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The 2011 Gettysburg Leadership Experience

***Over 30 Law Enforcement Professionals
attended the leadership staff ride, which took place September 23-25***

More pictures on page 17



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- From the President's Desk
- FBI to Launch Nationwide Facial Recognition Service
- New Jersey's Law Enforcement Approach to the Veteran Offender

Does Your Workout Work?

*By Matt Brzycki, Assistant Director of Campus Recreation, Fitness
Princeton University*

Obviously, it makes no sense to perform a workout that doesn't produce meaningful results. What about you? Does your workout work? If it doesn't consider the following three questions.

Question #1: Are you training with an adequate level of effort or intensity?

In my opinion, the main reason why workouts don't work is because an adequate level of intensity isn't employed. All too often, workouts are "gabfests" in which a high level of intensity is absent or, at best, sporadic.

You can't just do exercises with random weights for a pre-determined number of repetitions while "shooting the breeze" between sets and expect this to stimulate significant improvements in your strength and fitness. Your workout shouldn't be a ho-hum affair; it should be completed in an aggressive fashion.

The fact of the matter is that your efforts must reach or approach what's called "muscular fatigue." This is the point when you've exhausted your muscles such that you can't perform another repetition with good technique. If you can do 11 repetitions, don't stop at 10; if you can lift 100 pounds, don't use 90.

Question #2: Are you trying to progress in the resistance and/or repetitions from one workout to the next?

Another reason why workouts don't work is because there's little or no attempt to incorporate progression on a regular basis. Let's say that a month ago you were doing a "work set" of 10 reps with 140 pounds in the lat pulldown. And now, you're still doing the set for the same num-

ber of repetitions with the same amount of weight. That's not progress, is it? On the other hand, doing a set of 12 reps with 150 pounds a month later represents progress: That's 20% more repetitions with about 7% more weight.

If you do the maximum number of prescribed repetitions, you should increase the weight the next time you do that particular exercise; if you fall short of the maximum number of repetitions—say that your target is 12 and you did 11—you should use the same weight the next time you do that particular exercise and try to improve the number of repetitions.

Question #3: Are you getting enough recovery between workouts?

A final reason why workouts don't work is because recovery is underemphasized or, worse, overlooked. Recovering from a workout is just as important as the workout itself. Remember you don't get stronger during a workout; rather, you get stronger after a workout during the recovery phase. That's when your muscles literally rebuild. Not giving your muscles enough recovery means that your muscles aren't given the opportunity to rebuild. The end result is that your strength (and size) will decrease.

Proper nutrition is an important aspect of the recovery process. During intense exertion, your body relies on carbohydrates as its main energy source. After an intense workout, you need to replenish your depleted glycogen stores as soon as possible in order to expedite the recovery process. This can be done by eating foods and drinking beverages that are high in carbohydrates.

Bottom line: To maximize your response to training, your answer to each of these three questions must be "yes."

Matt Brzycki is the Assistant Director of Campus Recreation, Fitness at Princeton University in Princeton, New Jersey. A former Marine Drill Instructor, he has authored, co-authored and edited 17 books on strength and fitness.