

ADVICE TO COACHES

In selecting men to form a team, it should be borne in mind that Tug-of-War is an exceedingly strenuous exercise and training for it can be very monotonous. The men selected must, therefore, be definitely keen, hard working and cheerful characters. Any man of surly disposition or given to frequent grouching is much better left out of the team as he will have a very bad effect on the others.

The men best suited to Tug-of-War should have, or be able to develop, broad shoulders, thick thighs and legs, and well developed arms, ideally they should be nearly all the same size. Above all, they must have plenty of grit and be prepared to put up with any amount of hard work.

If difficulty is experienced in selecting the heavyweight team, it should be remembered that keenness, strength and stamina are more important than actual weight, and it is better to have eight really good men a little under weight rather than to put in a couple of substitute men to make up the weight.

Dress

During training, old boots may be worn provided they are comfortable and the soles are reasonably good. The general condition of the boot does not matter. For competitions work, however, really sound boots should be worn. They should be "broken in" beforehand.

Boots must not be "faked" in anyway, i.e. the sole, heel and side of heel must be perfectly flush.

Men should be encouraged to change into vests and shorts before doing any rope work. After training, every man should have a good rub down. Always remember that whilst doing training it is reasonable that the men's appearance is of minor importance, providing it is comfortable and essential to his exercise, but it is of major importance at all times during competitions. The whole team must turn out clean and smart. This factor is not only for the best interests of the sport, but also for the morale of the team.

The Rope

The size of a tug-of-war rope is 35 yards (minimum) in length and four to five inches in circumference. The length is immaterial as far as training is concerned, but it is advisable to have a rope of the correct thickness. The rope should be kept as clean as possible and all grit removed from it. Avoid storing the rope near paraffin or acid of any kind. Hang the rope in a reasonably well aired cool place when not in use, never leave it on any floor which may become damp.

No knots or loops may be made in the rope, nor may it be locked across any part of the body of any member of the team. Crossing the rope over itself constitutes a loop. Any act, other than the ordinary grip, which prevents the free movement of the rope, is a lock. The end or Anchor man may grip the rope under the arm and pass it over one shoulder, the remaining slack therefrom must be free.

Hoists and Pulleys

A derrick or gyn is useful during training. The "weight" should be a box or tray filled with scrap iron, so that weight can easily be varied. Wire should be used to connect the "weight" to the tug-of-war rope. The wire should run around the pulley at the top of the derrick, and then round a pulley at the base so that the loop to which the rope is attached is at a height of not more than 18 inches above the ground. A strong, well sited tree frequently makes a satisfactory derrick.

Training

Training for tug-of-war cannot be hurried and great harm can be done physically and morally if the team is overworked at the start. Stamina must be built up gradually, and the training in general should start easily and get increasingly difficult as time goes on. It takes regular, well

planned training to get a team up to a reasonable standard. Many of the best teams have had to be built up over the years. Avoid pressing a new group of trainees beyond their abilities.

It is suggested that the training should be divided into two periods:-

First Period:

Teams should train together, if possible, on at least two occasions each week and never less than once a week. The first month should be devoted to strengthening exercises, roadwork, and mastering the technique of the rope as far as the individual is concerned. The body should be strengthened generally, and particular attention should be paid to developing the abdominal, dorsal and heavy muscles.

Rope climbing, without the use of the legs is a good exercise for the grip and for the heaving muscles. Roadwork will develop legs as well as getting men generally fit. It should consist of walks at 4mph carried out in sweater, trousers and boots - never let men in training get cold. Make a point of walking over heavy ground, e.g. deep sand, ploughed, etc., and over a certain amount of rough ground, in order to strengthen the ankles.

Slow jogging with very occasional short sprints may be included in roadwork. It is also a good policy to give each man a sheet of newspaper to crumble in each hand as he walks along. It is surprising how this will exercise the fingers and develop the grip. A small rubber ball in each hand is also very good for this valuable exercise.

During this first period men should be taught the technique of the correct positions on the rope, and tested three or four at a time on the derrick. (see "Technique").

Throughout the whole of training it is important to weigh men once a week (in the same kit) and keep a chart of their weights. Weight is likely to drop in the first ten days, and may rise slightly afterwards or remain constant. Any sudden drop in weight is a sure indication of "staleness", the bane of every trainer. "Staleness", is best avoided by making the training as varied and enjoyable as possible. Active games of a light-hearted nature should be freely interspersed with more serious work, and training should never be carried out as a fatigue.

Second Period

After the first month it should be possible to arrange the likely team in the order in which they are going to pull on the rope, and from now on the rope work should predominate and should be carried out as a team. Use should still be made of the derrick, but from now on more and more work should be done against live opposition. If necessary, divide your manpower into small teams and run a competition with three or four men in each team.

The position of the team on the rope is usually the shortest man in front, and the tallest and heaviest man as anchor. One can develop the best type of balanced team if all pulling members operate from the same side of the rope; the right side usually considered the best.

From now on the Coach should aim at perfecting the technique of his team. The following section on Technique aims at giving Coaches an idea of the recommended positions to be adopted by a team at various phases of a pull.

Technique

'Take up the Rope' (rope on right side)

Pick up the rope and stand upright, well balanced on both feet, rope well held under the right armpit with the right arm bent and the right hand under the rope. The left arm should be extended with the left hand gripping the rope from the top. The rope should be in a straight line and fairly taut from front to rear, both hands as close together as possible, and the team should not stiffen

themselves in any way. A rigid stance uses up energy that will be required later.

"Take the Strain"

This is the normal pulling position on the rope. Gripping the rope firmly with both hands close together, allow the body to fall back to an angle of about 45 degrees. The correct position here is of the utmost importance, so it will be dealt with in detail.

a) The Feet

The sides of both must be well cut into the ground. It is impossible to push with both feet flat on the ground - a common fault with novices. The feet should not be directly one behind the other, but should be one on each side of the rope and about twelve inches apart. This gives lateral control and prevents swaying about. The feet should be separated about twelve inches from front to rear.

b) The Legs

The leading leg must be perfectly straight. This leg acts as a prop, and the more the opposing team heaves, the more they should pull this leg into the ground, thus increasing its resistance. The rear leg is slightly bent and it is from this leg that the driving power is mainly produced when the heave is made.

c) The Body

The lower part of the body must be kept well up over the rope, and never allowed to sag. The whole body should be in a straight line from the sole of the leading foot on the top of the head. If the body is allowed to sag in the middle, not only is tremendous strain being placed on the back muscles, but any drive from the legs will not be carried through the body and will merely accentuate the sag.

The upper part of the body should be well over the rope, but in no way lying on it. A man can exert his full force only through his centre of gravity, and the idea is always to have the centre of gravity as close as possible to the rope. The rope should be well up into the armpit. Care must be taken that the leading shoulder is not allowed to fall away from the rope and thus prevent a man pulling along the line of the rope.

d) The Hands and Arms

The hands should grip the rope close together with the palms of the hands facing upwards so the leading shoulder can be more easily kept over the rope. The leading arm must be perfectly straight, and the rear arm as straight as possible, consistent with the position of the hand. If the arms are bent the arm and shoulder muscles are cramped, and much energy is being unnecessarily expended.

e) The Head

The head should be kept back in prolongation of the line of the body, and not thrown forward. This gives extra weight on the rope and facilitates breathing.

The Heave

Keeping the strain on the rope, lower the angle of the body to about 34 degrees with the ground and heave by a powerful stretch of the legs and body towards the anchorman. Immediately take advantage of any ground gained by moving the feet back, being careful to keep them close to the ground. There must be no easing up either before or after the heave, as any relaxation will allow the opponents to take the offensive.