTS YOU" while you are lifting a weight, but "HELPS YOU" when you are lowering a weight. Exactly the same situation exists with a car, an airplane, or anything else with both mass and motion.

If a fresh muscle can lift a maximum of only 100 pounds, then the same muscle can lower about 140 pounds; negative fresh strength is thus about 40 percent higher than positive fresh strength, provided only that the speed of movement is the same during both tests. So if positive fresh strength is 100, then negative fresh strength will be about 140; but both of these test results are in fact misleading, are biased by muscular friction, positive being too low while negative is too high. The only valid test of strength is produced by a test of static (isometric) strength; and static strength is always midway between the levels of positive and negative strength.

All of which can now be clearly demonstrated in a simple fashion to the satisfaction of an average rabbit; but all of which still apparently remains unsuspected by anybody in the scientific community, while they go to great lengths in their utterly stupid attempts to explain this difference on a basis of something else. They cannot, apparently, bring themselves to admit their own ignorance; which provides clear proof of their stupidity, or even insanity.

For my part, I may be insane (after all, just how can we meaningfully judge our own sanity?), but I am not utterly stupid; ignorant of many things, yes, but stupid, no. I am at least aware of simple physical laws that many others continue to overlook, or even attempt to deny.

BUT, A WORD OF WARING: REMEMBER, muscular friction "helps you" during the negative part of exercise, and this help from muscular friction makes it possible for you to continue negative exercise to a point that produces so much fatigue that it may take you a couple of weeks to fully recover from it, and that level of fatigue from exercise is carrying things much too far, will result in "overtraining," which should be avoided like the plague. Exercise with no resulting fatigue is largely worthless, but too much fatigue from exercise is counterproductive, may cause losses in strength rather than gains.

If positive strength of a fresh muscle is 100, then negative strength will be 140 and static strength will be 120 (the "true" level of strength); but when a fresh muscle has been worked to the point that its remaining level of strength is ZERO, then remaining negative strength will be 120 (nearly as high as it was when fresh), while true strength, static strength, will be 60, having been reduced from its fresh level by 50 percent. Reaching that level of fatigue while performing only positive exercise is all but impossible, would require a very high number of sets of the exercise, far too many sets; but reaching that level of fatigue from negative-only exercise is relatively easy.

During large-scale research conducted by us for several months in 1972, we produced almost unbelievably good results from a negative-only style of exercise; but also discovered that very little of such exercise goes a long way, and that too much of such exercise was counterproductive.

And, yes, when your negative strength is increased to a given point, your positive strength is increase to exactly the same degree; so increasing negative strength also increases both positive and static levels of strength to the same extent. Fifty or sixty years ago, Bob Peoples (one of the best deadlifters in history) used a negative-only style of exercise; he rigged up a tractor to lift a very heavy weight that he could not lift, and then trained in a negative only fashion by lowering this heavy weight back down to the bottom position.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult, and frequently impossible, to perform negative-only exercise without help; which usually makes such exercise impractical at best since hiring such helpers is expensive. By using a chair or a bench, or a short ladder, you can perform negative-only chinning and dipping exercises without help; using your legs, climb into the top position of the exercise, and then lower yourself into the bottom position of the movement while using only your upper-body and arm muscles. Move very slowly during such exercise, never perform more than one set of about eight repetitions, and never perform such exercise more often than twice a week; and once a week is sometimes better, or even once every two weeks. MORE IS NOT BETTER IN THIS CASE, and may be overdoing it. We have a man on our staff who loses strength if he exercises once a week, neither gains nor loses if he exercises once every two weeks, and gains only when he exercises once every three weeks. But only you, by trial and error, can determine just what is best for you.

Another matter that is generally confused is the subject of "Muscular soreness," which is an oxymoron at best; because muscles do not have the types of nerves required to produce pain, and thus it is not the working part of a muscle that becomes painful following some hard exercises. And please take note of the fact that I said "SOME" hard exercises; because, in fact, some hard exercises do not produce so-called muscular soreness. And, secondarily while a first hard workout may produce later soreness, following hard workouts tend to reduce or even remove this soreness.

So if you start a program of hard exercise by working hard from day one, then it is a good idea to train every day for four or five days in a row; if so, you will still get sore, but such soreness will then quickly go away and never return as long as you continue to train regularly. But any degree of resulting muscular soreness can be avoided by starting a program of exercise gradually; that is, do not work very hard during the first few workouts, instead gradually increase the intensity of the exercise so that you are working to failure only after eight or ten previous but much easier workouts. Just what muscular soreness is caused by we do not know, nor do we know what it really is.