

# Getting strong is for everyone

By Jim Cornelius  
Editor in Chief

Over the past decade or so, a quiet revolution has taken place. Strength training has moved out of the dungeon and into the forefront of the push for health and wellness — for men and women, young and old.

Ryan Hudson of Level 5 CrossFit Sisters has helped to lead the charge in his hometown. He's seen his weightlifting classes change. There are always plenty of women involved, and these days some regular classes look like seniors classes because so many older folks are engaged in lifting heavy things — for the health benefits and for fun (*see related story, this page*).

Strength training is critical to retaining bone density, and it improves basic function in day-to-day life.

Cody Tweeten who recently moved from Wyoming to take a position as a trainer at Sisters Athletic Club, says “I do try to steer people toward strength training because it has so many added benefits.”

For clients who don't like weights or find them intimidating, he finds resistance bands a good substitute. The key is to get some resistance going to build up strength. And that's not just for athletes. It's about the quality of daily life.

“People don't realize what strength training does for them on a daily basis,” Tweeten said.

Tweeten recalls a client back in Wyoming who

had a very simple and prosaic motivation for strength training:

“Her mom couldn't squat down to pick up her kids. She didn't want that to be her... Family is usually a pretty good motivator.”

Hudson emphasizes that your physical condition when you start training isn't the key factor. The most important thing is that you're mentally prepared to work hard, to keep applying yourself. Because to be effective, strength training must be challenging.

“You've got to be up for this mentally,” Hudson said. “I don't care where you are physically. When people come in, I tell them this is a place where people work really hard and get really good results.”

A lot of intimidation and stigma around weight training has fallen away — the notion that it makes you “musclebound” or that women who train with weights will bulk up. Women don't have the same testosterone levels as men.

“You don't really see that bulking you see in men,” Tweeten said.

What you do see, as Hudson can attest, is women lifting amounts they would never have thought possible and looking and feeling more fit than they ever have in their lives. You see men getting stronger and encouraging others.

And you see older folks staying strong enough to pick up their grandkids — and keep up with them in all the activities Sisters has to offer.

# Strength training: Why compete?

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You've broken through the stereotypes and the trepidation and started hitting the weights. You're getting stronger, and you notice it in your everyday activities. You like the way you feel, you like the things that you can do, and you like the way you look.

Maybe the next step is to enter a weightlifting competition. No way, you say; that's not me. Maybe you should think again.

Ryan Hudson of Level 5 CrossFit Sisters is a big believer in competition as a way to enhance both the experience and the effects of strength training. He says he doesn't push his clients to compete — but he loves to provide them with opportunities.

Why compete?

“A lot of times, people get plateaued and they get stalled out,” Hudson told *The Nugget*.

Training for a competition is motivating — it can add focus and purpose to training. And a lot of times, people hit their best numbers on the platform in competition, simply because the atmosphere of a meet empowers them.

Facing a looming competition can focus a person on hitting a desired weight, too.

“A lot of times, being in a weight class competition where you have to make a certain weight on a certain day is all the motivation they need — the accountability to

get there,” Hudson said.

And competing can be a lot of fun. At the end of the day, it's not about who can lift the biggest load — it's about pound-for-pound strength and working hard to “actually do something great,” Hudson said. “If you make weight, post a total and have fun, it's a successful meet.”

The camaraderie that develops among lifters is phenomenal.

“That's why I want to host these competitions,” he said. “To give people opportunities to throw their hat in the ring and give this a whirl. When people see everybody cheering everybody on and encouraging each other, they want to be part of that.”

The effects are startling and obvious.

“They get hooked on the progress,” Hudson said.

The coach speaks from personal experience.

“That's where I started 10-12 years ago — I just started signing up for meets,” he said.

With trophies and records to his name, Hudson can look

back and say with certainty: “If I'd never signed up for a meet, I'd never have made half as much progress.”

Competition is more accessible than ever before. Take Strongman competition for example. Not so long ago, Strongman — competitions that feature a variety of non-standard lifting and carrying events — used to be the sole province of Icelandic giants like Hafþór Júlíus Björnsson, who played The Mountain on the hit fantasy series *Game of Thrones*.

Now there are weight and age classes and classes for women.

“Smaller guys and older guys and gals can compete in this,” Hudson said. “It's a growing sport because of that — especially on the women's side.”

Level 5 hosted its first Strongman Throwdown on July 20. The event featured one of the great traditional events — the Húsafell Stone carry, which originated in Norse Iceland, a log press,

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