

***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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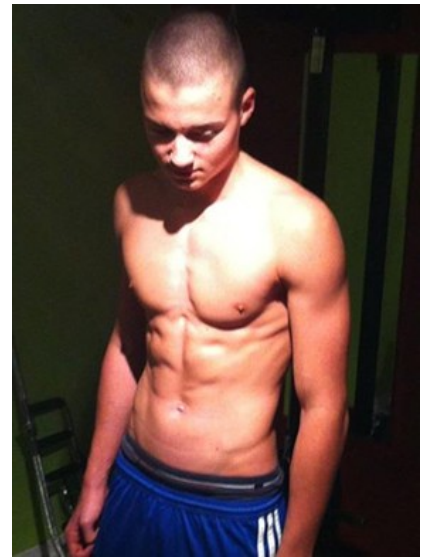
### Around you, Friends

As a strength athlete you carry your results around with you. First of all, you can avoid lots of negative comments by dressing normal. You do not always need to go for the tight t-shirts. Second - do not be negative to others about their physique or sports, hobbies. You need to realize that what you is what you like to do, others have passions for other sports or hobbies. If you show respects, other might well do the same to you. Also if you start to get bigger and stronger, do not look down or be negative to trainees starting out, but encourage, motivate them, tell them what you did to get strong...

What others will say about or to you.

There is a lot of prejudice when you are bigger, more muscular than others which will come your way over time. Below a listing of the situations I have experienced regularly over the years....

- People have a general impression that you are looking for trouble. I guess it is normal that people feel intimidated by some who packs some muscle. The way you behave, talk and dress has a lot of influence on this perception. But at times you will have people either getting out of your way faster or just do the opposite. I had people telling me that I must be thinking I am something special and think I am strong. I usually respond that I train for myself, and I do not think I am strong. I know I am strong, but not sure what that would have as a negative impact on the other person.
- People will tell you they know someone else who is bigger or stronger. Interesting is that recently at a reunion of my primary school I learned that on other hand I had been mentioned very frequently to others as being the bigger guy the know - be aware of that and do not even try to explain or prove that you are bigger and stronger. I usually respond that it is great that there are more enthusiast lifters around.
- Boys get envious (if their girlfriend look at you). I have experienced this problem many times. A girl spots you (on the beach or pool) and just looks at you or comment to her boyfriend that you look good. Alternatively the boyfriend lands a pre-emptive strike when he spots you and starts to comment on your physique – ie all due to anabolics, fake muscles, you must be a not



intelligent, that sort of stuff. Sometimes they get directly aggressive toward you. Guess this is all about protecting their turf – so do not blame the guy or get aggressive in return. You would just put oil on the fire and confirm that he was sort of right anyway towards his girlfriend. Best is to prove you are a gentle giant and smile.

- Girls might feel embarrassed about themselves because of your physique. It is most likely even worse the other way around (fit girl making feel guys very uncertain). Funny enough you being lean and mean also has an inverse effect on girls. You make them feel uncertain about themselves. I had quite some occasions where girl commented they felt so fat and out of shape when being around me. So strangely enough looking muscular is not always directly helping out finding a date.
- Comments that you must be using anabolics. Unfortunately many athletes revert to shortcuts, and in strength sports this is no different. In the chapter dedicated to anabolics I elaborate on all good reasons to why not to use these substances - please read this section carefully. But even as a clean athlete people will not believe you that you are not using anabolics, once you pass to an able average development. The general public will just assume all somewhat developed muscle comes from anabolics use. Moreover even fellow trainees, using or not using will start to accuse you of using once you get stonger and bigger above average. My response to this is to explain that I have been working out with dedication for a very long period of time and thus it is normal to have become strong. I usually add that as far as proving that I am not using anabolics, I could only do by starting to use them, and show how much more I would develop taking them. the reasoning of fellow trainees seems to be that they themselves did not reach the same level of development after some years, even with taking anabolics. On several occasions I have proven to other trainees some obvious reasons why they did not have significant results themselves after some years. Of course there is the element of genetics, but elements of willingness and training approach are crucial. I have worked out with a person that told me he was unable to progress, because he was never able to hit his muscles such that he even developed some soreness. Exposing him to some simple heavy duty routine changed his mind dramatically. He had been doing volume work with low intensity, and never exposed to real intensity. Another person who did not progress started to work out with me, but told me after a few sessions that this kind of intensity was nothing for him. He just was not mentally willing to train real intense. So it was normal that he would never make real progress in strength.
- If you stop your muscle will turn to fat. Not sure why people want to always stated this to me. Maybe they have they indulge that you cannot keep looking what you look like forever and eventually will look worse than them. There is some truth in it of course. As with any other sports, when you exercise a lot, you burn calories like crazy. If you stop this routine but keep eating as you did before, for sure you will gain weight and body fat. At same time you will lose muscle mass.
- When I was a student someone told me that I was doing this now, but would I still be doing this when I was 30? Pointing it out it was a waste of time anyway to try to look muscular, and you

will give up some day anyway. Nobody can look ahead that far anyway. Important is to live in the moment and enjoy what you do with a passion. If you would reason like this, most things in your life would not be worth starting, even personal relationships, which might fail over time. This attitude would render your life completely futile, so ban this kind of thinking about "usefulness". Maybe it is a sports and passion for life, maybe not, but the physical and mental aspects you learn from intense training and staying at it for longer periods of time to realize set goals are a school for life and for sure transferrable to many other aspects of life which need dedication, perseverance and sacrifice.

- I know it sounds silly, but with being a muscular guy you start to fit the mould of a good looking guy not only to girls. Gay people also appreciate the looks. My wife has been a highly amused witness of gay man following me around a museum, just to stare at me. I have also been approached on occasion when going out. Be prepared for your making your own experience with this phenomena, and take it with humor.
- Bodybuilders are not strong - people will throw this at you, to point out that your muscles are pure for "show". If you have big muscles you will be strong. There is no way around it. Conversely the only true indicator towards developing muscle mass is gaining strength. It is of course so that people training specifically for moving weights, as power lifters do, focus more on aspects as speed development, and making sure all supporting muscles for their specific movements are developed in concert. In the process neglecting development of, in their eyes "show" muscles like the biceps. So indeed a powerlifter might in comparison to a pure bodybuilder be moving more weight in specific movements, as a result of specific training, muscle development, technique and even use of supporting equipment (bench shirts, squat suits) - but I have never met a person with considerable body mass who was not able to move impressive weights.
- BMI fail. With accumulating muscle mass you will start to fall out of the mold for regular body mass index calculations. An example I have is from my physical check to get the medical license to play soccer in Luxembourg. With my length of 1.89 and weight of 110kg, my BMI is about 32. On the regular scale this is classified as "very fat". My body fat percentage is however between 17-20%, which is below average for a near 50 year old. The medical doctor doing the examination however just notes "very fat" as a risk on the examination form, despite me being in front of him in my underwear. My soccer team always liked to keep reminding me that I classify as "very fat", despite my development.
- Blood pressure measurement fail.. Since I developed arms with circumferences towards and 48 cm, I keep running into funny issues during regular medical visits to a doctor, where he tries to take my blood pressure using a regular manchette. At the medical sports examination I wrote about under the BMI bullet, they were equipped with an automatic inflating and measuring manchette. Amusingly this gadget was not able to provide enough pressure to close my arteries. The little compressor machine failed dead in its tracks halfway through, to the stunning surprise of the nurse. I had to explain her why this happened. Funny enough she ended up jotting 120/80 on the form, as she imagined I was in pretty good shape. I only had a few medical doctors who

understood the phenomena by themselves. Because of the large muscles, and resistance they have to compression, it just takes a lot more pressure to close the arteries and the regular measurement scale meaning just goes out of the window. My current physician reverted to using, what he jokingly calls, the horse-manchette. A manchette which is a lot wider, covering almost the whole upper arm. You can also revert to a wrist measurement. As soon as you start to get remarks that your blood pressure is high while developing your arms, make your physician aware of this phenomenon, don't panic or start taking medicine again high blood pressure.

