

STARTIN' OUT

*A special section
dedicated to the
beginning lifter*

CHALK AND POWDER

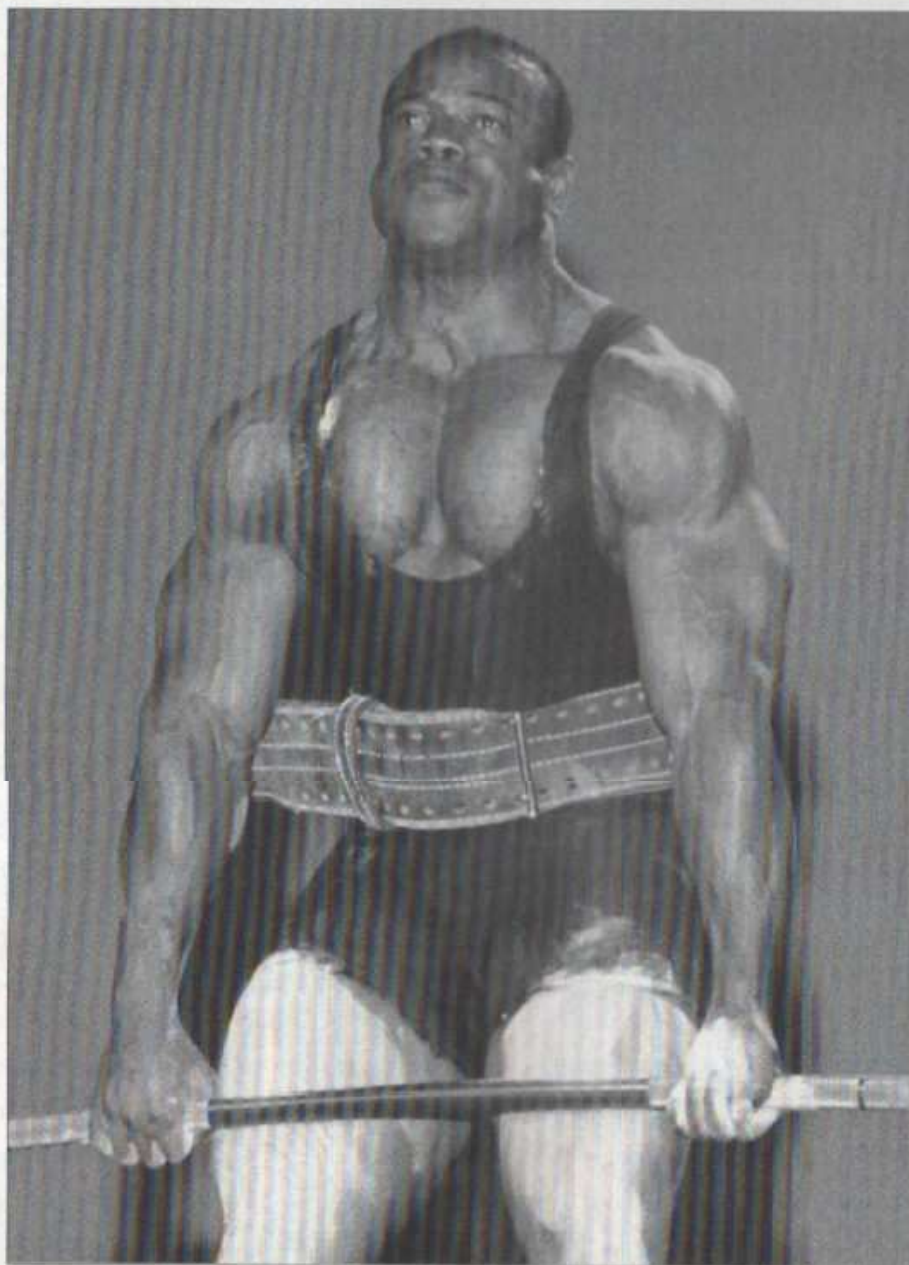
as told to Powerlifting USA by Doug Daniels

Controlling friction is a highly overlooked and underestimated aspect of the sport of powerlifting. Harnessing when and where friction should be either increased or decreased can make a huge impact in your results in both training and in competition. The two main tools to harness friction are chalk and powder. In a nutshell; use of chalk increases friction, while the use of powder decreases it. Knowing the when, where, and how is the key.

First, let's start with chalk talk. Again, chalk is used to increase friction or resistance. Spreading chalk on the palms of your hands improves grip due to the increased resistance that causes the bar to drag a bit more on the skin. This is especially valuable for the deadlift where grip can be more than half the battle for some lifters. Spreading chalk on your hands can also be used for the squat or bench for a more confident grip. It can also be spread on a lifter's back for the squat. This will help prevent the bar from rolling down during the lift. Similarly, chalk can also be spread across a lifter's back, shoulders and butt prior to the bench press to reduce sliding on the bench while bench pressing. As you can see, chalk can make its mark on all 3 powerlifts. Not to be overlooked is chalk's contribution to a lifter's confidence and psyche. Applying that chalk to your hands, etc., is usually the last action taken prior an attempt.

Baby powder or talc has the opposite effect of chalk. Baby powder is spread on a lifter's thighs and shins for the deadlift to help the bar slide up to lockout. Here, resistance or friction must be reduced. Be very careful as to not get any powder on your hands which could compromise your grip and could cause you to drop the bar. The best way to apply powder is to squeeze it from the container direct on your thighs and shins while being careful not to get any on your hands. Next, turn the container upside down and use it to spread the powder evenly over your thighs and shins. Apply powder just before putting your belt prior to taking your deadlift attempt.

Powder can also be used to ease getting on your bench shirt



Chalk and Powder ... when properly applied, can be instrumental in a limit deadlift attempt, like this one by a very muscular Arnold Coleman in WPO competition.

and squat suit. Apply some powder to your body, and then put our shirt or squat suit on. It absorbs some of the sweat and helps the gear slide on your body with less effort. Getting that tight gear on can really sap your energy, so every bit of energy saves helps. Spreading a little inside your lifting shoes can also help combat foot odor. Remember to wipe off any powder residue from

your hands after applying the powder. Perhaps a training partner or coach can help with the application.

Use a little a common sense and courtesy when using chalk and powder. First, bring your own stash. While many meets supply chalk, over the course of the meet, they tend to get used up, broken or borrowed by other lifters. You can

order chalk blocks from ads in this magazine. Bring at least 2 chalk blocks and store them in a Tupperware-like container. Toss them in your gym bag before you leave for the contest. I would keep one in your car as a spare and the keep other out of sight from other lifters or your stash will quickly disappear. Baby powder is seldom supplied at meets, so purchase some in a squeezable container.

Over the course of a meet, chalk may accumulate on the knurling of the power bar from other lifters. If too much accumulates, the bar will become hard to grip. If you see this, request the spotters brush the chalk residue off the bar before your attempt. Chalk and powder can also accumulate on the lifting platform, which can create a safety hazard for both you and the loaders and spotters. If the platform gets messy, ask the spotters to wipe the platform before your attempt. Courtesy and a little common sense come into play. Apply chalk and powder off the platform; everyone will be better off if you set the right example.

Controlling and harnessing friction is critical to achieve optimal results in training and competition. Use friction as a tool to your advantage like you would a squat suit or lifting belt. My tips and suggestions are all common sense and require little or no expense of energy and in some most actually save energy. They also apply to lifters of all levels and persuasions. Don't underestimate any aspect of powerlifting,

least among them chalk and powder.

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