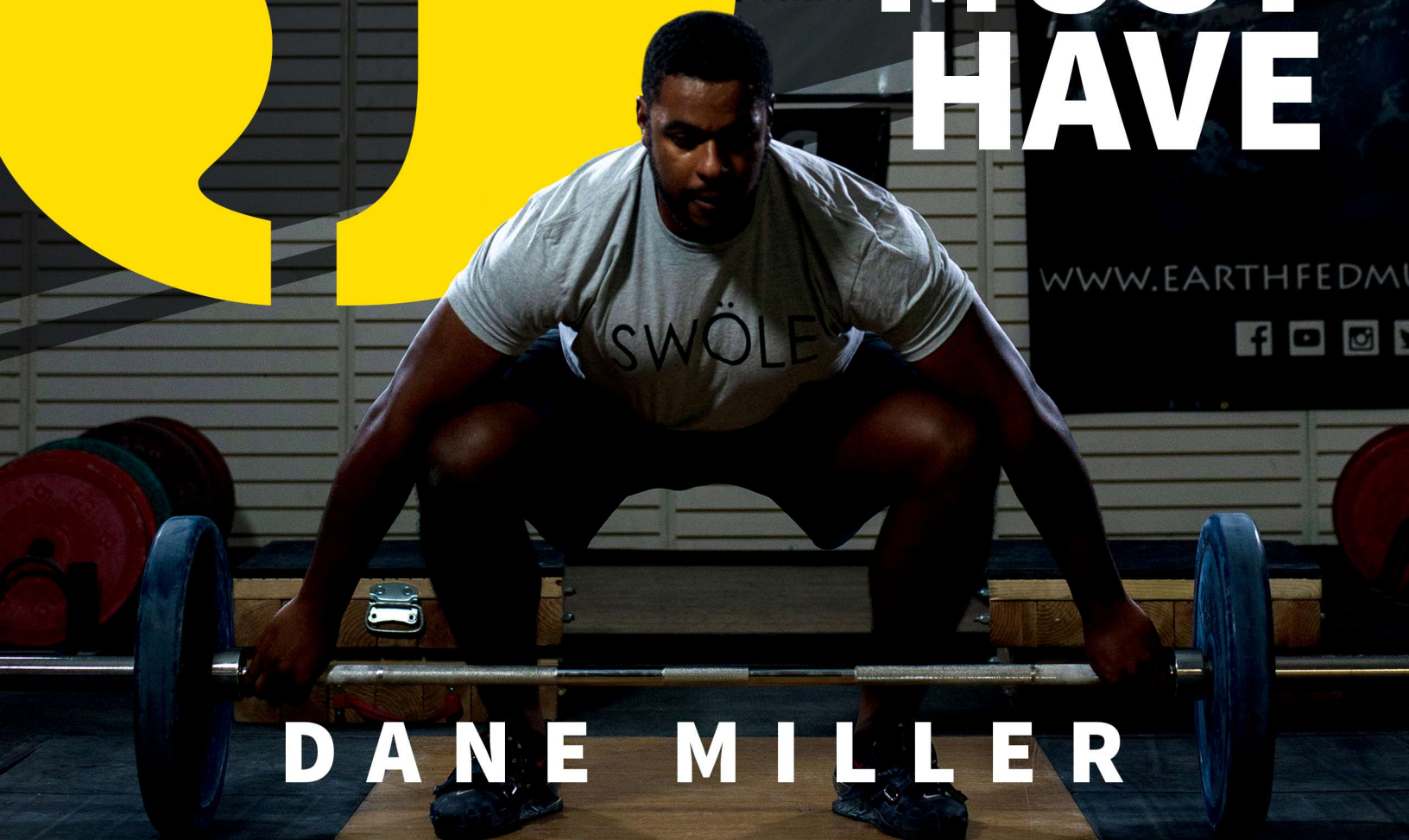


KEYS EVERY SUCCESSFUL STRENGTH PROGRAM MUST HAVE



DANE MILLER

5 Keys Every Successful Strength Program Must Have

By Dane Miller

Sitting down with notebook in hand, every possible thought regarding training clutters your coaching mind including periodization, movements, training goals, recovery, athlete type, etc. You sit there and wonder, where the hell do I start? Where can I begin to piece together an exemplary program that will get my athletes to the top or get my clients to achieve their fitness goals. Not only do you have no idea where to start but even some of the key aspects behind building a program are forgotten in the process. After staring at the computer screen or empty notebook for 20 minutes, you finally decide to start jotting down ideas, but you end up glossing over the key factors that will lead to tremendous strength gains.

When planning out each block for fitness and sports performance goals, be sure to keep these Five Keys to Success in the back of your mind to ensure success.



1 • Enhanced Movement Vocabulary

What the heck is movement vocabulary? Just as a child learns more words and the meaning of words an athlete can expand their movement vocabulary and develop a deeper comprehension of the movements. As a child grows from preschool to grade school his capability to enunciate, use words properly in a sentence, and understand the meaning of the words is constantly evolving. A child's ability to interpret and decode words continues to grow as they gain experience and practice.

Defense Mechanism:

A defense mechanism is any way of thinking or any mental barrier an athlete might put up that prevents them from learning new ideas or movements.

The same growth in the language of movement is paralleled in fitness and sports performance. As new movements are introduced, the coach must understand the rate and methods of learning for each athlete, as well as adjust the introduction of movements and pace of learning as needed for each individual athlete. The key is to understand **defense mechanisms**. More experienced lifters might have defense mechanisms based around previous training methods or coaches.

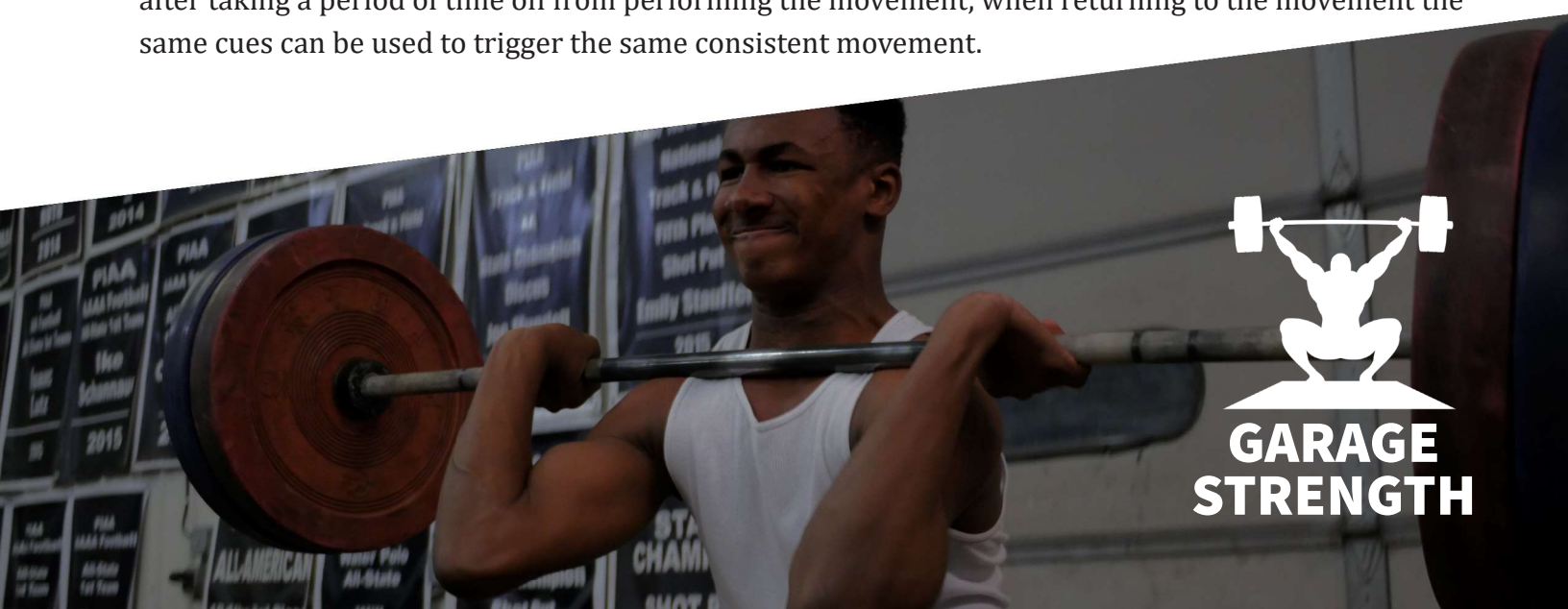
A younger athlete's biggest defense mechanism might

just be that they haven't learned how to internalize concepts about how to move the body. It is also key to understand that movement vocabulary is just like verbal vocabulary. An individual must learn what a movement is and then over a long period of time they will learn how to use the movement and then over an even longer period of time they will begin to entirely comprehend the meaning and how to execute it. As the movement vocabulary grows alongside the comprehensive experience of training, the athlete will improve and their fitness level will grow.

The best way to capitalize on movement vocabulary is by the use of coaching cues. When an athlete learns a movement they attach verbal tags to it that either the athlete naturally came up with or that is provided by the coach. The coach can then use those cues to trigger the movement when needed. Even after taking a period of time off from performing the movement, when returning to the movement the same cues can be used to trigger the same consistent movement.



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2 • Athlete Reactive Analysis

WHAT?!?!? This dude is just making shit up now. Your first thought might be that athlete reactive analysis refers to how an individual reacts to training on a micro perspective. Such as how fast they react on jumps, or maybe how they react from set to set. This is partially true, but it is more important to view athlete reactive analysis from a macro perspective FIRST, then slowly build into the micro perspective for better understanding of the individual.

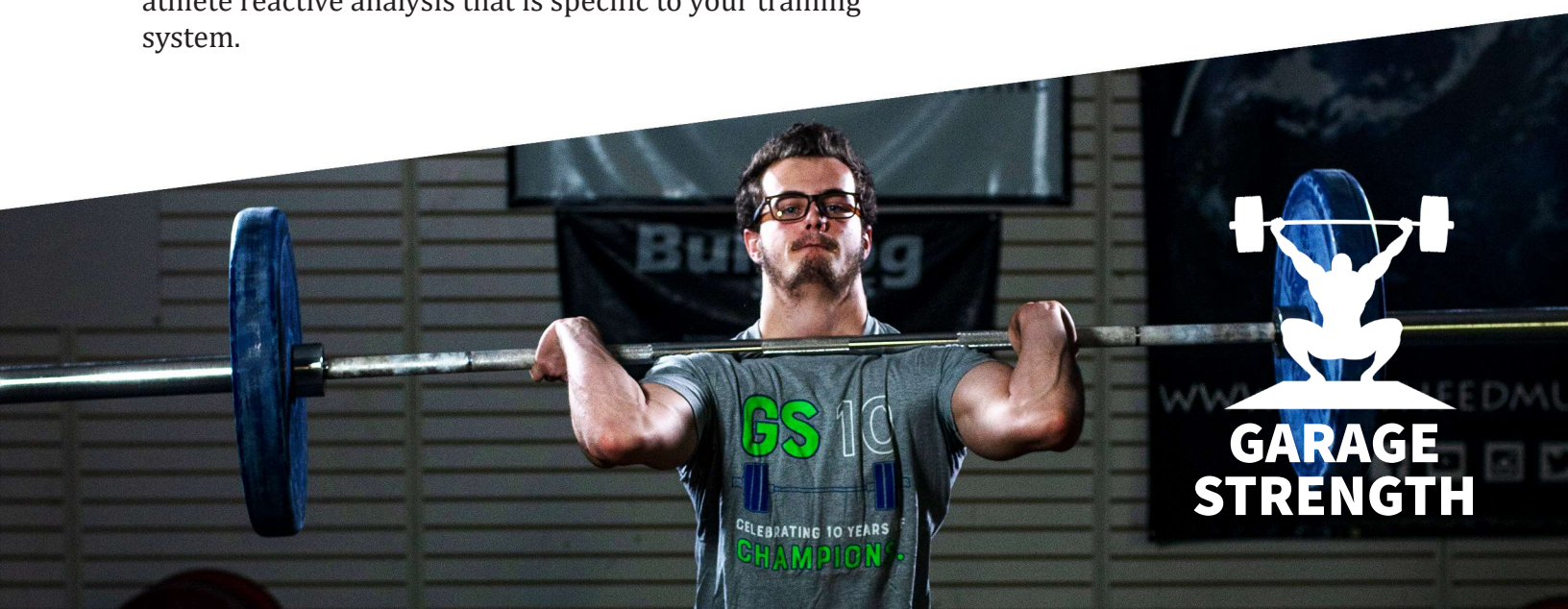
Analyzing athletes is something I learned directly from **Dr. Anatoly Bondarchuk**. While training under Dr. B, he would insist that many programs and systems of training are effective but the ones that are most effective are the systems that understand the needs of the athlete. It's important to use this as a gauge to determine the response each training modality may have on the individual and if their reaction will be positive, negative, or indifferent.

One key to athlete reactive analysis is determining twitch fiber make up. Is the athlete fast twitch, slow twitch, or a combination? Once that is determined, try to understand how they respond to rapid movements or slower movements. Are they able to handle criticism verbally or do they prefer to figure things out themselves? How do they handle volume versus intensity? Does learning a skill confuse them so much that their training and biological feedback is out of whack for weeks on end or does learning a skill help them improve training in all other manners at a faster pace? All of these qualities must be taken into consideration when determining an athlete reactive analysis that is specific to your training system.



Dr. Anatoly Bondarchuk:

Sports Physiologist, throwing coach, and former World Record holder in the hammer. He has coached 18 Olympic gold medalists and multiple world record holders



3 • High Rate Learning Skill

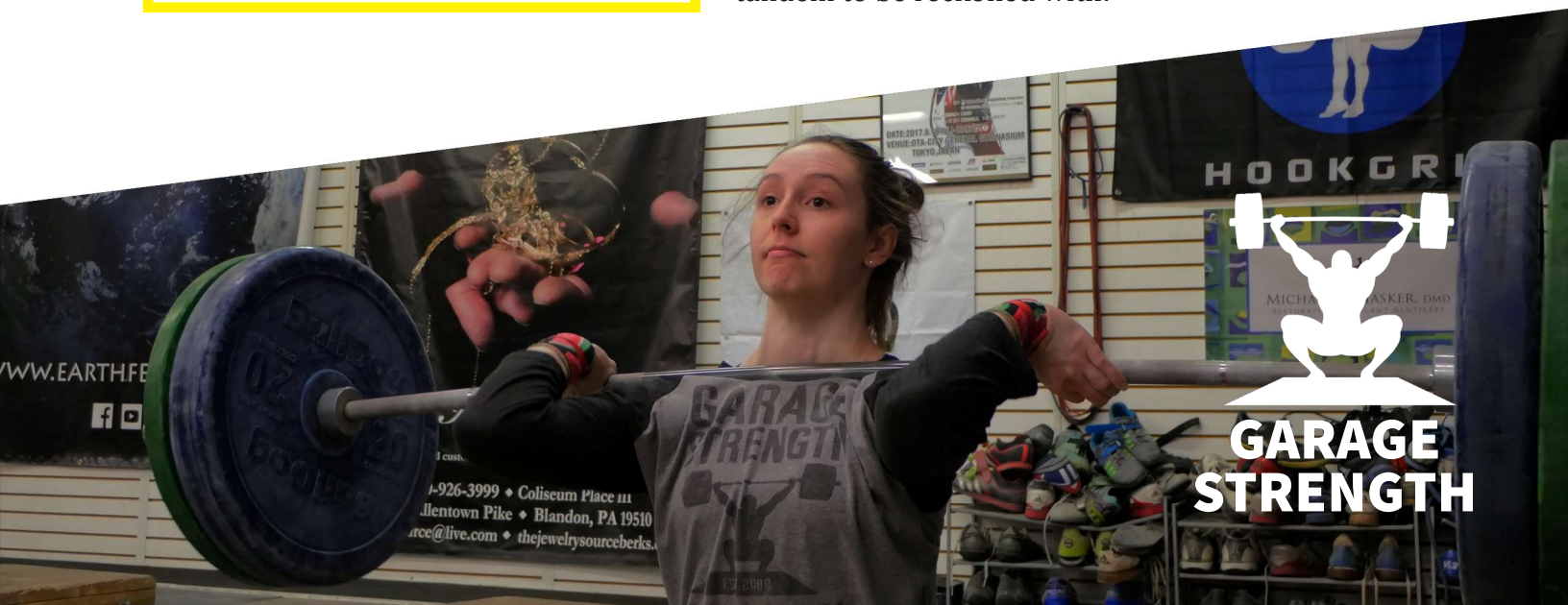
It is easy to forget how important skill learning is for strength development. In the book, “The Talent Code,” skill learning and overall improvement of movement and comprehension is clearly defined for the layman. The author brought to light the idea of **myelination**, what it means for performance and ultimately what it means for long term success. Learning a skill is EXTREMELY important for motivation, mindset, and strength development. Does that mean whittling wood or learning how to hacky-sack is going to help the athlete be a more powerful athlete? Actually, it very well might!

Learning skills has a tremendous transfer to dexterity, intramuscular coordination, and patience. It is important to learn skills in exercises that mimic the intensity and speed of movement that is similar to the sport they participate in. This is where high rate skill learning, or learning a skill at high intensity movement speeds, can be applied. The easiest way to program high rate skill learning is through Olympic weightlifting. I can already see the eye rolls, but please read a bit further!

Myelination:

An insulated sheath that forms around the nerve improving the efficiency of the neuromuscular system and motor unit firing rates.

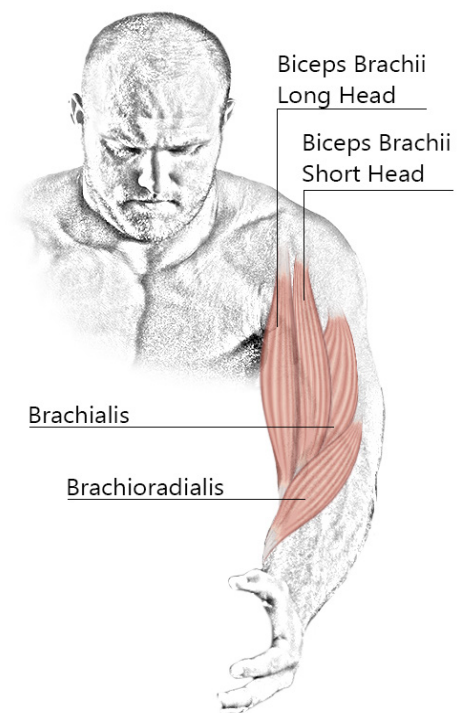
Everyone is saying, “Olympic lifting is too hard to coach in a sports performance setting.” Part of being a good coach is being able to teach skill learning at high speeds in the weightroom just as it is important to learn skills on the field or court in the athlete’s sport! If the athlete and coach both learn how to communicate well and understand cue’s, corrections, and responses, they not only become freakier athletes, they also become a tandem to be reckoned with!



4● Bodybuilding

You read that correctly. BODYBUILDING! By understanding the previous keys missing in a program, it is easy to understand why bodybuilding is so important. For starters, we cannot forget some simple biology. Why do men swim faster and run faster than women? They have more muscle mass. A very simple concept of physiology is that a larger muscle is able to produce more force than a smaller muscle. When high rate skill learning and enhanced movement vocabulary is implemented in the athlete's training protocol simultaneously, and even higher result is achieved!

The goal of implementing bodybuilding into a program is not only to build muscle but to ultimately improve movement. Also remember that I am not saying to train like a bodybuilder entirely, but that having aspects of bodybuilding sprinkled within a program is key to development of sports performance and general fitness. Bodybuilding at its core is building muscle mass, but it is also great for recovery, fixing structural imbalances, and can dramatically improve the mind-muscle connection in novice individuals if implemented correctly, optimize movement in the end!



5 • Mindfulness

Say what you will about prayer, meditation, yoga, quiet sitting... or whatever it is that you want to call it, but mindfulness is the hidden secret to every great training system. Over the next two to four years, we are going to see a BOOM in the fitness world engaging in mindfulness training. We are in an odd digital era. Social media is addictive, attention spans are decreasing and overall focus is waning for EVERYONE. Fortunately, we are also in a digital era where learning how to do yoga or meditation is relatively simple. When athletes and clients improve their mental focus and general outlook on positive thought, they are more in tune with logical processes of training. Training is a scientific method with minimal emotional response. If athletes and clients see each movement, each set, each day of training as a journey on a long term process, they will engage more effectively with the long term goal and ultimately have much better buy-in to the overall training system.

At Garage Strength, we recently began utilizing yoga consistently along with a Wim Hof specialist with our athletes. The results have been astounding. Our athletes are more engaged with the training process and have been able to execute the training system as a whole more effectively! It's just as important that the coach engages with mindfulness work. Improving mindfulness will lead to lower levels of stress perception, more positive training relationships and again, a more logical approach to athlete response.

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