

Training for the "56"

BY MATT McGRATH

It is a singular thing that training with the 56-pound weight will strengthen a man more than any other of the heavyweight exercises, that is, provided a man is fairly strong. When I mean fairly strong I mean a man who can catch up a "56," swing around, and throw it some distance without feeling any great strain from the exertion. Weak men, and especially those with defective kidneys, should never bother with the big weight. Perhaps one of the most beneficial exercises with this weight is to swing it between the legs and throw it about a dozen times every day. It has the effect of developing the muscles of the back, loins, thighs and calves, and is nothing short of a tonic to the muscles of the stomach. Every time I go to practice from the circle I always take half a dozen throws from stand between the legs and find it to be even a better muscle builder than throwing with a double turn.

It is no easy matter to master the knack of throwing with the double turn from the 7-foot circle and keep inside the bounds. In swinging around with the weight, the force is such that it has the tendency to carry the thrower too far forward at every movement, and, consequently, if he does not manage himself well he will be

taken over the front of the circle every time. Personally, I find it very hard most of the time to keep from fouling. The best plan to begin with is to make the easiest sort of a turn on the first spin, in fact, if a man does not make an easy turn he might as well drop the weight then and there, walk around and try again. One swing will be found necessary over the head and this should be nice and loose, the weight traveling well behind the head. As the weight is brought around to the front, the body should wear around with it until the ball is nearly half around the body. Then a little hop is taken and the feet should rest well and firmly on the ground after the first turn. The thrower, if he does as suggested here, may tear into the second turn like a tiger, but he should be careful not to jump too far forward, for if he does he will land over the front of the circle. It is a curious thing in connection with the double turns in throwing the "56" that if a man makes the first turn right he is sure to make the second one well inside the circle and get the proper lift-off at the finish, something which should be the aim of every athlete who cares to figure in the championship class. No man need expect to execute the double turn without long and careful practice and a goodly amount of study at the same time. All the men, including myself, who were successful with the double turn had to work diligently to get the knack, which is, of course, the best method of all with the "56."

Learning the "56" double turn is tiptop schooling for the hammer, for it gives the athlete a keen idea of how to balance himself and to get the proper timing to his swings.

When the athlete has learned the double turn he should be careful about the amount of work he should do each day. A dozen throws should be the outside of his session with the weight and it will be found that the physical condition will be improved by letting a day lapse maybe twice a week. If a man stays too long away from his practice he may lose a little of the knack, and if he should be ambitious to improve, strict attention will be found to be the best of all plans. If approaching a public competition, an athlete should not practice for three days previous, allowing that length of time for a good rest of the muscles.

I have been often asked what I eat in training. My answer has been that I eat everything strengthening, and only avoid sweets and pastries of all kinds. On the day of a competition I eat sparingly and generally allow three hours to elapse between my last meal and the time appointed for the contest.



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