

NEWS

//////////////////// BY HENRY HOUSTON



GETTIN' ARMED

Chasing Duck Football's strength and conditioning coach Aaron Feld's values

AARON FELD
DISPLAYS HIS
MAGNIFICENT
BICEPS

PHOTOS COURTESY UO ATHLETIC DEPT

AC/DC is blasting inside the gym of the Oregon Ducks football team. The place is empty, so Brian Johnson's screaming vocals and Angus Young's gritty guitar cut through the otherwise silent two-story building.

Aaron Feld, the Ducks' strength and conditioning coach, doesn't have his patented waxed handlebar mustache that — in addition to his "Fill the Sleeves" 45-day motivational campaign — made him an internet standout when I meet him. And he isn't as wound up as he usually is on the sidelines or when the Duck football players are around. That answers my question, whether he's always revved up.

His office overlooks the bottom floor of the gym, which he says is the best gym in all of college football. Yet, despite working a few steps away from this gym, he says sometimes he's too busy working to get some reps in.

That's OK, he adds.

He'd rather spend time with Oregon's athletes to work with them for the season. Sure, it's his job to focus on impressing best exercise practices into students and his fellow coaches. With his 45-day challenge known as the "Fill the Sleeves" campaign, though, he wants to spread the message of exercising to everyone.

I ask him how "Fill the Sleeves" is going.

He lifts his arm and flexes, showing off an armful of muscle bigger than my hand.

"How do you think it's going?" he throws back at me.

He's been filling the sleeves for seven years. It's based on a principle called cumulative load, he says. That means that blasting out a hundred reps increases the amount of training you get with that specific muscle group — in this case, arms.

But it's more than just growing muscle.

"It's more about being positive. Putting something positive in the world and encouraging people who don't train with consistency to find a way to be consistent," he says.

Feld adds that it's not meant for Oregon's football players. Instead, it's a way to get people who don't normally work out on a schedule, which establishes a habit.



The 45-day campaign that focuses on 100 reps of biceps curls and 100 reps of triceps extensions was a tradition that emerged when he was playing football at Mississippi State. When he played football, he would just focus on biceps and triceps exercises leading up to the first game of the season.

Once he started working as a coach, he says he settled on making it a 45-day routine. That was about three or four years ago.

Feld joined the Ducks' coaching staff earlier in 2018 and

that's around the time he got popular for his social media presence for the campaign. Google Trends, an aggregate of Google searches, shows that most searches regarding the campaign and about Feld came from the West Coast.

On Twitter and Instagram, he posted videos of himself doing curls atop a mountain in Hawaii, lifting a boulder on a beach when gym equipment isn't available and other videos to inspire people to not skip out on workouts.

Feld, wearing a "Fill The Sleeves" shirt when I'm talking with him, says he didn't intend for the campaign to get wildly popular.

The shirt features two arms flexed, which makes up an illustration of his signature handlebar mustache, his hair style and the phrase: "Hard work: Keeping the haters in business since 1776."

Feld says he and his wife earned \$30,000 from the shirts — it got that popular.

He already makes quite a bit from the University of Oregon. He signed on for a \$200,000 a year contract (which comes with other perks and benefits like a stipend for a courtesy car) and brought home an additional \$5,000 bonus when Ducks made it to the Redbox Bowl game.

Feld says he plans to donate about \$10,000 of the money he got from the shirts to Special Olympics Oregon, which has had to cancel statewide summer and winter games due to financial troubles.

At the end of the day, the difference between the physique of an elite athlete and an everyday person is the latter doesn't have access to harsh accountability — whether it's from Feld or Head Coach Mario Cristobal.

But it is possible.

Just keep in mind that he says you have to put in 100 percent effort, 90 percent of the time. ■