

Q&A with Fred Stellabotte

—Rachel Straub, MS, CSCS

1. **You've trained champion bodybuilders who have won 1st place among 500 contestants. What's your secret?**

You are referring to the 1985 San Diego Bodybuilding Open. My most intense training period was when I selected two of my staff members (both of whom had no previous bodybuilding experience) to compete in the San Diego Bodybuilding Open. I trained them for one year, six days a week, 4-6 hours a day. I prescribed what they ate, when they slept and when they awakened. When the two staff members entered the San Diego Bodybuilding Open, Tenaj Milward won 1st and Lisa Schafer won 3rd place among 500 contestants. I was extremely proud of them, because clearly, that was not a reasonable goal for the average person.



**Women's bodybuilding—
Fred's students win 1st and 3rd place, 1985**

2. **You have also trained others who are not professionals. How do you perfect your training for different clients?**

Well it depends on the person. I have been training members of the general public since 1989, when I sold my gyms. The age of my clients ranges from young people in high school to seniors in their late 80s. I have trained both the morbidly obese and those who have an ideal weight. Also, not all my clients have been healthy. Several had surgeries or injuries before coming to me, so I had to carefully adjust my training to meet the needs of each individual. However, what is consistent among all my clients—regardless of body type, age, experience, or past injuries—is proper form and technique using fundamental weight-training moves.

3. **Did you ever compete in bodybuilding competitions?**

No, I never had the time. From 1970 to 1989 I owned and operated my clubs. I was there seven days a week, at least 12 hours a day. I was completely dedicated to ensuring that all my members remained injury-free. A minimum of 800 workouts a day took place at my clubs, and there were over 13,000 members, so this required all my time.

4. **What was your secret to ensuring that all your club members remained injury-free? You couldn't possibly have overseen 800 workouts a day.**

I personally trained each of my staff members in the basic moves of proper weight training. Many of them had had no experience with weights before we started, so all the exercises that my instructors taught and my members performed had been carefully selected by me to ensure safety and best results. I had instructors standing at all four corners of the weight-training floors, vigilantly watching the members to ensure that they executed all the exercises properly. Also, every time a new member joined the club, he or she was assigned a weight-training program tailored to their skill level. Then they would meet with their assigned instructor on a monthly basis to update their programs.

5. **You had 3 clubs—a men's club, a women's club and a tennis club. What was unique about each of them?**

They were formally called the Manhattan Beach Athletic Club for Men, the Manhattan Beach Athletic Club for Women, and the Rancho Verde Racquet Club. The Men's Club and Women's Club were gender specific, and the Tennis Club was open to everyone.

The Women's Club had a pristine weight room with a staff of instructors present at all times to ensure safety for all members, as well as a wide range of amenities that complemented the weight training program. For example, we offered classes in aerobics, yoga and dance and facilities like Olympic-size swimming pools, saunas, steam rooms, whirlpools, sun beds, valet parking, and babysitting. Additional facilities were available on request, such as a full-service beauty salon, massages, a snack bar and a juice bar. The Women's Club even had a tug-of-war team for a while that I personally trained for overall strength.

The Men's Club also had a fully equipped weight room with instructors present at all times, and while some amenities were the same, others were different. It had racquetball courts, a running track, pool tables, saunas, steam rooms and whirlpools, an ice plunge, a full service laundry, and sun beds. We also offered other facilities, like car washes, a cocktail lounge, a snack bar, a juice bar, and massages. The Men's Club also had tug-of-war team that I personally trained for overall strength.

The Tennis Club had 15 lighted tennis courts, an Olympic-size swimming pool, 5 racquetball courts, and a snack bar.



Fred with the Women's Club tug-of-war team, 1982



Fred at his desk at the Women's Club, 1989



Fred at the Men's Club with workout buddies, 1972



Fred at the Tennis Club grand opening, 1976

MEN'S CLUB GAZETTE

MANHATTAN ATHLETIC CLUB *** (213) 545-6618 *** Newsletter For Men

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER EXERCISE

Message from
MAC President
Fred W. Stellabotte

Today, more than ever before, man is aware of the importance of physical exercise. He is stronger, healthier, taller and living longer than his forefathers. Ironically, there remains a vast majority of the American male population who will never really appreciate what regular exercise can do to improve a person's appearance, vitality and even personal attitude.

After watching the rapid growth in popularity of our women's health club, we were convinced that even in the physically active beach area there was a need for a place to go to exercise—for men, too!

So, in 1972 we founded the Manhattan Athletic Club for Men, less than a mile from the women's club in Manhattan Beach, California.

Naturally, we're proud to report that our assumption was correct. Over a period of five years, we have grown into a complete exercise-oriented membership organization for men which caters to a wide variety of people.

Our members range from professional athletes to the average guy who wants to get his blood circulating again—and perhaps lose or gain a few pounds.

There is no age limit or physical barrier for exercise. When a man decides to join the club, he is thoroughly interviewed by one of our instructors. A chart outlining special exercises is prepared to satisfy each individual member's physical needs. The exercise program is periodically adjusted as the member progresses.

We offer one of the best equipped exercise facilities in the Southland area. We also feature the most modern exercise machinery and body building equipment—some custom designed to meet the club's specific requirements.

Many of the men who utilize the equipment in our exercise rooms vary their programs and also participate in either racquetball, handball, or jogging.

There are about one hundred joggers in the club. Some are marathon runners who literally log hundreds of miles each month. Others jog to keep their cardio-respiratory system in tune.

A visit to our steam and sauna rooms, jacuzzi and cold water dip usually follows a good workout.

The club's Health and Nutrition bar is open every day and offers a wide

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HEALTHY ATMOSPHERE—Manhattan Athletic Club president Fred Stellabotte relaxes in the club's spacious exercise gymnasium, which is one of the best equipped facilities of its kind in the Southland area.

Fred at the Men's Club, 1975



Rancho Verde Racquet Club CENTER COURT

28000 S. WESTERN AVE., EASTVIEW, CA. 548-1417

Vol. I



Fred Stellabotte preparing a big one during Grand Opening Day.



Enjoying a break at Open House.

RAFFLE
Congratulations to the following winners of our Grand Opening raffle:
Linda Evans — Vic Braden tennis weekend for two.
Wendy Knobel — tennis racquet.
Bill Harris — tennis racquet.
Linda Maruska — Palm Springs weekend for two.
Linda Egan — Dinner for two.
Maj Britt Bak — Dinner for two.

GRAND OPENING — GREAT SUCCESS
Amid sunny skies and perfect weather conditions, our Grand Opening provided the club with a delightful start.
Along with a delicious buffet luncheon, excellent tournament play, prizes and pleasure tennis, we were pleased that our members had the opportunity to meet each other and enjoy the congenial atmosphere.
Our special thanks to all of the hosts and hostesses who helped to make the day such a success.
We hope that each of you were as pleased as we were with the fine turn-out. We are looking forward to many more parties and activities in the future.



Fred at the Men's Club, 1975

6. How did you learn what proper weight training and improper technique are?

I acquired my knowledge through years of research and self-study. While I was a US Navy SEAL, I spent time in China with monks who were experts in martial arts like aikido. Watching how animals moved, such as the tiger and the White Crane (a pecking bird), the aikido masters created movements that imitated theirs. That experience inspired me to watch and study my own body so that I could better understand human movement.

After I returned home and retired from the Navy SEALs, my career aspiration was to master how the body moved and how muscles functioned so that I could help others achieve superior levels of fitness. To accomplish this, I studied my own body in depth for hours at a time. Specifically, I would stand in front of my home mirrors, carefully moving individual muscles while observing and documenting how each one moved and worked. I also completed extensive coursework in anatomy, kinesiology, and neurology. So, my knowledge stems from a combination of events, experiences, and personal research.

7. For the person who is starting to weight train for the first time, what is your #1 piece of advice?

Always use the correct technique. It is not the exercise that can harm your body, but rather, improper methods. That's why learning from someone who understands the benefits of proper weight training and the danger of incorrect training is crucial.

8. How can someone find a good personal trainer? Today, so many trainers are certified. Does this impress you?

My best advice would be to choose an instructor based on personal recommendations and the instructor's experience. Today, the kinds of certifications that are available seem endless, and they don't all represent adequate knowledge of proper weight training.

9. How do you know Rachel Straub, the co-author of your book?

When Rachel was in high school, she started experiencing chronic knee and back pain. Her doctor recommended that she strengthen her body through proper weight training. Since Rachel's mom was one of my clients, she asked me if I would train her daughter. I consented. When I started training Rachel, she had no idea of what she was doing—to tell the truth, she was one of my worst clients. Everything she did was wrong. But she was exceedingly dedicated so I didn't give up on her, and she soon became my star pupil. When she went to college, she continued to weight train using the programs I had designed for her, and one summer, she served as my intern. Upon her return to college in the fall, she was able to help her advisor, Dr. Eric Grotzinger, cure his frozen shoulder, and he later proclaimed, "You changed my life." After this event, Rachel dedicated herself to learning my methods in depth while simultaneously pursuing graduate studies in the exercise sciences. Eventually, we decided to co-author a book dedicated to teaching proper weight training.