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January Newsletter Part I



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Here is the news that we'll cover in Part I of this month's newsletter....

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Hello,

I hope that the month of January has treated everyone well and that find yourself a step or two closer towards achieving one of your short/long term goals. Things are active here for the CasePerformance team members.

Our [strength](#), [running](#) and [nutrition](#) consultations are going well. If you're interested in finding out about our group discounts please send us an [email](#).

I. Changes in the CasePerformance newsletter format

As mentioned back in December, I have been testing out a new format with the newsletters, switching to a multi-part newsletter. Based off feedback given to me via [FACEBOOK](#) or [email](#), I have decided to send it out in 2 parts. Since YOU are my top priority, Part I of the newsletter will be more geared towards what's happening in the lives of CasePerformance community members. The 2nd one, which will be emailed 1-3 days after the first, will have a little more emphasis with what's happening here at CasePerformance.

I also had feedback encouraging me to convert **the newsletter into PDF format** so that individuals could print it off and/or easily save it in a computer file. If you're reading this PDF, obviously you've figured out how to access the attachment! The content is the same as the actual newsletter but the content is presented in a much more user friendly way.

Respectfully,

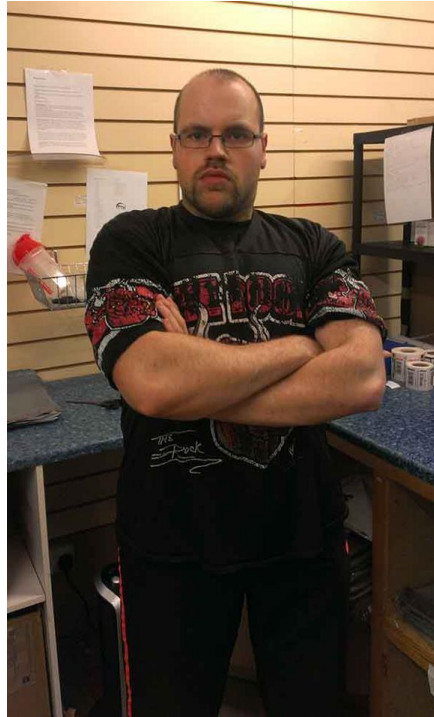
Sean Casey

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II. Community Member of the Month...



This month's CasePerformance Community member of the month is Dino Tassigiannis who comes to us from Liverpool, England. To say that Dino has an amazing story that led to him getting involved with resistance training and living a healthy lifestyle would be an understatement. As a 10 year old boy, he contracted meningitis while with his family visiting Greece. Additionally while doing the brain scan to determine point of entry, it was discovered that he had a brain tumor that needed surgical removal. While removing the brain tumor, they hit a nerve which left him temporarily paralyzed from the neck down for a period of 3 months. Although he regained movement, he was left with the inability to straighten his legs, had Arnold Chiari syndrome and was informed that he'd have to spend the rest of his life in a wheel chair. However, Dino far surpassed his doctor's expectations as he began to walk again, only to later develop Perthes Disease and suffer from 2 more bouts of meningitis. Despite these obstacles, Dino has pushed forward, developing a passion for resistance training. Recently Dino was kind enough to share his story with us ...

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Dino, as alluded to in the intro, you’ve overcome a lot of physical ailments in life. Would you be willing to share with us the steps you had to take to overcome these challenges?

I'm certainly willing to share the events that have led to me being where I'm at today. My road to mobility started while in Intensive Care. I used to try and make a fist with my right hand, just to see if I could; at first nothing, but after a few days of keeping at it I was able to move my index finger. Not long after I could all of them, but still no fist. I know it sounds stupid, but I used to ask my father to tape my hands close. In my mind, I didn't want my hands to forget what that felt like, being fully clenched.

The next stage was after I was transported from Athens Hospital to Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool. This was where the first of many physiotherapy sessions would take place. It was scary. The first session involved me mostly crying as the physiotherapist forced me to try to stand from my wheelchair. As bad as it sounds, I can't say I would have made progress as well as I did had I not had a tough love approach given to me.

While there, I used to go to the school they had at the back of the hospital. At the time I could only speak a little English. Although my mother is English, my father is Greek and the latter language was the primary one I spoke up to this point in my life. Every day when I was in school, they'd put me in a stand up table for an hour. A stand up table is exactly as it sounds. I'd be Velcro strapped in it so my muscles become stimulated to hold posture. I could walk a little then, from A to B but it was a struggle and I had the pace of a turtle.

A few years later, they tried a procedure to straighten my legs with the hopes that it would make it easier for me to walk. Basically they put me under and the doctor pushed my knees straight for two hours. It was unsuccessful and just left me with huge bruising all over my lower half.

Although the surgery didn't go as hoped, via hard work things began to get better. Then when I was 14 an accident involving my bed, a newly tiled floor and a shelf ended with breaking my back. I was let out the hospital the next day as there's nothing they can really do for you if your spine is still growing. I was thankful I wasn't paralysed again.

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Fast forward a few years and a hip replacement later, I can now ride a bike and blast my legs in the gym. It took me 16 years to get to a stage where I am content with my mobility. My next goal? Let's see if I can one day run properly.

When did physical exercise go from simply something you did for “rehab” purposes to a true passion for you? Or was physical exercise something you absolutely loved from the start?

I was never really into training at the gym, but at one point or another I've always been into some kind of sport. At school before I got sick, I was a big basketball and football (soccer) player. After being put into a wheelchair, I took up wheelchair basketball at Broadgreen High. Additionally, at the North-West School Sports Day, I won a few medals for javelin and shot-put. My love for weight training began in 2005 as I wanted to get big and lose body fat. Cardio wasn't an option at the time. A broken back and an eroded hip makes cycling, rowing etc kind of painful after the first 5 minutes.

I bought a weight set and trained in my back garden with my nephew who's 5 years my junior. Not long afterwards I joined Gym 21 owned by NABBA Mr. Universe Bill Jones and got a few pointers here and there from him.

My training lacked direction though, until I started training with Nathan Smith, an up and coming Personal Trainer from Liverpool. He's really knocked my lifting form into shape. It doesn't matter how many years you've trained, you won't know if what you are doing is really beneficial unless someone else critiques you. This is an important factor as it helps reduce the chances of injury.

Who have been your greatest influences or role models in this field of resistance training?

I know it's cliché but it has to be Arnold Schwarzenegger. The first time I saw him was actually in the Hercules movie when I was around 7 years old. Since then, not only has his bodybuilding inspired me, but also his attitude to attaining success; the wolf at the top of the mountain mentality. I'm no bodybuilder, but I have adapted this philosophy towards my life goals.

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When first starting off, what were the biggest mistakes you found yourself making? In other words, what would you advice people NOT to do when first starting a training program?

My advice for people would be to stop fooling themselves and face the facts. I first started going the gym in 2005 but for years I was still a fat guy. Why? Simple - I kept fooling myself into believing that I didn't need to work on my diet because calories didn't matter. I also sacrificed form to lift heavier weights which ended up giving me unnecessary pains. As the saying goes, leave your ego at the door.

I also believe that you have to be your biggest critic. Otherwise you will fall in the trap of disillusionment and you won't achieve your true potential.

Are there any particular short or long terms goals that you're currently working towards with respect to your training?

Right now I am in the middle of my first ever bulk. Having gone from 130kg to 90kg, I was scared of getting fat again. That said, I know that maximizing muscular growth won't happen while on a calorie deficit, so away I go! My goals right now are to get as much mass added as possible in the next two months, then cut down slowly to retain what I gained. Long term wise I'd love to have a six pack and I will get there, it's just a slow process for me.

Speaking in terms of generalities, what does your current training week look like?

Right now I do a three day split.

On Tuesday I do legs and biceps; Leg press, leg curls and EZ Bar bicep curls. I wish I could do squats but back problems don't allow it. I do 3 working sets in the 10 rep range for these. The one exception to this is the bicep curls where I'm doing 10 sets. In the past I've done 3 working sets, but trying out an “old school” approach to see how my body handles it.

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On Thursday I do chest and triceps; flat bench press, 3 working sets at 5 reps. Incline dumbbell press at moderate weight for 10 reps. Then I finish off with tricep bar press, 3 sets to near failure.

On Saturday I do rack pulls, 3 sets of 5 reps going heavy. Then Kroc rows, 3 sets of 25 reps. Finally I finish off with close grip pull-ups using negatives.

What is the current state of exercise like in England?

Since the Olympics, everyone seems to be more aware on how important training is for health. However, awareness doesn't necessary bring motivation and dedication to train. Obesity in the UK has become a big problem during the past few years and most people in general seem to have gotten lazier, which of course has a direct link to physical health.

That said, the part of the country that does train really showcases England's potential. Cheaper commercial gyms are opening as well as more specialist types like CrossFit®, hardcore bodybuilding and so on. We're not short on options.

Another sour point is that on October 1st, 2012 a 20% value added tax, commonly referred to as VAT, was placed on all powdered supplements. As a result, those who do train and look after their health end up suffering via their wallet. Thankfully there are some great brands out there that do quality products for good prices.

Switching gears here, a topic I always get questions on is nutrition and supplements. What are your thoughts on these topics? Any particular nutrition and/or supplement strategies that guide your decisions in these areas?

The way I lost my original weight (130 kg to 90kg) was the old school way, calories. Lately though, I've been trying intermittent fasting (IF), but it is not always convenient when you factor in that I finish work at 5:30pm and then head the gym. By the time I get home, my eating window is too small to get in 50-55% of my daily calories needed post workout. As with all dietary approaches I experiment with, I'm able to learn what works best and adapt it to my lifestyle.

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Supplement wise, I do feel it is important to remember that these products will do nothing if your diet and workout routine are not in check. Currently I'm on a high protein diet with 100 g of it coming from protein powder. You'll get people saying you shouldn't rely on protein powder so much, but at the end of the day, protein is protein to a degree and powder is cheaper to buy than the likes of chicken, turkey, beef, etc and I already get plenty of these whole food protein sources in my diet.

I also take a multivitamin, and concentrated DHA/EPA fish oil product. I also take a great pre-workout supplement which I'm a huge advocate of because I'm a fan of beta alanine and citrulline malate. I've had great success with it for years. I notice increased endurance and strength that helps out, not just in the gym but in my overall daily task and general quality of life. It also contains creatine, theobromine and green tea which are some goodies I've come to really see the benefit from using.

Creatine needs no introduction I hope. Green tea is something everyone can see a benefit from using, and the research literature on it out there is immense and worth reading. In addition to getting it from the pre-workout product, I also drink green tea with a bit of coconut butter thrown in instead of sweetener or sugar.

I don't really like caffeine based preworkouts, because I'm a big coffee drinker so I prefer to get my caffeine that way. I use coconut, milk instead of cow's milk in my coffee. Theobromine is obviously present as well and the combination seems to help with my energy and focus.

Once in a while I'll use a cissus product to help out with my spine, but I've come to deal with the pain, so that's a rare occasion.

Any other final thoughts/advice you're willing to share with us at CasePerformance?

As with everything, knowledge is power. But you won't get anywhere if you don't apply that knowledge into practice and truly dedicate yourself to the task. As they say, "To get to heaven, I'd crawl through hell".

And with that, this month's Community Member of the Month interview comes to a close. Thanks again Dino for sharing your story with us!

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III. Performance Tip: "People Watching" at the Training Facility

Although I can't say that I've trained at 100's of gyms across the world, I can say that I've trained in various settings including your typical YMCA, 24-7 Fitness Clubs, college recreation centers/gymnasiums, high end physical preparation facilities and basement/garage setups (can't forget this all important final facility!). While training at these various locations, I've found that most trainees fall into one of the following groups:

1 – The Applied Crowd: Everything done based on personal "behind the fork/under the bar/putting in the miles" type of experience completed by themselves or those they have trained.

2 – The Science Crowd: Everything done "by the books" using validated scientific research published in peer reviewed journals

3: The "bro"-science crowd: This group is really a weird twisted step child of the first two crowds who never got spanked and disciplined while growing up! They kind of randomly throw out their opinions. Yet, regardless of how absurd they sound (Trust me, some of them are WAAYYYY out there!), state them as if they were facts.

If we eliminate group 3, who fails to benefit anyone (outside of comical humor), we're left with crowd 1 & 2. So which one is better? Well, I guess if I had to pick one, I'd lean towards the applied crowd with respect to training. This may come as a surprise to many who have read my articles as they tend to be science heavy. The reason I went with the first crowd is simple – they have experienced and lived the life.

However, I want to make a special distinction when leaning towards this crowd; **namely the best ones in this group, who I admire and lean to for help, are very knowledgeable in the science of training, even if they don't know all the big fancy words to describe the science behind it.** Take Phil Stevens, he's never tried to market himself as a science guy; rather he takes the opposite approach, noting on his CP profile,

"A constant "student" of the game, his real-world under-the-barbell and behind-the-fork approach has led to many opportunities, experiences, and life changes amongst his clients"

Yet, for those fortunate enough to discuss training with Phil, you'll quickly notice he's very intelligent in the application of scientific principles to guide the training process. Phil's applied biomechanical knowledge as displayed in his deadlifting article series. ([Part I](#), [Part II](#)), is exceptional as well.

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That said, although Phil respects the science, he's not going to just completely throw his applied experience out the door just because a new scientific paper says "X, Y, Z". Take for instance the deadlift; despite the popular stance taken by many in the science crowd that the back "must be kept 100% straight 100% of the time", Phil has went on record on multiple occasions stating that a slightly rounded back is much better and safer for some body types when pulling heavy weights.

Ian King has also written extensively about trusting your own intuition and applied experiences as discussed in his two part interview he kindly did with us back in 2011 ([Part I](#), [Part II](#)).

The other caveat I throw in my stance when leaning towards the applied side of things ... make sure that the individual has truly belongs in the applied crowd and is not really just a "poser" who belongs in the broscience crowd. It's for this reason that I recommend individuals without any previous experience seek to find [good coaches/personal trainers](#) when first starting off to avoid injuries, etc.

In terms of nutrition, I tend to go the opposite way. That is, I am more likely to lean towards the science side of the equation assuming the individual has plenty of applied experience as well. Why the difference you ask? I personally believe that training (vs. nutrition) is much more flexible and needs to be adjusted on the fly for optimal performance. Not to say that nutrition doesn't, but I feel that this individualized approach to training can't be obtained as well by sport/exercise science research as what it can with respect to sports nutrition science. I also feel that a placebo effect is much more likely on the nutrition side of things and research can better separate the gold vs snake oil junk supplements/recommendations.

How do I go personally go about balancing the science vs. applied experience? Well, one of the things I like saying is ["Re"-search leads to "Me"-search](#). This principle served as the foundation for an article I wrote a few years back. As I mentioned in it, the best coaches are actually great scientist in my opinion. Don't believe me? [Check out](#) the similarities b/w the gold standard scientific process and what the best coaches do on a daily basis

The ideas discussed above resonated in my head while working with Dino on the interview. He has applied the *"Re"-search Leads To "Me"-search Principle* to his performance lifestyle. A few key phrases I picked out of his interview which exemplified this approach:

"trying out an "old school" approach to see how my body handles it"

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"As with all dietary approaches I experiment with [Ed note – all of which have shown some merit in scientific literature], I'm able to learn what works best and adapt it to my lifestyle"

"... can see a benefit from using and the research on it is immense and worth reading....."

In the end, I tend to lean towards those in the applied crowd when looking for training advice. However, as I've discussed in this month's tip, the best in the applied side of the training equation, tend to be pretty dang good women/men of science as well!

IV. Meets/Events

There is 1 event coming up in March that have been shared with me by members of the CasePerformance community.

1. Strength Guild Spring Strength Camp

Hosted by Phil & Sarah Stevens with Dr. Lonnie Lowery

Where: Topeka, Kansas

When: March 8th -10th (Friday evening through Sunday afternoon)

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

That wraps up this CasePerformance newsletter. Thanks for being a part of the team!

And as always... Train smart, train hard and leave the excuses to someone else!

Sincerely,

The CasePerformance Team