

Twelve Things that are...BASS ACKWARDS

As I was listening to Christopher McDougall's talk about his book "Born to Run" on the Strengthcoach podcast (it took me months to finish this), I began to think that perhaps we have had things backwards for the past few years. In his interview he talks about how he does the opposite of what most trainers of endurance athletes do and actually doesn't build a base to support the sprint, but rather sprints to support the base. While it may sound backwards to many trainers, I can't help but agree with him. Having said that, I have compiled a brief list of twelve "things" which I feel we have attacked the opposite way that we should. While you won't agree with it all, hopefully it will make you think a little bit about how you train your athletes.

BASSACKWARDS:

1) *Bilateral before unilateral*: I, like many trainers I know, used to think that we should train both limbs at the same time and then work towards the more challenging single limb movements as the athlete progresses. Wrong. It wasn't until I started reaching Mike Clarks stuff with NASM and got PES (performance enhancement specialist) certified that I changed my approach. I was skeptical at first, but it made a huge difference in the productivity of every athlete that I trained. All my athletes now see this approach (except for a rare exception); we train all single limb and unilateral movements before I will ever let my athletes load up with heavier bilateral dumbbell or barbell based movements. Most people think I'm crazy, I disagree.

2) *Work more, play less*: Odd concept, but here in America, when we usually fail, the first suggestion is to work harder and longer instead of taking a break to figure out how to work smarter and shorter. Backwards? I think so. That doesn't mean you shouldn't work hard; anyone who knows me knows that I stand for hard work. My only issue is that we need to work smarter with regards to our specific goal(s) and not necessarily more. Find out exactly what you need to do and work hard at that specific goal. Make sure you have parameters and a plan designed to reach that goal so that you aren't getting off track on the way. This allows you to have more available time to separate yourself from what you do and have a much needed mental break. Remember, more is not always better!

3) *Aerobic base before speed work and/or conditioning*: Long ago someone dreamed up that there should be an aerobic base built up before we worked our way into speed work and/or conditioning. The thought is that that base (oxygen based) was needed to improve our other abilities. Since then we have learned better. Long and slow is not good and doesn't do much to make anyone faster or in better shape.

4) *Specialization before generalization*: For some reason everyone wants to think that they're elite in their specific sport or training area. Out come the special tools to boost up their egos and supposedly their weights as well. If you are benching 150 and you think you need some special program to boost your bench, you're wrong. Try working out! Like magic, the more you do a movement, the better you get at ingraining the motor

skill/pattern and magically you become more efficient at the movement. When we first got chalk in the weight room at the school I work out of, I told the guys that they better be holding at least 300lbs in their hands before I even see chalk go onto their hands. Why in the world should you be using chalk if you're holding 135lbs? Needless to say, the same day I saw a couple of my star athletes doing push-ups with chalk on...can you believe that this is our next generation?

5) *Dynamic Warm-up before proper movement:* For some reason we really like to use generic dynamic warm-ups (high knees, butt kicks, carioca, etc.) but we do it before people have proper movement and we just end up engraining poor movement patterns. It didn't hit me until a few months ago when one of my athletes was doing walking lunges as part of the dynamic warm-up. It hit me that at the same time we hadn't touched walking lunges yet and only done static holds. Solution: Do split squats as part of your dynamic warm-up. Start with static holds on the bottom position and work your way into dynamic split squats. This ensures proper foot position and allows proper stride length as well. Magically, most of the kids who have horrible patterns and knee pain will suddenly feel like a new person!

6) *Conditioning before movement:* The next thing coaches love to do is give athletes conditioning protocols with movements that they cannot maintain for 10 reps, yet they are expected to maintain the movement for 30-60 seconds of hardcore conditioning. Obviously there is a give and a take, but don't expect someone's movement to be flawless if they are 10 minutes into a brutal conditioning session.

7) *Movement before stretching:* If you can't get into the proper position to begin with because you're tight, stretch! I don't care what people say about a decrease in power, if you can't move properly, stretch. Overactive or tight muscles will prevent you from getting into position no matter how hard you try to get yourself there.

8) *Adding external load before moving properly:* If you can't get through a good deep squat, don't add weight. Gray Cook calls it adding strength to dysfunction, and I can't help but to agree with him. None of my athletes will see a bar until they can reach parallel. That's femur parallel to the floor. Coaches love to load up athletes and try to coach them into the proper squatting position when they have hundreds of pounds on their back and are trying to crank out a set of triples. It's not going to happen folks! Spend the time on the front end teaching movements in your warm-ups and reinforcing them during "rest periods" and you will magically see the movements improve and will eventually see the benefit in the loaded movements.

9) *Supplements before good nutrition or good training:* For some reason most people are looking for the fountain of youth, yet they spend more time trying to find the magic potion than they do actually working on making themselves healthier. I'm sold on the fact that if people spent the time they spend on trying new supplements just training hard and eating clean they would see better results with less money and less headache. High school kids in particular don't care about what good training is and how or what it takes to get there. All they want is the next thing that will give them the "edge," as long as it

comes in pill form. I actually had an athlete tell me the other day that he thought Black Powder was so effective that it would make it him bench 50 more pounds immediately upon taking (laugh quietly now so he doesn't hear you)! To his surprise after he loaded up the bar in his basement (with 50 more pounds than he'd ever done before—and without a spotter I mind you) he lowers the bar to his chest and presses. For some odd reason the bar doesn't seem to move...the Black Powder must not be working (gasp)! Needless to say he had to roll the bar off of his chest to get out from underneath it. It's amazing what kids think these days. I recommend three supplements: water, air, and protein. Most people don't drink enough water, work themselves hard enough where they are sucking air, or ingest enough protein in a given day. Tomorrow, try this supplement: drink water, workout, and have a protein shake. Do that 4-6 days a week and a year from now, you'll see the best body you've probably ever had.

10) *Sport specific before general*: I'm sick of trying to explain to high school kids that they are a whole lot more like their friend than they want to believe. For some reason everyone wants to be specialized, yet no one has general strength yet. The hockey player is a whole lot more like the basketball player than either of them want to believe. Want to be faster on the ice? Work on your lower body strength, period. Want to work on your speed on the basketball court? Guess what, do the same thing! 23 hours a day you two are a whole lot more alike than you would like to believe. The funniest thing, the best female athlete in the school is just that...the best female athlete. She is not a single sport star; she is the best soccer player, the best hockey player, and the best lacrosse player. For some reason, no one understands or seems to connect those dots though...

11) *Don't stretch at the beginning of a workout*: People get mad and talk about how static stretching at the beginning of the work out reduces power. Maybe it does, there is some research that agrees with that. My problem is this; if not where do you put it? Last time I tried to get my athletes to stretch at the end of a workout when they were done, they responded, "I can't I have to be home for _____." I learned two things from that. 1) I don't care if my athletes lose a minimal amount of power production, most kids just don't stretch enough. 2) If I don't program it into their workout somewhere and make it part of the "workout," they won't do it, period. My solution: upper body, lower body split days. I can add in static stretching as part of a set and not have it negatively impact their lifting or power output. Obviously it only works in phases where you are able to train on upper/lower splits, and not during total body phases, but it has helped two-fold. More flexible, less down-time during workouts, and recovering is better.

12) *Internet Guru before trainer*: Be a trainer before you log onto the internet. I am almost 28. While I know that Mike Boyle has logged almost as many years coaching as I have breathing, I also know that it pays to learn wisdom from those who have done it. I for one, spend the majority of my day coaching athletes, reading research, and writing training programs all with the hope of becoming a better coach an improving my coaching skill. My question...where do all these people who spend all day in forums find the time? I can barely find enough time to actually get a workout in myself, and usually that's only if I block off a section of time and lift in my basement.

The examples could go on and on with lists of various strength, cardio, and life details, but I have to try to squeeze in my scheduled workout before I go to gym and train my athletes.

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