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On Swedish Bar Exercise

By *Takashi Morishita**

In 1913, the Swedish bars were first indicated in the school gymnastic curriculum in Japan, and it was the first time that the Swedish bar exercise was ever introduced to the Japanese physical education.

The use of the Swedish bars for physical training purposes had become increasingly popular, and had been studied. The years from latter half of the Taisho era (1911-1925) to about 1940 saw the Swedish bars installed as one of the gymnastic facilities at primary and middle schools throughout Japan. They were used in various ways. A look into how these bars were used discloses many cases reflecting guidance given by advanced techniques.

The Swedish bars, which had ceased to be used for some time, were revived in 1971; the directives for guidance issued that year officially included the Swedish bars as an apparatus of heavy gymnastics.

Today it is difficult to find newly constructed school gymnasiums without the Swedish bars. The fact that this valuable gymnastic apparatus is left unused for proper purposes but only as an accessory of the gymnasium due to decrease of qualified leaders and lack of awareness led the author to arrange and review past literatures on the Swedish bar exercise with a view to establishing the effective usages of the Swedish bars. Questions were identified, and practical experiments were performed by the author himself to find answers to the questions. The features and effects of the Swedish bar exercise were enumerated and its applicability was evaluated by investigating muscular actions from myo-electric phenomena observed during the exercise.

As a result, it was found that training of muscles on the Swedish bars can stimulate many muscular movements, suggesting that the Swedish bars are a suitable means for muscular training and physical build-up. It was further discovered that the

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Swedish bars allow the intensity of physical exercise to be adjusted by changing the height of the bar. In view of this, the use of the Swedish bars with bar levels adjusted to physical structure and power should be practically good in making the training comparatively adequate and safe, if guidance to stepped use of physical training materials is properly understood by the instructors.

Based on the above observations, the author selected usages of the Swedish bars most suited for muscular training and physical build-up, systematized relations of such usages with muscular movements and formularized suitable training programs accordingly as courses A through F.

This paper discusses the prescription of these courses. The courses A, B, C and E are to be carried out according to individual physique and physical fitness using conventional weight training apparatus and Swedish bars combined, whereas D and F were prescribed for use of the Swedish bars alone.

In view of the fact that the selected usages of the Swedish bars for muscular training and physical build-up include exercises suitable for physical reform and reinforcement, other physical teaching materials considered suitable for physical reform and reinforcement were additionally selected and composite ways of training abdominal, dorsal, thoracic and lateral muscles by upper arm support, leg support, knee hook, etc. could be systematized.

As the future subject of study, it is necessary to make further investigations to prescribe other suitable programs for muscular training and physical build-up.