



Timely Information for Personal Success

So You Think You're Strong?

By Aaron J. Allie

Who's stronger, a competitive bodybuilder, farmer, or cross country skier striding 31 miles? These are three completely different examples of strength. If you factor in some simple physics, movement evaluation and brain-to-muscle intercommunication, you may find your answer.

Consider Science

Without having access to a coin-operated strength tester, science gives you the next best measuring tool with equations for force and work.

Force = Mass X Acceleration. Obviously the bodybuilder takes a lead after some bench presses, however consider that some occupations and sports require multiple, less forceful contractions of muscle fibers at higher speeds over an entire competition or 8-hour shift.

A biceps curl is great for producing larger biceps, but the distance the weight actually moves is minimal. Using Work = Force X Distance, the farmer chuckles as he/she pushes a wheel barrow, drags a trailer to a hitch, or carries heavy rocks for long distances. Calculate the total cumulative work of the bodybuilder's workout, the farmer's daily effort or the skier's thousands of strides to determine who the real workhorse is.

Strength is a Relative Term

Strength, much like diet, is a broad term. There's a distinct difference between gym-strong, endurance and functionally strong.

Michol Dalcourt, a professor, personal trainer and director of The Institute of Motion, notices that hockey players that spend summers working on farms are better acclimated for the season than players training at gyms. Weightlifting exercises train the muscles through a specific range of motion that doesn't account for variables like the unpredictability of sport. Also, external factors like wind, uneven ground, mud, and reaction time are factors not easily mimicked at a club.

It's not so much aesthetic brawn, but the nervous system's ability to recruit motor units or groups of muscle fibers to complete a given task. Based on appearance alone, a bodybuilder should

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It's Time for a Progressive Approach

It's painful to watch regulars at health clubs lumber away on the same routine they've been doing for 30 years, often pausing in the middle of a set to catch up on local goings-on.

Although having that 2nd family at the gym is great for attendance reasons, has your biological family ever wondered why you look exactly the same for \$30 a month? Some tips to avoid the passive approach:

- Change up your workout every 4 - 6 weeks to avoid strength plateaus.
- Shorter rest periods between exercises can spike "good" hormone levels throughout the day.
- Machines are good for beginners, but you need to progress to dumbbells and bodyweight exercises.
- Be discerning, but don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone, that's how we grow.
- Get well rounded. Alternate running days with other activities like hiking, ice skating or rollerblading.
- Set a healthy example for your kids. They will be parents someday, too.
- We spend time researching lots of things online. Spend some time researching your health? ■

- Aaron J. Allie

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Questions and Answers

Tips for Losing Weight

Q: What are the best strategies for staying motivated at losing weight?

A: First, reduce your daily caloric intake by 10%. Next, start a weekly exercise program. But it seems people often forget a higher power. When tragedies or severe accidents strike, people quickly turn to prayer. But when left with the shortcomings of humans and exercise, many are ok with finding an excuse for not making the time, or lack of willpower or energy and leave it at that. If you are a prayerful person, why not try praying about your lack of motivation? When complicated days drain your energy, find the enriching simplicity of 5 minutes of quiet devotion. I've seen it work numerous times in my client's lives and in my own. ■

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be able to drive a golf ball 600 yards. In reality, a big drive or 31-mile ski race requires nerve impulses to generate amounts of force necessary to maintain balance, posture, flexibility and stamina for the length of the activity.

There are Plenty of Functional Activities

If you're not ready to invade the tough-guy part of the health club by all the dumbbells, mirrors and grunting, there are plenty of functional activities you can do in other places in the club, at home or in your backyard.

Possessing other attributes like core strength, stability, balance and quickness are things that get many to the finish line of the *Tough Mudder*, a 10-12 mile obstacle race, mud run events designed to challenge the toughest of the tough. You also see NFL lineman taking ballet classes or doing martial arts.

Summary

Before answering the question at the beginning of this article, you need to watch an event on the Pro Rodeo Tour. When it comes to toughness between the bodybuilder, farmer and endurance skier, my gut tells me the real tough guy or gal wears boots and scratches his or her sunburn with a pitchfork. ■

Aaron J. Allie, B.S., CPT, MES, PES.