

EP59: Pump No More? The New Rules for Strength Classes with Sam Rider

Will: 02:55

Sam Rider, welcome to the podcast. How are you today?

Sam 02:58

Very good. Thank you.

Will: 02:59

Perfect. So if you're a regular listener to the pod, then you may recognize Sam's voice, because he has been on this before espousing wisdom. But Sam, for anyone that hasn't come across you before, do you want to give a little introduction to yourself and your background in fitness?

Sam 03:14

Yeah, so I've been working with Shift fitness for the last five years or so I would say. It'd be start. Yeah. 20 2016. Yeah. Yeah. Obviously, we're helping with the likes of L1FT and M1ND and SH1FT in terms of creating content. Before that, I worked with yourself, Beachbody as a master trainer, and before that teaching classes and only my own facility, and before that was living in London as an instructor and a personal trainer and an athlete at the same kind of time.

Will: 03:49

Yeah, you know, I was actually thinking about this question when I was running through kind of the plan of the show. And I realized that you and I have now known each other for a decade almost and my first introduction to you was at the Beachbody Master Trainer UK audition, where you've been out the night before, I think you turned up, turned up at the master trainer audition. I didn't actually know you're super hungover. I just thought you're grumpy. So I got one thing, right? It's funny, because obviously, today we're going to be talking about the new rules of strength training and group fitness and how everything's changed. But I just remembered that on that very first day, you were on one because you've been to a training for body pump. And they've been talking about occlusion training in the biceps track. And you were very offended as someone that believes strength and conditioning protocols about the fact that, we'll get to this later but you realize not occlusion training. It's not occlusion training, can't be, can't be. We're going to talk about why that's the case later. But I thought that was a nice little anecdote. Sam has really cared about the scientific terms that we use in Group Fitness from the start. So we're going to do a deep dive into that now. So why don't we just jump straight into it? What I wanted to bring you on about because I know it's a specialist topic and you're what would you probably choose for your mastermind, is strength training, and the science behind it, and particularly why strength training in a group fitness scenario has always been something that is more difficult to achieve, but that we're getting closer to now. So let's just get started, why don't you explain for the listeners who are obviously instructors, what the challenges are for delivering true strength training in a group fitness format. So historically, what are the things that have stopped us from being able to train like we do in the weights room?

Sam 05:30

Well, looking at traditional strength training, what most people will regard traditional strength training is like a multiple sets of three to four sets, 8, 10 reps, 12 reps, whatever it may be with up to two minutes rest in between a set. So that straightaway try and apply that traditional form of strength training in a group X environment is difficult, because of the time you know, having to stick two minutes in for a recovery is not impossibly not going to get as much of a workout in a group x format. And then also, you've got the load side of things. So when we're looking at the loads we're going to be using in strength training, we're looking at near maximal loads for certain sessions and trying to achieve that with, you know, studio equipment is going to be pretty hard. They're the main, the main ones, I would say.

Will: 06:15

So when talking about loads, I'm obviously going to the magic word of the day, which is hypertrophy. But what's what's the issue about the loads in terms of what you can say you're trying to achieve with strength training versus when you do it in a studio?

Sam 06:28

Well, the first set of strength of a strength program is important to the first strength first set, you'll probably use about 8% of the total muscle fibers that you're looking to recruit. And the load that we're going to be using, we're looking at most, most strength training programs looking at a minimum around 70% of that max 70% of your max load being used on a bar on a machine, you know, you're gonna be able to achieve that in a group format, per se. But then, you've also got the neuromuscular demands of it as well. So if we're lifting those kinds of weights as well, you've got the neuromuscular disease demands of the movement, which is basically obvious if I'm going to squat the the demands of doing a squat, able to stabilize and balance whilst doing squat are gonna be heightened as well. And then you've got the risk of injury. So the risk of injury is also another constraint you've got.

Will: 07:15

Right, when you're training in the gym, you've got the racks, and potentially someone supporting you, and you're not having to rack the bar and then put it up over your head in studio full of other people. Right. So we've talked about that and the risk of interest in injury, when when we're talking about load, why is load important for strength training, let's take it right back to basic first principles.

Sam 07:36

So for there are two types of hypertrophy or hypertrophy, depending on you say it, so you've got sycoplasmic, and you've got myofibrillar, I don't want to go too much into the difference of them. But they're both going to require an element of load, one will require more volume. But both of them require an element of heavy resistance to achieve hypertrophy. So hypertrophy, we're looking to add as much muscle mass as we can. That's the term and that's that's achieved greater with a with a load. So you can add, it's not I'm not saying you can't add muscle mass, or you can't increase hypertrophy by doing cardio, because you can. But if you've been training, if you don't, that's probably more if you're a novice, if you've been training for quite a while you're looking to add a more, you're gonna need a significant amount of load to do that, because that is the fundamental thing for adding muscle mass is the load.

Will: 08:24

So what's a laypersons definition of hypertrophy? If anyone doesn't know doesn't, like I'm assuming that most people are instructors so they do, but just in case, just in case they need to refresh, how would you describe it?

Sam 08:38

We focus on hypertrophy, which focuses on the development of your muscles, you focus on increasing the size of the muscle fibers developing the large muscles in the areas that you need to work on the most. But yes, it's focusing on developing on muscle size, that's what hypertrophy is.

Will: 08:53

Right? So muscle size equals strength equals higher metabolism equals stronger bones. I'm trying to simplify it down.

Sam 09:02

Yes, simplifying it, yes, because obviously, the more muscle mass we have, the more we're going to be able to obviously, the more weight we're going to be able to lift, the more calories we're going to burn, like you've just said, at rest. So your basal metabolic rate your BMI will be will be higher as well, because of that, but like I said, there are two different types of hypertrophy. So if you look at powerlifter, and a bodybuilder, a bodybuilder will have more or more sarcoplasmic, whereas a powerlifter would be more myofibrillar hypertrophy, because they're looking at the actual strength of a fiber rather than they both will increase in size, but sarcoplasmic will be more in terms of muscle mass. I don't confuse people too much but hypertrophy in general is yeah, increasing the size of the muscle fiber itself.

Will: 09:48

Okay, perfect. So we're going to put a pin in that and roll back to it when we talk about some of the new styles of Gryffindors training that is coming in that uses different techniques to try and focus on that a little bit more. But right now we're going to roll it right back and talk a little bit about sort of the history of strength training, or types of strength training and the grip fitness studio. And we're going to start with something that you and I both taught which is Body Pump. Originally Pump from New Zealand, obviously, where I am too, it's been part of my understanding of what a gym is right since the start, Les Mills has a huge brand in New Zealand. And so I think as long as I've known what a gym is, I've known what pump is. It's obviously been around for a number of years, it's been copied by lots of different companies, but that classic old barbell class where you do a set process of a warm up, squat, chest back, that's been around for a long time and it's what a lot of people would know when it comes to studio fitness. Do you want to take us through a little bit of your your history of pump and then what your thoughts are with regards to pump and how that can impact what we were just talking about in terms of strength training, what are your thoughts give me everything?

Sam 10:58

So I've taught pump for quite a few years I can't even remember the release that I actually started on, but...But yeah, pump pump was great. And it's a great program you know, it's done. It's done wonders for the industry. Like you said, it's brought men into the into the studio as well, you know, you didn't see as many men. I started teaching, I used to teach aerobics, Aqua, circuits, Pilates, and I didn't teach any any Les Mills programs at the time. And most of my classes were for the women. And as soon as I went into a pump class, I did notice that it was bringing more and more men in as did circuits but but more so because it what you did it had that barbell there. So it was seen as you know, a little bit more masculine in a sense. But yes, it was a great program. It's, it's changed over the years, it's just tried to evolve a

little bit. But going back to what we said earlier, being able to use a sufficient amount of load for the for the timeframe that they use my problems with the programs and the problems, the only worries I have is things like the squat track, you know, you're doing five, six minutes of squats with the bar, is that really strength? Like I said earlier, it could be for a novice, you are going to do it an element of strength. But in order for progression, if you're going to be every release is going to be another five minutes squat track doesn't matter how many times you keep changing that tempo, you're still doing five minutes with very little recovery very, very little variations as well, like, a squat, a wide squat, back to a squat, back to a wide squat.

Will: 12:32

This is this is where this is where I'll start by saying this. This podcast is going to talk about the new rules for strength training. But it is not a podcast, it's going to be critical of Body Pump. Because I think the body pump is a fantastic workout for the people that do it. I just think like now now that the science of exercise has progressed, and also the things that people do in a gym has progressed a long way from where we were in the 1990s. We're going to talk a little bit more about that later in the introduction of CrossFit and boutique and how that's impacted sort of the average person's fitness experience. When I looked at Body Pump, the more I got out of the Les Mills zone and saw other types of training, the more I realized that it was a really great class for cardio strength. Heart fitness is always really, really good. But the thing that I would give it a criticism for is that it's always the same, it's just the same stimulus. And I would see people in classes. And this is not to suggest that I'm not a big believer in doing something that you enjoy regularly to keep yourself fit and healthy. But if you're wanting to go into a class for change, or to develop strength, there comes a point when that's just no longer going to happen. Because you cannot put more weight on after a certain point because the bars don't allow it. And it's not safe. And it's just the same every time. That's my big criticism of Body Pump is that it's just the same workout with different music. And you may like that, yeah, many people do. But I got really bored of it really fast.

Sam 13:55

Yeah. And that's the confining, you're confined to that, you know, it's to the beat in which is which has its pros and has its cons to the beat. It's great because you are trying to ensure that people are moving in a safe tempo or an effective tempo. Because if we did just do a circuit class or conditioning class and says right, we're going to do a set of squats here, people could go off at different rates, does allow people to do a certain number of reps with good form, however, is a little bit too long. And when it comes into the fast pace of the music, you could argue that it's a little bit too quick, if all that's needed is just a little bit more variation in them or creativity and looking at other ways of stimulating.

Will: 14:33

Well, it's interesting actually because as as people that listen to this might have known this is something that Les Mills obviously realized as a company too, because they bring out a new format, which they've called strength development, which implies that potentially Body Pump is not the best approach to strength development, which funnily enough is very similar in that it's exactly the same length and exactly the same style of training as L1FT. Not going to suggest that Les Mills has copied us Sam, I'm just going to say that when the market leader, when the market leader does exactly the same thing as you've been doing for a few years, it's always a good sign. But let's get off that topic for the time being. What I would like to do is to think about and talk a little bit about how the average person's fitness experience has changed to bring in more strength. And I guess this is something that you will have

experienced because obviously, you had a strength conditioning box. How long ago was that when you had that was to middle of middle of the teens?

Sam 15:28

Yeah, I had that for seven years, seven, eight years started off in a very small facility. And then we grew into a very, very large too large, in fact, because I ended up having to close because it became too too stressful, I had like 12 trainers at the height of its performance. We had like a physio room, a yoga studio, we had gym memberships classes we used to sublet and yeah, it was it was crazy. But it was great. It was a fantastic experience and enjoyed it immensely. But yeah, the, the, the main thing about that, the great thing about having my gym like that, and, and seeing was the different types of people that were coming in to use the gym and get into, you know, weight training, or strength and conditioning type training in the sessions that we did people that I would, would never normally seen commercial gyms coming in and doing it and using kit I've never used before as well.

Will: 16:16

Yeah, I was still teaching, I was still teaching programs, Les Mills programs, Beachbody programs and commercial gyms and like say most of my classes, I would say majority them were women. And as soon as I had my own gym when I was doing my own classes, which was incorporating more weight training, and then still have cardio, but we were using lots of kit. Yeah, there was a pretty much a 50/50 split of of men and women coming in. But even pre that really I suppose when you said you said CrossFit the boutique gyms, the F45s, you know, one rebels and whatnot. But the initial one for me, I used to teach at a circuit class in London. You know, when I left, I left London what 2009, 2010. And my circuit class were pretty much a 50/50 split. And it just wasn't, circuit classes have been around for a very, very long time. I've been teaching circuits for 20 odd years, but just the market in with CrossFit and the market around F45 and his boutique gyms... I think there was really a time I think in the mid sort of 2010 to 2020. I mean, maybe it's slightly earlier, but you really did see a change. Whereas you and I've been going to the gym, I've been going to the gym since like 1998 when I was about when I was sort of like teenager, and you had your cardio classes and your cardio equipment, and you had your bodybuilding area, and someone like me would use both. But there are a lot of people that used one or the other, you had sort of guys that will go in and they do their warmup, and then they'd hit the they'd hit the weights room. And then you might have ladies and this is obviously overgeneralizing, but it was pretty accurate for you know, the state of the industry in 2000, the ladies who would come in and they'd use the cardio equipment, or they'd do a class. And then what happened with the introduction of a couple of really, really famous brands, so we're gonna talk about P90X, I'm going to talk about CrossFit, was that the type of person that that would use the gym, and will or I should say, what the average person was doing started to sort of mix in around the middle, right. And with the introduction of CrossFit and p90x or p90x is obviously very famous Beachbody DVD, which was strength training at home. It was essentially a class, but it was using, you know, pull ups, pull up bars, heavyweights, and then you also had CrossFit which was bringing the aspects of Olympic lifting and gymnastics into small box facilities. So when we talk about big box, we're talking about changes. And we're talking about small box, we're talking about independent operators, or CrossFit boxes. And then you started to have guys doing classes. So guys coming along, and working out in the small groups or medium groups, and doing a set workout just like a group fitness workout might have been, but not to the music, using music as motivation, but doing it to a set workout pattern. And then you had woman who had previously been maybe doing the more classic type of group fitness class that was exercise to music working to the beat, they were also coming in and doing the strength kind of class and the whole, the whole window of what a group fitness class could be started to change. What are your thoughts on what are your

thoughts on that? How did you find that, because you were working in a in a chain, teaching classes and also running classes in your own box around the time I'm talking about. I was just about to say that I didn't mention F45. But that's that's another one that's really that really did just take off like, like a SoulCycle style on it just becomes a brand that everybody's heard of, because it's always in the news. And let's be honest, F45, although, recently, they've they've like hit the skids a little bit when it comes to the way they've structured their corporate operation. But basically F45 was just a circuit class, like we would set up a circuit class in my like first years working in a gym back in 1999 2000 circuit class, but instead of demoing all the exercises, there was a video. Great, like a circuit class is still probably my favorite style of training if I want to, if I want to go in, work hard, leave, feel like I've done a mix of everything circuit class, perfect for me.

Sam 20:10

All that's happened is they've just lost the name circuit. Everything else, if you look at I'm not going to take CrossFit is circuit, but it's not far off. I was teaching, I was teaching circuit classes where I'd go, okay, okay, we're gonna do X amount of moves for X amount of reps for X amount of time. Did I say it was an AMRAP? No. Did I say it was an EMOM? No. But yeah, that's what we did. And did we use kettlebells? Yeah. Did we use weights? Yeah. Did we use other bits of kit? Yeah, we did. We used as much as we could. In the sports world, there's loads going on, right. And up and down. We're dragging stuff, pulling stuff, carrying stuff. And that was well, before CrossFit was at its height.

Will: 20:46

You know what it was, is that like, circuit classes got a certain, a certain style associated with the name. And you know, that gym chain Curves, again, we're like, we're kind of talking about the industry as a whole. But curves was a ladies only gym, that would run super classes, like every hour on the hour, I think. And you could basically go in and you could either choose to work out by yourself, or you could, they had a circuit of like, 12 exercises

Sam 21:12

And they had like a light system as well. Green, Go. Red, Stop. And it was a lot of machines.

Will: 21:17

Yeah, it was, it was machine training, I think like it was one of those one of the really, really early forms of a very, very successful franchise, where you'd go in, it was ladies only gym, you'd have 12, I might be getting this wrong, but like, for all intents and purposes, you'd have a whole lot of machines. And then you go from machine to machine, and it would be circuit style training, so intervals working and intervals resting and moving on to the next machine. And I think people started to associate circuits, which are a fantastic style of training. As I said, it's absolutely my favorite with this, this thing that they had in their head of a thing that was done at a gym like curbs, when really a circuit a circuit is literally just a set of different exercises that you are doing in a specific type of protocol that you're trainer will give to you.

Sam 22:03

And like said, equipment, so like any any gym could hold a circuit class, but not every gym could be a CrossFit gym, or F45 gym, or you know, and that's the thing, it's the equipment. So, you know, we could do a bodyweight circuit and still call the class circuits. And that's where the changes come all these other boutique gyms have come in in the last CrossFit have come in have just made circuits sexy, really.

Will: 22:24

The first ever class I taught was Les Mills, back in the day, had a format called body circuit. And it was basically if you wanted to teach body attack, which is what I really wanted to do at the time, you had to start with teaching body circuit and body circuit was 30 seconds of doing high impact exercise and then a buzzer or might have been 45. I can't remember if 30 or 45 seconds in the center. So you'd be doing like high knee runs but a bit a 32 count version of of a high intensity move. So for example, high knee runs, double, double, double, double, and then the buzzer go and you go to the outside, and there will be that weight circuit. So there'd be like a pec deck and a hamstring curl and a leg press. And you would do people could do double center, which is just like the equivalent of doing Barry's double floor or they could do double outside. And you would just go high intensity intervals on the center. And then you go out and you do you do weights on the outside, and then the class would last for about 45 minutes. My absolute favorite class...George Clark used to teach a Saturday morning body circuit and you'd have like 100 people there'd be 50 people in the middle and 50 people around the outside and then it would switch over. It was awesome.

Sam 23:35

No, I was gonna say my favorite class is exactly the same. I used to teach in where I'm from in new and I trained them athletics track within the stadium, and there was a sports hall there and I started teaching classes there. And I started to have a class I think I used to get that for my first I was like 10 people would show up here and there. And I finished when I moved up here, I used to get anywhere between 70 to 100, 110 two or three times a week. And it was it was amazing. We used to use the running track. It was fantastic. Use all military circuits, partner circuits, rep circuits, time, it was fantastic. And yeah.

Will: 24:09

So for anyone that's listening to this, who doesn't have a good understanding of what CrossFit is, and we talked about it already, you just want to give your give what what is CrossFit for someone that's never tried CrossFit? I'm assuming that a lot of people listening to this have but just in case they haven't.

Sam 24:23

Crossfit usually incorporate an Olympic lifts, an element of kettlebells, and it's grown over time, they start to add more sort of disciplines a sort of, I've seen a lot more strongman sort of being thrown in there from you know, carrying stuff and pushing stuff, the gymnastics element, and then you've got the you've got the rowing that they do and they've got the air bikes that they use. So it's forever growing. I think I think that continued to continue to evolve with CrossFit. But I don't think I think Greg Glassman is even involved anymore, is he?

Will: 24:52

No, no, not after a bad tweet during the pandemic took him down.

Sam 24:59

But yeah, but that when was it, the late 90s when it was when it was created, but then in terms of being mainstream when it is, I suppose its biggest rise probably what 2010 I want to say, and then with the CrossFit Games growing over the years become more and more popular. And like you said, it's both men and women into into gyms who who are feeling like they're getting a great workout for for the time that you know and being in they've got some you know, they've got some really credible boxes around

the world. You know, some great CrossFit gyms about but just like any industry, you've got good and bad with it.

Will: 25:37

I guess. So we're talking about, but putting a pin in exactly where we are talking about we're talking kind of mid 2000s. So 2013 to 2016. This is also the it's been around for a while. This is the basic rise of the boutique. So this is when Barry's also, Barry's really also rose to prominence and became something that you know, the Kardashians were doing and featured on TV. What's like Barry's boot camp for anyone that doesn't know, it's obviously extending out now and they've got a few more modalities. But for the longest time, it was a very, very successful gym that did one type of class, which was treadmill and dumbbells on the floor. Yeah, it would do a seven day or seven day format, where Monday will be upper body Tuesday will be lower body Wednesday will be core and then the body on the weekend. And the basic thing is you go in you'd, you'd either warm up on the treadmill or on the floor, and then you'd switch into your warm up. And then you'd have maybe three more sets where you'd be sprinting on the treadmill for five minutes in intervals. And then you'd be doing different exercises on the floor and intervals. So essentially circuit class with a treadmill and some dumbbells. Am I wrong?

Sam 26:43

Exactly what but like you said, yeah, there's and then this is this...Blaze has been created as well. David Lloyd of Blaze, which is basically Barry's Bootcamp but with some punch bags, so it's like...

Will: 26:54

Yeah, and Les Mills actually back in Auckland they have I think that ceremony and conquer I think they've got a boxing Barry's workout and they've got a running Barry's workout. So for anyone that's done boutique fitness, the the thing I think that we're trying to pull in here is that boutique really did see what was happening in terms of women and guys who had previously been doing separate most mostly this we're generalizing here, so so don't don't come at me for for generalizing, because I know that it doesn't apply to anyone. But boutiques really saw an opportunity to elevate an experience that both men and woman could do. And some boutiques are still a bit more female focus on boutiques and CrossFit gyms might still be a little bit more male focused, but you started to get a lot more integration around the middle of what both men and women wanted from a fitness class. And that was kind of sorry, you go.

Sam 27:51

Yeah, I was gonna say you've also got a viewpoint of I'd mentioned like, the then got the hybrid of those. So those independent gyms have sort of come along and sort of looked at CrossFit looked at boutique fitness and going, Oh, we're gonna go somewhere in between that and create our own brand. And we can franchise that brand out as well, you know, the Foundry's, the gym you've trained in, they're well known in London, there's another one Marshawn, which is another one which has branched out, and then those guys, they sell like, they're very forced to, to other gyms not to, to do exactly what they do, but sort of teach them how to do what they do in terms of the business and marketing side of it, as well as the, the, the format of the program as well. But when you look at it, you think, Oh, is that a CrossFit gym? Or no, it's not? But then all they're doing is they're creating their own protocol, or they're creating their own method. This is exactly what I did. I had my own, I didn't I didn't, I didn't, I didn't really franchise it out. I had a brand and my class was there. And it wasn't CrossFit. But we use lots of kit that Crossfit would use, because it was there to do.

Will: 28:54

No, no, no, no, this is why why I invited you on to talk about this. Okay, so we've kind of set the scene. And this is the this is the situation that we found ourselves in, in sort of 2016, 2017 when you and I were working on the on the creative side of what SH1FT Fitness was going to become. So we started with a bodyweight training format. And the key thing about that was different about that is that every workout was different. As you might have heard at the start, I decided that if we were going to do something, we already had Les Mills doing Les Mills, which was great new music every quarter, but the same workout every time with a few little differences around the edges, no shade on that, but it's not what I wanted to do. Masa are already copying them. There's other companies that are or group power ar already copying them. So why copy the best version of something. Why not create something different, which is what we did with SH1FT. So we had the bodyweight format for a couple of years and then we decided that we wanted to bring in a strength and conditioning format. Now we've already talked about we've already talked about the fact that strength and conditioning and a group fitness scenario is difficult, but our instructors work group fitness instructors who are predominantly teaching in studios And they might have been teaching on their own out in the community. But the thing they they had that was the same struggle that exists in the group in the studio is they were using group fitness equipment. So we wanted to create L1FT, which was a strength conditioning class that delivered on the promise of creating strength and conditioning in the individuals that were doing it. But that was able to be done in a group in the setting. So Sam, maybe you can take us through some of the thought processes around how we came about creating L1FT, which is now up to its, I think, 26th iteration?

Sam 30:32

Yeah, yeah. So like you said the equipment was was constrained. But we wanted to try and create something where we could utilize both a barbell and dumbbell. So it was looking at looking at how could we make it strength conditioning, when we haven't got a sufficient load? What are the different types of protocols and methodologies that we can use to still create a stimulus that's going to improve strength and conditioning within the body? So we've used various different protocols, from your basic multiple sets to your supersets to trisets, we've...

Will: 31:04

Wind it back, wind it back, wind it back. So when you talk about multiple types of protocols, what do you what are you meaning when you talk about a protocol, in a strength and conditioning, in its context of a strength conditioning class?

Sam 31:14

Well, I think I think you've mentioned it before, like functional people used to use the term functional hypertrophy, they used to have like, sort of traditional strength training, which was seen as using just gym machines, or free weights in like a multiple set that we mentioned earlier. So three sets of 10, or whatnot. And then you sort of had this belief in functional hypertrophy, where people would use more kettlebells and bands and, and stability balls or weighted balls, and there was something that they would see that was more functional. However, I don't believe that there's functional and that there's traditional strength, I believe in strength.

Will: 31:51

All the strength is functional and all functional is strength.

Sam 31:54

Exactly. So, and that's the thing. So people say, oh, well, you know, the chest press isn't functional. Am I pushing? Yeah, I'm still pushing. Is it the same as a push up, but it's very similar, I could argue it's safer, it's gonna keep moving a certain plane of motion. And a certain, you know, the line of force is going to remain constant, I'm gonna have less chance of injuring myself. And if I've got an older client wanting to use that machine, then obviously, it's going to be safe and functional for them to do if they're having to push the door, pull a door, and so on. And so everything is functional, it just depends on what it is and how it's used. Right? So yeah, so to split them up, I thought was a bit unfair. So it's trying to merge them both together really, and sort of go like any form of weight training is functional, even traditional weight training. But let's see how we can actually get a different, how we can add, we can, we can look at structuring the workouts in that sense of creating more stimulus. So coming up with different methodologies to use.

Will: 32:51

Yeah, and actually, we had a little bit of a trial run at this. So as I said, at the start, Sam was one of the master trainers that work with me when we were at Beachbody, and in towards the end of or towards the middle of Beachbody live which obviously no longer exists. A lot of people listening to this will have been Beachbody live instructors. In about the second year that I was at Beachbody, we decided as a company that we needed to pivot, so Beachbody had released p90x first as a certification format. But they released it as a personal trainer certification format. So basically, personal trainers could come they could get p90x certified, and then they will be doing very, very well written and good workouts. But they will be programming those workouts in kind of in place of what they were doing already. It was a great, great format, great program. But no one was really signing up to it. And we had 1000s of instructors doing turbo kick and 1000s of instructors doing piyo and 1000s of instructors doing Insanity. And so we were deciding how we were going to move it as a team and I was really big on turning p90x into a group fitness format. And I won't name any names. But I will say that I got massive pushback from the trainers who were already teaching the personal trainer version for the basis that you cannot replicate what we did in p90x in a group fitness format. And my answer was, you're absolutely right, not trying to replace it, what we're going to do is we're going to use the principles and we're going to shake those principles up and twist it into something that we can do in the group fitness studio. And we created p90x Live, which Sam helped me with some of the creative stuff. And obviously people that were working in the team at Beachbody live at the time. And we created what I thought was a really, really great format. It was split up into four sections, there was a cardio section, a core section, and upper body section and a lower body section. And each time each release, those sections would follow a different protocol. And that was a science based way of training. And when I was looking for what those protocols would be, I was taking inspiration from CrossFit. So it might be an EMOM or an AMRAP. And we're going to talk a little bit more about that later. But it was bringing in the terminology that you might use in a class like a CrossFit class or in a p90x workout and then figuring out how we could make that work for a lower load in a group fitness studio. And I think we did pretty well. Unfortunately, p90x no longer exists. But I kind of took what we had learned with that process of the p90x group fitness class, and applied it to what we do at SH1FT Fitness, which is releasing a new workout with a new focus every time and maybe Sam, you can pick up on some of the on some of the focuses that we have in L1FT and why we've chosen them.

Sam 35:31

Yeah, and like, like you said, going back to what you've said as well, I think I think that that sort of thing where a lot of personal trainers would turn around and say, you can't replicate this in a group session is

mainly because they've never been to a group session where it has kind of been replicated and they just feel like the whole ego of like, oh you can't do what I do. And you can't give good coaching in a in a group format with so many people. Well, believe it or not, I could probably do it better than you do with one client.

Will: 35:59

You know what, this is a funny time because this is also before Beachbody had obviously been doing fitness videos for ages. But this is around the time when Les Mills were pivoting to Les Mills on demand and Les Mills virtual. And if you're a levels instructor has been teaching for a number of years, you would realize that the biggest part of a lesson was training was the CRC process connect recommend commend. So it was giving live technique feedback. And it was basically like the reason that you can't do video versions of these workouts because you can't correct people's technique. And as we've all learned, if you're a good instructor that understands how to instruct, you can pre correct everything with your delivery video. And the other thing that I have to say that we've all realized, now that I've been saying for a long time as made, that ship has sailed, like people are going to do these classes in a group format. Look at how successful CrossFit is. People are going to create digital fitness. You can either get on the boat, or you can stay on the shore, but if you stay on the shore, you're not coming with the industry.

Sam 36:54

Exactly. But getting back to what you're saying about what we do, so we've had different releases. So you mentioned EMOMS, you've mentioned AMRAPs, we've had them in there. We've had supersets we've had essentially, we have added centric sessions or negatives where we've gone through looking at the tempo of the reps...

Will: 37:13

So how do we achieve these, if these are things that you normally do with a in a class that has the option of heavier load, how do you go about programming it so that we can achieve that in the group fitness scenario?

Sam 37:25

So that's the thing. So most people don't even use these protocols in their gym strength training routine. So like we've talked about traditional strength training set out, it's traditionally a multiple set, and how things progressed. And now there's so much more you can be doing that people aren't doing that in the gym environment. It's not, they're just not I go to the gym regularly still. I go in and everybody, 99% of people are still doing multiple sets. It's very rare. You see anybody doing a superset, it's very rare you see anybody looking at eccentric sessions or, or GVT, German volume training, we've even we're even looking at stuff like that, that we can be trying into group format. So why not put it in a group format with okay, we haven't got near maximal loads, but why not stick in a group format? It's never been done before. Why not put it in?

Will: 38:09

I just realized that we probably didn't talk about one of the most important things to talk about, which is the biggest difference between strength training in group settings now and what it used to be is that we're not moving to the music. The music is there as a motivator, but we are doing timed intervals or program based intervals. And because we're not moving to the music, we have the opportunity to focus more on the time under tension...

Sam 38:33

Exactly. So optimal optimal time, for example, or not, we mentioned hypertrophy, earlier optimal hypertrophy times we're looking around, I think studies indicate, 40 to 70 seconds. So you look at a lot of our L1FT programs that we've got, they are around about that 40 second time for just one set. Or if we're superset and tricep, and then we're going well beyond the full area, and we're hitting that 72nd round. And so that's why we're programming it in that fashion. So we're getting those optimal time periods. And then we can like you say, because we're not constrained to work into the beat, we can really focus and zone in on the technique of each move that we're doing. And that's the difference between what we spoke about earlier, the traditional Body Pump class and also the other form of circuit classes is that we're taking a bit more time and zoning on how to perform the exercise coach that coach the move. We're also looking at the tempo and the rep ranges that we're using.

Will: 39:23

Exactly. So focusing on you know, building the movement up over time getting more complex with each rep, but it's okay because we have wrist and work periods and you're an instructor you can really take the time to coach what the next move is during the rest period. And also explain explain what they are, right?

Sam 39:41

Yeah, and we've the recovery periods have been we're being clever with those in the audit selection as well as move so I don't want to keep referring back the body pump but like doing doing one body part for each block. Like your workouts are very, very different. Yeah, we might do a little bit of an upper body section or a locally section but it will be split between doing chest, back, biceps, triceps, shoulders, you know so...

Will: 40:06

Sorry to kind, of but, would I just want to ask you, do you like, I still do the bro split on occasion. Just because I like, it's a novel workout for me because I do a lot of functional training. But what's the downside of just doing one muscle group for five minutes and then moving on, like, just for people that are listening to this, and they're wondering why you would say that?

Sam 40:25

Well, you're not going to be the five minutes to, you're referring to body pump?

Will: 40:30

Yeah, like I'm saying, what's the downside of doing chest for five minutes, squats for five minutes, back for five minutes. What's the downside of doing that?

Sam 40:38

We've already spoken, injury, mainly is the main one, the neuromuscular demands of doing most of these movements, if you

Will: 40:44

If you put a heavy enough weight to challenge you, you're holding it for that long, it's really hard to to have the same form at the end that you had at the start, right? So you know, you have to drop your weights to maintain your form, meaning that you don't create the change and the hypertrophy that you

could have created in the same five minutes. Yeah. When we get a bit about that, actually, could you talk about neuromuscular load and I think that that's something I want to draw out for the people listening. So why is it better in five minutes to do three heavy sets with wrist and then to do one, five minutes, it just explained that for the listeners.

Sam 41:14

Just to force output, so you're going to be able to, you're going to be able to get more effective reps out with that recovery, you need that recovery time, hence why in L1FT we will, we'll do our upper body session where we will do a certain, say we're doing a chest and back move. And then we'll follow that up with maybe a buy in try and move, but will average rest between that chest and back move before we do that with a bi a tri move. So that then once we come back round again to the star, we've had sufficient amount of rest from finishing the chest and back move to come back around to it again. Does that make sense? So yeah, totally, we're not, we're not continuously hitting the same muscle group over and over again. Because we need more rest.

Will: 41:51

They can't recover. And if you don't get the adequate recovery, you can't challenge it with load or volume. And that's what we essentially want to do, right? We're not able to challenge as much with load as you can in a weight room scenario. So we're challenging with volume. And if you're challenging with volume, then you're going to blow out and need to recovery. And if you're just holding on to the weight for five minutes without stopping, you can't lift as heavy as you could lift and you're not going to get the you're not going to get the gains that you could have got otherwise, either string volume.

Sam 42:20

Yeah, and your volume is key as well. So when you mentioned hypertrophy earlier, that, yes, we need an adequate amount of load. But if you look at the weight, I don't want to say we want to train like a bodybuilder, but bodybuilders would do a high amount of volume to hit that they weren't necessarily the strongest guys in the room, but they will hit a lot of volume. And so that's the that's what we can mimic in a group fitness format.

Will: 42:40

What does volume mean in this setting?

Sam 42:42

Well, reps and sets and loads. So reps, sets, and load is volume. So the combination of those three is your is your volume. So yeah, and that's why we can we can't achieve that in a group x format. Yeah, we can't get submaximal loads. But you can get a pretty decent amount of load. Depending on what you've got, you know, in the gym, you still can get pretty close, and we've got a look at who it is. Okay, I might not be able to get submaximal. But there's a certain number of people my classes that can, they are using a weight that's like, like, take Daniel, for example, my partner, she will get in the gym as she she probably could squat, what 50, 60 kilos maxing out. So 70% of her max is achievable on the studio, but she's a fit, young woman. So we can we can achieve that in the group x format. Okay, the big strong guys might not be able to get really close to it. But we're not far off. You know, we're not we're not we're not a million miles away. And yeah.

Will: 43:38

So there's there's only one thing I want to talk about a little bit more, which is how we vary it up. So as I said, as a as a company, as shifting as we are really big on every workout that we release being completely different to the workout we did before. There's a reason for that. Sam, could you just outline why we don't want to do the same style of workout each time we work out? Like what's the purpose for challenging it up with with a new style every, say, three to four weeks or within your training style.

Sam 44:07

I'm coming of up to what I think this is 20 years I've been teaching now. And the common thing for me when I was teaching programs that were the same for a three month period, or, you know, sometimes, a long time that that people wanted something more varied, they were getting bored. So, the main reason was boredom. We wanted to create something that's, you know, that's going to is going to stimulate people, because people would come into my class and we'll oh, we're going to do, we're gonna do a different release. We're gonna do a different exercise this week. But oh no, we're sticking to the same thing now. And that's what we could create. We could create something that could be interchangeable, but the variety as well. A lot of these programs are sort of stuck in using only one type of exercise for a body part or two or three and there's so many with free weights...

Will: 44:49

The thing about the studio scenario and this is, again, no criticism on our studio barbell class, but if you've got the weight on your back squats, you can do front squats, you can do back squats, but that's about it right? Like you'll be putting the bar down if you're in a busy class, that's, that's a safety risk.

Sam 45:06

Yeah. And but then it's like there's so many other things you were doing unilateral movements. So we can do, yeah, we can do a stepping lunge, you can do a split squat, which is actually a bilateral movement. But you know, there's so many variations, we could do a forward stepping lines, we could do a backward stepping onto the sideline, we do Romanian deadlifts, we can do single leg, Romanian deadlifts, there's so many different variations of these, we can do them, okay, we could add a step we could have it, we could have a plate, and we could do a deficit lunge, and so on. And this is a lot more that can be done that wasn't being done.

Will: 45:37

Aside from keeping people interested, which integrate fitness setting, is absolutely key. You want to be entertaining and getting people to come back. But why is novelty important from an exercise science perspective.

Sam 45:47

Well if you do the same thing over and over again, expecting a different result, then you're crazy, right? Was it Einstein who said that, doing the same thing?

Will: 45:55

Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. Yes, but let's break that down. So what? Tell me, what happens? If I go to the gym, and I do the same workout three times a week, every week, for the year, what happens to my body over the course of that year?

Sam 46:11

If you're increasing, if you're if you are progressively overloading so if you are doing an actual programs, most people aren't...if you are increasing loads, if you are manipulating your rep ranges, your sets your weight, and your recovery, then yeah, you will make an improvement. But most people aren't. Now in a group x format, there are, I suppose, or there might be a group x format, we've looked at doing it the way we could try and periodize the same workout over the X amount of weeks and months and slowly increase the load, but it'd be down to the participant tracking what they do.

Will: 46:40

Exactly. Like it's great to do when you're a PT, right, like doing small group or one on one, everybody has their piece of paper, you're coaching them. But in a group fitness scenario where people are sometimes they're sometimes not. It's a different group every time, it's just really difficult to do.

Sam 46:53

Yeah, so that's the only that's the only real benefit to PTs, are that they constructed that mezzo cycle for you. But the whole reason why we've got the varied program with L1FT, we believe is that we're trying to create that change. That's that different progression of stimulus. These workouts are so varied that they're going to challenge you in a different way that you haven't been challenged before and that's the beauty of it.

Will: 47:16

Because if you want to keep your body, if you want to keep your body fit, then you either have to challenge it with like time under tension, load, or a different type of exercise that's going to activate different muscles in a slightly different way. Right?

Sam 47:30

Yeah. And then obviously, you can look at recovery periods as well. But yeah, it's like the one we're looking at the minute. I don't know if I'm allowed to say things...

Will: 47:40

We program like a good six to 12 months in advance. So even if they listen to this podcast, they're not going to get the workout for a while.

Sam 47:45

So we've got one that's now got one coming up is going to focus more on eccentrics, we touched on it a little bit on an earlier releases, but this one is going to really be like focusing on the time under tension. So we're going to be actually looking at controlling the the eccentric portion of the move, and then we're going to throw in some inspired PAP, we're going to find a little bit of PAP work. So pap is a post activation potentiation. So it's used traditional strength coaches for a specific movement. So be it like an explicit normally explosive movement. So it's normally for use for an athlete that was going to improve like a throw, so maybe a pitcher or somebody sprint improving vertical jump. And what they would do is they would use the submaximal loads for low reps, followed up by an explosive movement. So say you did like a heavy loaded squat. And then you did a jump squat. But like we're talking submaximal loads. So in L1FT, we're going to use the inspiration of that in one of our workouts, which is going to create something a little bit different for believers want to call it that was that was pretty tough to an explosive move after doing that, that pretty heavy squat that I've done now, I've never done that before. And that's we're going to look to do, it's not going to be exactly the same as PAP, it is going to be something that's inspired towards it.

Will: 48:57

Right. And this is the bit where we circle back to the criticism that I got when I wanted to change p90x to a studio class, which is you can't do that in a studio. And the answer to that I say is yeah, you might not be able to do it exactly the same as you would in the weight room. But you can you can take the principle, take the science take the idea of what's behind it and why we're doing the work, right. Like as you can hear, if you listen to this podcast, we put a lot of thought into how do we make each of our L1FT workouts really different to what came before really different to what we've done before but still really conscious of principles of strength training, and how we can bring them into fitness.

Sam 49:32

I'd like to say I'd like to say one thing like, little things we've put in...I remember when we put in a B stance, RDL which is a single leg RDL we put that in a long, long time ago, there was another program I saw such a basic moves. Such a basic move. For some reason I didn't see so I was like, well, I'm going to throw them in there. Then I'm going to superset that with a lunge. Like for whatever reason it was like okay, now all sudden I'm seeing Single Leg RDLs everywhere. I'm even seeing like top strength coaches putting on their posts about It single leg RDLs, it's crazy. The variations of isolation exercises we've been using from our lunge position concentration curls, you know how your shoulder moves we've been doing. We've been doing like, Y raises and T raises and we've been doing why YTW raises we've been doing all these different variations are slowly starting to creep in and other programs. So we must be doing something right.

Will: 50:23

Well this is this is the sign. Imitation is the best form of flattery, Sam. Sam always sends me screenshots of when he sees a move that he definitely knows he made up, or that he created.

Sam 50:35

I didn't make up a move. But it's it's that there's other ways I used to get really fired up, I know that there...

Will: 50:38

Oh no, there are certain moves that we've put in L1FT, because we've been focusing on L1FT and making sure that we create, like we bring new moves to every work. And we've been doing this since 2018. And I'm starting to see them creep into other programs. And I and I know that these people are my friends on social media, so I know they see it. So I take it as a sign of a sign of approval. They're on the right track. L1FT is our most popular format we have 1000s of instructors teaching it...

Sam 51:00

Yes. The some of the moves that I said I used to think when I used to teach body pump for example. I used to think, why aren't they throw in the preacher curl or...? And that used to get to me if it was why doesn't someone just just just throw it in like it's there to be used? Like there's so much more you can use. And then.

Will: 51:15

They are doing that a bit more on Body Pump now that people are criticizing it right because they think that they're getting too Trixie?

Sam 51:22

Yeah, they're thinking, oh, what's going on? This isn't this is what I'm used to doing. And that's the only reason they're moaning because it's something different people are creatures of habit, and they love doing the same thing over and over again. But then you can take any move and you can tweak it and you can you can, you know there's it's it's achievable, it's hard because we're only using gravity in the load, if we had cables and stuff, you know, even more more. That's that's pretty much impossible in a group format, maybe something to think about...

Will: 51:48

Next up, the next up is L1FT Cable. So that kind of brings us to we've talked, we've talked about everything that I kind of wanted to talk about, I guess the only last thing I want to say is like what like what, what overall is the benefit of doing strength training for years and years, like we at SH1FT Fitness and definitely in the fitness industry as a whole, when this is coming out, the Beachbody just made some big news that they're dropping the name Beachbody, which they've been thinking about doing for about 10 years, and they're changing to body, which is Beachbody on demand and direct interactive, I think and the view that they want to focus less on before and afters and more on how you feel, which again, is something that I feel sounds quite familiar from SH1FT Fitness' brand values for the last six years. But given that that's the way the industry is going. What's the point in doing strength training as you age, what's the value in it?

Sam 52:38

Well, if anybody knows me, or has heard me talk before, I have coined the phrase moving is great and moving better is great. And if we can do that with more loads, then even better still. As we age, you know, you've we've got people talk about sarcopenia. So, which is obviously age related muscle mass, I remembering you saying it back...

Will: 52:59

So sarcopenia is the loss of muscle mass as you age, we're recording this just after World Menopause Day. Menopause causes a real speed up of sarcopenia. But it also happens in men as well as your testosterone declines decade after decade, men lose on average 10% of their muscle mass each decade after 30, so I'm well into that category now.

Sam 53:20

Yeah, but then you've also got, I think the rate of, of sarcopenia in a typical person is something like 1 to 2% every year after the age of 35. If so, when you 35, it says that one, and then I think when you get to 60, then accelerates by about 3% every year.

Will: 53:35

Yeah, and loss of muscle mass obviously means that your metabolism slows down. So you put on weight easier that you're generally less fit that your muscles overall, including the muscles that support your joints are strong and less able to like help you in a fall.

Sam 53:49

Exactly. And then if we look at not just the muscles, the tendons and the ligaments, so doing all this weight training isn't just strengthening the muscles and try and ensure that we hold a certain amount, I suppose. It's also the strength and efficiency of the tendons and the ligaments that support those joints along with the muscles that support those joints and allow those joints to move. And that's the key. If we

want to continue to move well as we age, then we need to keep moving. But also challenge it a little bit with a little bit of additional load. We're not talking about going crazy in our 60s and 70s, lifting submaximal loads, but we're doing the likes of L1FT, which is using has modifications for using a barbell using a dumbbell using your body weight, we're going to be able to achieve that and that's the key. You know, I just want to be able to, you know, lift up my grandkids one day be able to put lift them up, take them to the park, get them on and off, you know, seesaw and so on. That's what I'm gonna want to do when I get to 60, 70, and you know, as well as be able to just do what I can do now day to day and get up a flight of stairs and walk, walk around the shops, whatever it may be, I want to be I want to be able to be fit for life and, and weight training is the key to that and it's you know, easily achieved with us. You're still going to get that cardio element from lifting weights depending on your lift them and we've got L1FT, we have L1FT workouts that do that as well, which are gonna raise the heart rate and, and work you cardiovascularly, as well.

Will: 55:07

Sweet. So I think that's pretty much it, we've covered all of it the new rules for strength training, I guess to boil it down, it's exercise to music is out and exercise to science is in. But that doesn't mean that you have to give up your body pump class, you can still do that. But maybe just mix it up with some with some L1FT. And you'll be getting some new science protocols that are coming at you every month and the ability to, to focus a little bit more on on hypertrophy through intervals rather than rather than moving to music, which is not a bad thing. I'm a big fan of moving the music. I just think that if you do the same thing every year, a year in year out, you're gonna stop feeling the change and feeling the change is important.

Sam 55:47

Exactly, exactly. And then just go back to what you said to body pump, body pump is great also for coaching. So if you if you look at fundamentals of coaching and movement, it's been great for that, you know, it's been awesome in terms of safe, effective movement as a basis but then it's like, how do we how do we progress this? How do we add, how do we start adding more to this and and increasing it right and adding more strength and conditioning. We've been there.

Will: 56:13

Yeah, for sure. Thanks very much, Sam. I will be chatting to you again. See ya!

Sam 56:18

See ya later.

Will: 56:20

Thank you for listening. If you're enjoying the show, don't forget to subscribe for all the latest episodes wherever you get your podcasts. And while you're there, please drop us a review. You can also get in touch with me at will@sh1ftfitness.com. I'm Will Brereton and you've been listening to Group Fitness Real Talk.