



Local News

'Under the Bar' takes Tate over the top

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London businessman builds \$3.1 million company

Holding 740 pounds overhead, it pays to pay attention. There are lessons to be learned.

A local power lifter found that lessons learned in the process of becoming a champion are useful in other areas of life as well. Dave Tate should know — he now runs a successful business in London.

According to his Web site, www.elitefts.com, Tate holds Elite status in power lifting (in three weight classes) with best lifts of a 935 squat, 740 deadlift, 610 bench press and 2,205 total. He started lifting at age 14. Now at 39, Tate is the founder and president of Elite Fitness Systems (Elite FTS).

He started the business in 1999, in partnership with his wife, Traci. That was in a spare bedroom of their home at Choctaw Lake.

"Our first month's sales were \$300 and I was excited," he said during an interview on Wednesday. "Last year it was \$3.1 million, in a 7,000-square-foot location."

That location is an office and a warehouse. Sales are by Internet.

"We don't have any walk-in sales," Tate said.

"We're in the 'PR' industry — that's short for 'personal record' industry," he said. "We help strength coaches, personal trainers, power lifters and strength enthusiasts to become better and set personal records. Our Web site provides products and education to help them reach their goals."

At www.elitefts.com customers will find more than 3,000 products and information from more than 40 experts in the field. Questions can be answered online, Tate said. Over the years a database of more than 55,000 questions have been logged.

"Never before has such a group of expertise been available," Tate said. "And it's all free. You won't find it anywhere else."

Each Friday the site is updated with five new articles.

"The reason we do the articles — it goes back to my training experiences 'under the bar,'" Tate said. "It's important to give back, to help people obtain their strength and fitness goals."

Originally from Findlay, Tate earned a bachelor of science from the University of Toledo, though he credits his education to “the school of hard knocks.”

Tate is a popular speaker on the development of maximum strength and development. He has written hundreds of articles regarding strength and conditioning.

Add a book to that.

“Under the Bar” was published in 2005. Tate wrote it out of a sense of frustration.

“After many years of writing these types of articles I still felt something was missing,” he wrote in the book. “I had to find a better way to communicate these training techniques to my readers while connecting the concepts to every area of life in a holistic way.

“For example, I could not understand how so many lifters and coaches could experience such great success in the weight room, yet the rest of their life was falling apart. They couldn’t see that they already had all the skills they needed to be successful in all areas of their life, but they just could not make the connection.”

Among the chapter titles are: aim, attitude, integrity, teamwork, risk management, perseverance, flexibility and responsibility. The company’s core values, listed on the Web site, deal with many of them.

“Everything that you need to succeed is usually right in front of your face,” Tate wrote on the back of his book. “You just have to know when to recognize it.

“The lessons that I have learned from power lifting have been invaluable to me and have given me the tools to succeed in all areas of my life. But like many people, these lessons did not become apparent until I stepped back and recognized their true worth.”

According to the book, a good bit of what helps Tate in his life and work came from his parents, before he ever touched a weight.

“I was taught the difference between right and wrong, not to lie, steal or cheat; never to give up when things got hard; to value education; to have a positive attitude; to be flexible and keep my word; to work as part of a team and set my sights high,” he wrote.

The book is peppered with concrete examples and stories of the principles about which Tate writes.

For example, the chapter about teamwork quotes a power lifting Baptist pastor (with a 1,025-pound squat and a 700-pound benchpress) at a wedding who used “spotting” to encourage his listeners to avoid going it alone when facing challenges.

Tate isn’t alone. He thanks his wife, Traci, in his book. Tate dedicates the book to his sons, Blaine, now 4, and Bryce, now 3.

He doesn’t want power lifters to be alone, either.

According to the Web site, Tate started the business because “he could not believe the incredible amount of misinformation in regards to training for sports” he found on the Web in general.

“Dave realized that there were thousands of coaches and athletes that were looking for training advice but most were coming up short. Dave set up a question and answer through a power lifting Web site and began

writing articles to help these athletes and coaches with their training programs.”

The company has a key to success: not gimmicks and marketing tactics but placing the training needs of the customers first.

Elite FTS sells training equipment by other companies, but much of what they sell is designed by Tate himself. For example, engineers in North Carolina took Tate’s redesign ideas for a power rack and produced a machine which enables a lifter to use a wider stance and provides more specific settings for weight positions.

“We sell hundreds of these things,” Tate said.

There’s a reason for that.

Tate’s design raises the side frame off the floor by a few inches, meaning a rack of the same, standard width can accommodate the wider stance used by most lifters. Also, the pin holes are an inch and a half to two inches apart. The industry standard is three or four inches.

Lifters put them everywhere, from garages to living rooms, Tate said.

When a university purchases such machines, they’re more likely to buy 16 than one.

Jim Wendler, who squatted more than a thousand pounds, sells for Elite FTS. He said Wednesday that the company just signed a contract for the Cleveland Browns weight room. Included in that contract were six power racks.

“We sell to a ton of schools,” he added.

Among those are Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, Davidson College in North Carolina and Ohio’s Urbana College weight room.

“Under the Bar,” at \$14.95, is one of the books available on Tate’s Web site, www.elitefts.com. For more information or to place an order, log onto the Web or call 1-888-854-8806.

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