

Train the movement, not the body part

According to modern scientific research, our brains do not need to recognize isolated muscle activity. The brain instead automatically develops coordination between muscles based on movement patterns. Therefore, how much do bicep curls help with mountain biking, kayaking, running or rock climbing?

Preparing for upcoming spring activities requires movement pattern development.

Training only one muscle group – i.e., the shoulders, biceps or back – will not play a major role in movement pattern development. Weight training with muscle isolation is popular with bodybuilders because they have to show off form: muscle symmetry and size.

But preparatory training for spring skiing, trail running, cycling and other activities here in the mountains is about movement. Speed, quickness, power, control, coordination and stamina are examples of training goals for these activities, not how the body looks.

Do not confuse form with function. Training the movement, not the body part, is the key to improving how the body moves. Many who train using different movement patterns will naturally develop muscles to look as if they have done some bodybuilding, but the focus is function. Great form is a by-product.

Grey Cook, author of *Athletic Body in Balance*, states in a paragraph what I often convey to the plethora of different body types and abilities I have trained over the years.

“Most children learn to [crawl, sit up, stand] walk long before they can effectively communicate with words and before they develop the observational skills to simply mimic such a complex movement.”

This is referred to as proprioception, or body awareness, in which the body senses both touch and movement in space. Children typically learn to crawl, sit up, stand or walk for the first time through feel, not through instructions or observa-

tion. So we should recognize the importance of mastering the fundamental movement patterns we were born with when we transform traditional workout routines to specific movement pattern routines.

Doing specific movement routines is the same as functional training. Magazines use the words “functional training” for propaganda. This is the current “buzz” phrase being used for example exercises that provide little or no purpose as to why one is to perform them.

What is functional training really? One of the best descriptions, stated in Mike Boyles’ book *Functional Training for Sports* is clear.

“Functional training is best



Training to be Balanced

Augie Hernandez

Do you really want to enter the bike season tapping into only 40 percent of your potential?

described as a continuum of exercises that teach athletes to handle their own body weight in all planes of movement.”

This can be described as purposeful training. This draws a question as to why someone would be performing bicep curls when he/she cannot lift his or her own body weight, as in a push-up.

For example, the change of season is approaching and an individual is training for mountain biking. Let’s say he/she will get train four to six times a week with some spinning on a stationary trainer or classes at a fitness club, performing intervals, building up the quad strength and sweating really hard. This will develop about 30 percent to 40 percent of his/her potential. Do you really want to enter the bike season tapping into only 40 percent of your potential?

Aside from explaining every facet of training for mountain biking, let’s keep it simple with the most important facet: the core.

Reaching your highest potential

is achieved by first strengthening the core. By my definition, the core is from the armpit to the bony part on the side of one’s hip (the one that hurts when side-lying on the concrete) and everything around it. The abdominals muscles are only one part of it.

The rest include the low and upper back, chest, sides of the ribs, the entire pelvic girdle and one of the most important area, glutes. All movement patterns emulate from the core, which creates a foundation for movement. It is difficult to have mobility before stability.

In preparing for spring activities, review how the core can better facilitate your overall movement, not body part divisions. Hire a trainer, review the current literature available at Web sites like www.performbetter.com, or www.nscalift.org, and resourceful books that I mentioned in this column.

Think whole movements. If this is too difficult to understand, find a 2-year-old child and move like he or she does by twisting, turning, jumping, squatting, crawling or running, and you will discover what it is like to move in whole movements.

Augustine “Augie” Hernandez is the founder/owner of Training to be Balanced LLC. Augie has a bachelor’s in exercise physiology and an associate of science as a physical therapist assistant and is a certified strength and conditioning specialist. He can be reached at augie@t2bb.net or www.trainingtobebalanced.net.

FOR YOUR HEALTH