



Marius Morstad on finding your one repetition maximum (1RM)...

... because to know where
you are going, you've got
to know where you are.

Left: Even old, balding punters can
improve their finger strength – the editor
putting his cheapo training kit to good
use – well it keeps him off the streets.

Bouldering

The reason for doing some strength training is to get stronger and thus to be able to do harder boulder problems or routes. Then the painful truth has to be faced...

To make it simple I will concentrate on bouldering. You will have to evaluate your level (grade) so from that you can evaluate your progress to know where you are. First evaluate your on-sight level. Find your on-sight bouldering grade either at a gym or outside bouldering area. This can be hard on the ego so do it by yourself. Choose problems of different character, be honest and write it down, even if it is only B1. Then find the level you can boulder with some work, limit it to one session.

This is the painful truth about where you are as a boulderer. Maybe you can boulder harder with some more work and by picking the right problem that suits you but it is difficult to measure progress or to make a training program from that. Your goal from this is to improve, so to see if your training works this is zero level to start from.

Fingerboard

(See pictures above and overleaf of pulley and board.)

Don't straight arm it, try to pull up while hanging don't be passive, both for injury reduction and for practical use later (you want to pull on the holds not just hang on them). Find the counter weight that enables you to hang on the hold for five seconds. This is your 1RM.

One arm

Do it with the same pulley system as the fingerboard. Find the 1RM. If you can do one without support, add weight to the body. Make sure that you do the exercise properly, rotating all the way, so your wrist is close to your chest.

Campus board

Test yourself and see if you can do 1-3-5 or 1-4-7 or even 1-5-8 on the smallest rungs. Remember to go back to the starting rung.

Marius on...

In the French magazine *Roc and Wall*, there is a pseudo scientific article about dynamics in climbing and there is a photo of Jacky Godoffe on Megalith as an example of a dynamic move, but in reality he is only throwing the hips into the rock, no vertical movement to speak of. Dynamics in climbing is like sex, most of it happens inside the head and is pure imagination. Of course there are exceptions like the Buckstone dyno and some of the stupid eliminates at Minus Ten. But in general a so called dynamic move is more like a horizontal one, just to borrow some time from gravity. A quick slap is a more precise definition for this kind of move.

Right: Jerry Moffatt putting his finger strength to good use – working his new boulder problem Chequers Groove at Froggatt, graded Font 7c/7c+.

Jerry soloed it above a very big crash pad indeed, as it is high, hard and the landing is very bad.

Seb Grieve

Training

strength – part two



Training strength – part two



Above and below: A heavy weight, a length of 6mm perlon, a couple of quickdraws, a screw-out pull up bar, a doorway and some comfy slippers – a homemade gym.

Additional exercises

These are very important exercises so I'll cover them in depth in another article. They take care of the underlying factors that improve performance and should not be ignored. If you are serious and have real ambitions you should really put in some work here, most climbers are weak in these areas. The areas I have in mind are lower back and stomach for stabilisation, thighs for dynos and high foot placements, dips for mantels. They're best done by 10-12 repetitions and 4-5 sets, three times a week. When you get used to the exercises you can follow the same regime as for finger strength, on the thighs and dips. But keep the volume on lower back and stomach. Vary the type of exercises on a regular basis.



Summary so far:
This is where you are now. If the training you do works, the figures should improve after a while.

Marius ON...

Getting strong fast

In the first few weeks of training strength, most of the gains are neural adaptations of different kinds. They come quickly and go quickly. Real change includes growth of the cross-sectional area of the muscle you want to train. For real gains you will need to keep at it for a few years. There are not many weightlifters in the world who got strong by training strength four weeks a year.

Monday

Dead hangs: 5 hangs at 95% of 1RM
2 minute rest between 1x1, 2x2, 3x2 for neural with 5-7 minutes rest between each set
10x4 for hypertrophy with 3-5 minutes break between each set

Easy circuit of bouldering, 20 problems, 2 minutes between each problem
Additional exercises (see box left)

Tuesday

Campusboard The rung distance you can do 3 times with 3-5 minutes rest between.
Deadhangs 5 hangs at 90% of 1RM, 2 minute rest between 1x1, 2x2, 3x2 at with 5% less resistance than yesterday
One arm Easy top roping, climb slowly without stopping 10 routes with 3-5 minutes break between.

Wednesday

Climbing Do boulder problems with big holds steep with underclings and sidepulls and long stretches all on positive holds. Concentrate on the form of the movement. Work on dynos on steep surface and low angle.

Additional exercises (see box out)

Thursday

Campusboard As Tuesday
Dead hangs As Tuesday
One arm As Monday
Climbing As Tuesday

Friday

Climbing As Wednesday
Additional exercises (see box out)

Saturday

Campusboard Try to do it better than the test
Deadhangs as above
One arm as above
Climbing Like Wednesday but better

Varying the exercises:

Fingerboard: use a more sloping edge
Campus board: Two handed jump up, drop down and up again. Don't do too big a distance between rungs so everything can be done fast. See *One Summer* video.

One arm: Frontal one arm. See *The Real Thing* video – Ben is doing one at the end.

Climbing: Use very small footholds, try moving up without losing contact with the feet; try keeping both feet on. Also do several step ups without changing handholds. Also try big footholds and small handholds.

Additional: Here there are thousands of exercises to choose from.

Traps to avoid:

- Increasing resistance too fast
- Reducing the volume because you increase the intensity
- Over-estimating your level of fitness
- Trying to cash in on your increasing strength too soon
- Not doing the climbing
- Trying to do everything in one session a day, instead of two.
- Being too pushy and aggressive, try holding back to avoid injury.
- Training through pain.

SECOND WEEK AND ONWARD

Adjust the program so you can do the exercises properly. It is important that you complete the repetitions and sets. If you can't, go down in resistance. Always do the neural work first, add resistance when ready for it. Give everything from rep one, even if it feels easy, don't save yourself. Continue this program for another two weeks and in the fifth week, do half the volume. For the next three weeks, as the first three weeks. Then one week with half volume. Then do a new test on your 1.RM. These weeks should have shocked your system a little and improved your general strength. For the next four weeks do the neural type training three times a week and the hypertrophy and additional exercises twice a week. The climbing is then replaced by more quality, harder and more of it. Then start all over again but change exercises.

Marius ON...

Being a pro...

In the climbing world it means getting paid or just receiving free gear from some sponsor for wearing their gear, getting published every little ridiculous climb or move done, with photos showing all the labels of the sponsors. And not least, pretending you are training very seriously and scientifically. Talk a lot about getting fit again to your sponsors and mates. Excuse yourself for not performing at the moment, for reasons of injury, weight, bad weather, humid conditions and for falling out with an imaginary girl friend. The money received is just enough for a few beers a week at the Broadfield, what the hell, you're a pro.

Using sport terminology...

A way of improving status is to use specific terminology. You can also invent some terminology of your own, then write some articles about training, do a little back slapping calling each other training Guru's and you have a blooming career. But there is room in the hostel for everybody, said Jesus.

Winning the World Cup...

There aren't many sports in which you can say you won the World Cup when there weren't more than three events and two of them were in places that can hardly be reached by plane or train.

Being trendy...

How is it possible, growing up in Apt campground, taking a shower once a month and never washing your clothes, spending your early youth in bright coloured lycra, eating chip butties and spending most of the time without any sexual experiences to talk about?

Being a has-been forever, without ever having been a been...

This is best done defending a time period in climbing, as the moral, technical and ethical highlight. Do it hard and brutal, take no prisoners. Question the young climbers, their general morale and ethics, quickly conclude they are incredibly low. Remember, the climbers have to be really young so they don't remember that you spent most of the time in the pub on your active days and that you found climbing a little frightening and had a hard time putting in pro.

Making a video...

With the intention of getting rich, to really show the world what an incredible climber you are. Six copies sold in England, four in the US.

Starting up a business...

... with the world's tightest and most critical customers? They have a beer budget each month of about £200 and a clothing budget about £1, and 50 pence for new gear.

Defending your position...

Nobody expects George Best to be on top of it on the football field. But that's not the case in climbing. Can you understand how battle-worn somebody like Jerry Moffatt must be, having defended his status and position for almost three decades, against downgrading, getting burned off, jealousy, demanding sponsors and ironic magazines and then being remembered as the climber that didn't finish Evolution?

Summary

Hopefully this article will give you some tips you can apply to your own routine. It is not a proper recipe and will take some experience to follow it. You will maybe shudder at the thought of doing it everyday but that's how it is in modern sport today.

Marius Morstad works at the Norwegian University for Sport. He is a long time friend and advisor to Ben and Jerry.