

## The Beast Speaks

By popular demand, *Modern Strength* will now be published using a single column format. Pfffft, and I thought that you would appreciate the futuristic double column format better! Well, in this era of user friendly material I guess that the single column format is indeed better adapted to your needs, even if it doesn't look as sharp!

Christiane, a.k.a Ms. Beast is continuing her preparation towards the Canadian nationals, and things are actually going better than expected. At 7 weeks out her whole upper body was completely shredded, in competition shape already. Her lower body still lacks dryness and cuts, but we now have 6 weeks to work that out, so she should have no problems. Here are two pictures of her shoulder.



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Obviously I am a bit biased, but I feel that those are some of the best shoulders ever on a natural woman bodybuilder. And her whole upper body is just as ripped!

BTW, she is working on a training/nutrition article detailing her exact methodologies. If such an article interests you it would be cool of you to send TC and email requesting it.

I'll keep you posted on her progress as the issues go by.

Okay, now on with the show!

## The performance scale

Here are included 3 checklists including 10 questions each. It uses a modified *Likert* scale (the athlete can select between *always*, *most of the time*, *frequently*, *rarely* and *never* and each choice is attributed a certain amount of points). The 3 checklists are:

1. Training habits
2. Nutritional habits
3. Restoration habits

The score for each individual portion is calculated on a total of 100. This way, it is possible to know where the problem(s) lies and hopefully find an adequate solution to the athlete's lack of progression.

Training checklist	Always (10 pts)	Most of the time (8pts)	Frequently (5pts)	Rarely (3pts)	Never (0pts)
Free-weight exercises comprise most of my training volume					
I use proper form in my lifting exercises (no cheating or bouncing)					
I use a full range of motion (adapted to my capacities) in my lifting exercises					
I work the pulling muscles ( <i>back, traps, biceps, rear deltoid</i> ) and the pushing muscles ( <i>pectorals, triceps, anterior deltoids</i> ) equally					
I work the hip flexors/knee extensors ( <i>quadriceps, psoas</i> ) and the hip extensors/knee flexors ( <i>hamstring, glutes</i> ) equally					
I devote as much time and effort to the lower body as to the upper body					
Multi-joint exercises comprise most of my training volume					
I train as hard as I can in the gym					
I keep the rest between sets minimal, only using what I need to recover (not spending extra time socialising)					
I have confidence in the training program and in myself					
<b>Total for each category</b>	___ pts	___pts	___pts	___pts	___pts
<b>Training grand total</b>	___ / 100				

<b>Nutrition checklist</b>	<b>Always (10 pts)</b>	<b>Most of the time (8pts)</b>	<b>Frequently (5pts)</b>	<b>Rarely (3pts)</b>	<b>Never (0pts)</b>
I refrain from eating junk food					
I ingest at least 1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight					
I ingest at least 2 grams of carbs per pound of bodyweight					
The carbs I ingest are from natural foods ( <i>fruit, veggies, whole wheat bread</i> )					
I refrain from ingesting carbs and fat in the same meal					
I ingest at least a small amount of protein in all of my meals					
I eat a wide variety of different foods and produces					
I ingest a post-workout drink <i>at the most</i> 15 minutes after my training session					
I eat a big breakfast with high quality foods					
I eat 4-6 quality meals per day					
<b>Total for each category</b>	____ pts	____pts	____pts	____pts	____pts
<b>Nutrition grand total</b>	____ / 100				

Restoration checklist	Always (10 pts)	Most of the time (8pts)	Frequently (5pts)	Rarely (3pts)	Never (0pts)
I ingest a post-workout drink <i>at the most</i> 15 minutes after my training session					
I sleep 8-10 hours during the night					
I go out late (party) less than once per week					
I take a contrast shower (alternating hot water and cold water for 10-15 minutes) 30-60 minutes after my workout					
I avoid personal conflicts with other peoples					
I am on time with my studies or work tasks (no added stress)					
I go to bed no later than 11pm					
I include relaxing activities during the week					
I try to keep my life balanced between sport, friend and school (or work)					
When I go out, I drink 2 or less alcoholic beverages					
<b>Total for each category</b>	____ pts	____pts	____pts	____pts	____pts
<b>Restoration grand total</b>	____ / 100				

### How do I stack up?

The following table shows you how to interpret the results from the above checklists.

Result	Interpretation	What to do
90-100%	Extremely good!	Congratulate the athlete on his efforts; encourage him to continue on this path. Offer him to help him fine-tune his habits.
60-90%	Adequate, should not pose a problem with your rate of gains	Offer some positive feedback on what he is doing correctly (" <i>always</i> " and " <i>most of the time</i> " items) and cue him on how he can improve his potential problem areas.
40-60%	Problematic area, will lead to a significant reduction in the rate of improvement	Explain why his bad habit(s) can lead to a decrease in a reduction of his gains and offer him easy (non-drastic) solutions to help him improve these habits.
0-40%	Danger zone, will lead to an eventual decrease in performance	This type of athlete requires a significant change in his habits. Often there is a serious personal problem underlying these bad habits and you may need to dig deeper to find the real source of the problem. An athlete in this category (especially if he is in this category for 2 or 3 facets) is sometimes non-receptive to advices and recommendations.

## Trading places

### *How to make your mark as a strength & conditioning expert*

For some of us, strength training is such a passion that we decide to make it our livelihood. Many peoples have a lot of knowledge when it comes to building muscle, strength and power. Yet, how many actually become “famous” strength coaches? Very few indeed! Sadly, the guys at the top are not always the better coaches: however they all have a lot of drive to make their mark and know how to market themselves.

I feel that I’m well placed to give you a few tips on how to make it as a strength expert. Not that I consider myself to be one of the top strength expert or a Guru of some sort. However I have achieved a fairly high level of success and recognition in a very short period of time. Becoming a reputable and successful strength coach is a lot like playing chess: you must think about your every moves and try to predict what will happen next.

So I am about to give you a few tips on how to get to the top and how to stay there when you reach it.

### **How to reach the top**

#### *Getting a break*

I’ve said it many times I’ll say it again: the “*secret*” to being a successful coach is to get *one* big break. Your break could be getting a job writing for a quality training publication like T-mag, it could be training a young athlete who goes on to become a star and it can even come from an already established training authority who chooses to take you under his wing.

The thing is that you never know where your break is going to come from. So really, you should maximize your opportunities to get a break: get to work with as many athletes as you can, even if that means working for free at first, get in touch and establish good relations with any top strength coach you can. Basically you have to get your foot in the door anyway you can.

I worked for free during my first two years in the strength training world. The local athletes and organizations do not have a lot of money. And face it, if you are not a “big name” coach, pro athletes (who can pay a lot) will not hire you. But to get a good reputation you must produce athletes and most of all you must get to *know* athletes. During these first two years it was very hard for me to conciliate everything: training, career, studies. In fact I almost burned myself out at first. I took so many clients that I had a lot of trouble keeping myself organized. But I have no regrets because the more athletes you get to work with the more you hone your skills as a strength coach. Working with a lot of athletes will also increase your chance of getting a break. One of the young athletes you are training today could become a star tomorrow. He could also find himself training with sport superstars: word of mouth is very powerful! The more peoples talk about you, the greater are your chances to succeed.

### *Knowledge*

You can have all the drive in the world, if you are not qualified as a strength coach you won't last very long. It's very important that you be able to produce results. While you don't need a Ph.D. in exercise science to do so, you must acquire as much theoretical and practical knowledge as possible. This means reading everything you can on training, but reading it with a critical eye. It also means developing a feel for athletes. It's one thing to plan a session on a piece of paper; it's another to actually train athletes in the gym. The only way to develop that feel is to get to train as many athletes as possible.

### *Contacts*

When you are trying to come up in the strength training field you cannot afford to be an asshole. A lot of wannabe trainers act superior and condescending to other coaches or regular peoples. This is big mistake! If you never know which athlete could become a superstar, you also don't know which coach could become very influential in the future. I remember working with a local strength coach and self-proclaimed guru and he once told me in a fist of rage that he would ruin my career. Obviously that was before I started working for T-mag, training elite athletes and having a good reputation. The problem is that I'm now much more influential than he is. I'm not a vindictive guy, in fact if he wanted to work with me again I'd probably agree, but some other guys are vindictive and will remember if you jerked them around.

Some coaches can get away with being egocentric and condescending, but this is only if they have the right to do so: once you are on top you can afford to be more self-confident and cocky. However I still believe that genuine good guys like Charles Staley, John Davies and I will have the edge in the long run. Never underestimate the power of respect and good relations. Cultivate them, if peoples feel that you're a good guy they will often go out of their way to help you.

Establishing good working relations entails that you first need to create a relationship! You must go out and get to know peoples. Be genuine and frank. If you lie to them at first and they find out, you're toasted!

### *Image*

While enlightened athletes know that looks doesn't equate knowledge, the vast majority of athletes judge you according to your physique. As a strength coach, having a muscular but lean physique is the best business card you could have. When I started my career I was still competing in Olympic lifting. At one point I was 230-240lbs on 5'9". I was very strong and fairly muscular: but I did not have a pleasing or aesthetic physique. Deep down, most athletes want to look good, it's human nature. So if your physique seems unattractive to them chances are that they will not really trust you. They will think: "if he knows so much about how to get in good shape, how come he isn't". You cannot underestimate the influence of your physique on how peoples perceive you. I knew a

weightlifting coach, great coach and great guy. However when he tried to go “mainstream” he failed because he was grossly out of shape and obese. Now, he was a fantastic and knowledgeable coach but he just turned off most “regular” athletes he approached.

Along the same lines I firmly believe that a strength coach should be able to do what he asks of his athletes. Obviously I’m not talking about being as good as them. However if you ask your athletes to do the Olympic lifts you must be able to do them yourself, and do them with adequate technique. If you ask your athletes to run several 400m sprints (which are hellish work) you better be able to do it. Some coaches will often workout with their athletes from time to time. John Davies is known for doing this and so am I. If your athletes see you train hard they will have an easier time accepting the grueling work you ask of them. As former Navy Seal commando Richard Marcinko would say: “Leaders lead from the front, not from the back”.

Having an important sports background is also important. No need to have reached the elite level in many sports, but I believe that the more different sports you practiced, even if just for fun, the better coach you’ll be. For one thing you will be able to better understand the physical demands of a sport if you practiced it. Myself I have participated at the competitive level in football, hockey, soccer, rugby, golf, Olympic lifting, powerlifting, strongmen competitions and basketball. I have also done some skiing (alpine and cross-country), badminton and gymnastics.

One last point that is linked to the preceding one is that to be a good strength coach you must have a certain level of strength yourself. I’m not talking about being a world class strength athlete. But you must be stronger than most peoples in a wide variety of lifts. Being strong is much like your physique: it can enhance or break the confidence an athlete has in you.

### *Material presentation*

It is very important to be professional, even if you’re not yet established as a *true* pro. This means giving out well designed, visually appealing programs and business cards. If an athlete hires you as his coach and you give him a hand written program on some piece of paper, how professional will you look? Not very! All of my programs are visually attractive: my programs are 25-30 pages long, include pictures of all the exercises used in the program; I use myself as a model so that my athletes know that I can do the lifts I ask of them. The cover page is a high quality semi-hard/glossy paper and there is a kick ass color logo on it. The back page is also semi-hard and glossy, giving the program a “softcover book” feel. I’ll tell you that I’ve gotten a lot of jobs simply based on the attractiveness of my program. There is nothing wrong with it: if you know that you’re good, you must get your message across in any way possible.

Having a visually stimulating business card, a card that stands out of the pack, will also be a great tool. If you leave you card in a gym or anywhere else you must attract the attention of as much persons as possible.

Like it or not, one of the most important thing to become a strength training success is presenting yourself and your material in the best way possible. This is because of what's known as the Pygmalion effect: the way peoples see you will influence what they'll think of you. If they see you as a true pro, someone who cares about his athletes and someone who's in shape they will trust you all the more!

### *Marketing yourself*

I used to believe that strength coaches who marketed themselves aggressively were nothing more than sellouts. I even referred to the type as "bandits". However I now understand that there is an important need to market yourself if you want to be a success. Nobody will hire you if you are a "nobody" who never leaves the basement! You must get your name out there, get some recognition. Writing for a quality magazine is a good start but not everybody can achieve that at first. But every strength expert can write a small information brochure/booklet and distribute it freely in gyms. If you include a lot of quality info, make it snappy and interesting your name will get around!

Basically try to get your name out as much as possible. Take any opportunity you have to have peoples talk about you. Do not be ashamed of marketing yourself, you are not a sellout: you know that you have something to say and you want as much peoples as possible to hear it!

### *You too can make it*

A lot of young coaches are intimidated by the top dogs in the field. I once was like that too. Somehow I did not believe that I could become part of the elite myself. It's only when I told myself "*screw them, I can make it*" that I started to have success. Confidence brings success which brings confidence. The current strength training Gurus are peoples just like you, if you put them on a pedestal you are doomed to fail as you will always consider yourself to be inferior: you are not! Most training authorities are at the top because they had one big break or had a fantastic drive to succeed: if you have that you too can make it.

### **Once you reach the top**

When you achieve a certain degree of success you must make your name a fixture in the mind of athletes and bodybuilders. When peoples think of strength coaching they think of John Davies, Charles Staley, Ian King or even Christian Thibaudeau. To get your name to become synonymous with the profession you must make important contributions to the field: write books and articles, produce videos, give seminars. The more productive you are, the more "mythical" you become. Remember that image is important in getting the job and knowledge is important to get the job done!

A lot of trainers become arrogant and demanding as soon as they have some success. I still believe that being a good guy and having solid, positive work relationships with other coaches is one of the keys to long term success.

Along the same line, when you reach the top remember your big break and give something back. For one, I'll do anything in my power to help a future strength coach to make a name for himself. Don't be afraid of other peoples' success.

Another thing you should do as you become more successful is to be more selective with your clients. When you start out you need to work with as much athletes as possible. However as you become a big name you need to be associated with success stories. You simply cannot survive failures: only accept athletes who are hard workers, disciplined and talented, these will get much more out of your training and as a result you will look better. Furthermore, if you maintain a huge client base when you become part of the elite you really cannot give all your attention to each athlete. Elite athletes need to be closely supervised because the slightest improvement can mean the difference between winning and losing, between 100 000\$ a year and 1 000 000\$ a year.

I am myself at the mid-point between the two: I'm slowly reducing my client base. However I still have non-elite athletes: these are the guys that first hired me when I was a "nobody" so I repay them for their confidence by continuing to work with them.

## **Conclusion**

Obviously the strength coaching profession is not for everybody. However if it's your passion and just know that it's what you want to do, *go for it!* The tips contained in this article will help you achieve your goals. But you still have to do the work. Opportunities won't come up on themselves.

## Shameless self-promotion

This is the portion of the newsletter in which I try to make some money out of you!  
Presently I offer the following:

Seminar (5 hours seminar at the location of your choice)	1000.00\$ plus travelling fares
Individualized training program	100.00\$/month
Individualized nutrition and supplement program	100.00\$/month
Black Book of Training Secrets (hard copy)	30.00\$
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