

It's Not About the Tools!

by Brock Leggins

As a strength coach/trainer/coach of physical preparation, there are many means and methods available, depending upon your situation. It is up to the coach or trainer to best organize the training, utilizing the correct means and methods, in order to elicit the desired response. Unfortunately, many both in the training world and general population view the tools themselves as the key to success. This can be seen in arguments over which exercises (such as compound lifts, isolation lifts, etc.) or tools (kettlebells, barbells, bodyweight, etc.) are best for building muscle, burning fat, improving power, etc. These arguments fail to consider that the execution of the means have a far greater impact on the adaptation than the tool themselves. A very simple way to think about this is to compare sprinters and marathoners. Both use the same means – running – to accomplish their goals, however, the implementation of how they run dictates the adaptations that occur. Just as a marathoner could not hope to keep up with a sprinter over a short distance, a sprinter would, in due time, fall well behind the marathoner over even a mile distance.

As an example, Dan Pfaff has noted that he has had sprinters of very similar levels of accomplishment who achieved their success in very different ways, due to a variety of factors. Some were very weight room strong, while others didn't touch a weight. Media has also been littered with outstanding athletes who, prior to attending college, had achieved outstanding physiques as well as sporting success without the aid of a barbell. While it is true that those athletes are among the genetic elite in regard to sport, they should also serve to show that, as the saying goes, "many roads lead to Rome." The insistence by coaches that athletes fit into a certain "box," so to speak, in regards to their training may only serve to hinder their development.

With all of that in mind, the purpose of this article is to illustrate the myriad possibilities for the use of various means and methods that one may have at their disposal.

Means can best be thought of as exercises, lifts, or drills. These may include (but are not limited to):

- Barbell lifts
- Dumbbell lifts
- Kettlebell lifts
- Jumps
- Sprints
- Medicine ball throws
- Special technical drills for sport improvement

To name only a few.

Methods, then, are how these means are employed. These include (but are not limited to):

- Dynamic effort
- Maximal effort
- Submaximal effort
- Repetition effort
- Duration of execution
- Regime of muscular work (concentric, eccentric, isometric)
- Rest intervals
- Frequency
- Order of execution

- Volume

And many more.

When looking at the various ways in which the means may be employed, it becomes readily apparent that it is not, in fact, the tools (or means), which matter, but the manner in which they are used.

Please note that this article is not intended to champion or implicate any mean or method as best or worst – merely to illustrate that terms like “best,” “worst,” “good,” “bad,” or any other descriptors must be based upon the situation. At the end of the day, it must be remembered that resistance training is nothing more than force training, and therefore, via manipulations in the methods employed, nearly any means will do. Thus, it is not the tool that is important, but how it is used.