

Master Trainer

Lifetime Bodybuilding and Masters Athletes

Volume 6, Number 4

August, 1996

Bringing Back the Excitement and Focus on Training

One of the ironies in recent years is that while bodybuilding and weight training have become far more accepted and popular across different groups of people, less accurate information seems to be available about how to effectively train. I particularly blame many of the current crop of bodybuilding publications now widely available worldwide. Apparently, an increasingly competitive market has led at least some of these publications to become "soft porn" periodicals which additionally feature more and more ads for food supplements, most of which are non-efficacious or have not been clinically tested. For the most part, the magazines are directed to their primary market, younger men. The basic message (similar to the one used to sell many other products — cars come to mind) is "When you get bigger by eating all these supplements, sexy women will be throwing themselves at you."

To be honest, bodybuilding and weight training have always been about attractiveness and power, but that was never the entire story. Current publications have simply taken this one aspect — attractiveness and power — and more or less dropped the rest.

"Let's focus on realistic and effective training."

Years ago I used to devour new magazines (which then definitely had no "T&A" features) because they had provocative ideas about training. For example, almost 30 years ago *Iron Man* became the outlet for Arthur Jones' first articles about training and later information about his groundbreaking Nautilus machines. With those articles *Iron Man* and Jones created excitement and innovation in the field and rendered to its readers a great service. Granted, revolutions in training, by definition, cannot routinely happen, and we should not expect every issue of every magazine to provide yet another astonishing development. We should, though, expect some intelligent instruction about training.

I'm also well aware that besides the voyeuristic aspect of bodybuilding magazines, they sell the fantasy that anyone can become huge and muscular. In order to fuel this fantasy, most bodybuilding publications, even those espousing an anti-drug position, mostly depict men and now women who are genetically gifted as far as the ability to produce muscle mass and then add to their gifts with chemical enhancement. Indeed, even a few well-known natural bodybuilders had more muscle mass **before** they started to train than virtually any reader (e.g., Skip LaCour was 5'10" and 190 lbs!). What's often not discussed in these publications is that very few men or women have the genetic potential to even vaguely approximate what they see pictured in the magazines. In addition, the rare genetic endowment coupled with chemical enhancement allows people to gain spectacularly on almost **any** type of training routine. Miracle food supplements do not make up for average genetic ability, and people of average genetic potential cannot be mindless in their training because, assuredly, not everything will work for them.

I suspect that in the end the magazines and food supplement companies are simply setting the stage for their own demise. There must be literally millions of terribly

In This Issue

Features

Bringing Back the Excitement and Focus on Training	1
Education of a HITer by Matt Brzycki	2
Women and Weight Training: Countering Myths and Misperceptions....	4
Reaching a Peak — Lessons Learned, Lessons Applied....	8
Additional Insights and Directions	11
Common Sense Training by Bill Piche	12
Another Note on HIT Approaches to Cardiovascular Training	14
A Fire Rekindled by Renee Harrison	15
Logical Bodybuilding by Robert R. Harrison	17
Criticisms of High-Intensity Training: Some Comments.	18
Shining the Spotlight in the Wrong Direction	19

Columns

Readers' Update and Input	20
---------------------------------	----

Master Trainer focuses on information about lifetime bodybuilding, master athletics, and health and fitness. Information reflects the author's opinions as well as summaries of books, articles, and recent scientific news. This publication does **not** provide medical advice for specific medical problems. Medical advice should be obtained from medical personnel.

disappointed and frustrated men and women who find no matter how many hours they're in the gym or how much money they spend on food supplements, they simply cannot emulate the champions. Such individuals are not, of course, the best ambassadors for the sport.

What's particularly unfortunate is that few of these men and women will learn that within some **reasonable expectations**, everyone can make substantial improvements in their strength, appearance, and **health and fitness** by adhering to a well-principled training program and a nutritious diet. This knowledge isn't gained because few publications offer this perspective or information. *Hard Gainer*, *HIT*, and *Master Trainer* are some of the few publications that have tried to follow this approach. Not surprisingly, given present circumstances and popular culture, none of these are mainstream, mass market publications or will likely be so in the near future. In these "niche" publications, the emphasis is on providing training information within established guidelines and principles without the hype and fantasy.

The August, 1996, issue of *Master Trainer* especially focuses on training, albeit to the virtual exclusion of other relevant material and typical columns and departments. One goal for this issue was to bring back the excitement of the actual nuts and bolts of training; another goal was to bring in training ideas and approaches from other people. We all gain through each other's knowledge, insights, and commitment. Future issues will return to more balance in coverage and types of articles, but this issue will hopefully contribute to the focus on realistic and effective training. ♦

Master Trainer has a new e-mail:
ageless.athletes@bnt.com

Master Trainer is published every other month. One year's subscription is \$20 in the U.S. or \$26 outside the U.S. (postage included).

To subscribe, send your name and address along with a check or money order to:

Master Trainer c/o Ageless Athletes
Suite 221, Memorial Building
610 N. Main St.
Blacksburg, VA 24060-3349
e-mail: ageless.athletes@bev.net

I welcome any and all comments, feedback, and letters. Please let me know what you'd like to see in *Master Trainer*. Richard A. Winett, Ph.D.

Education of a HIter

by Matt Brzycki, Princeton University

Editor's Note: Matt Brzycki is the Coordinator of Health Fitness, Strength and Conditioning Programs at Princeton University. He is the author of numerous articles and books including the excellent *A Practical Approach to Strength Training* (3rd Ed.), Masters Press, Indianapolis, IN.

I first learned about HIT in March, 1980, when I was hired as a Fitness Instructor at a health club in Forty Fort, Pennsylvania. I had completed my four-year enlistment in the Marine Corps in August, 1979, and was just finishing up my freshman year at a branch campus of Penn State. The person who introduced me to HIT was the club's general manager, Tom Laputka. Tom was a former professional football player in the Canadian Football League and the short-lived World Football League. He weighed as much as 287 lbs and was one of the world's first 500-lb bench pressers. Tom told me about workouts that were brief, progressive, intense, efficient, comprehensive, practical, safe, and — one of his favorite adjectives — productive. All this was foreign to me as I had never heard or read of workouts like this before. In the Marine Corps, I had been a Base Powerlifting Champ and a Base Bench Press Champ. I had always equated more with better.

Later, Tom told me about how in the early 1970s he and another guy named Casey Viator were trained by someone named Arthur Jones. HIT made enough sense to me that I would train members of the health club this way. However, I didn't think HIT was appropriate for me. It was hard to believe such brief workouts were better than the lengthy workouts I had been doing for years.

In the fall of 1980 I went to Penn State's main campus where I began to compete in powerlifting again. Later that year I took a course called Development of Strength Training Programs, which was taught by Dan Riley, the Penn State Strength Coach. Dan spoke about the same kind of brief, intense workouts as Tom had told me. Actually, this wasn't much of a surprise since we had used several of Dan's books as references at the health club in Forty Fort — one of which ended up being our text in class. Dan left a few weeks after the end of the semester to become Strength Coach of the Washington Redskins, where he is to this day. His course underscored the value of brief, intense workouts, but again I didn't think such workouts were appropriate for me.

The last time I competed in powerlifting was March 20, 1982. At a bodyweight of 162, I did a 410 squat, a 260 bench, and a 440 deadlift for a 1,110-lb total. Certainly not great, but at a height of nearly 5'11", I didn't have favorable body proportions and, therefore, was at a distinct

biomechanical disadvantage as a powerlifter. In the summer of 1982 — at the urging of some fellow lifters at the Wilkes-Barre YMCA — I competed in my first bodybuilding contest. Though I placed third in my class, I also realized my ecto-mesomorphic body type wasn't suitable as a bodybuilder. My genetic destiny is as a so-called "hardgainer".

I graduated from Penn State in 1983 with a Bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education. In May, 1983, I was hired as a member of the Health Fitness Staff at Princeton University and remained there until August, 1984. Though I still didn't think HIT was right for me, I had continued to prescribe HIT workouts for others.

In August, 1984, Dr. Paul Kennedy hired me as his full-time Assistant Strength Coach at Rutgers University. We trained all varsity athletes with an HIT program for the six years we were there — everyone from male football players and baseball players to female gymnasts and golfers. Once again, I thought HIT was suitable for our athletes but not for me, so I continued to perform lengthy sessions in the weight room.

On March 15, 1985, I was sitting on a bench between sets of chest exercises and said to myself, "This is ridiculous." At the time I was a 27-year-old Assistant Strength and Conditioning Coach at Rutgers University in New Jersey. My workday was Monday through Friday from 4:00-10:00 p.m. and another 3-6 hours on Sundays depending on what part of the football season we were in. I usually went to the weight room after breakfast and lifted for four hours until it was time for lunch. (My college days were very similar except that I usually trained after lunch right up until dinner.) On this particular Friday morning, for whatever reason, I began to think about the amount of time I'd invested in my weight training. I did some quick math: four hours a day times three days a week is 12 hours a week times 52 weeks in a year is 624 hours of lifting weights in a year. This is the equivalent of lifting weights for 24 hours a day for 26 straight days — almost an entire month out of a year. And multiplying that by the 7-plus years I had been doing these marathon workouts was pretty sobering.

It wasn't until that Friday in March, 1985, that I realized maybe HIT was indeed for me. Two days later, on March 17 — almost exactly three years to the date of my last powerlifting competition — I finally gave HIT a sincere shot and haven't trained any other way since then. Sure, I've made numerous adjustments and changes over the past 11 years, but the basic concepts of brief, intense workouts have remained the same.

Because of the influence of Nautilus founder Arthur Jones, some people will eternally characterize HIT as "one set of 8-12 reps on Nautilus machines". Even if this statement was true, it would still be a gross oversimplification

of HIT. In fact, one of the great attributes of HIT is its versatility. First of all, HIT does not have to be one set of an exercise; it's not uncommon for HIT practitioners to recommend two or three sets of an exercise. Repetition ranges can also be manipulated to provide variety in training and to reduce orthopedic stress in various populations (such as the young and the old) or for the purposes of rehabilitation. Moreover, the resistance used in HIT can come from any type of equipment or "tool", including barbells, dumbbells, machines (selectorized or plate-loading), cinder blocks, other human beings or a person's own bodyweight (as in dips and chins). Incidentally, the speed of movement, volume of workouts, sequence of exercises, duration of workouts and frequency of training can all be varied as well.

There are literally dozens of HIT strength coaches at the collegiate and professional levels, and every one of them puts their own personal twist to HIT. For example, Coach Ken Mannie of Michigan State does slightly different things than Coach John Thomas of Penn State; Coach John Dunn of the San Diego Chargers does slightly different things than Coach Chet Fuhrman of the Pittsburgh Steelers; and

Ken Leistner of powerlifting renown does things a lot differently than Ken Hutchins of Super Slow fame. Yet I would characterize all these gentlemen — and many others — as HIT practitioners who endorse an HIT-type program with the individuals they train.

In the mid-1980s I even prescribed HIT for a student who wanted to break the New Jersey state teenage record in the bench press. He did a traditional periodized program for the bench press on Mondays and Fridays, but all other exercises were done in an HIT fashion (i.e., one set to muscle failure followed by 3-5 post-fatigue reps). His Wednesday workout was entirely HIT and took less than 20 minutes to complete. (He did negative-only dips on Wednesdays with his bodyweight plus added resistance instead of the bench press.) He got his state teenage record, by the way, benching 265 lbs at a bodyweight of 132.

Incidentally, the principles of HIT can also be applied to aerobic training for many of the same reasons as it is used in strength training. For example, brief but intense aerobic workouts will be more time-efficient and will carry less risk of injury than that of lengthy aerobic workouts. Personally, I do aerobic training twice per week and typically maintain my heart rate between 85-95% of my age-predicted maximum heart rate for 20 minutes.

By slightly modifying different program variables, HIT can be used by just about anyone: young or old, male or female, athletic or sedentary. As far as the appropriateness of HIT for "ageless athletes", I just turned 39 years old, and

*"One of the
attributes of HIT
is its versatility."*

my weight is usually in the neighborhood of 170 lbs (compared to 165 lbs at the age of 19) with less than 11% bodyfat. And I think I can turn up my intensity nearly as high as when I was younger!

Editor's Note: In order to create a point of comparison, I asked Matt to note typical routines pre-HIT and now. Here's his response.

Pre-HIT is hard to say. It's been so long. The only thing I can say is that I used to do 4 sets of every exercise I could think of. I trained all body parts the same day (i.e., 3 workouts per week), so you can imagine the intensity level with that kind of volume. I talked myself into reducing the number of sets to 3, but then I added more exercises so the total volume was the same. Here's roughly what a workout would be:

Traditional Program (3 times per week):

Hips: 1 exercise, 4-5 sets
 Quads: 1 exercise, 3-4 sets
 Hamstrings: 1 exercise, 3-4 sets
 Calves: 1-2 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Chest: 5-6 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Upper Back: 5-6 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Shoulders: 2-3 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Biceps: 3-4 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Triceps: 3-4 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Abdominals: 3-4 exercises, 3-4 sets each
 Workout Time: 3-4 hours
 Cardio: 2-3 sessions per week, 20-40 minutes each session

HIT Program (three times per week, all exercises one set to failure with 3-4 post-fatigue reps done immediately after failure).

1. Hips: 1-2 exercises
2. Quads: 1 exercise
3. Hamstring: 1 exercise
4. Calves: 1 exercise (once per week)
5. Chest: 2-3 exercises
6. Upper Back: 2-3 exercises
7. Shoulders: 2-3 exercises
8. Biceps: 1 exercise
9. Triceps: 1 exercise
10. Forearms: 1 exercise
11. Abdominals: 1-2 exercises
12. Neck: 2-4 exercises (once or twice per week)
13. Low Back: 1 exercise (once per week)

Workout Time: 45-60 minutes
 Cardio: 2 sessions per week, 20 minutes per session ♦

Women and Weight Training: Countering Myths and Misperceptions

Because most women have no interest in becoming big and muscular, women believe their training programs should be quite different from men's programs. From this key concern — becoming too big — a number of myths and misperceptions have evolved about women's weight training. Such myths and misperceptions have kept many women from weight training or training with any degree of effectiveness. Most women are, unfortunately, not doing the one activity — weight training — which can truly shape their bodies in a highly attractive way, greatly improve their health now and in the future, and markedly improve strength.

This article will seek to counter myths and misperceptions about women and weight training and make the case that in most instances the training programs for women and men will be **virtually identical**. Moreover, the principles of training governing these programs are the same. There are **not** separate training principles for women and men because training principles are **universal**.

Let's first examine a number of these myths and misperceptions and then provide principles and prescriptions for successful training applicable to **both** men and women. As noted at the outset, the chief concern of women is that by weight training they will become big, muscular, and highly defined. This is a myth and misperception because few individuals of either sex have the genetic endowment to develop a large, defined musculature. Women and men possessing these characteristics seem to be more the norm

Available Primers and Reviews

\$3 for all 4 or \$1 each

- Review of Study on Geriatric Weight Training
- Review of Diet and Lifestyle Program and Reversal of Artherosclerosis
- Primer on Periodization
- Primer on Psychology and Motivation

Send your name and address along with a check or money order to:

Master Trainer c/o Ageless Athletes
 Suite 221, Memorial Building
 610 N. Main St.
 Blacksburg, VA 24060-3349