



PREFACE

With a Diesel interview, you'll not only learn from the leaders in the industry about current trends and their strategies about performance enhancement, you'll also learn something about them on a personal level.

Eric Cressey, a top 100 Powerlifting USA athlete, has hit the ground running in 2006. Unveiling [Magnificent Mobility](#) (with Mike Robertson) and his latest solo venture, [The Ultimate Off Season Manual](#) to the masses, this prominent strength coach has already made a huge impact and there is no limit in sight.

Eric has a great Newsletter and huge article repository on his site – you better got out to his site and subscribe today – or you're missing out!

Smitty

The Diesel Crew



Q1

**Tell us a little about yourself. What is your background? Where you grew up?
What sports you participated in?**

I grew up in Kennebunk, Maine, and was as enthusiastic an athlete as you'll ever find. I was still a fat kid, though. I was all-state in tennis and soccer as a senior, and was recruited by several Division II and III colleges for both sports. Long story short, though, my fitness level wasn't what I would have liked, so I embarked on a rigorous diet and training program that worked for a while, but eventually left me skinny, weak, sick, and completely confused about how to get out of the rut I'd dug for myself. My chances of playing college sports were pretty much down the drain; I just needed to get healthy and gain some good weight. That's when I fell in love with weight training and proper nutrition; it pretty much saved my life – and I got a career out of it. It's all been smooth-sailing from there.

I've worked with athletes from the youth ranks right up to the professional and Olympic levels, and as a competitive powerlifter, I have state, national, and world records. My competition bests are 540 squat, 402 bench, 628 deadlift, and 1532 total in the 165-pound weight class.

Education?

I double majored in Exercise Science and Sports and Fitness Management for my undergraduate degree from the University of New England. From there, I went on to get my Master's degree in Kinesiology with a concentration in Exercise Science at the University; it's the #1 ranked kinesiology graduate program in the country, and they've got some tremendous professors. I was fortunate to not only study under them, but also spend a lot of time working with varsity athletes in strength and conditioning and subjects from all walks of life in the human performance laboratory.

Q2

Did you always want to work in the industry?

Believe it or not, I started out at Babson College, a business school just outside of Boston. I was convinced that I wanted to be an accountant (like pretty much everyone else in my family). Long story short, I had some health issues that made me appreciate the value of proper training and nutrition, and I soon realized that I was more interested in pushing weights than crunching numbers, so I transferred after my sophomore year.

Q3

Why are you unique?

Given the tribulations in my past, I essentially have a perspective on dealing with almost anyone with whom I consult. I've been fat, and I've been skinny. I've been strong, and I've been weak. I've been healthy, and I've been injured. I've been an up-and-coming athlete, and I've been successful in my sport(s). I've worked with loads of male and female athletes. I have experience with beginners, and I've worked with some of the best and seen what it took to get them to where they are. Likewise, I've seen tremendous

athletes waste away great opportunities because of poor training and lifestyle practices, or genuine laziness. Hell, I've even worked in cardiac and pulmonary rehab.

Truth be told, though, I'll be the first to admit that – at age 25 – I haven't done *anything* in this industry – which is why I'm the most open-minded guy you'll ever meet. I'm always looking for ways to get better at what I do.

Q4

What does mobility mean to a young athlete?



Most young athletes have a ton of range of motion – at least until they get to the teenage years and spend eight hours a day at the computer on instant messenger! The problem is that they don't necessarily have stability within that range of motion, and that's where mobility training proves itself superior to static flexibility training in most instances. There's really no use in being able to attain a given range of motion if you can't stabilize yourself in that position. Most really young kids don't need to static stretch; in fact, excessive passive flexibility without mobility will actually *increase* the risk of injury! Dynamic flexibility is a way around this, as you're working on the central nervous system and not just the tissues.



What does mobility mean to an older athlete?

It's very simple: If you don't use it, you lose it!

Consider the *Law of Repetitive Motion*, and equation that explain how overuse injuries occur:

$$I = NF/AR$$

I = *Insult/Injury to the tissues*

N = *Number of repetitions*

F = *Force or tension of reach repetition (% of maximum muscle strength)*

A = *Amplitude of each repetition*

R = *Relaxation time between repetitions (lack of pressure or tension on the tissue)*

We know that increasing the denominator (Amplitude x Relaxation) is a way to reduce the insult the tissues. Amplitude is just another way of saying range of motion; the more range of motion through which you take your body on a daily basis, the less likely you are to accumulate insult to the tissues in question. Mobility training effectively increases your daily amplitude; the more sedentary you get (as most people do as they get older), the more mobility work you need.

Q6

Because of your interviews with Stuart McGill, what have you added to your mobility work and what have you removed?

I'm being more cautious with any movements (e.g. prone and supine twists and scorpions) that promote any sort of lumbar rotation. We need stability – not mobility – at the lumbar spine, and plenty of mobility at the hips, thoracic spine, scapula, and glenohumeral joints. Most back problems stem from having too much extension and rotation, so the last thing we need to do is encourage more.

I still use some of these movements, as they can be coached to heavily prioritize hip mobility if you use the right cues. However, I don't use them with those who have "general" back pain – especially if it's a "blinded" internet recommendation scenario. The DVD includes dozens of other effective ways to get things done for these individuals, so we pick up without missing a step.

Q7

Are "functional training" and "core" used too loosely?

Is the Pope Catholic?

Functional training started out as a sincere effort by physical therapists to use rehabilitation modalities that best simulated their patients' activities of daily living. What was functional for one patient was not functional for another patient; why would a secretary need to do the same thing as a firefighter? Now, we have coaches saying that one program can be functional for both a soccer player and a football player; anyone want to explain that to me? In its truest sense, functional training has tremendous merit; in its bastardized role in today's training world, it's nothing more than flavor of the week bulls**t.

Nowadays, “core” means “the abs, obliques, and all those other muscles between the knees and shoulders that I’m too lazy to remember, much less list.” Mel Siff is weeping somewhere. I wish more people would just forget everything they “know,” and start from scratch the right way by going to a Stuart McGill seminar



Speaking of seminars, what pissed you off or what did you laugh at, at the last seminar you went to?

I’m actually typing up the responses to this interview on the ride home from speaking at the Syracuse Strength Spectacular (I’m not driving at the same time, for the record; I’m not THAT good at multi-tasking). I can’t complain about a thing; Michael Hope did a great job of bringing in an awesome lineup, and the knowledge level of the audience was a solid as I’ve seen. You only get the most die-hard enthusiasts when you hold a seminar in Syracuse in June. I was laughing like crazy the entire weekend; in most cases, if I told you why, I’d probably be ostracized from the inner joke circle forever!

I will say, however, that Diesel Crew got a mention Friday night at the hotel bar around midnight. I was chatting with Dave Tate, Jim Wendler, Ryan Smith, Anthony Roberts, Zach Even-Esh, and Jason Manenkoff; I’m not sure how it came up in the conversation, but we got to reflecting on how you’ve got a trigger finger when it comes to hitting “send” on your newsletters. We got 857 emails from Diesel Crew last week alone, man! Maybe all that grip training is making your fingers spasm as you work at the keyboard?

We’re just messing with you, of course; we love the enthusiasm. It’s just that when you combine liquor, upstate New York, and a bunch of sarcastic lifters, nobody is immune.

Q9

Where was your biggest failure as a coach? What did you learn from that experience?

Not remaining a competitive athlete myself. There was a time when I just lifted for the sake of lifting; I was basically just “working out,” as I think about it in retrospect. Actually training for something (in my case, powerlifting) is a whole other ballgame; it changes your perspective so much.

When I wasn't competing, I couldn't share the competitive mindset as easily with the athletes I coached. It's imperative that we as coaches be able to walk a mile in our athletes' shoes – even if it's just in a broad sense.

This experience also taught me the value of making goals quantifiable and time-bound, which has tremendous value for the weekend warriors with whom I work. “I want to increase my bench press” is not a good goal. “I will bench press 315 by August 1” is a much better goal; it gives rises to specific objectives that must be carried out at specific points in time to get to where one wants to be.

Q10

What was your biggest success? What did you learn from that experience?

My biggest success was my first powerlifting meet, as that's when I realized what my biggest failure was and what I needed to do to “undo” it. I went out and pulled a Connecticut Junior deadlift record of 510 pounds at a body weight of 165 and never looked back. Competitive powerlifting has completely changed me as a lifter, coach, writer, consultant, and person.

Q11

Ever get into grip training for powerlifting? To what extent do you include grip into your programs?

Yes and no. On one hand, powerlifting is largely reliant on supporting grip, and since I've never missed a deadlift on grip (I rarely use straps), it hasn't been a priority.

I did, however, start to use a lot more thick bar work in my last training cycle, and it really helped my bench progress, as I have a tendency to get a bit lazy with gripping the bar. I have very small wrists (six inches in circumference), so as I move up some weight classes, putting some extra size on my forearms is going to be a big priority; otherwise, this joint structure isn't going to stand up to much heavier weights on the bench. I'll be doing a lot more direct forearm and grip work in coming months.

Q12

Achieving the flexibility needed for an athlete's sport is essential to ensure their potential success and their ability to prevent or recover from an injury. What potential issues could occur if an athlete has:

I could go on all day about these, but I'll list the main things I see...

- a. Tight Hamstrings** – Lower back pain, strained hamstrings and adductors, patellofemoral tracking problems/knee pain, anterior hip pain

- b. Tight Internal Shoulder Rotation** – subacromial impingement, bicipital tendinosis, labral injuries, rotator cuff tears, degeneration of vertebral facets/acromioclavicular joints/sternoclavicular joints, elbow pain (compensation).

c. Tight Hip Flexors – Pretty much the same as the hamstrings, as they go hand-in-hand. Rectus femoris and tensor fascia latae strains are going to be more common, too.

d. Tight IT Band – anterior and lateral knee and hip pain, lower back pain

e. Limited spinal rotational mobility – Lacking rotation at the lumbar spine is a good thing; it means that you're stable. Lacking mobility thoracic spine is a problem; it markedly increases the risk of injury to the vertebral facets and AC and SC joints. You're also more likely to get subacromial impingement; if your thoracic spine is immobile, your scapula will fall out of position to compensate (winging, usually). Most shoulder problems originate at the scapula.

Q13

The Stick? Foam rollers? Trigger point therapy? ART? Contrast Baths? Extra Workouts? Sled Dragging? – or all the above?

All of the above, although I'm not sold on contrast baths/showers. As my good friend Michael Hope recently wrote, "Thirty percent of all care is placebo. That means a lot of useless shit has made many people rich." Nobody is making any money off of contrast baths/showers, but I haven't seen a single bit of research showing their efficacy. I could write an article tomorrow about how bathing in one's own urine will raise growth hormone levels by 46.87%, and I'd probably get a dozen emails from people saying that all their muscular soreness was gone because of my "piss protocol." The mind is more powerful than we think.

Think about it: most of the best minds in the industry agree that the best thing to do post-exercise is relax as soon as possible. How the heck is throwing someone into ice cold water going to help? As far as I'm concerned, ice baths are for rapid cooling in people with heat illnesses.

But, to answer your questions, I love all the soft tissue therapy modalities you outlined, and I use extra workouts (as outlined in my “Cardio Confusion” article at T-Nation) all the time.

Q14

QUICK WORD ASSOCIATION: (give me the first things that comes to mind, when I say...)

Berardi – Taught us the difference between “required” and “optimal” and barbecued lots of sacred cows. I’m forever indebted to JB for publishing my first article in 2001 and giving me loads of advice over the past six years.

Cosgrove – *Brilliant* guy – both as a coach and businessman. He’s been a great mentor, friend, and inspiration to me, and has saved me a ton of frustration and thousands of dollars worth of mistakes.

Kettlebells – Good implement, but for crying out loud, people, there needs to be a lot of tools in your toolbox. Get a client or athlete who can’t overhead press and you’re left twiddling your thumbs for an hour.

Odd Objects – True instability training (my thesis results will delve into this in a lot more depth; they should be published later this year in the Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research).

Chek – Makes me afraid to leave my house sometimes. I admire the fact that he is extremely well read, though.

Gigantic Elite Beanies – If they can make Will Hefferman look good, they must be cool. And, there is no such thing as a bad beanie when you’ve lived near the UCONN campus in the winter; it’s like a wind tunnel.

No Chalk Allowed Gyms – People go to these places to “work out,” not “train.” I don’t think people realize that there is almost ALWAYS another option in terms of where you can train, whether it’s a garage gym down the road or a powerlifting gym on the other side of town. You just have to be willing to look.

American Idol – Never watched it. I suspect that if more males didn’t watch it, more than 5% of the population could actually deadlift more than 225.

UFC – Awesome athletes; MMA guys are a blast to train.

Q15

You are on staff at Excel Strength (www.ExcelStrength.com) with Sully, you must be hitting the Strongman implements? Tell Sully – I said "What's up?"

Well, I’m not officially going to be joining the party until August 1, when I move back up to Boston. I’m definitely looking forward to having regular access to more of the implements; I’ve had bits and pieces over the years – just enough to make knowledgeable, but not “dangerous.” I know that just training and shooting the breeze with Brad and Sully is going to take my training and coaching to a whole new level.

Q16

What was the latest manual or book you've read related to the industry?

Actually, it was my own off-season training manual; I was proofreading it for the third time!

Before that, though, I went through [Human Inferno](#) by Chris Mohr and Alwyn Cosgrove. Those two are both really bright guys in their respective fields, and they did a great job of coming up with a really comprehensive resource.

Q17

What was the latest manual or book you've read NOT related to the industry?

As I mention below, I'm doing a ton more business reading nowadays. I'm just finishing up "Marketing Your Services: For People Who Hate to Sell" by Rick Crandall. I actually stumbled onto it by accident on my parents' bookshelf back in Maine, and it's turning out to be a great read.

Q18

What was the latest DVD you've watched related to the industry?

"Carried Away" by Dan John. Dan gave me a copy back in January when we met up in Washington, D.C., and I just now got a chance to watch it, as I've been working my way through a stack of resources. I wish I had gotten to it earlier; he did a great job. Dan has a lot of enthusiasm and a fantastic ability to make the complex seem simple; he's one of the best coaches around. This DVD includes a lot of movements that will strengthen the "core" (God, I hate that word) in a more functional and less "foo-foo" way.



Q19

What's in your iPod? What's on your Tivo?

I don't own one of either. If I wore an iPod to South Side (Gym), I hope they'd kick me out.

Q20

Ever get into a fight? What happened?

Nothing beyond ordinary backyard stuff; I'm a lover, not a fighter (attractive single women who are impressed by my sensitivity can email me at ec@ericcressey.com). As Dale Carnegie once wrote, "The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it." Knowing how to pick my battles has really helped my productivity.

Q21

Over the last several years, it seems that the industry has seen a progression from machines => band training => stability training => strongman training => odd object training. Along the way, the core components have been retained and the bullshit has been left behind. Has everyone switched over to the integration of many different training modalities into their programs? Is this even needed?

Oh, there's still a lot of BS kicking around – even among some of the most popular gurus in the business. We're always going to be faced with new training initiatives; it's up to us to use intuition and experimentation to separate the treasure from the trash. The second we get complacent and stick with just what has worked in the past is the second that we stop getting better at what we do. You need to be looking for better ways to get the job done all the time, but at the same time approaching everything as a devil's advocate.

Q22

Tate talks about when he poured over all the books, manuals and transcripts over the years, he would take notes and compile summaries of these texts. What is your best technique for recollection? Cue cards, summary sheet, reread the book?

I just try to apply it in real-world contexts as soon as possible. As I read, I'm always trying to contemplate how things fit into what it is I do. I can't say that what I do is miraculous; I read like everyone else reads. I just read a lot more!

I do have to give a lot of credit to my parents in this regard, though. My mother has been a teacher of English for roughly 30 years, and my father reads 2-3 books every week; it's a value that was fostered in me at an early age, as I have been around the classics for as long as I can remember. Reading a ton got even "easier" when I fell into an industry that allowed me to blend my personal and professional goals; I can see how everything I read helps me get closer to those goals.

Q24

Finish this statement, "If I could go back 5 years, I would do the following 5 things (that I just recently accomplished) immediately – and not wait!"

1. I would read a LOT more about business and not just training and nutrition.
2. I would have started powerlifting sooner and canned the foo-foo bodybuilding BS.
3. I would never have wasted a penny on books by people who told me that my concentric tempo should be anything other than *really f**king fast!*

4. In the two years prior to arriving at UCONN, I would have gone out of my way to find an awesome training crew with which to lift. Maine is a powerlifting hotbed, believe it or not; growing up, I had no idea that there were several good gyms within driving distance of me. My gains have gone through the roof since arriving at UCONN and then moving on to South Side.

5. I would have spent as much time working ON the business as I do IN the business. Sometimes, it's really hard to see the forest through the trees – especially when you're working 80+ hours per week among training clients and athletes, online consulting, writing articles and books/manuals, and answering emails. By putting more time and thought into how I'm going to prioritize my time and organize my systems, I've been able to work a lot more efficiently without sacrificing anything.

Q25

What five sites do you go to everyday?

In addition to the boring stuff – my email accounts and 1shoppingcart.com (to check up on order status), I hit up the following

1. www.T-Nation.com
2. www.EliteFTS.com
3. www.UconnHuskies.com (to check up on the athletes with whom I've worked)
4. www.ESPN.com and/or www.Sports.Yahoo.com (to see how our pro guys are doing, and read anything I can find about the Red Sox)
5. www.JPFitness.com

Q26

What 's coming up for EricCressey.com?

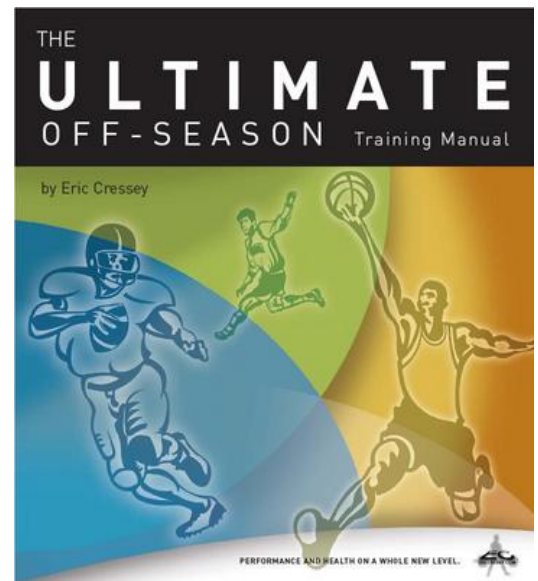
You know, it's funny; I don't view my website as something that needs to be extravagant. I try to just use it as a resource to centralize my activities and use the newsletter to give back to those who have supported me over the past few years. I'll keep updating the [schedule](#) and recommended resources page, and send out a [free newsletter](#) every Tuesday. It might be interviews, Q&As, or random articles that I write on the spot; I roll with the punches and always go based on what readers request.

I should say that there is a good chance that we'll be getting a coaching group of some sort off the ground this fall. I initially introduced the idea a few months ago to gauge interest, and the response was quite good to say the least. We'll be working out the logistics over the next few months.

Q27

What are you promoting right now? Any products on the immediate horizon?

I have to say that I'm really excited about [The Ultimate Off-Season Training Manual](#), my first solo information product. It's funny; at the Syracuse seminar, Dave Tate talked about how I had sort of been pigeonholed into the "mobility guy" role in spite of the fact that it might comprise 5% of what I do with the athletes with whom I work. This manual is a taste of a whole lot more of what I have to offer; it's the product of training and observing loads of athletes, and chatting with some of the best coaches in the business on what has worked for them in the trenches. Readers can find out more about



DIESEL CREW INTERVIEW – ERIC CRESSEY

THE DIESEL CREW, LLC
"ACHIEVING BEYOND POTENTIAL"
LEADERS IN GRIP STRENGTH

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the manual at www.UltimateOffSeason.com.

That said, we're still getting a ton of positive feedback on [Magnificent Mobility](#), so I guess being the "mobility guy" isn't that bad!

I'm also in the process of co-authoring two e-books. The first is a joint venture with Kelly Baggett, one of the brightest minds in the industry and someone with whom I've had some great conversations over the years. The second is a project with Julia Ladewski, a really successful powerlifter and performance enhancement coach at the University of Buffalo. Somehow, Julia has managed to fly under the radar in spite of the fact that she has a tremendous amount of coaching and under-the-bar experience to go along with plenty of booksmarts. We both have worked a lot with female athletes of all ages and ability levels, and this e-book will focus on that population.

Mike Robertson and I will also be doing a two-day seminar called "*Building the Efficient Athlete*" in New York City on July 22-23. This is going to be a great opportunity for trainers and lifters who are looking to take their knowledge of applied functional anatomy to the next level. I'll also be speaking in Los Angeles September 16-17 alongside some of the big names in the industry; there will be more information to come.

ERIC CRESSEY

www.EricCressey.com

"Performance and Health on a Whole New Level"

Thanks for taking the time and doing this interview for us Eric, I'll see you in NYC!

Smitty

The Diesel Crew