

# Increasing Speed

**Arthur Jones**

Speed of movement is determined by a number of factors...and by relationships between these factors.

It is obvious that a man with such weak leg muscles that he could barely stand unsupported would not be able to run very fast, if at all...so increasing the size, and thus increasing the strength, of his leg muscles would also increase his speed. Even though it increased his weight.

Does that then mean that increasing the bodyweight of an athlete will always increase his speed? Certainly not...it simply means that it might, or might not, depending upon circumstances.

The result of increasing an athlete's bodyweight would be determined by the following factors... (1) it would depend upon the type of tissue that made up the increased bodyweight, fat or muscle...(2) it would depend upon where this tissue was added...(3) it would depend upon starting bodyweight, and the starting level of strength...(4) it would depend upon the particular sport.

The body will only permit a certain degree of disproportionate muscular development...which means that it is utterly impossible to develop maximum-possible size and strength into the muscles of the legs without also increasing the size and strength of the arms.

And this means that there is a very definite limit to the "desirable" size and strength for many athletes. For example...increasing the strength of a runner's legs will make him faster, up to a point; but, beyond a certain point, it will become impossible to produce additional strength in his legs without also increasing the weight of the torso and arms...and since the "noncontributing" weight of muscle in the torso and arms will increase the mass that must be accelerated and moved during running, it is possible for a point to be reached where the burden of extra weight cannot be compensated for by the increase in leg strength.

If nothing else changed, then increasing the strength of a runner's legs would always make him faster...but in practice, other things do change.

So...an athlete should increase his muscular size and strength up to the point that such increases are also increasing his speed. When increased strength produces no increase in speed, or a loss in speed, then you have gone too far...which situation is easy to correct.

Simply stop exercising for a brief period, or restrict exercise to fairly light movements, and reduce the diet proportionately...the body will not remain maintain a level of strength that is not required, and it will judge requirements by demand. In simple terms, "if you don't use it, you'll lose it."

Speed of movement is also determined by a number of factors that are not responsive to exercise...the length of limbs...neurological efficiency...and a number of other factors. You can do nothing to help these factors.

But you can do a great deal to help the factors that are responsive to exercise...you can increase the strength of the muscles that directly contribute to performance...you can reduce the fatty tissue to the lowest practical level...you can improve flexibility...you can improve circulation...you can improve “condition”...and you can greatly reduce the danger of injury. In combination with a reasonable diet, exercise can influence all of these factors...and the net result will be a marked increase in speed.

Having done all that can be done to help all of these factors, some men will still be fairly slow...but they will be much faster than they were before.

The antics and outrages of a rather large number of “bodybuilders” have done an enormous amount of damage to the entire field of exercise...causing many coaches to look upon the subject with great suspicion, or even outright hostility. Part of the problem has arisen from the fact that the current image of the “body beautiful” is based upon a body type that is almost the opposite of what it is supposed to represent. Most leading bodybuilders are far stronger than average men...but far weaker than they should be, if due consideration is given to their muscular mass.

But a lack of proportionate strength is not a particular bodybuilder’s fault...nor is it a result of an incorrect method of training...Instead, such “less than expected” strength is a direct result of poor leverage factors that are not subject to change.

The ideal body type for great strength calls for shorter than average legs, a long torso, wide hips, and fairly narrow shoulders...which is almost the direct opposite of the “Mr. America” type of body.

So a bodybuilder’s increased muscular mass will always make him much stronger than he would have been with smaller muscles...but he still may not be as strong as another man who has much less muscular mass but better bodily leverage.

Nor does the size of a muscle indicate the neurological efficiency with which it functions...a point covered in an earlier chapter. A man with outstanding neurological efficiency may be able to demonstrate twice as much strength as another man who has far more muscular mass but a lower order of neurological efficiency.

I am sometimes tempted to believe that the almost unbelievable muscular mass displayed by some bodybuilders is to at least some degree an attempt on the body’s part to compensate for a low order of neurological efficiency, or poor body leverage, or both.

Bodybuilders are notorious for being “weaker than they look”...and with good cause in many cases. But there are exceptions, usually to be found among the shorter, stockier bodybuilders...who seldom reach the top physique competition, simply because their actually more functional bodies don’t fit the pattern of what a physique star is supposed to look like.

Bodybuilders are also notorious for being slow, and clumsy...which charges are frequently overstated. But again, not completely without cause.

Part of this widespread opinion obviously results from a habit that many bodybuilders have of constantly flexing their muscles in an attempt to make themselves appear even larger than they are...which also makes them appear stiff, and clumsy, and slow.

So bodybuilders as a class are certainly guilty of bringing upon themselves the present lack of respect that they encounter in many circles...and they are also responsible for the fact that many coaches still look upon exercise of any kind as something to be avoided if possible, because it might make their athletes slow, "like bodybuilders."

As a consequence, many coaches are denying themselves and their athletes the actually great benefits of exercise...for fear of making their athletes slow, they are literally preventing them from becoming faster.