

Special Fitness & Sports Training Report:

Why you should
**FORGET THE SCALE, &
START FOCUSING on
your exercise & diet
instead!**

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If I had \$5 for every time I was asked this question...

"I need to gain/lose (insert # here) pounds, what is the best way to do that?"

Well, I guess I do get \$5 or more from my clients, who ask this question, so I am paid something to answer it.

Kidding aside, here are the 2 biggest issues for both athletes & clients I've had. It isn't really getting faster or fitter, it's always revolved around the scale.

That dreaded bathroom scale! How this little thing can CONTROL one's feelings over the success of a fitness or sports training program, I'll never know. All I know is that I want a little bit of its power in doing so. It's my intention with this article to draw that wicked, 'supposed' power away from that little beast, and help you realize that it is just a little demon that you can squash for good.

Issue #1 :Weight Loss

"How do I lose ten pounds? Some article says I should lose that much. I also weighed 20 pounds less than I do now, back in high school. How do I get back down there?"

Wow...where do I start? First off, why does losing ten, fifteen, or twenty pounds mean anything? What I mean is, where do you want those pounds to come from? From your body, I hope, but NOT from the scale alone. Here's why.

Your body is comprised of many, many cells, tissues, organs, and systems, as you know from anatomy classes back in school. All these systems & cells function for you on a daily basis. We trainers usually group these systems into 2 categories when we talk about body weight: fat mass, and lean body mass. Fat mass is just that: body fat stores throughout your whole body. Even every little cell has some fat deposits in its membranes to help it work. Fat IS needed for your body to grow, repair, regenerate, and function daily. Fat isn't the evil thing we only associate with bellies & thighs. There is a purpose to it on this earth!

Lean body mass is a collection of everything else: your muscle mass, your bone mass, and your organs. Your organs will pretty much stay the same weight throughout the course of your life. (unless you smoke and your lungs collect all that awful tar & carcinogenic material, then you gotta carry that garbage around, too.) What changes with exercise is this: lean body mass can go either up or down, and bone mass usually rises upward. What happens with exercise is muscle mass becomes stressed, and needs energy to repair & re-grow. If it doesn't get this energy, muscle mass can be lost, since repairs can't be made, and protein sources in the muscle become an energy source. This is the 'eating

away' of muscle tissue that some people refer to. Dieters alone, who don't do quality exercise, & go to the extremes of low calorie dieting, put their muscle mass at risk of being lost in a hurry. Sure, there may be a weight scale loss being shown, but it's mostly muscle mass being lost, simply because there's no calories to help repair & re-grow muscle tissue.

So, what it comes down to is how much body fat and how much lean body mass you have. Not what just some scale tells you!

Here are my stats on body weight, body fat, and lean body mass, to give as an example. I'm not afraid to share this with you, because I know its going to help educate you.

Bodyweight: 180 pounds
Bodyfat %: 12%, which is 21.6 pounds
Lean body mass: 88%, or 158.4 pounds

Now, 12% body fat puts me in the healthy range for my age, which is 15% or less. Do I need to lose weight? Do I need to gain weight? Nope! I'm healthy. I could get leaner, let's say around 175 pounds. Let's do the math on that, assuming that my lean body mass stays the same, and then I lose the 5 pounds from the body fat mass.

New bodyweight goal: 175
Bodyfat %: 9.5%, which is now 16.5 pounds
Lean body mass: 90.5%, or 158.4 pounds

With a 5 pound drop in body fat, my % dropped 2.5%, while my lean body mass % increased by 2.5%. Even the stats show that I didn't really gain any lean body mass, but the % of my total lean body mass, compared to my bodyweight, went up! Now I have even a higher percentage of lean body mass to help keep off body fat.

I've tracked my bodyweight over the past 6 years of training I've done. Usually I'll be around 10% and 175 during a sports season I coach, and then be at around 12-13% and 180 once I go into an off-season phase. This 5 pound fluctuation was bothering me quite a bit, until I realized that it is just a seasonal thing due to my active lifestyle of running with my teams during their season. So much so, I don't even have a scale at home any more, I just use the one at the weight room or fitness center now and then to see where I'm at.

So, I hope now you can see how body fat percentages tell you a different story than just a scale weight alone. Now, they do make scales with a bodyfat % reader on the scale itself. These have been useful for some people, but just like

how people get obsessive with the scale numbers, they will most likely become super-obsessive over these bodyfat % numbers if they do daily tests with this type of scale.

What I've seen as being successful is doing a weekly or twice weekly body composition test. Some even go monthly on it.

Some other questions about body composition I get:

"What about those skin pincher things, we did those back in college & high school and I hated it. Do you do that?"

Answer: nope, I don't use the old way of skinfold calipers, for the reasons you stated: people hate being pinched! To me, it's really invasive to ask someone to take up their shirt, pinch their belly that they are trying to get rid of, and then take a measurement. The handheld analyzer I have eliminates this awkward feeling both I & the client get during a skinfold test. I simply punch in your weight, age, height, and go from there. 10 seconds later, I have your number you need. We have the technology to do it. It's like using an abacus when you can use a calculator to balance your checkbook. I think the days of the skinfold tester are dying, or gone!

Issue #2: Weight Gain

"Coach says I need to gain 10 pounds to get better, how do I do this? Do I drink a lot of Whey Protein?"

YIKES! Where do I begin with this one? Mostly athletes come to me with this one. It starts out as some magical coach, who apparently has the magic wand to predict what weight gains will cause better performances to occur, gets the idea in some young athlete's head that they need X pounds to perform better. I HATE THIS WITH A PASSION. Sorry to express that anger, but it really angers me. Those are harsh words, and here's why: There is NO KNOWN TEXTBOOK OR FORMULA that says if any person gains X amount of weight, they will automatically perform better! Most of this nonsense and advice stems from the sports of football and wrestling, even in other sports, this mentality exists. It disgusts me. If you can find such a formula, you will make yourself a billion dollars to answer this ridiculous question.

Actually, in most instances, a gain in overall weight can actually SLOW an athlete down. I've seen it happen. When I first moved to Thief River Falls, I was training an athlete for an NFL/AFL/CFL combine tryout in Chicago. He was SO obsessed with gaining weight, he gained 10 pounds in 3 weeks time when he went on a weight gain diet, eating upwards of 3500 calories or more, per day.

His 40 yard dash went UP from 4.5 to 4.9 seconds, and his vertical jump performance went DOWN 3 inches, instead of upwards. All this progress he made, GONE in 3 weeks, due to some weight gain! He wondered "why?" and I explained to him that he was trying to perform the same tests, only with 10 extra pounds on him, without his body adapting to the weight adjustment! It was like asking him to put on a 10 pound sand-weighted vest, and telling him to run the same times & jump the same heights. If you held 2, 5 pound dumbbells in your hand, would you instantly jump higher than you would without them? No! Then why, why on earth, are athletes told that a weight gain will be a instant performance gain?

A coach I know, Barry Ross, explains this well in his e-book, Underground Secrets to Faster Running. He goes over in great detail how weight gains do not give way to greater performances. Think of it in these terms: if you had 2 rockets, one was 150 pounds, the other was 200 pounds, and both had equal horsepower engines to propel it, which one gets to the moon the fastest? The lighter one does. Less weight, faster speeds. Pretty simple, huh?

Barry coined the term "Mass-specific force". If you have more force generated with less mass, you have greater ability to run faster. Problem is most strength training programs try to build muscle mass for sports performance, and this could be crushing possible increases in performance from occurring. Barry's simple method of lifting heavy, resting more, and gaining strength, not mass, avoids this mass gain issue, and lays down a clearer path of where an athlete should go, when looking at greater performances. It is not just an increase in muscle size, it is the supposition that it creates a faster athlete.

Perhaps one of the major strength programs for high schools, called "Bigger, Faster, Stronger", gives this connotation. I'm not blaming it, but the name certainly strikes the image of a chain reaction of what strength training can do.

What really should be emphasized is a 'performance weight'. What I mean by Performance Weight is the weight which allows an athlete to perform better than they once did. I believe the body will naturally find this weight, when an athlete undergoes consistent & quality sports conditioning & training. The right amount of fat will be lost, the right amount of strength will be gained, and the body will find a true, steady, performance-based weight to function at.

Another issue that ties into this one, is the issue of supplements and protein shakes. I'm always asked the following:

1. Which brand do I take?
2. Are they all the same?
3. How many shakes do I need each day?

If I got into all of those questions in-depth, I'd almost have a book ready for it. What I can tell you in simple terms is this: Most kids & young athletes do not need these shakes or supplements. When one looks at their nutritional habits, it is very, very poor. Some kids don't even eat breakfast, or hardly eat all day, until they get home and then gorge on all sorts of food. Worse yet, they could be eating school food during the day, or a trip to a fast food place, and fill their bodies full of more junk. Don't even get me started on the pops & energy drinks they suck down like its going out of style.

Listen up: If you put garbage in your body, whether you're an athlete or just a fitness enthusiast, you'll get garbage out. Garbage in, garbage out. You can't feed a Corvette low octane gas, when you know you need high octane fuel to make it go as fast as you can. Same thing goes for your body. If you feed it junk throughout the day, and then try to put in just a little bit of 'good stuff', like an expensive protein shake, guess what? It won't do much good, because you have too much junk in you to process. The protein shake is wasted.

I know a lot of experts say that you should eat a varied diet and 'balanced' diet. What they are really saying is eat healthy foods. Keep it simple and eat your veggies, fruits, whole grain foods, nuts, lean meats, low fat dairy, etc. Keep the chips and salsa as a treat, not a nightly feast!

Once you get your nutrition in order, you'll probably find that you don't need a protein shake to rely on for your only healthy nutrition habit. To me, a good, tall glass of milk (or two) can be the best all-around post-workout drink. It has a good balance of carbs, protein, and fat (if you drink 1 or 2% variants). Milk can truly do a body good!

Well, I hope that cleared up some things for you in regards to weight loss and weight gain issues. This article is one of the simpler ways I can explain these concepts.

For more information, make sure you sign up for my "Fit By Fingertips" newsletter, which you can register for on my website, <http://speeddialcoach.com>. Be sure to check out the other sites, too:

All-Star Fitness: 30 minute Personal Training! <http://fitness.speeddialcoach.com>

All-Star Athlete: 60 minutes of Fast & Furious Sports Training! <http://allstar.speeddialcoach.com>

Boot Camps: Group Fitness for all ages! <http://camps.speeddialcoach.com>

All-Star Athlete Xpress Program: The 30 minute Sports Training Solution for Busy & Active Athletes! <http://xpress.speeddialcoach.com>

Endure! E-book: Discover secrets of building endurance in less time & miles!
<http://endure.speeddialcoach.com>

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