

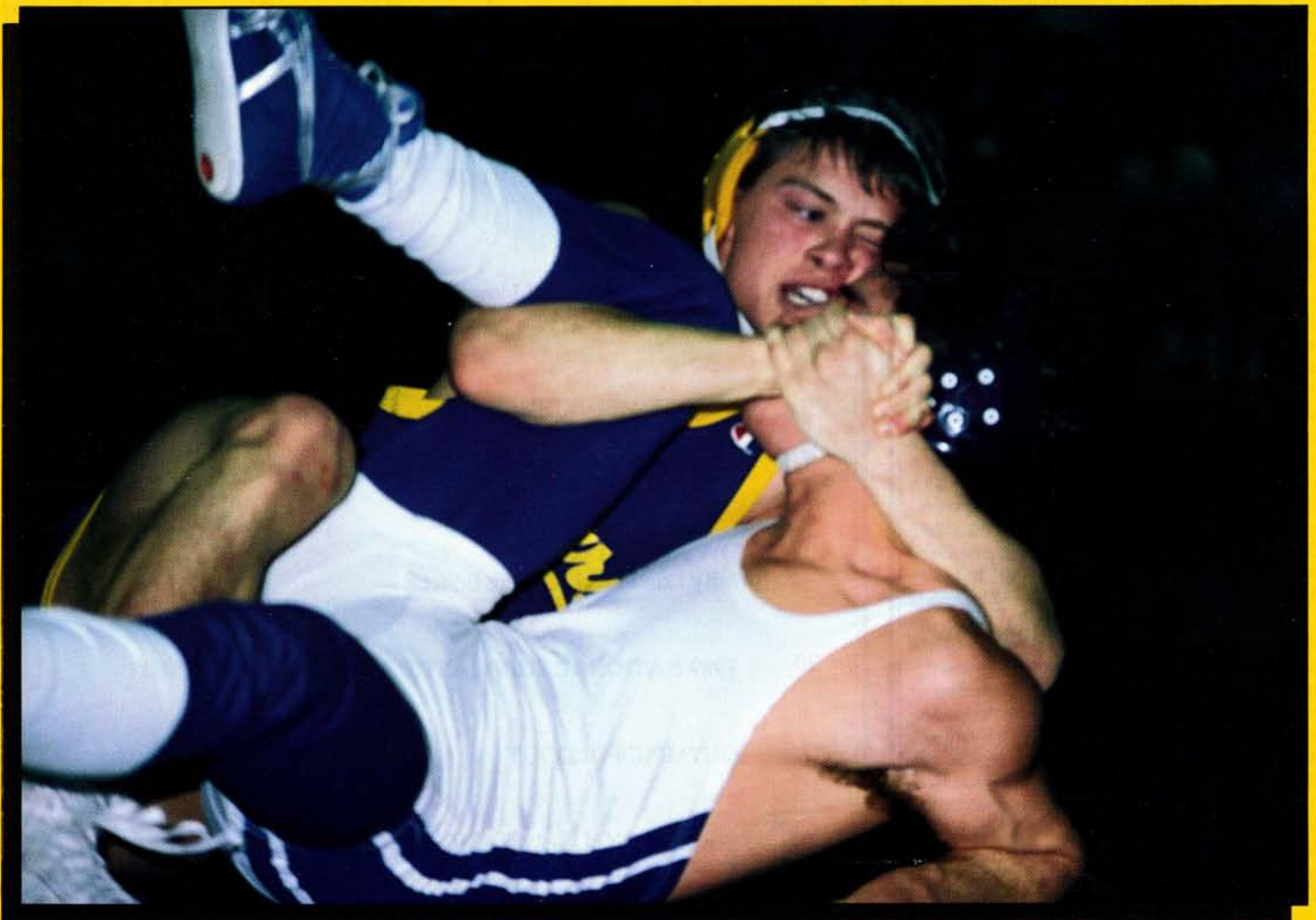


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WRESTLING USA



The Importance Of Intensity
NCAA Division III Preview
Aids In Sports

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COACHING TIPS

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTENSITY

To attain the maximum possible results in strength training

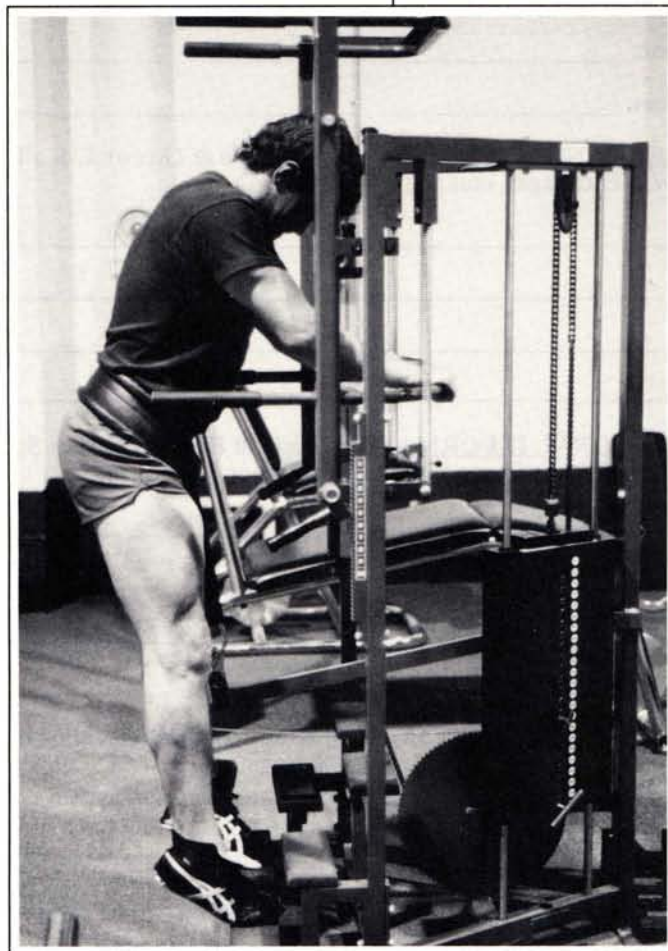
Except for genetics, an athlete's intensity of effort is arguably the most important factor in attaining the maximum possible results from strength training. Apparently, there exists a level of intensity below which little or no strength gains occur. In other words, the intensity of effort must be great enough to exceed this threshold so that a sufficient stimulus is provided for growth to take place. Failure to reach this level of intensity will result in submaximal gains. Unfortunately, no one knows precisely what level of intensity is necessary to stimulate muscular growth.

THE INTENSITY CONTINUUM

Even if the minimum level is unknown, we can determine the most productive level of intensity by deductive reasoning. For the moment, let's suppose that a 90% level of intensity was the threshold for achieving maximal results. If so, how do we pinpoint 90% intensity....or 95% intensity...or any other level of intensity for that matter? Well, there are exactly two levels of intensity that can be determined rather easily. One level is 0% intensity or complete inactivity. Obviously, no intensity creates no stimulus and therefore produces no effect! The only other identifiable level happens to reside at the opposite end of the of the continuum. That level is 100% intensity. This level of intensity is characterized by a total all-out effort for a prescribed amount of time. It is literally impossible to determine any other levels of intensity. So, the only level of effort that is both productive and measurable is 100% intensity.

TIME AND INTENSITY

The question arises - How can I get my wrestlers to attain this level of intensity in the weight room? There are varied opinions as to how this may be accomplished. Most sug-



gestions center on increasing some program variable such as the number of sets, the number of exercises or the frequency of workouts. Although these may seem like valid ideas, it's very doubtful that increasing any of these will raise the intensity to a desirable level. The reason for this is simple. There is an inverse relationship between time and intensity. As the time or length of an activity increases, there is a concomitant decrease in the intensity of effort. Stated otherwise, you cannot train at a high level of intensity for long periods of time. Hey, anyone who has survived the rigors of a two hour practice session should be able to verify this! By increasing sets, exercises or frequency, the training time will ultimately increase. The end result is actually a decreased level of intensity. If you understand the logic of this principle, it should now be obvious that in order to train at a high level of intensity, you must train for a relatively short period of time.

ATTAINING MAXIMUM INTENSITY

Thus far, our reasoning has established that 100% intensity is the only desirable level that we can measure. This level of intensity is best achieved when an individual trains to the point of momentary muscular failure. When this is attained, an athlete has stimulated the maximum number of muscle fibers for growth. How does this happen?

Let's say that one of your wrestlers is to perform a set of leg extensions with 100 pounds. In order to overcome inertia and provide impetus to the 100 pounds of resistance, his quadriceps must exert slightly more than 100 pounds of force. The weight will not move if a force less than or equal to 100 pounds is applied. During the first repetition, only a small percentage of his available muscle fibers are working - just enough to move the weight. As he performs each repetition, some muscle fibers will fatigue. Fresh fibers are simultaneously recruited to assist the fatigued fibers in generating ample force. This continues until the last repetition when momentary muscular failure is finally reached. At this point, the available fibers cannot create enough force to lift the weight. During the final repetition, his level of intensity is maximal and he has stimulated as many muscle fibers as possible for growth. By performing one maximal set, he has done the equivalent of a few submaximal sets... in a shorter amount of time. So, one set of an exercise performed in a high intensity fashion is just as productive as doing multiple sets and obviously more efficient in terms

of time.

However, there are individuals who are cynical of this style of strength training. More often than not, it is because their response was poor. Undoubtedly, their poor response was due to a submaximal level of intensity. One set of an exercise can produce striking results but only if that one set is a total all-out effort.

ONE MORE REP

A high level of intensity is an absolute requirement for optimal strength gains. Although it is quite possible that less than 100% intensity will provide enough stimulus to produce maximal results, 100% intensity is the only desirable level that can be measured. This level is typified by training to the point of muscular failure. By training in this manner, only one set of each pre-

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scribed exercise is required. Since it is literally impossible to train hard for long periods of time, an entire session in the weight room should not exceed 30-40 minutes. At most, 14-18 total exercises should be performed per workout with the emphasis on the gluteals, legs and upper torso. Doing any more than this will probably cut into your athletes' recovery time and limit their potential gains. ☐

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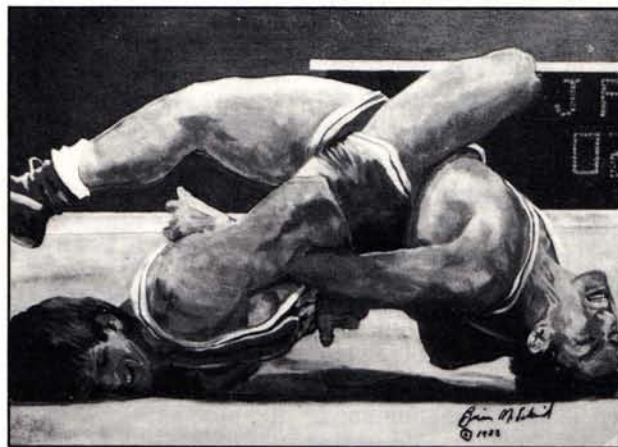
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