

István Javorek

[3. September 2022](#)



My name is István Javorek.

This is what I do: Retired university professor and coach

This is what I could teach you, that you cannot learn from a book: To protect and strengthen the health of everyday people with simple dumbbells and callisthenic exercises.

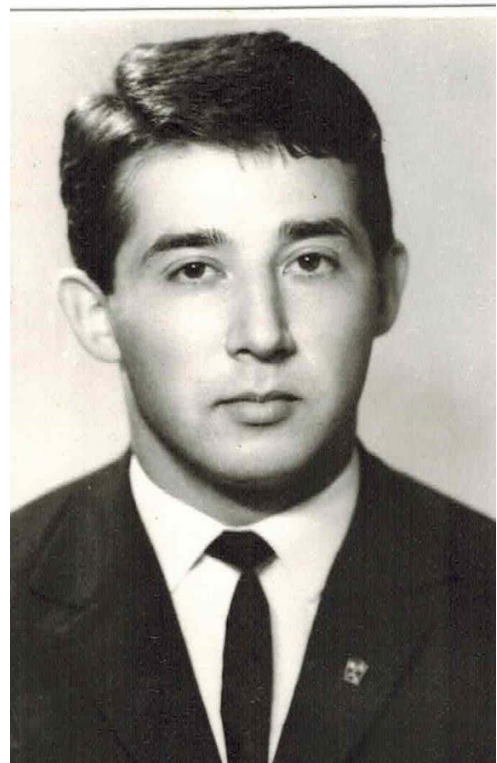
This is what culture means to me: For me, culture means people's reading, basic knowledge of literature, art, sports, and technology.

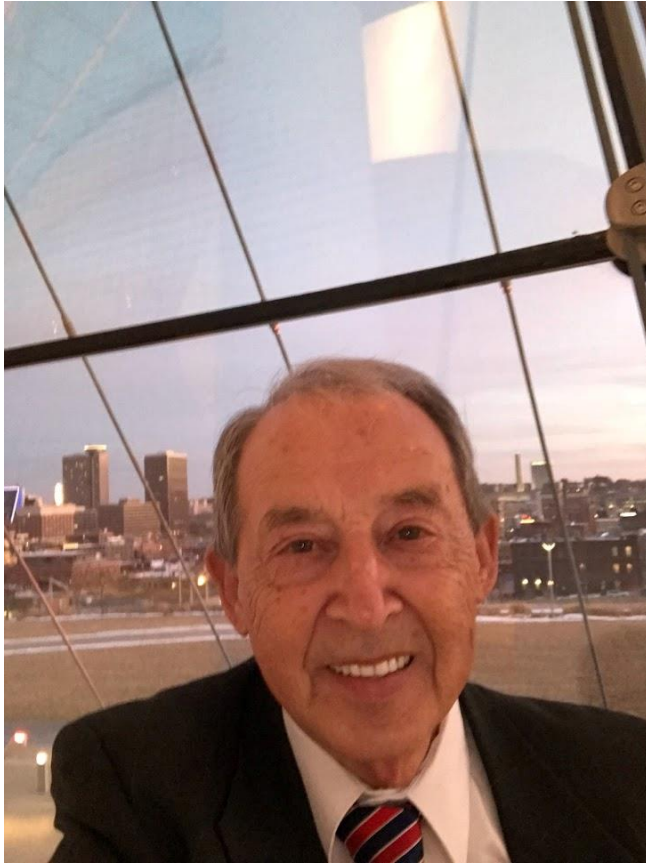
This is how my work reflects my culture/s: My work has been, on the one hand, teaching and training children, students, young people, as well as performance and amateur athletes. On

the other hand, it has been writing more than a hundred scientific articles in many sports magazines and professional journals.

This is my utopia: Through the use of my training methods and classes, I have worked all my life to make the lives of people easier – and this not only for performance athletes, but also for people of average or challenged health and physical ability.

My motto has always been: smile and always say that you love what you are doing. Fill every cell in your body with positive energy!





Quick bits

My favorite book genre: I like classics and I love books about the lives of writers, poets, and composers.

My favorite book: All the poems of Endre Ady and Attila József

My favorite place to read: Alone on the bench of a quiet European cemetery, or in my garden among my flowers.

Where I buy my books: I don't buy books anymore. We have plenty in our home library, in both Hungarian and English.

My favorite museum: I cannot pick just one. I truly enjoy art museums and art galleries in general.

My favorite artist

(painter/sculptor/performance): This is a hard question to answer, but if I had to pick, it would be Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci.

My favorite source/s for news/information/further education: At my age, I feel that my daily browsing on the Internet, watching the news on our local TV stations, and regularly attending theatrical performances, symphonic concerts, ballets, and the opera is quite sufficient.

My favorite dish to eat: Yellow bean soup with cold sour cream and fresh green onions, followed by freshly fried chicken liver with onions, and washed down with a glass of Cabernet Sauvignon.

My favorite outside activity: Walking fifteen thousand steps a day in a nearby park with rolling hills and training in my garden with light weights.

My favorite place in Kansas City: The Nelson–Atkins Museum of Art

An 80-year-old gladiator and his wife

[23. November 2022](#)

Written by István Javorek



As you already know from my introduction, I am István Javorek, a youthful eighty-year-old gladiator. Today, I would like to tell you what's on my mind and what I have been up to lately.

Unfortunately, as it is sometimes the case with elderly gladiators, I recently slipped down the stairs and broke my upper arm. And, if that wasn't bad enough, my dear wife developed a terrible backache that has rendered her completely immobile.

So you see, gladiators have their problems, too. What's important is how we deal with these problems.

As a trainer, I have been active all my

life, so I recover from injuries more easily and get over illnesses faster. Easier and faster, but not without willpower and perseverance! Obviously, as a sportsman, I have always trained on a daily basis. For the time being, unfortunately, my upper body training is very limited due to my injury.

But my legs are fine, and I have no problem walking! While I do my physical therapy and work on regaining movement and strength in my injured arm, I walk eighteen thousand steps every day at a nearby park with lots of rolling hills, and I try to eat healthy.

In my wife's case, because she has been quite inactive for several years, a recovery is considerably more complicated. However, she, too, must try! And if she can do it, believe me, so can you!

Due to the complete or partial seclusion of the two-year pandemic, the population of the world is in dire need of exercise. Each and every one of us should be doing some program of exercises on a regular basis. The exercises have to be easy to perform and should be tailored to everyone's specific needs and time limitations. And this goes especially for the elderly! Only, I don't like to say the elderly, so I refer to my clients in my age group as the Aging Youth.

During our short life on earth, we should take care of our health, our most precious treasure, because the longer we are healthy, the longer we can enjoy the small pleasures of the „Dolce Vita.“

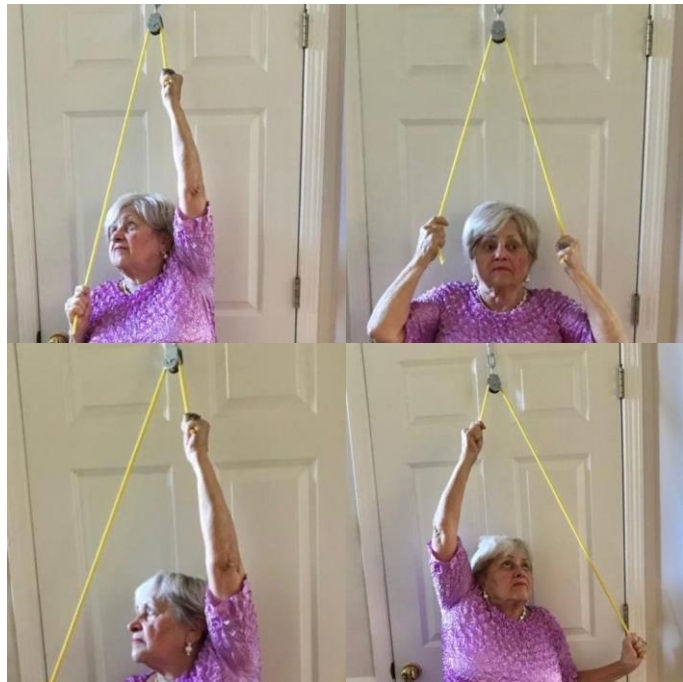
The sad fact is that, unfortunately, most of the time we start exercising only after an illness knocks us out, and, instead of dumbbells, we „press the bed!“ The secret to a long life is movement, action, work done with pleasure, and a balanced lifestyle in which exercise should have a prominent place.

I believe that if your cells are filled with joy, they retain their vitality for longer. I try to remind my clients and athletes every day that crying takes a lot of energy and makes you depressed, while smiling is all you need to feel happy!

So, right now, life has thrown me and my wife a few curve balls. But every morning, we still try to do our best. For my wife, for the moment, this means waking up with a smile on her face, despite the pain she is experiencing. It means having the willpower to go regularly to her physical therapy and believing that tomorrow the pain will be less.

It means taking small steps and celebrating every single achievement – being able to sit, being able to tie her shoes, being able to stand and cook again (one of my wife’s favorite activities)! For me, it means helping my wife as best as I can while not forgetting to take care of myself. It means going out into the sunshine and reconnecting with nature. It means staying as active as I possibly can. But it also means having to accept that my body cannot do what it could when I was not an aging youth, but a young man! And throughout these realizations and efforts, it means staying positive and hopeful and optimistic about the future. So let me hear you all say it: “Yes, I love it!” And that’s what’s on my mind these days. Let’s see what I have to say next month.

In the meantime, let me leave you with these two images of my wife and me exercising. My wife is using a little device I developed to help her stretch. It’s very practical, because she can just put it on one of our doors. As for me, I am outside, in my favorite park near our house.



Coach Pop's Views at the Start of 2023

24. Januar 2023



I. Question Dr. J: It's 2023 ... As you went over into 2023, what were you thankful for and what New Year's resolutions did you make?

Answer István Javorek (aka Coach Pop):

I didn't even notice that a year ended. Ever since the pandemic started, I have been losing track of what day of the week it actually is, even though I am quite busy with daily gardening, other chores around the house, conducting one-on-one training sessions and keeping in touch with my clients over

the Internet. Does time sensitivity decrease after retirement?

The year begins with me being grateful for the fact that, except for a small upper arm bone fracture as well as some joint discomfort related to age and performance sports, I can call myself healthy. Thanks to my 14,000 – 15,000 steps a day, walking fast in a nearby park, and my daily training with light weights, my resting heart rate is now 40 bpm and I have almost kept my body weight. Unfortunately, my muscles have lost some of their former tone and I am six kilograms lighter than my competitive body weight. To look on the positive side, though, I have not gained weight and will be able to keep the same belt for my pants this year as well.

New Year's resolutions are not for me, because I see the new year as a mere continuation of the previous year. For example, I begin 2023, looking forward to continuing an activity I started last year. A little while ago, I started helping Székely (Székely) children from the villages in Hargita County, who have chosen ice hockey as their favorite sport. I have been developing suitable outdoor training plans for them and providing them with all sorts of advice. I have also been mentoring the coaches of the Gyergyószék and



Csikszék Jég-Vi-Har (Jégkorongozó – Rural Hargita) school hockey teams in the area of strength and conditioning. Being able to contribute to the development of rural children from thousands of kilometers away, fills me with overwhelming emotion and gives me an unbelievable sense of satisfaction and joy. I hope this venture will be successful, and I would be very happy if more children from these hidden villages in Hargita County could grow up to become successful ice hockey players.

II. Question Dr. J: *By the time this blog is published, you will have turned 80 years old. How do you feel? How are you better at this age and what has become more difficult?*



How old did you say I was? Good God! My joints will disagree, but the rest of me still feels 28 years old.

All my life I have enjoyed creating something new. I have always carried a small notebook to jot down spontaneous ideas. I still have new ideas to this day. For example, I have been training a 12-year-old boy with some physical disabilities. He motivates me to develop new training plans for him, and I take tremendous pleasure in watching him develop into a healthy athlete. He may not become a world champion, and it is a challenge for me to decide on the most suitable training methods for his particular physical and emotional needs and abilities.

Answer István Javorek (aka Coach Pop):

But to answer your question specifically, I feel better now, in old age, because I have accumulated experience and have only gained in confidence over time.

What is more difficult now? Nothing. I have always been an optimist and have never looked back. I have always believed that there was a solution to every problem. You just needed to analyze the situation thoroughly, believe in your success, and fight relentlessly.

I have always tried to instill a positive attitude towards life in my athletes and my students. I have taught them to consciously choose to laugh and be cheerful, to seize opportunities and to overcome difficult situations.

III. Question Dr. J: *Do you think aging is a hardship or a privilege? How and why?*



Answer István Javorek (aka Coach Pop):

This is not a question I ask myself. As the French say: “C’est la vie,” as in, “That’s life!” I do not consider old age to be an advantage or a disadvantage. It is the natural manifestation of life on earth.

IV. Question Dr. J: *You were a coach all your life. In very general terms, what advice could you give us about working out?*

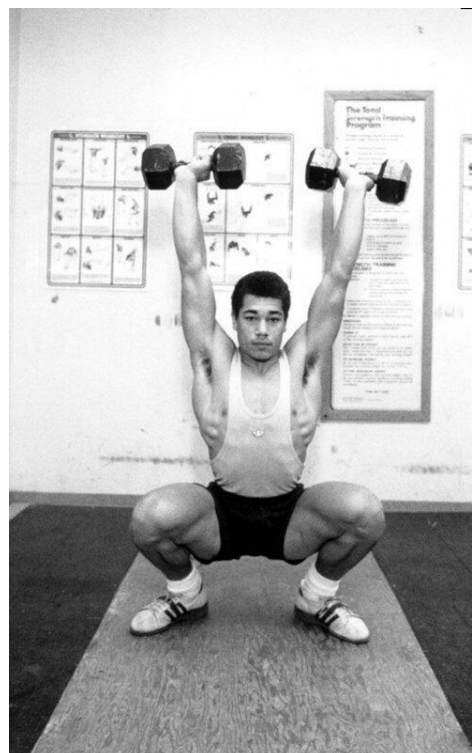
Answer István Javorek (aka Coach Pop):

In sports, as in all areas of life, there are always new methods and new innovations. According to the innovators, the training methods have irrefutable advantages. It is interesting to me that even new variations of thousand-year-old yoga are invented, especially by those so-called experts who tempt naive clients with some sensational exercises. But also, if we look at my field of athletics, weightlifting and all-sports physical fitness training, the sport itself has not changed, only the equipment and the technical implementation.

Today, it is difficult to imagine modern physical training without the huge repertoire of exercise variations made possible by weightlifting (including barbell and dumbbell exercises, calisthenics, etc.).

Dumbbell exercises are my favorite, because they are generally safe, do not require a large practice area, and are easy to teach. They can be done simultaneously and very efficiently with a large number of athletes, the exercises are dynamic and have a large range of motion, and a wide variation of movements is possible. Dumbbell exercises help develop muscle strength, cardiovascular and muscular endurance, flexibility, and general fitness.

Dumbbell exercises should be combined with a variety of plyometrics, ballistics, and stretching-shortening exercises.



V. Question Dr. J: *What are you looking forward to the most in this 80th year of your life?*

Answer István Javorek (aka Coach Pop):

To see the Javorek clan together. To hug my daughter and my grandchildren. And, as I wrote in a poem in the first difficult months of my escape from communism in 1982:



“...Believe, my little darling,
We will be together again next year,
We will have fun and travel the world...”

Written by István Javorek

American Football vs. Rugby

[30. August 2023](#)



Question Dr. J: Could you tell us about your time coaching at Texas A&M? What were you responsible for? What was the most difficult and the most fun? What are some of your fondest memories?

Answer István Javorek: I would like to start by saying that after a rather difficult period of integration into a new society, and after returning from my short coaching experience in South Korea, I started to write and send my resumé out to more than 100 professional sports associations, universities, and private fitness clubs. I got dozens of positive responses like, „Thank you, your resumé is great, but we cannot offer you a position at this time.“ Meanwhile, I was involved with the United States Weightlifting Association, doing training clinics and writing articles for the National Strength and Conditioning Association. The turning point was when I was invited to the University of Texas in Austin and to Texas A&M University in College Station. Both universities invited me for an interview. Both ended up offering me a job, and I got to decide where I would start my career in America.

Austin is a big city, while Bryan-College Station is a combination of two small cities with everything very close to the college campus. Knowing that you and your mother would arrive shortly in the USA, I decided to become a member of the „Texas Aggies,“ and join their fantastic university, so rich in tradition and spirit. I looked for a private school for you, and

ended up enrolling you at Saint Michael's Academy, which was only a 3-minute drive away from the Texas A&M campus.



<https://engineering.tamu.edu/admissions-and-aid/undergraduate-admissions/life-at-texas-am.html>

I took on the position of assistant coach for American football, track coach for the track and field program, and conditioning coach for Olympic sports. At my club in Romania, at the Asociatia Sportiva Clujana, I had worked as a technical director and head coach for weightlifting. I had also volunteered to do the all-sports conditioning for the association. I would like to mention that Eastern European Universities of Physical Education prepare coaches to be able to adapt to the training and conditioning of all Olympic sports, and for all age groups and levels of performance. So, at Texas A&M, only American football and partly baseball were new to me – baseball only partly, because the Romanian national sport is Oina and quite closely resembles baseball.

I bought an American football conditioning book and asked the head coach to let me follow their drills for a month to get a better idea of how it all worked. After a month, I was ready to write new programs and teach the team perfect lifting techniques for weightlifting exercises.

I started training with my track athletes at 6 am, then I drove home so I could take you to school, and then I went back to coaching. Then, in the afternoon, I walked you home from school, but returned right away to the A&M campus to continue training the athletes. Maybe it was stressful, but I truly enjoyed being your father and being a coach at the university. It was hard, but definitely worth it. So, no complaints from me!

I enjoyed working with the football players, as well as men's and women's tennis, men's and women's basketball, women's volleyball, swimming, synchronized swimming, softball,

baseball, full track and field conditioning, and coaching track. I enjoyed talking to all my athletes, telling them jokes, or about why I left Romania. As a coach, you end up talking to your athletes about everything. Coaching is in part mentoring, and getting to know people so you can best decide how to train them in the most efficient and successful way.

Perhaps the annual bonfires are what I remember the most from my time at Texas A&M. These were truly spectacular and really brought in the crowds. There is something very special about thousands of people gathering around a huge fire to sing the same songs, cheer and really be together. I also loved „Yell Practice.“ On the nights before football games, students gathered in the stadium to practice the cheers and battle cries they would use to support their team the next day. In addition to cheerleaders, Texas A&M also has Yell Leaders, young men who lead these organized group cheers. The stadium is always packed with more than forty-five thousand college students! The atmosphere is exhilarating.

Question Dr. J: How did you like coaching the Texas A&M football team? I know you developed very strong bonds, especially to some of the players, and you continue to be in touch with them after almost 40 years. Why do you think this is?

Answer István Javorek: I have always enjoyed getting to know my athletes, and I have always taken great interest in their lives.

I am still in touch with many of them, and it makes me really happy that they still remember me and still want to „talk“ to me. Since I had so many international athletes, I now get Emails and calls not only from within the US, but also from Austria, Finland, Canada, Mexico, Australia, and South Africa.

Honestly, keeping in touch with them and answering their Emails takes a lot of time, but I love it! Especially, when I get compliments like this one, taken from an Email I recently received from Ian James, a Canadian long jumper: “You don’t know how much your mentorship and coaching style positively impacted my life. Thank you! I love sharing the strength and conditioning knowledge you taught me with other fitness enthusiasts and athletes.”

What more could I ask for at age 80?



<https://12thman.com/>

Question Dr. J: At Texas A&M university, you worked as an assistant conditioning coach for the famous Aggies football team. At the same time, you have also been invited to hold several seminars and training programs for the Irish Rugby Federation. How are the two sports different? How are physical requirements on the athletes different? And how do you approach (or did you approach) coaching these two groups differently?

Answer István Javorek: American football and rugby are two completely different sports. Just look at the equipment and the physique of the athletes! The rules of the games are also very distinct. In rugby, for example, you can never pass the ball forward, like in American football, where the offensive team may do so during each down. In rugby, you may only pass the ball sideways or backwards.

On the other hand, the general idea behind the conditioning programs for the two sports is very similar. In the second phase of conditioning, however, the conditioning programs become differentiated and focus on the specificities of the different positions played within each sport. In this second phase, I have to tailor the conditioning program and the types of exercises to the individual needs of each athlete.

Rugby uses nothing but a ball, and maybe some mouth and ear protection. American football, on the other hand uses a whole range of protective gear. You might think that this makes American football „less dangerous,“ but in fact, the extra protective gear just means that tackles can be harder and rules more relaxed, leading in the end to more severe injuries. For example, because there is practically no protective gear in rugby, tackles above the shoulder line are not allowed. In American football, they are allowed, with certain restrictions, of course.

Question Dr. J: Which of these two sports do you enjoy watching the most, American football or rugby? And why? Do you watch Monday Night Football? Are you a fan of the Superbowl? Will you watch the Rugby World Cup in Paris?

Answer István Javorek: As a weightlifting, track and field, and all sports conditioning coach, I enjoy keeping up with all sports. I have tremendous respect and appreciation for the incredibly hard work of all athletes. I particularly enjoy gymnastics, fencing, weightlifting, American football, rugby, tennis, basketball, soccer, volleyball, swimming, baseball, softball, archery, boxing, wrestling, all track and field events, and more.

But to tell you the truth, I am not a big TV sports watcher. I like to watch, or read about the highlights, but I do not sit in front of the TV and watch for hours. If I am coaching a particular team or athlete, then it is different. But then I like to be there live, so I can actually see their reactions, talk to them, etc.

Written by István Javorek

Weightlifting

[8. November 2023](#)



Question Dr. J: Why is weightlifting so important?

Answer István Javorek: In the USA, the public seriously misuses the terms “weightlifting”, “weightlifter”, and “weight training”. These words are used to speak of more general training with weights and machines. Just because someone is exercising with weights, this does not make them a weightlifter. In this case, the person is an athlete who is engaged in a non-competitive form of fitness with weights in order to attain certain personal goals.

Weightlifting, as a competitive Olympic sport, comprises of the Snatch and of the Clean & Jerk lifts. In preparation for these two “lifts” or “events,” a variety of barbells and dumbbells exercises are used, as are other basic fitness and conditioning methods. Olympic weightlifting is a very demanding and dynamic sport. It requires not only strength and explosiveness, but also endurance, speed, and flexibility.

Lifting weights for fitness and conditioning is a must for both general fitness and if you wish to achieve success in performance sports. To select the appropriate exercises, you have to consider the individual’s needs and goals, the facilities that are available, the amount of training time possible or desired, as well, of course, the specifics of whatever sport, health benefit, or hobby you are tackling. Only once an intelligent selection of suitable exercises has been made on this basis, can these exercises be organized into a long-term training program, which then varies exercises, repetitions, sets and intensities according to the specific needs and goals of the individual athlete.

Question Dr. J: What is the difference between Olympic weightlifting, body building, and lifting weights for fitness?

Answer István Javorek: Weightlifting must not be confused with training with weights. Weightlifting, as mentioned before, is an Olympic sport, whereas weight training is a method of fitness, and a way to develop strength. Weight training exercises may include lifting free weights, working with machines, or doing calisthenics exercises.

Powerlifting is the grandchild of Olympic-style weightlifting. It is mainly characterized by the absence of explosive and ballistic movements, since the heavy weights involved prevent this type of action. The main competitive powerlifting exercises are the back squat, the bench press, and the deadlift.

Bodybuilding is another method for fitness and muscular development whose main goals are muscular hypertrophy (big muscles) and general fitness. Bodybuilding typically omits explosive exercises. However, back in Romania, I trained many bodybuilders and successfully included several explosive exercises in their programs. All my bodybuilders possessed harmonious musculature and had a very athletic physical appearance. Next to employing explosive and ballistic movements, which can increase neural drive, soft tissue strength, peak strength, and power, bodybuilding uses many weightlifting exercises and principles, including the scientific periodization of the overall plan of preparation. After all, if one increases peak strength and power, one generally can do more repetitions with heavier loads, which is something that is well known to enhance muscle and connective tissue hypertrophy.

Bodybuilding, or muscle development is called *Kraftsport* (or strength sport) in Germany and *culturisme* (or body culture) in France. I like to call it “body sculpturing.”

Bodybuilding, as a sport, first gained popularity in the United States, but gradually became more popular all around the world. If we put aside the negative stereotypes associated with bodybuilding, we will find that many of the methods of bodybuilding can be useful for the general conditioning of young athletes, and a great addition to any athlete’s year-round conditioning.

The goal of lifting weights for fitness is simply to improve general physical and mental health and to contribute to a positive body image and a healthy lifestyle.

Question Dr. J: Should all athletes lift weights? Why? What about “athletes” like ballet dancers?

Answer István Javorek: Yes, absolutely. You just have to be careful and do it properly.

40 years ago, you couldn’t imagine a basketball player doing conditioning exercises with weights. Today, you cannot imagine it without.

In ballet, exercises with weights contribute to strengthening tendons and ligaments. Barbell exercises can be used to build good posture. For range of motion, dumbbell exercises are more commonly used. Dumbbells can also be used very effectively in cardio programs.

Even musicians, for example, can benefit from lifting weights. They can use weights to correct posture, or to develop the musculature around joints, like the elbows, wrists, and shoulders.

Literally everyone can benefit from training with weights!

Question Dr. J: What are the main health benefits of lifting weights for the general population?

Answer István Javorek: Sports scientists showed a long time ago already that exercising with light weights stimulates growth and contributes to the development of a healthy, well-proportioned body. Kids can start practicing with light weights as early as nine years of age without any negative effects on the musculoskeletal system. What is very important is to respect the regularity of exercising, and to not overload a still physically underdeveloped young body.

With suitable exercise, we can produce as much as a 70% increase in muscle strength, improve physical appearance, and establish strong, proper posture. In this case, we are practicing body sculpting or body building.

Exercising with weights at a young age must always be combined with different dynamic movements and games (running, skiing, swimming, etc.). Working out with light weights at an early age will develop a solid foundation for later, by enhancing neuromuscular coordination, reflexes, posture, and musculature. This will in turn increase the probability of achieving success later on in any given sport.

Physical activity has a stimulating effect on the circulatory, the hormonal, and the nervous system and is important at every age. Physical activity increases heart and lung capacity. It stimulates the vital functions of the body and fortifies the body's immune system. Reflexes, an awareness of the body's orientation in space, and a sense of balance are also developed. Confidence and self-esteem are improved, leading to a more satisfied, healthy, and happy lifestyle.

Fitness and wellness do not necessarily require practicing a sport or achieving any specific performance milestones. Just engaging in some form of regular, age-appropriate strength training that takes into consideration the individual's existing fitness level can help anyone achieve his/her physical and mental goals in life.

Question Dr. J: What are your specific safety suggestions for non-athletes who would like to begin lifting weights?

Answer István Javorek: Let me see if I can give you a few general pointers.

I think the most important thing is to start off really easy. Learn the proper technique for whatever exercise you are going to do. Take the time to make sure you are doing the

exercises correctly. Don't try to do complicated exercises at first, learn just a few of the basics, and add on as you get better and better.

Make a commitment to work out 30-40 minutes two or three times a week. This little workout should include a warm up and some stretching. You can start off by running in place, or simply by walking or running up and down some stair. You can then do some lunges and split jumps, followed by a few general dumbbell exercises. At the end you can do some dynamic and some static stretches.

To find out what weights you should be using, do what is called a 5-rep test. You simply try to figure out what weight you can do the particular exercise with at least 5 times. The 6th time you should really struggle and no longer be able to maintain proper form. You write this weight down for each particular exercise. You then create for yourself a short program with several variations of the exercises. Keep in mind that children and the elderly should work with lower intensity and higher repetitions, while young adults and adults should aim for higher intensity and lower repetitions. So, how does this work?

Remember the weight you wrote down from your 5-rep test. That would be 100% intensity. If you are writing a program for a child or someone over the age of 60 (give or take a few years), you will want to work with lower intensity, so with about 30% – 45% of the 5-rep test weight, and do about 16-20 repetitions. For 70% intensity, which is what you would want to eventually achieve for a young person, you will do only about 10 repetitions. Obviously, with increasing fitness, you also increase intensity. In fact, for performance athletes, you do not do a 5-rep test, but a 1-rep test to determine the 100% intensity weight. This would mean that if lifting the entire weight, they can only perform 1 repetition. But I do not advise using a 1-rep test for anyone who is not a performance athlete, involved in very serious, concentrated training.

One other piece of advice is to avoid monotony. If you only know 12 exercises, switch up the order every time. For example, on Monday do exercises 1, 3, 5, and 7, on Wednesday exercise 2, 4, 6, and 8, and on Friday exercises # 9, 11, 1, and 3. Include all possible conditioning variations in the program: free weights, exercises with medicine balls, stair work, jump boxes, up and down hill activities, other plyometrics exercises, acrobatics, etc. And then, introduce new exercises into your program gradually.

Do not try to copy programs done by known athletes, because you will just end up getting hurt. And remember that you do not want to be a world champion, just a healthy person! It is very important to respect your own physical and psychological capabilities and limitations, and to only implement exercises that you can perform well, and that you feel are important to you.

And maybe the best piece of advice I can give anyone at any age, regardless of what you are doing, always try to smile and think positively, and say, as I always do, "Yes, I love it!"