

My First Half-Century in the Iron Game

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Testing Strength: Part Seven

If, on Monday, you fail in an exercise after performing ten repetitions with 200 pounds of resistance, but then, during your next-following workout, are able to perform eleven repetitions with the same level of resistance, it would appear that your strength had increased, and maybe your strength had increased, but again, maybe it had not. If your exercises were performed in exactly the same manner, using exactly the same speed of movement during both workouts, which is highly unlikely, then your strength had increased, but had not, as it might have appeared to do, increased by ten percent. The actual increase in strength, if any, would probably be on the order of one or two percent.

To demonstrate an actual increase in strength of ten percent you would have to be able to lift ten percent more weight for the same number of repetitions performed using the same style and speed of movement.

But, in practice, very few people use either the same style of lifting or the same speed of movement from one workout until the next during exercises; which should not be surprising, since it is very difficult to evaluate your style of performance and nearly impossible to measure your speed of movement accurately.

Given the above facts, and they are facts, it follows that monitoring your progress, or lack of same, from workout to following workout is not as simple as many people believe it to be; nevertheless, I believe that people should keep records of their workout performances, records which will, over the long haul, give you a reasonable idea of your progress, even though they never will provide exact records of progress.

Nearly twenty-four years ago, in the Athletic Journal, I published an article entitled "The Future of Exercise, An Opinion." An article which was, so far as I know, the first published mention of the use of computers in connection with exercise. That article was published very prematurely as things turned out, since it expressed my opinions at a time when nobody had much, if any, experience with computers in such an application, therefore it turned out to be much more of a "wish list" than anything else.

Then we learned the hard way over a period of several years that many of the things that initially appeared to be both desirable and relatively easy to accomplish were in fact simply impossible. In practice, it took us more than another eleven years of continuous research and development to produce the first computerized machine that we were willing to place on the market, eleven years of continuous work AFTER that article was published, plus about three years of work that was performed before the article was published.

So while that article promised a lot more than we were able to quickly deliver, it did not produce any hesitation on the part of our competitors; Cybex, Universal and a long list of others, having had the idea handed to them on a silver platter by my article, quickly started selling all sorts of computerized machines that were utterly worthless for any purpose and were sometimes downright dangerous. To this day, April of 1997, MedX still provides the only source of computerized machines that are capable of providing any of their claimed functions; everything else on the market in the field of exercise that is linked to a computer is outright junk, is, as they say in Texas . . . "A dog that won't hunt."

General Motors was forced to change the name of one of their cars that was exported to Latin America, the Chevrolet Nova . . . because, in Spanish, the word "nova" means "will not go." Yet, in this country and elsewhere, thousands of people still buy exercise machines that will not go, that cannot perform any of their claimed functions. Which, to me, makes just as much sense as buying an airplane that won't fly or a car that won't go. Thus I strongly urge people to INVESTIGATE before they INVEST. The problem there being the fact that determining the actual facts about anything in this society is damned near impossible; opinions by the thousands, claims by the millions, but facts by the dozens, if that. Facts that are not even suspected by even one out of every 10,000 supposed "experts" and are understood by almost none of them.

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Nearly ninety years ago, a man named Glenn Curtiss violated the patents of the Wright Brothers by copying their airplanes, and then tried to claim that he had invented the airplane before they did; a situation that eventually brought about a side by side comparison of the Curtiss airplane to a Wright airplane, and, guess what? The Curtiss airplane would not get off the ground, refused to fly.

Unfortunately, in the field of exercise, proving the facts is not quite that simple; any computerized machine that you use, including all of the junk now on the market, will spit out supposedly meaningful and accurate results, and far too many people cannot tell the difference between utterly meaningless gibberish and accurate results. The makers of every device on the market invariably claim that their product is by far the best, and frequently add the claim that only their products are designed according to scientific principles, are “biomechanically correct” or “physiologically functional” or some other utterly meaningless claim.

Just where, I am forced to ask myself, did the designers of these products get all of their supposedly scientific knowledge? Since, to the best of my knowledge, no meaningful source of any such information exists anywhere on planet Earth. Very damned few members of the scientific community showed any slightest interest in muscular function or exercise until about thirty years ago, and the few who did were generally ignored; that situation being a natural result of the fact that there was no money in it for the scientists, people who, like most others, are primarily, and usually exclusively, interested in “what’s in it for me?”

Then, when things changed, when a lot of scientists suddenly noticed that the field of exercise physiology might provide them with a meaningful payoff, we suddenly had dozens, then hundreds, and eventually thousands of supposedly scientific articles being published by an enormous number of self-appointed “experts.” The primary problem being, then and now, that none of these people knew the differences between their asses and holes in the ground; a secondary problem resulting from the fact that they were speculating about things that they could not measure, and thus could not understand. If a single one of these supposed “experts” has come up with a discovery of any real value then it has not come to my attention.

Most of them immediately jumped upon the supposed bandwagon of outright bullshit being published by Cybex about the claimed advantages of isokinetic testing and exercise because, the scientists wrongly believed, Cybex machines provided them with a tool that they could use for the purpose of measuring human functional abilities; thus, they wrongly believed, they could measure the results of exercises and thereby arrive at an understanding of muscular functions.

At least a few men dreamed about building a successful airplane for a period of several centuries before it actually came about, and none of these people ever built an airplane that would fly, although many tried to do so, for the simple reason that they were not even aware of the requirements for a successful airplane. Eventually, the Wright Brothers did build an airplane that would fly, but only after many years of trial and error tinkering with no slightest help from the scientific community. In fact, most scientists still continued to believe that flying was impossible for several years after the Wrights were flying on a daily basis in front of thousands of witnesses.

Then, when a few scientists finally did become aware that flight was possible, the first thing they tried to do was to steal credit for the discoveries of the Wright Brothers; both Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, and the then director of the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, entered into a criminal conspiracy in an attempt to steal credit from the Wright Brothers.

All of which is a matter of historical record, but all of which has been brushed under the rug by almost all of our current crop of scientists; and, in any case, most of them are now so busy trying to steal credit for other people’s work that they are no longer concerned with what happened to the Wright Brothers ninety years ago.

During the last sixty years I have at least met and talked to at great length, and usually got to know quite well, practically all of the scientists who were involved in exercise physiology during that period; among them were a few, damned few as it happens, people that I still believe were sincere in their beliefs, but not a single one that I believed to be well informed about the facts involved in his chosen field of interest. Primarily, I believe, because none of them had much,

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if literally any, personal experience with exercise, and thus tended to believe the theories published by other scientists who were just as ignorant as they were. So at least some of these people were not evil in any sense of the term, were not motivated by greed; nevertheless, as somebody (the Bible?) once said . . . “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Many people now publishing articles in both scientific journals and in the current crop of muscle magazines sincerely believe their stated opinions and are not knowingly trying to mislead anybody, but it does not follow that many, if literally any, of them actually know anything of value about exercise. And very long and usually bitter experience with very large numbers of such people has clearly made me aware of the fact that any attempt to meaningfully communicate with them is an exercise in futility at best. Very few had guts enough to call me a fool or a fraud to my face, and the few who did immediately regretted it, but me knocking them on their ass did very little in the way of educating them on the subject of exercise. In retrospect, I now regret only those cases when I should have engaged in violence but did not do so. In general, though, I usually went to great lengths in my attempts to deal reasonably with such people, in my attempts to educate them, but was invariably forced to face the fact that any such efforts are wasted, that you cannot deal with unreasonable people in a reasonable manner.

Do not waste your time trying to reasonably explain insanity, if you could explain it then it would not be insanity; instead, recognize it for just what it is when you encounter it and then get to hell away from such people, or, given an undeniable opportunity to get away with it, do everybody a big favor and kill them. Based upon my own lifetime experiences I can only say that violence never got me into trouble of any kind, but it damned sure got me out of trouble quite a number of times. Knowing what I know now, if I had my life to live over I would be a hell of a lot more violent than I actually have been, not less, more.

I have never been involved in criminal activity of any kind, and am violently opposed to it, but I have at least sometimes been willing to defend myself against people who were criminals. If any or all of the above is too strong for some of today's all too numerous left wing, ultra liberal, pinko do-gooders, those among us who have already destroyed damned near everything of value in our society, then all I can say is, as I have said before . . . “Fuck you and the horse you rode in on.”