Interview with Jim Wendler of www.Elitefts.com

1. Give us a little background on who you are, what you do and how you ended up where you are today.

I am currently the senior editor for Elite Fitness Systems. I worked as a Strength and Conditioning coach at the University of Kentucky where I worked with several different teams including football and baseball. I also played football and graduated from the University of Arizona where I earned three letters. My best lifts include a 1000lbs squat, a 675 bench press, 700lbs deadlift and a 2375 total in the 275lbs class.
2. In our efforts to get stronger, more powerful and faster, is it truly as complicated as many coaches make it out to be? There are so many different program designs with endless set – rep – rest patterns. What advice can you give on this topic?

I can say that for the most part, it’s really not that complicated. Where it does get complicated is when you have coaches, parents or trainers trying to have kids that are not readily prepared to do advanced routines or exercises. Now you are really going to be scratching your head trying to figure out why he is hurt or not making progress. Here are some basic rules to live by, and that hold true especially for young athletes.

1. Be consistent.
2. Use good form
3. Stick to compound movements
4. Progress slowly

Stick to these 4 main points and you will be ok. The problem is that training for many people is sporadic, the form is awful, they do exercises that have no real effect and make huge jumps without having a strong base. So while it can be confusing for coaches, these four points are going to be key.

3. Where do most strength coaches go wrong when training athletes and what can they do to correct these problems for the better of their athletes?

Not being able to communicate their thoughts and their ideas in a way that an athlete can understand. Let’s all be honest and say that most qualified coaches have enough information to make an athlete better. Notice that I used the term “qualified”. But can they transfer this information to an athlete in a way that they can understand? This includes coaching points, motivation, and the explanation of the program. No one ever talks about this issue, but this is what make a teacher a coach; communication.
4. Are there any tried and true principles & methods you have applied on yourself and others that have always produced great results?

See the 4 points above!

5. How do you like to train for your own needs? Do you have certain methods that are followed frequently to help you get consistent results?

I train very heavy with a lot of singles. I do a lot of pulling (deadlifting) movements and squatting movements. My training revolves around 3 things: getting stronger (primarily in the bench, squat, deadlift), mobility work and conditioning. These three things are my priorities.

I have found that I get stronger with a lower overall volume but by using a high number of singles at 90% or above. This is not recommended for everyone, though. If I want to increase my volume, I simply increase the amount of work being done on my assistance lifts.

6. Discuss some of your favorite methods / techniques for restoration. Also, how have you changed your training methods due to personal injuries to improve your health and reduce injuries?

I don’t do anything expensive or fancy for recovery but these are some of the things that I do –

- Stretching; this is done at night and done with controlled breathing and relaxing.
- Foam Roller
- My own form of meditation
- Walking outside (sounds corny but it’s a great way to relieve stress and get some fresh air)
• Eliminate sugars from diet (I still cheat from time to time, but it’s not bad)
• Healthy Fats (olive oil and fish oil)
• Mobility work (done daily)

I have really never been that injured; I have torn a few things but nothing that would constitute surgery or extended time off. The biggest thing that I learned is that I must listen to my body and make adjustments. If my back is killing me and I’m supposed to deadlift that day, I won’t do it. Just because it’s scheduled on paper doesn’t mean it’s on my body’s schedule! You have to be smart and know when to push yourself and know the difference between being smart and being lazy.

7. I’m going to throw out some equipment & phrases and just fire away at them as you wish:

1. Sleds & The Prowler: Great conditioning tools for anyone; the sled is great for strength work, too. I recommend the sled to everyone, regardless of level. It’s great for beginners because you simply walk. It’s hard to screw up.
2. Barbells: The staple of a weight room
3. Russian Kettlebells: A tool
4. Dumbbells: Next to barbells, the staple of a weight room
5. Barbell Bench Press: Fun to do
6. Power Development: Over used term
7. Repetition Method: Great method for beginners and for building mass
8. Stones: I never want kidney stones!
9. Favorite web sites for training information & equipment: EliteFTS (what do you think I’d say?)
10. Favorite exercise for upper body and why: Pull-ups; this is the squat for the upper body
11. Favorite exercise for lower body and why: The Squat

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8. Thanks big time for taking the time to do an interview with us. How can our readers contact you and learn more information about you. Give us websites and anything else you would like to share!

Thanks Zach, everyone can go to www.Elitefts.com to see our Q & A and our extensive line of products! Thanks for the interview!

For more Underground Interviews with top notch strength coaches visit www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com