

# My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

# 24

There are still some people, but no longer big bunches of them, who have been interested in weight training longer than I have; and along the way I have at least met most of the men who have become legends in the field, and in many cases got to know them well. I first met Vic Tanny during the Second World War; met John Grimek in 1946, both Steve Reeves and Arnold in 1968, Arnold when he posed in Southern Africa and Steve when I ran into him in a hotel in Lisbon, Portugal; Larry Scott when he visited Kruger Park in South Africa in 1967; Bill Pearl when he played a part in a film I produced in 1960; Clancy Ross when I visited his Gym in 1947. Plus far too many others to mention.

After I started Nautilus Sports/Medical Industries, Inc., in 1970, literally hundreds of well-known bodybuilders visited me in Florida: John McWilliams, Sergio Oliva, Boyer Coe, both Mike and Ray Mentzer, Robby Robinson and a long list of others.

Having read some of my earlier articles in IRON MAN, most of these people came to see me in the hope that they might learn something of value that would improve their results from training. Now, years later, I have very mixed feeling about what they learned; but I have no doubt about what I learned from them: primarily I learned that meaningful communication is just damned near impossible with most people. Even when they listen, they seldom really understand, and they do not always listen.

We are, I believe, suffering the effects that have resulted from a long period during which life has generally been far too easy; the result being a generation of people who have been spoiled, people who are looking for instant, effortless results, “something for nothing.”

But, with few exceptions, my life up until now has generally been a case of getting “nothing for something.” Some of the things I tried actually did produce at least some of the results I was seeking, but most of them failed, sometimes miserably, often painfully.

Perhaps the most important thing that I have learned is that we learn primarily from our mistakes; provided that we are smart enough to recognize them as mistakes, and honest enough to admit it. Most people, however, seemingly go through their entire lives repeating the same mistakes almost endlessly, and I have at times certainly been guilty of that myself. If an idea appears to be good, but then fails to produce the desired results, the usual tendency seems to be to assume that some slight change will solve the problems; but in practice this generally fails.

Solving any problem requires several steps: FIRST: we must recognize a problem exists; SECOND: we must attempt to understand the problem; THIRD: we must attempt to provide a solution. And it helps if you clearly understand that there is no place to go for help, that nobody out there can provide you with the required answer; and the fact that something apparently worked for them does NOT mean that it will work for you.

Look around you at the other people in the gym; do they all produce equally good results? Of course not; in fact, most of them produce very poor results, regardless of what they try. Which should tell you that what they are doing is wrong; wrong, at least, for them, although it might work very well for somebody else.

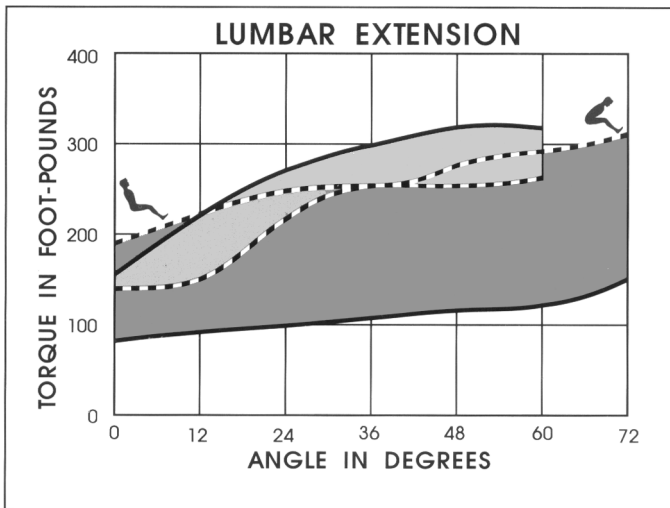
About twenty-five years ago, several people started publishing a wide variety of supposedly well-informed opinions on the subject of differences in muscular fiber types; and, at the time, many people asked me for my opinions on that subject; to which I replied ... “I don’t have any opinion on that subject, because I have no knowledge upon which to base any such opinions. When and if I ever do learn anything on that subject, then I will publish my opinions; but not until then.”

Prior to that I had seen several clear examples of differences in fiber types; but, unfortunately, at the time I failed to understand the things that I saw. Noticed them, but did not understand them, could not explain them.

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I did not start to understand such differences until about ten years ago; primarily failed to understand them because previously we could not measure such differences in a practical manner, if at all. But, in 1985, we finally developed the tools that were required for measuring such differences, and eventually this led to at least a reasonable understanding of them. But even now, given the required tools for such tests, and having conducted these tests with literally tens-of-thousands of people, there are still a few things that we do not yet understand; things we can demonstrate but cannot explain.

The following illustration presents a dramatic example of differences in muscular fiber types. One of the subjects involved. Joe Circulli of Gainesville, Florida, obviously had a very high percentage of so-called “fast-twitch” fibers in the muscles being tested, while the other subject, Dr. Jay Graves, now in the Department of Physiology of a university of Syracuse, New York, just as obviously has a very high percentage of so-called “slow-twitch” fibers in these same muscles.



The results of four tests, two tests which each of the two subjects, are shown on this chart; both subjects were tested for the totally-isolated strength of their lower-back muscles, were then immediately exercised with isolated, specific movement for these muscles, and were then immediately retested for their remaining strength following the exercise.

Such tests involved three parts, a test of fresh strength, an exercise, and a test of remaining strength following the exercise. This procedure is called a “Fatigue Response Test” since it shows how the involved muscles respond to exercise; how much fatigue is produced by the exercise.

And, kindly note, I did not say “results,” instead I said “effects,” a result is a long term situation, something that occurs days or weeks later, while an effect is something that happens immediately.

Muscular growth stimulated by exercise is a result, while the immediate fatigue produced by exercise is an effect.

The highest strength curve shown on this chart represents Joe Cirulli’s fresh, rested strength, before exercise, that is the curve above the dark shaded area on the chart. The curve at the bottom of the dark shaded area shows his strength remaining immediately after the exercise. The dark shaded area shows the fatigue produced by the exercise.

Lower on the chart, the curve BELOW the light shaded area shows the other subject’s fresh strength, while the higher curve, ABOVE the light shaded area, shows his strength immediately after the exercise. Rather than LOSING strength from fatigue, this subject was actually stronger after the exercise than he was before the exercise.

With fresh muscles, Joe was much stronger than Jay; but following the exercise Jay was momentarily stronger than Joe in most positions throughout a full range of movement.

In this instance, both men performed exactly the same exercise, with the same resistance (200 foot-pounds), with the same number of repetitions (six), and at the same speed of movement. Neither subject was exercised to a point of momentary muscular failure; each did six repetitions and then stopped.

Given that Joe’s fresh strength was far higher than Jay’s, the level of resistance for Joe was actually very low; while Jay, being weaker when fresh, was using a relatively much higher level of resistance in proportion to his fresh strength. As an example of just how low the level of resistance actually was for Joe, I will mention that several weeks earlier, then being somewhat weaker when fresh, Joe performed eight repetitions with 800 foot-pounds, the weight then being four times as high as it was during the test and the repetitions being eight instead of only six.

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So a relatively light exercise for Joe produced a lot of fatigue, while a relatively much heavier exercise for Jay produced no fatigue, actually increased his fresh strength.

When we first observed such an effect we could hardly believe it, since it was seemingly an impossible effect; but now having seen literally hundreds of similar examples it can no longer be denied. Which does NOT mean that we really understand it even now. But it does mean that we can put this observation to work in a favorable manner even if we still cannot understand or explain it.

And “science” cannot provide any help, since almost all of the thousands of scientists now working in this field still remain ignorant in regard to such effects; primarily remain ignorant in this regard because they have never had the use of tools capable of measuring such effects.

Twice each month, at the School of Medicine of the University of Florida, in Gainesville, I am the principle speaker during a day-long seminar conducted for the benefit of a large group of visiting scientists with an interest in exercise and/or rehabilitation, and during each of these seminars we demonstrate such effects in a very dramatic manner by actually conducting such fatigue response tests. Most people, upon seeing this actually very simple demonstration, are literally stunned by it; and, I strongly suspect, many of them not only do not understand it but even do not believe it. “Seeing is NOT ALWAYS believing.”

Primarily, I suspect, because it is “NEW,” is something they never heard of before, never thought about, and is not “their idea.” The so-called “NIH FACTOR,” not invented here.

Which response, given the true history of science, should not be surprising: about 100 years ago, when the first recording of a human voice was played for a large group of leading scientists in England, the Chairman of the group denounced it as a fake and walked out of the meeting; he believed it was a fraud based upon a ventriloquist. Still refused to believe it even six years later.

And for several years after the Wright Brothers were conducting daily flights in front of thousands of witness, most of the scientists still refused to admit that flight was even possible. Apparently they were not aware of things like birds and insects.

But, you may ask, just how can I apply this information in my training? What value does it have for me?

I answer those questions in the next chapter.