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Printable pdf version of this newsletter:

<http://davedraper.com/pdfs/irononline387.pdf>

You'll also find Dave's column from last week online at the link below.

<http://davedraper.com/url/column.php>

1 - Draper here... Winter Workouts -- Soup's On

January is not exactly hanging around gathering dust. No cobwebs in the 31-day stretch, as we note we're already past the halfway mark and the days are getting longer. Reluctant to welcome another year, many of us poked cautiously at its edges -- will it be better, will it be bitter, shall we commit, what's our strategy? And, then, oh, no, here we go again. The days, like cars of a freight train, are rumbling by.

Big plans or no plans, we cannot ignore the first month of the year, as if it were a pause for contemplation or a moment to reflect. Jump right in; be strong and courageous, hopeful and alert. Hesitation is behind us, bombers. Hesitation is doubt; doubt is absence of trust, and where no trust exists there is fear. Fear paralyzes.

Many of us never skipped a beat, the heavy metal accompanying us like a faithful dog (or a monkey on our back) from December, across the imaginary timeline and into January. Some of us -- the noble -- are content to be back in our comforting refuge after an obligatory respite, our generous contribution to seasonal family joys and responsibilities. Others read these words and bear a sharp pain, the distressing sting that attends procrastination, neglect and guilt. The gym and the shifting of weights and the thud of heavy metal are a fading memory and their minds, having exhausted the usual excuses, are groping for relief, ways to reinstall their workouts and catch up.

Each day is a starting-line, and not of the variety that suggests a do-or-die, all-or-nothing and win-or-lose race to the end. We take our mark with purpose and charge, and we're off, no contest, no records, no spectators or fans. We push and pull and pile, toil and smile. We acknowledge our achievement with humility, make fitting assessments and prepare to do it again. Tomorrow is another day, another starting-line.

This might not be the approach of champions, but it steadily engages us and readies us for bigger and better days ahead. Anything more is greedy, unrealistic, time consuming, disappointing and mind-, back- and spirit-breaking and dumb. That doesn't mean we won't slavishly tread the seldom traveled road, none of us having achieved a prize for brains during our musclebuilding antics.

Whoever we are, whatever the time of year and if we are yet with breath, we are always seeking more effective and interesting training methods. We know muscle develops slowly and strength builds gradually, and we've exhausted every training routine since the days of Sandow. Doesn't matter; like desperate lost souls in the desert we search for water. We say to one another in parched voices, "There's water in them thar sand dunes, cool, clear water." Funny thing... we believe it.

Why not?

Having convinced you there's hope, here's my new plan, which is in fact an old plan. Truth is any plan, if you haven't practiced it in a long time and it isn't an outright bad plan, is probably a good plan. The only requirements are you execute it with form, focus, intensity, assurance and continuity. Here's where many of us fall off the platform; the requirements are barely understood, partially applied or quickly ignored, and the resulting lack of success convinces us the routine is a failure.

The routine never had a chance. It was abandoned before it was sufficiently engaged.

Ah, yes, the plan: What is the plan?

The plan involves a pause for assessment and evaluation. Don't give me that long puss, that bored sigh, that impatient glare. This is not an intellectual exercise, a waste of time for the robust lifter of iron. Stop, look and listen, Bucko. Brief pauses to observe ourselves and our actions are hugely insightful, widely encouraged and universally neglected. Confront yourself with a few friendly inquiries.

Don't run off, scoff or hide. Intense lifters do this regularly; not idiotic Qs like who am I, what am I doing here, am I crazy? -- but introspective reflections with attention toward exercise and workouts, whole-body and bodypart development, muscle density and muscle tone, bodyweight and bodyfat, undertraining and overtraining, diet and nutrition, mood and attitude, purpose and motivation. Sounds profound and looks complicated, but review is simple and natural in process.

I've painstakingly prepared the following incomplete, inarticulate and incomprehensible review list littered with meddlesome commentaries and daydreams. If you have your wits about you, you can do the contemplative deed as you sit poised at the end of the bench press between sets.

>>How's it goin'? Or to be more specific, how's your weight training progressing? Is it on hold, ice cold, cool, lukewarm, very warm or hot? Yeah, I know -- sounds like soup.

I like soup. Soup must be chunky and thick with lotsa meat and vegetables, and is best served between very warm and hot. When it's hot you need to sip it carefully to enjoy its wholesome full flavor. You can eat very warm soup with gusto to your filling -- most beneficial and rewarding. Lukewarm servings do not satisfy the palate and are soon discarded. What a waste.

I also like stews, which are heartier than soups. I seldom eat desserts. Who needs them when there's piping hot soups and stews?

>>Are you enjoying your training or is it distressing? Is it an obligation, or a desirable pursuit? Is it fun, like a hobby, sport or recreation, or is it hard work, toil and trouble, like stacking cinderblocks or digging ditches. I know; it's sort of a combination of all the above.

There are times when weight training is indescribably delicious and times when it is life-saving. There are those workouts that lift you up and those that beat you down. Some are just a plain nuisance. I wanna go home. You ever notice how, after a few days from the loathsome gym, you become irritable and unlivable and dangerous and you'd do anything for an annoying, troublesome, fabulous workout in your beloved refuge? Yeah, me too!

>>Do you consider quitting the noble activity of weight training on occasion, giving up on muscle and might, tossing strength and health, chucking the iron in a scrap heap? I see. Let me put it another way, do you think of resuming your lifting in the near future?

Quitting is so final. It's also so tragic. Quitting, even an extended layoff, is like close to dying while still breathing. You can't quit. What about your kids, your mom and dad, your country? Your heart and lungs and hormonal system, muscle tone and bench press... the vein across the lower biceps. Steve Reeves never quit... Zabo ain't quittin'... have you tried supersets... slumpbusters... chanting?

>>Are you stuck in a rut, experiencing a plateau in strength, concerned with overtraining? Have your workouts become dull and lifeless, and in need of amping, ramping and revamping?

If this is your conclusion, could it be the problem is not the workout but your attitude? A bright and hopeful and energized state of mind can often transform an apparently fruitless and lifeless workout into an inspiring mountain-mover where two steps forward are followed by three steps upward and another one onward, and again and again to the top. Imagine the view at the mountain top, sense the fulfillment of the steep slopes hiked and every crack and ravine crossed. We reach the top one workout at a time. Nothing dull about cliffs and crevices unless you stare at them only... not confronting them... not knowing what lies beyond.

>>When did you change your workout last? Are you one of those impetuous lifters who changes his routine with his moods or muscle-Ts, or do you wait till it grows fangs before retiring it to its cage? Training methods need alteration periodically, but not momentarily.

Frequent routine changes can interrupt muscle overload, interfere with rhythmic training flow and muscle-exercise understanding, inhibit discipline and persistence and cause confusion and disorder. Think about it.

And, then, we get bogged down with routine: bored with exercise sameness and discouraged with diminishing muscle response. Our muscles become accustomed to the same overload and, thus, refuse to respond to that overload -- the same resistance direction, the same groove, the same joints and ligaments, the same weights, the same pastel, miserable world and I'M GOING TO SCREAM. Easy, big fella! Some call these slumps, sticking points or plateaus. Others call them torture, twisted and the end of the line. I call them cowards. Change your routine and press on.

>>Are you aiming to lose weight or gain weight or remain at your current bodyweight? Do you follow a smart muscle- and health-building diet? Do you eat too much, too often or too little, too late? How's your protein, carb and fat intake? How are your EFAs... no, I'm not being fresh, ma'am.

No assessment of our training is complete without discussing diet and nutrition. Here's a link that never grows old:

<http://www.davedraper.com/general-nutrition.html>

The time has come for all good bombers to turn off their lights and go to sleep -- unless, of course, you're at work reviewing this newsletter, in which case you should stealthily log off and get back to work.

He who flies high and long has achieved his destination -- flying high and long. He also has achieved a larger-than-average fuel bill. No matter, we're rich.

Go... Godspeed... DD

2 - Laree here, taking over with IronOnline news...

One outstanding thing about the IronOnline forum is our camaraderie, and nothing brings that out quite so well as when we're online together. Meeting up in a live chat with people with whom you've posted back and forth (or read posted messages by year after year) is the closest thing to face to face, and let me tell you, it's a grin.

In an accidental chat Monday afternoon, Chris McClinch (our regular Warrior Nerd) agreed help bring us together via a Live Training and Nutrition Q&A Chat this Saturday morning. You busy?

9am Pacific Time, noon Eastern. I'm told that's 5pm in the UK. Here's a world clock to help you with your scheduling:

<http://www.worldtimeserver.com/>

It'll be fun to get a chance to say hello, and I guarantee Chris' answers to attendees' questions will point a light on something missing in your training or nutrition program. The chat details follow.

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/saturday-chat.php>

Today in the blog I opened a new cardio conditioning section wherein I claimed the spin bike as the world's top cardio training tool. After more than a quarter of a century spent sampling nearly every type of cardio training introduced, wacky fitness machines to all styles of group aerobic training to running indoors and out, car pushing and sled pulling... the bottom line remains for me the weighted flywheel indoor cycle.

Don't believe it? Here let me tell you why in part one of a four-part series on spinning your way to optimum condition.

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/spin-intro.php>

I'll continue with the next segments in time for next week's newsletter. Until then, I hope to bump into you in the forum, or if time allows, in the Saturday morning chat.

Laree

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IronOnline forum:

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/iol.php>

IronOnline blog:

<http://davedraper.com/blog/>

IronOnline health and fitness database:

<http://healthandfitnesswiki.com/>

Dave's Bomber Blend whey protein powder:
<http://davedraper.com/url/blend.php>

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