

***Be not afraid of growing slowly,***

***Be afraid only of standing still.***

*Chinese proverb*

A personal return on experience from over 30 years strength sports experience.

By Mark Notschaele

5. Decades of knowledge in a nutshell

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### Lessons for life

My boys commented that due to intense training they sleep very well, feel physically great and developed a great feeling of self esteem and self confidence.



Sports, when practiced with some real zeal, decent objectives set and well coached – does not only improve the physical state of a person, but it also develops the mind in a tremendous manner. On the road to improve performance- it teaches a person about (realistic but ambitious) goal setting, what it means to persevere, sacrifice and set priorities, learn to experiment and give those experiments time to prove themselves, respect - through learning from others and their own sharing of experience with others, dedication to a passion and above all patience.

It teaches that "from nothing, comes nothing" – which is a genuine lesson for life.

Once a person realizes this (early on) in his life, there is a high chance of a noticeable positive spillover to other aspects of that person's life: being it school, development of other passions and hobbies, relationships with friends and family and professional life. So sports can and should be a very positive learning experience, and should co-exist with the other mandatory aspects of life.

I heard too often that young people have no time for sports – due to for instance competing school duties. My thesis is that when young people engage in something they love, do it with passion and experience real progress in fi sports – the acquired skills spill over to other aspects of life fi school – creating overall system of effectiveness and efficiencies that otherwise would not exist. So cutting out sports is counterproductive as a way to set life's priorities and expect overall improvement of performance in other aspects of life at fi school.

Of course a good sports coach would monitor the balance and performance of his pupils between their duties in life. Some coaches just demand their pupils to also do good in school – on penalty of lowering training volumes if not. On creating time: I have seen my boys lowering the time they spend behind their X-Box dramatically because they voluntary engage in work outs 3 time per week, and do jiu-jitsu 2x per week. Creating results and self esteem in the real world can become more attractive vs the virtual world – under condition that indeed tangible results and progress are created – which fuel motivation.

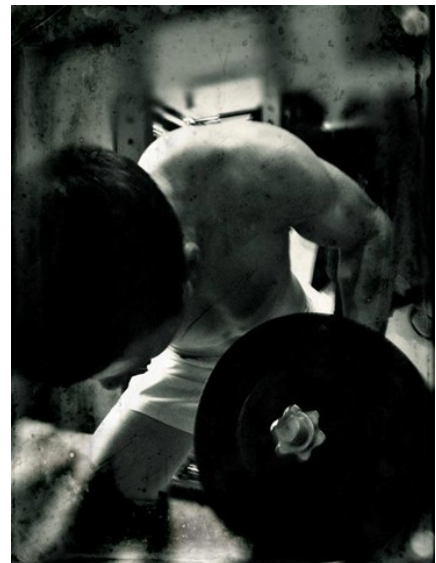
That on the same count one can “learn in the negative” was experienced by my boys some years ago. When playing soccer at the age of around 14 years old in the local team, they got a new trainer for the season. As it turned out the trainer was far from being a role model. He was not punctual – often late for the games on the weekend, with the team waiting for him in the dressing room – without their team shirts, the referee asking the parents what was going on...and the other team already on the field. He did not have decent knowledge of soccer tactics and associated required training techniques. Above all he lacked leadership, coaching, discipline skills. Examples: At soccer training with youngsters it is a proven motivational technique to promise a fun sparring game at the end of the training – under condition that all other training exercises are done well. Well, with this coach had the team just play a fun soccer game each training session, because some boys insisted they did not really like to do the exercises. Also a usual tactic is to have boys that do not show up for training without a valid excuse (given upfront), do not play the real match on the weekend. Basic group psychology as that way the boy (he does not play) and the team (they miss out on a good player) pay a penalty. With this coach, he did announce this as such, but never put it into practice – so attendance dropped steeply on training sessions – but boys showed up for the official game.

So what happened over the months ? The atmosphere in the team became real bad, because some of the boys were getting very obstinate toward the trainer getting away with near everything, and even hostile versus the remaining boys who wanted to train, but had “no say”. As an effect of lacking training the team started to lose near every game due to missing very basic tactics and team collaboration structures. This of course led to de-motivation and friction in the team and boys leaving the team. As a result also my boys enthusiasm for soccer completely vanished in a few month and eventually they quit the team.

I was lucky enough that I could debrief the situation with them as a typical system of “from nothing , comes nothing” systems experience at play in the real world – which in a team setting is rather complex to deal with as an individual which is still motivated to make a difference – and should not be seen as personal failure of 1 person - which to date made a deep impression on them and created valuable learning with them.

Fortunately they did not lose enthusiasm to do sport due to this experience, and at 15 years old, they joined the local tri-athlon team, which turned out to have a great coach and role model. I am sure that this learning in the negative has allowed them to better understand the causality between training input, and progress output.

If in a situation like this, such a debrief does not take place though, the odds are that a young person is lost forever for sports, missing out on all the important lessons for life it brings along.



In their quest for setting all parameters toward the fastest progress possible - I have also seen my boys becoming an real deep interest in other aspects of the overall strength program – becoming very aware that resting, recovery and decent health food intake has a heck of an influence on progress - but that is material for another article

To end this article - some notes specific on strength sports: It is tempting to develop into an arrogant nasty bully when starting to realize you are getting bigger and stronger than many other people. I make a big point discussing “respect toward others” and “being an advocate for the sport” with my trainees.

Bottom line is that a dedicated coach and trainer makes sure that all the mentioned experiences are observed, guided and debriefed to provide for correct “learning for life” effect.

People do not learn from experience – they learn from debriefing the experience - putting it into the right perspective and context.

