Foreword

Andrew Shortt ‘Fitness Clinician of the Year’
On The Johnston Rep Method

The Johnston Rep(utation)

To know Brian D. Johnston is to be well aware of his affinity for debate. In fact, anyone familiar with the IART understands how much analytical debate and discussion are encouraged as a means of learning and digesting knowledge. Mr. Johnston is well known for his willingness to argue claims and heavily promotes critical thinking skills.

What may be misconstrued on the surface as obstinacy is actually a hearty zest for pursuing new knowledge but without a watered down “politically correct” approach. What at times may come across as belligerence, when on the receiving end of a heated discourse, is actually pure and undaunted dedication to objectivity. In my experience, Brian poses an almost obsessive curiosity for new information and exhibits an investigative drive like few others.

It is only in the past few years that I have taken on the work of a Fitness Clinician as a serious pursuit. That is, I have been learning and working all my life in and around it but have only recently brought it fully and completely to the forefront of my efforts. This, in the case of Mr. Johnston and the IART, has allowed me a unique perspective.

I have watched for years from the sidelines as Brian has worked with and effectively challenged everyone from the likes of Mike Mentzer to high level Ph.Ds. As well, I have observed his interactions with regular folk, like myself, and hundreds of other exercise enthusiasts over a period of several years.

Oddly enough, for all the talk and gossip that circulates about him, in truth he is a relatively unassuming person to meet. What has become apparent is that he is dedicated, sincere and very hardworking. He is almost entirely devoid of flash or showiness of any type. In fact, if it weren’t for his workaholic like behavior and his engaging attitude I would almost peg him as somewhat dry and boring. Boring in the sense that he appears almost awkward with regards to anything that even hints at being superficial. Not that he is overly self-absorbed or that he takes him self too seriously, just that his obvious passion for Exercise Science, appears to supercede some of the more common human traits. Those of strong conviction are often regarded as supercilious but in this case that moniker really doesn’t apply.
Regardless of credentials or background, I regard Mr. Johnston more than anything as a ‘scientist.’ A scientist in the truest sense, working privately without the influence and distraction of lobbyist style grants and gross peer review based pressure. Unmistakable are his significant contributions to the field but what stands out to me is his complete refusal to rest upon his laurels. Certainly, he promotes his expertise and the fruits of his labors to fund his work, but popularity is clearly low on his priority list. He is a genuinely friendly sort, but ‘back slapping elbow rubbing politics’ seem almost foreign in nature to him. Plainly put, it was his strict but sincere ways that drew me to his organization.

Now at the risk of sounding like little more than a proud student, or worse yet a silly starry-eyed follower, let me make the following clear: At the heart of the IART is the understanding that we all think and operate as individuals. We may share but we are not communal in nature. Each individual is responsible entirely for him or her self in every way and at all times. Plainly put, when discussing my opinions and points of view, I speak for myself, not Brian or the IART per se.

In fact and more to the point, it is with selfish satisfaction that I look back to the beginning of this particular story. One that in many respects starts with my being right where, in a sense, Mr. Johnston was wrong (for a change).

**Hope Floats**

Back in late 2004, I had the enjoyment of sharing a visit with Mr. Johnston. Among other things, he offered me a whirlwind tour of the Bowflex Ultimate® as he knew of my interest in such. I was immediately struck by how thorough and creative he was in regard to uncovering so many possibilities. Brian managed to show me as much in 30 minutes as I had learned on my own in the previous six months that I had owned such a machine. This is where it really hit home how completely absorbed he was in the world of maximizing and optimizing.

Inspired to see and understand things from many new perspectives, I pushed our conversations towards speculation and loose hypotheses. As he usually is very reluctant to participate in guesswork, I took advantage of the private and personal setting. I broached the topic of what may be on the horizon as far as dramatic new “growth stimulating” elements went. That is, not just better, smarter ways to get the same gains or simply what direction experimentation needed to go… what I was looking for was a hint at “the new blitz,” as it were.

Maybe I was just getting caught up in the moment, but I was surprised and somewhat deflated to hear Brian respond by saying he believed that for the most part he may have exhausted all possibilities. That is, there was much to be learned as far as details went but as far as stimulating new muscle growth beyond the levels thus far possible (through advanced techniques), things may have come to an end. He explained how he had reworked variables and learned to make the most of many things in the time since writing *Apex*. He added that new approaches may sustain one’s interest and trickle out a few gains but that, for the most part, things seemed to have dried up.
I stated boldly that it was just a matter of time before he gave birth to something new. I disagreed that he had exhausted all avenues and stated from what I saw that he was, in many ways, just beginning to “hit his stride.” After having learned about and having applied this latest method, I am delighted to know that I was correct in my assessment.

**Happy Coincidence and the Arthur Jones Connection**

As you will see mentioned in Brian’s ‘back story’ on the development of this technique, it was his work with the Bowflex that first started him examining this approach. Now, coincidentally, it was Brian’s interesting review of the Bowflex that finally inspired me to become certified with the IART. I had much distain for the industry and couldn’t visualize an appropriate place from my interest and skills in “the fitness scene.” His thought provoking and creative analysis of this versatile machine peaked my interest. Brian illustrated how with a good combination of creativity and analytical ability, this little machine could have a lot to offer. This rang true because it was founded on the proper understanding of the requirements for productive exercise. That is, one can fiddle about till the cows come home with a new toy or device, but without fulfilling a real need, it amounts to little more than tinkering.

Let me put it this way; Arthur Jones was fond of making statements that contained seemingly disparate points of view and thus frustrated and confounded most of his supposed equals. He would, in all humility, describe his invention of productive exercise machines (not to mention productive intensity levels, etc.) as being the result of two things: First, pure greed for getting what he wanted, which was an effective means to an end, and second, an honest and proper understanding of the requirements for such. He would offer brash bold statements as to his input and influence but in the same breath make one thing clear – as Thomas Edison was quoted saying, "such things were usually 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.” Jones would ruthlessly admonish others for ignoring, misunderstanding and outright lying about the elements required to create or demonstrate proper exercise. Yet, concurrently he was candid about all the failures and accidental nature of his developments. He made it clear that when one commits to the truth it doesn’t necessarily mean the solutions come easy; in many ways you must sacrifice completely all desire for anything like immediate gratification.

What Jones was to exercise equipment and the variable of intensity, Johnston is to exercise prescription and performance. Johnston has collected and analyzed all the various aspects involved in the somewhat complex and diverse subject of physical enhancement. He hasn’t just categorized and prioritized, but pulled it all together in a cohesive manner. A read through his, as Dr. Ellington Darden calls it, “compendium” Exercise Science: Theory and Practice makes it clear that Johnston understands the greater picture. That picture being: How all elements are interdependent and interactive to varying degrees, and it is not only important to know this but to be experienced with understanding it, as well.
It is my not so humble opinion that Johnston has through both inspiration and no small amount of perspiration given birth to a new age of exercise. Not only of a more serious position in the field of general health care, but that of a consummate craftsman, utilizing all tools at our disposal in a skillful and artful way.

It is no surprise to note that I first was introduced to Mr. Johnston and the IART through my interest in the writings of Arthur Jones. It was a recognition of many similarities in their abilities and base personalities that caught my eye. Both shared a dogged determination to understand more of Exercise Science and to let little stand in their ways of this pursuit. Regardless of detractors and copycats, they pushed unapologetically forward on their quests.

As a carpenter or even wood sculpture realizes, the basic substrate with which they create (the tree) requires common elements to be used and considered. However, they also realize that the subtleties of each piece of wood combined with differing parameters of the final product means one must choose the best tools for the job carefully. A little more of this and a bit less of that will and does make a huge difference in the end.

The Johnston Rep Method is another superb tool of which to own and to perfect its use. It is a versatile device that will not only optimize the quality of the final product but maximize the way in which you can use many of the other tools at your disposal, as well.

What is in a Name?

During light conversations about possible labels for the technique, I encouraged the Johnston Rep tag. I did so for two reasons. First, the technique requires some craftsmanship and trying to describe it or even allude to its nature in one or two words seemed trite. More importantly, it was the way in which it was fully discovered and intricately applied that I considered most profound. In true Brian D. Johnston fashion, the technique was born from the desire to push limits, the limits of physical enhancement as well as the limits of tools and equipment. In the years that I have known Mr. Johnston, I have found him to be not only a keen inventor and experimenter but in a fundamental sense he is an explorer. While he remains steadfastly rigorous in study and testing procedure, he has not (like so many in the field) lost his spark for adventure. The development and application of this technique proves once again, we need not become dried out, overly skeptical or dogmatic while remaining objective in our pursuits.

It is his keen sense of observation coupled with a deep desire to unravel truths that I detected when studying the elaboration of this technique. Brian has a knack for dissecting things then rebuilding them better than ever. Moreover, in this case it has lead to the development of something entirely more useful and really quite new.

At the heart of muscular development lies the need to disrupt homeostasis. That is, to force the body to adapt and hopefully to do so in the manner in which you desire.
With a strong understanding of the proper application of variation, Johnston has put himself at the forefront of the study of homeostatic disruption. Whether it is through dramatic but effective alterations in overall demands, or his delightfully diabolic attacks at the heart of rep performance, Johnston has put the “A” in Alarm Reaction! (as per the General Adaptation Syndrome).

As well, to twist a common quote, Brian has proved himself highly adept at seeing what sort of forest exists because of what group of trees. He is proficient at recognizing the important, although sometimes subtle and elusive inter-dependant and inter-influential nature of things. It is in this vain that Johnston Reps combine and balance many of the most important aspects of “muscular growth stimulation,” and to that end I think it entirely is appropriate that the concept be named after its developer.

By Comparison?

I wish to make one last thing abundantly clear: give this technique a complete test drive before passing judgment (and read the book twice before doing so). I have used partials, stutter reps and almost every type of variable imaginable in the past. As well, I have utilized lockouts, let-offs as well as warm-up sets and pre-fatigue pumping to encourage blood engorgement. None, and I repeat “none” of those methods provided anything like what I have witnessed and experienced with the Johnston Rep Method. Give yourself time to apply it properly. Fine tune your weights and think through your choice of movements and how to use them, and you happily will be surprised at the level of effectiveness created by this unassuming technique. In many ways it is a “diamond in the ruff” and a “wolf in sheep’s clothing” all rolled into one.

The Johnston Rep is best considered in the vein of the traditional Blitz approach (as per Apex). It isn’t just a single basic variation… it has plenty of different and distinctive shades of application for you to employ. This technique does for a rep and a set what Blitzing did for a workout and a cycle. Do not underestimate it based on its casual appearance; The Johnston Rep packs an immense punch.

Enjoy,

Regards,
Andrew Shortt, C.F.P., C. D. I.
2004 Fitness Clinician of the Year

NOTE: There is a training variable known as ‘Stage Reps’ which suggests dividing an exercise in thirds, which would work the sticking point first, followed by the second and third easier zones, to accommodate lever advantages and disadvantages of an exercise. This direction is similar to one application of JReps, but the missing aspect with this variable is a method to strategize, breathe and move, and to divide and execute exercises effectively (i.e., halves vs. thirds, and with the inclusion of rest pauses between zones). This is how JReps emerged and developed from a variable and into a method to optimize exercise results.
Rick McCutcheon pushing into the mid-zone on Roman chair squats
Chapter One

Background to
The Johnston Rep (JReps) Method

The Desire for Physical Change

Muscle. It is a factual observation that everyone who exercises wants to look good, although that standard varies from person to person. Nonetheless, even a long distance runner appreciates the sinewy appearance of his or her muscular development… although most exercise enthusiasts prefer a more solid, athletic look than that of a runner. This is not to say that every person wants large muscles (after all, what is large?), but they want enough muscle to look developed… so that others can tell they exercise and are proud of displaying that image.

I have noticed this from every walk of life, and even so-called strength athletes such as Olympic lifters – although the focus is on the lifting of weights and power, few of those athletes would refuse another 10-pounds of muscle and a better look if it did not affect their lifting performances and if they did not have to do anything more in the weight room to achieve the muscle.

Women certainly are no different, including those who don’t want to build so-called ‘large’ muscles. Men want development, and for obvious reasons of masculine dominance and peer respect (and intimidation). But with women, those fragile creatures who are afraid to develop ‘masculine’ muscles, they soon change their tune. With rare exception, when a woman begins to see the shape of her triceps, roundness in her shoulders, sweep of the thighs, and particularly a hint of abs poking through the fat, she is hooked. Perhaps wearing smaller clothing sizes and being more ‘compact’ or ‘tight’ in dimensions is good encouragement to tolerate any added muscle. Such tolerance likely is the case since in today’s world an acceptable look for women ranges from the hourglass or ‘petite-and-slim’ look to the athletic.

Most interesting is how women can be as obsessive about body development as are men. This is apparent if the reader considers the lengths in which female bodybuilders will strive, with the gross amounts of drugs used even at the city and regional levels, let alone the Ms. Olympia. Several years back, when women’s ‘fitness’ competitions were beginning to emerge, to be the answer to the drug situation in bodybuilding, it likely was possible that most of the fitness competitors did not take drugs – or, at least, they were former drug users and were happy to follow the ‘natural’ route.
But like any sport, eventually the fitness ‘models’ wanted an ‘edge’ over their competition, and so they slowly sneak ed in a bit of Winstrol or some other mild drug just to look a bit more muscular and defined than the next person, but not so much so that they looked like ‘bodybuilders.’ However, we can’t escape the slippery slope of competitive sports, and today’s fitness competitors, in the constant pursuit of an added ‘edge’ now look like the female bodybuilders from a few decades ago.

And so, we now have the ‘figure’ competitions, whereby women are judged in bathing suits and high heels, based on their overall symmetry and athletic appearances; the answer for those who do not want to be bodybuilders or fitness competitors. One would think that this type of competition would be drug free, but it is not. Again, the women who compete in this type of contest want a bit of an edge over the others… more shoulder and arm development, and leaner abs are the trademarks for the figure competitor. And I’m not talking about top-level figure contests, but drug use at the lowest, city level.

If drug use is so apparent in ‘figure’ competitions, it should be obvious the importance people (including women) place on using whatever trick is in the book to develop muscle. Unfortunately, few people give much thought about harnessing the power of the mind to train harder and smarter, or the value in proper training methodology. This book is about the latter, although it requires significant concentration and confidence to make the methods contained herein effective. For this reason, I recommend the I.A.R.T. DVD Mind Into Muscle, an instructional video that will help you establish a winning mindset and improved ability to create greater mind control in imagery and productive training, to produce even better results when combined with the details in which I am about to share. And do not underestimate the need for quality mental application with this method, which is so specific and concentrated that you cannot implement The Johnston Rep Method (hereafter referred to as ‘JReps’) as you would full reps, a factor I’ll speak about shortly.

How effective are JReps? I will say this now and repeat it again later: It is no magic pill, nor will it produce a championship physique. I will be discussing the effects and benefits of this lifting method, but here are a few examples of gains that were made in only a few months and with three different people. At the time of writing this report, I have been experimenting with this method on myself, and several others, and more extensively on a male competitive bodybuilder and a female figure competitor.

Twelve weeks drug free, and the bodybuilder is almost as lean as he was in competition, and 16 pounds heavier (and keep in mind that he carb loaded for the contest, which adds weight to the body), for a change from 244 pounds to 260 pounds. Since the contest his arms increased a half-inch and his thighs a half-inch, with noticeable changes in his calves, rear deltoids and abdominals. In many respects, some muscle groups have taken on a different appearance because of the change in development. What is important to note with this case study is that any other bodybuilder would lose size once off the drugs, whereas this person not only maintained his size, but he has increased his size. The pumps he obtains with JReps is so extreme that he cannot tolerate more than 4-5 sets for any big muscle on average before it feels like his skin is about to split!
The figure competitor\(^1\) approached me and looked no different than a Venus swimsuit model (a person who actually did win Venus swimsuit competitions and who had a bit part in the movie *Driven* with Sylvester Stallone and Burt Reynolds). She needed shoulders, abs, arms and legs most notably, and which body parts are the focal points for judging. In three months she looked athletic, although she did have a weight training background that apparently produced almost no gains. Her shoulders and arms looked thick and developed, her abs visible (when not over-consuming her favorite foods, burgers and fries!), and with quadriceps separation. Certainly the increase in intensity of effort under my direction had a bearing on her results, having previously performed less intense, volume training, but I am aware of changes that people make under typical HIT conditions, and her results were much faster. This woman, aged 28, certainly is no genetic anomaly. At 5’2” and 105 pounds soaking wet, she has little potential to develop muscle under ‘normal’ conditions, but in the three months training her, people were amazed at her transformation and questioned what she was doing that was so much different than before.

Now, it could be said that the people I have trained on this method likely would have produced results anyway, since I weaned them off the volume approach and instilled a high-intensity approach. Again, I am aware of what changes are possible under typical HIT conditions, and this is not the same. Moreover, that is why I find my own results compelling in support of this new method. Currently, at age 40, I weigh 198 pounds (morning weight), and I am as lean as when I was 194 pounds at age 35 (which involved a carb deplete/load, with a ‘normal’ weight of 190 pounds). A 4-8 pound gain, depending on how you look at it, may not sound like much, and with only a ¼+ inch difference on arms and thighs (with the same waist measurement), but what I have and continue to experience is fuller looking muscles between workouts, bigger pumps, and an overall better appearance. My physique looks different. Those things may be subjective, but you know as well as I do that there is a disparity between when you look good and when you do not. And when you start looking better than usual, then you know you’re onto something.

The other interesting thing is that although I am a firm believer in constant variation, and implementing different set variables (e.g., 21-method, descending sets, ½ rep method, etc.), I have found JReps to have unusual staying power, in that I have not dropped it from my repertoire for the past several months, and continue to obtain great workouts. I really don’t expect to gain much more from the system, but it did help me to eke out a few more pounds of muscle size at age 40, and it continues to provide me my best workouts ever; a motivational factor that is necessary for another 20+ years of exercise.

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\(^1\) The figure and bodybuilding competitor shown later in this book, Ms. Marie-France Desgroseillers, is a different person; a woman who never has taken drugs, but who has trained with high-intensity methods previously.
Rick McCutcheon pumping out the mid-range on the Hip Belt Squat
General Views on Exercise

Too much emphasis is placed on set and exercise schemes, and not enough emphasis on how the sets and exercises should be performed for optimum effect.

I am no different from most people who exercise, in that I like strong muscles and being healthy, but my prime objective and motivator to exercise is to look good. I enjoy seeing my abdominals, the veins running through my arms, the separation in my quadriceps, and the feel of pumped, firm musculature. It is a mental rush. This obsession has inspired me to experiment with any and all types of training methods, to discover what works best to optimize development. And in that journey I have made some important observations, although they tend to be different from what other people have or will recommend, and likely, from my perspective, because they are looking for the wrong things, or they look at the bigger picture but in the wrong light.

For example, most people think very linearly about exercise, in that they recommend a ‘program’ that often is quite static, such as ‘x’ number of sets for a muscle, or some type of combination, such as 5 sets of 5, or 10 sets of 10. Conversely, I believe that exercise demands need to change, in that there should be times whereby volume and even frequency increase. The time for such an increase would depend on the person, e.g., having the motivation and overall reduced stress levels to undertake a more challenging routine. However, because of recovery limitations, those higher demands need to return to a more tolerable measure eventually and before any signs of overtraining transpire. The book Apex deals with this aspect of long-term training implementation.

Others have claimed that to optimize exercise, one needs to have machines with ‘perfect’ (or, at least, ‘ideal’) force curves. The fact that many well-muscled individuals exist without the use of such machines, whether on steroids or not, should make it apparent that a well-made tool may provide a more efficient, quality-driven workout, but that the more important facet is ‘how’ the tool is used. And this is why free weights or cable exercises can be as effective for developing muscle as what is possible with machines.

And so, what have I determined to be of greatest value in optimizing muscle? Intensity of effort is a given, a factor that I will only address in passing. Fundamentally, even those who do not believe in training to muscular fatigue still are aware of the necessity to train ‘hard enough,’ in that sitting and staring at a weight will not produce muscular change, and neither will dozens of sets of easy, light-weight training. There has to be enough of a load on the muscles, and when the load increases progressively (which is the nature of strength training, in order to enhance strength levels), this ensures that intensity of effort will be high or maximum. And when intensity of effort is high, then the number of sets and frequency will not be very high – cannot be very high so that the stress levels remain within tolerable means and the trainee can recover between workouts.
Hence, there does exist very basic attributes to any proper exercise program when the focus is to enhance muscle and strength. But with those trainees who do train hard, who do put forth every ounce of effort, they oftentimes hit a wall in progress, and will contemplate a change to a sub-fatigue higher volume approach. This works for a number of reasons, such as:

1) A change of pace can produce further progress simply because it is a change, and not because the sub-fatigue higher volume approach is superior (particularly over the long-term);

2) The increase in volume can have a positive effect on muscle pump, which phenomenon does have a positive effect on growth (to be discussed later); and

3) The increase in muscular contractions per workout could have a positive effect on growth (although hypothetical, I believe it to be true).

From my experiences, I noticed that more contractions are better than fewer contractions, such as 10 contractions vs. 5 contractions in a set that would last 60 seconds, for example. The problem is, if your sets last 60 seconds, it is difficult to perform ‘more’ contractions without moving progressively faster, to the point whereby quality of movement decreases (less muscular control and tension, and more momentum and use of stored energy), and the risk of injury increases (for the same reasons). Moreover, eventually any ‘higher-volume’ routine runs out of steam, since intensity of effort still is a primary, and as the trainee attempts to use more weight on the higher-volume routine, it is necessary to employ progressively greater effort. This is true since strength is finite, and the more weight you attempt to use in an exercise, to challenge the muscles in order to make them larger and stronger, the more likely it will be that you will train to fatigue.

But how does one increase muscle pump, the number of contractions per workout (or per unit of time) without moving faster, without increasing the risk of injury, and without implementing a traditional ‘high-volume’ approach to exercise? The answer to this question came to me after I experimented with JReps, but suffice it to say, my ‘accidental’ discovery may not have been so accidental, in that I did observe a few related and quintessential factors in physical development and responses to exercise:

1. In the context of a workout, it is how you use the tool to train the muscle that is most important, i.e., the style of performance.

2. In the context of a routine, there needs to exist constant variety and unique challenges on the muscle, so that the muscle has less an opportunity to adapt to the exercise stimulus, in order to adapt by improving in function and size.

3. In the context of long-term application, exercise demands need to fluctuate, so as to force the muscles to a higher state of function.

\[2\] The use of stretched and compressed tissues to help ‘rebound’ the weight, such as dropping and quickly lifting a barbell in the bench press.
Points 2 and 3 share some commonalities, but they are different. Certainly altering exercise demands is a method of employing variety, but when addressing variety I mean changing the exercises, their order, and how they are performed. On the other hand, fluctuating exercise demands refers to the measure of sets, frequency and set variable integration, i.e., to create greater or lesser burdens on the muscles.

Most of us are in the dark when it comes to altering exercise demands over the long-term, since it can be difficult to determine how much should be performed out of the ordinary. If you find 5 sets for a muscle ideal most of the time, should you try 8 sets and for how long? I can’t answer this for you since it really depends on your ability to tolerate exercise strain, what you are used to, how hard you train, etc. As per the book *Apex*, I have found that an increase of volume by 100% and an increase of frequency of about 50-100% (above normal, tolerable levels) cannot be sustained more than two weeks before needing to return to a ‘usual’ routine – not without incurring negative consequences. With the issue of exercise variety, a regular change-up of exercises and their order often will suffice, together with the odd set variable such as forced repetitions.

The style of performance, however, is the area in which I want to address for this book, since I believe the way in which a person exercises, to optimize each set, which then serves to optimize each workout of a routine, is of primary importance. After all, we need to focus on the small things (the rep) in order to have a proper and positive influence on the big things… from sets, to workouts, to routines, and to the achievement of long-term goals.

But do not misinterpret what I am about to share with you to be a promise of 18-inch arms, or that you will be ‘huge.’ As previously alluded to, hard work is a primary factor no matter how you lift a weight, and so that needs to be in place. Performing an appropriate number of sets, too, is of importance. When you put all those things together, and apply an appropriate lifting style, then you have a winning combination to help you achieve the most that your genetics will allow.

Now, the issue of proper lifting style is in debate, and again people think too linearly. For the most part, recommendations are as follows: ‘lift the weight up and then lower the weight back down.’ Very straight forward. Fewer people will put more thought into the formula, and will recommend slow, controlled movement in order to maintain tension throughout the full range of an exercise. I believe in this latter aspect, in that control and quality of tension/muscular contraction is vital. But I have found further that altering the method of how a weight is lifted, beyond the issues of constant tension and safety tends to have a very positive influence on my muscles, whether to increase their size or to maintain fullness and hardness much better and for longer between workouts.

An example would be the 21-method, whereby 7 repetitions are performed for the first half of the range, followed by 7 repetitions for the other half, and followed by 7 full range repetitions. Of course, this could be called the 15-method if you decide to perform 5-5-5 rather than 7-7-7, but the ‘21’ method has a better ‘blackjack’ ring to it, and the reader likely realizes how emotionally fixated we can be when it comes to the mystique of numbers and the ‘sound’ of a name.
Although altering the manner in which I performed an exercise proved favorable, about 10 years ago I noticed the best effect when I implemented bottom range partials, whereby the ‘stretched’ half of an exercise is performed, and which is one aspect of JReps. I further noticed that some styles of lifting produced a greater pump, such as 1½ reps and those, too, had an influence on the fullness and hardness of my muscles between workouts.

And interestingly, I implemented JReps in early 2005 in order to optimize exercise performance/feel on the Bowflex machine, which I’ll elaborate upon in Chapter 3. It was shortly thereafter that I decided to experiment with this method and then discovered that it works incredibly well with other equipment, from free weights to variable resistance machines, and even body-weight exercises.

What you will experience when implementing JReps is high volume contractions within a low volume of sets. This is what makes the method so effective, in that a great amount of work, blood pumping and muscle fiber activation throughout an exercise’s full range of motion occurs in very brief workouts.

Moreover, JReps allow you to customize each set of any exercise, so that areas that once felt easy can feel very challenging, and that any zone within an exercise’s ROM becomes an effective training zone for optimum growth potential. Because of this, JReps reflect the overload principle better than any other method, in that each zone is overloaded to its optimum capacity, which means stimulating more muscle fibers than traditional training. And the more muscle fibers you stimulate, the greater the resulting muscle pump.

This effect becomes obvious to those who integrate JReps properly and with vigor, as it becomes easier to lift or move everyday items. You see, when you lift or move something heavy, the muscles move a little, but they try to maintain an isometric position as much as possible, since you are stronger isometrically than you are when moving concentrically. Therefore, the body will attempt to maintain an isometric contraction to provide you the best lifting advantage. No one picks up something heavy, such as a box filled with books, and moves the arms up and down while walking with the load. Rather, you hold it close to your center of gravity and maintain the position to the best of your ability, to make the task easier.

JReps involve constant motion, but because the range is concentrated or limited, it better reflects an isometric environment than does full range exercise. And together with greater loading and inroadin of specific muscle fibers within each zone of an exercise movement, the carry-over effect you will experience in everyday activities will be more significant.

Hence, improved strength throughout the entire range of motion of a muscle makes JReps a vital training methodology for the average person, those progressing through injury rehabilitation³, and for competitive athletes.

³ A superior pump has a positive effect on nutrient delivery and pain/inflammation reduction, and painful areas of exercise can be avoided or targeted specifically, as required.