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- 1 - Draper here... Training Over 40

I have a friend, Mui Tsun, who writes fitness material for health mags and the internet. She's currently writing a book on bodybuilding for the over-40 gang and asked me for my point of view.

Yes, bombers, somehow the secret got out: I'm over 40. But that doesn't mean I've had it, I'm over the hill, all washed up, finished, kaput or a mere silver sliver of the Blond Bomber I once was. With the aid of a cane and Laree, my assistant, I'm able to get about the gym for a pretty hefty workout. I love those big rubber balls.

Anyhoo... here's a review of the most frequently asked questions collected by the author, Mui, and the dazzling answers contributed by this dashing young writer, Moi.

Let 'er rip...

Q. As a man over 40, have I lost the ability to "grow"? I continue to train, but the "packing it on" stage seems to have left me. I lift about the same weight. In fact, a bit more, but the growth (size) doesn't seem to come.

A. Two truths should be revisited and underscored at this point: that's life and everyone is different. A third truth can be added: 40 to 50 are still very good growth years.

"That's life" tells us we do slow down in our muscular growth as we age. Yet, if the basic training precepts are followed -- workout consistency, hard training, smart eating and plenty of rest and relaxation -- muscular size, shape and quality can be improved perceptibly into our 60s. "That everyone is different" -- genetics, health, training acumen, drive, toughness and such -- tells us some will flourish more than others. Some will flounder.

Sufficient exercise will keep one in shape. Swell. Those who are suited to progress as they age need to be aggressive with their training, while at once retaining commonsense, care and attentiveness to overtraining and system abuse.

Finesse, passion and creativity are three major qualities that determine and assure a trainee's continued distinct advancement. They separate the ordinary from the special.

Certain muscles that have not been overtrained or training-saturated -- rear delts, forearms, lower lats, thighs -- can surprise us and respond especially well to specific exercises, and restore our confidence and delight in training and growing.

Finally, the over-40 lifter must be careful not to be dominated or intimidated by the over40 rhetoric. It is specious, spurious and insidious with tentacles reaching the subconscious that defeat him before he's 41.

Q. I am 49 and have just started bodybuilding. My biggest question is what will my skin look like once I am built? Like most my age, my skin is starting to sag. Will building help tighten it or will it just sag over my muscles?

A. The same two truths mentioned above need to be reviewed.

The skin generally will benefit from the physical stimulation and the circulation of life-giving blood offering nutrients and oxygen to its tissues. Furthermore, system detoxification and its positive affect on the body accompany hearty weight-bearing exercise. The skin is not the least of the benefactors to this welcome gain. Health is improving before your eyes.

Added muscle and tone from your bodybuilding can be expected to swell within the skin and improve the age-related looseness. On the other hand, the loss of excess fat might counter the skin-tightening effect of the muscle. Don't despair.

Remember this: If skin tone and wrinkles are the primary interests in your bodybuilding quest, you might become disappointed and miss the grander acquirements of the lifting experience. Given time, everything improves. More often than not, most of the improvements are not what you anticipated or sought: inner character strength, systemic health, bone density, fortified immune system, balanced hormonal activity, improved blood-fats and blood-sugars, and a general glow and structural rightness you're too close to see... and more are on the list.

Q. How long does it take to start losing the muscle you have gained, i.e. when off for sickness or unable to get to the gym to train for a period?

A. This depends on the quantity and quality and maturity of the muscle you carry on your frame, and on your genetic background. Those fortunate trainees who are predisposed to natural muscle development will lose muscle slowly. Sound muscle mass is basic to their structure. Those, like most of us, who train hard for every quivering tissue lose muscle more readily. Stay strong. Do not fret.

Lifters having dedicated several years to serious muscle building often experience minor muscle loss in the first two to four weeks of forced layoff. The tissues lose their general fullness and fitness from lack of use and stimulation, a cause of undue depression, but regain vitality in several intelligent workouts.

Unscheduled layoffs should be and often can be avoided. Make every effort to assure training consistency, even if partial workouts or fewer workouts per week substitute your full training regimen. One missed workout leads to another and another and you fall into a training gap that is hard to recall. Smart training sessions modified to accommodate special circumstances, minor illness or injury work wonders to carry you along the crooked way. Be creative. Be steady.

Q. I am a 47-year-old bodybuilder and have been working out on and off since my teens. Are the older bodybuilder's protein requirements the same as for a younger bodybuilder? Or are they less than younger bodybuilders' due to the slower metabolism that comes with age?

A. I suggest musclebuilders of all stages and ages accentuate their protein intake to assure muscle development and tissue repair. The muscle you've achieved over the years and your

spirited efforts to continue to grow hard and strong depend on a plentiful supply of those amino acids.

As the metabolism is not firing away as it did as a kid, it follows that the system is not as efficient at absorbing and utilizing amino acids to satisfy our bright and hopeful needs. The overall volume of food intake might require down adjustment, but let's keep the protein high, the nutrient-packed carbs and the good fats fortified with essential fatty acids medium. Get stronger every day.

Note: Protein is not toxic; you can't get too much and certain amino acids combine to provide energy.

Q. Is it too old to compete when you're in the 40s?

A. Not if one wants to compete and assesses oneself worthy of the effort and display. Folks compete successfully into their 60s, 70s, 80s at lifting and physique contests arranged for their age group. Some of our best champion bodybuilders have amazed audiences with their fine development in their mid-40s and 50s.

Q. How can I make my face look as young and powerful as my body?

A. A strong visage often comes from the look of authentic confidence that accompanies training and the qualities one acquires through the training process. Strength in back, the courage to gain it and the humility knowing someone around the corner is stronger and bigger exudes a powerful and impressive glow of its own.

I've heard of facial isometric and isotonic exercises, but have not seen a program outlined or demonstrated. You could design your own routine with a little creativity -- cheek-crunching and jaw-stretching and eye-widening for x sets of x reps every other day for 15 minutes. I really doubt these are worth the time and effort. Just think of the tense facial expressions (exercises, essentially) we make throughout a tough workout or within any given day. Our faces should be ripped.

Leanness, a goal of bodybuilding, is eventually realized in the face, accentuating the bone structure and often translating into a rugged look. Seek leanness through hard training and right eating.

In other words: Train hard, eat right and look tough.

Q. How do I begin exercise safely over 40 without risking health and unnecessary strain?

A. The best way is to be a kid again... with an adult brain. Revive your curiosity, playful spirit and willingness to jump right in without painful self-consciousness and binding pride. Have fun and trust in your efforts. This doesn't mean make a fool of yourself or charge forward with unbridled eagerness. It means use your energy, enthusiasm, heart and commonsense.

There are different ways to begin your over-40 training program. You can power-walk in your neighborhood daily. As you are able, go longer distances and add jogging to your walking regimen. Learn and practice simple rules of smart eating behavior and consider future training plans that include resistance exercise.

Join a gym, hire a knowledgeable personal trainer for three basic sessions and apply his or her teaching regularly. Continue your wise investment, knowing time and consistency will certainly bring you to your fitness goals.

Training and eating right are not rocket sciences, and instincts, sound thinking and simple observation will guide you along the way. Safe and wise steps will unfold. Eventually, you'll know yourself and your limits and have the will and means to surpass them. Risk and strain and the over-40 mentality will evaporate like steam from an old kettle on a potbelly stove.

Q. What is the most important muscle group to work after 40? I think it may be the legs since that is what hurts me the most.

A. You don't want to neglect any muscle group and it's true, legs get us from place to place and contribute to our independence.

Something else: A decent leg workout provides systemic benefits. That is, due to the mass of the muscles under load and the vast amount of blood moved through the system, comprehensive enzyme and hormone activity takes place and the entire muscular system is urged to respond, to grow, accordingly.

Bingo. Leg training hits the jackpot.

Throw in some supersets -- chins and dips, dumbbell inclines and seated lat rows, bench presses and lat pulldowns to keep a grin on your face.

Q. Reducing body fat, losing lower abdomen fat and maintaining lean mass whilst cutting: How do I do it? I need single figure bodyfat percentage to show my abs off.

A. Have you tried chanting to Zeus?

This small miracle requires lots of time, patience, courage and perseverance mixed generously with leg raises, rope tucks, crunches and hyperextensions and a tad of aerobic exercise. Of course, the perfect application of your basic musclebuilding movements from squats and deadlifts to barbell curls and dumbbell inclines are a must. Don't forget to combine volume- and power-training sufficiently. There'll be no turning back, letting up or laying off... ever.

Now, about your eating habits and nutritional plan: Start with slabs of protein, smaller meals frequently throughout the day... mmm... Why don't you have a seat, sit back and relax... it might be the last chance you get.

Q. Can you ever get rid of cellulite on arms and body by doing aerobic activity every day and lifting weights? Right now it seems like the more I work out, the more "baggy" my arms are getting, yet I know I am getting stronger. Does this stuff really go away if one works out hard and long enough on a daily basis?

A. Let's just say that no other plan of attack will work better... or at all. You face a monumental problem, if the loose skin on the back of your arms becomes your only focus and reference for achievement. Your regular smart training and right eating will continue to improve your health day by day. Be confident of this.

Building muscle is your most important achievement. Train to build muscle and fat burning will follow. Sometimes training intensity has to be increased if one wants to see more impressive

improvements take place. Where moderate exercise is healthy, it might not be enough to affect the changes you seek. You might consider increasing your set-to-set pace or the amount of weight you use in each exercise or the level of input in each set and rep. Supersetting exercises is a most effective training method for muscle building and fat burning. Try HIIT-style aerobic training (High Intensity Interval Training) for more dynamic fat burning and cardio health.

Keep your training fresh and interesting, but don't change it too often. Never give in, never give up.

That's all she wrote, skydivers. And I've been over-40 barely 23 years. Youth is a good old friend, musclemakers; never let him go.

Go with God's speed... Kid Draper from Secaucus

2 - Laree here, taking over with online news

Taking a wild stab in the dark, I'd guess the average age of the "Draper here" newsletter readers to be, uh, over 40. How's that for a wide range carefully calculated to display a winning hand?

If I'm right, it means many of Dave's thoughts for Mui's book hit home with you. So, maybe you're ready for a little more over-40 Draperese. I'll dig out a few more links for you to send you on your way.

Before we go, I did promise last week to have our Bash Itinerary handout ready for download along with this week's newsletter. Let's start with that and go from there. The link below will take you to a printable, live-click pdf with times, addresses, maps and directions on the first few pages, followed by a central coast tourist guide pointing to all our favorite hangouts. You may want to grab the download for future Santa Cruz vacations even if you won't be around for our July 9th Bash weekend.

Pretty soon I'll mellow out about trying to talk you into making the trek here next month. Meanwhile, I can't pass an opportunity to point out this simple fact: For the over-40 crowd, there's no better set of guides than the Bash speakers, Bill Pearl and our man Dave. Both men have trained for longer than the 40-year-olds have been breathing; there's nothing you're going through in your training they haven't experienced.

First the overview, then the itinerary:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Bash05>

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=BashItinerary>

Dick Tyler wrote of Bill's strongman act of the late 1950s in West Coast Bodybuilding Scene. I hadn't posted that excerpt on the website before, and now's a good time to remedy that. While you're clicking around, Bill's website has a collection of monthly routines to take you from beginning to advanced in 20 months. He does the thinking and, if you do the work as detailed, you can't miss. Here's your Pearl research for this week:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=PearlWCBS>

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=20Months>

Couple other things Dave mentioned that you might want clarified: HIIT (interval) cardio and his style of superset training. Here's more:

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Superset>

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=HIIT>

Speaking of supersetting, I've got a little teaser for you. We're gathering steam on the video projects and one of the videos scheduled for the first round is a Draper Slumpbusters video. Dave uses supersetting in nearly every workout, but nowhere does he capitalize on the technique better than when he needs to bust through a plateau or plough under any workout dullness. You'll see the Slumpbusters by the end of the summer, or there'll be no August vacation for us.

No, wait, I've got it! I'll work on the video editing while Dave paints the house. Yep, those videos will at least be in a good resting place later this summer because it's been way too long since we shut down for R&R. We're due, whether the house needs painting or not.

Laree

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