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Teacher, coach and weight lifter Dave Kitzerow gives teenagers lessons in weight lifting and life and a well muscled example of the benefits of healthy living

When Dave Kitzerow goes to the Feith Family Ozaukee YMCA in Saukville to lift weights, he often has a half dozen Port Washington High School seniors working out with him.

“It’s a group of five to seven young men who want to learn how to lift properly — spotting and safety is important — and the right nutrition,” said Kitzerow, a guidance counselor and track coach at Port High who is known for his healthy lifestyle.

Kitzerow used to be a power-lifting coach and judge and is a certified youth strength and conditioning instructor. With his counseling background, he adds some life lessons to the lifting sessions.

It started when his son Nathan, 18, and Nathan’s buddy, John “Boomer” Scheel, both Port High football players, asked Kitzerow if they could work out with him. Soon more guys showed up.

Some want to get stronger for track and baseball.

“Never let the bar get cold” is Kitzerow’s mantra, the guys said.

“It’s much harder (lifting weights with his father) and I think we’re getting more gains than when we were lifting by ourselves,” said Nathan, who used to work out with his father when he was in middle school.

“He’s teaching us to be well-rounded men,” added Tanner Mersereau, a football player. “He encourages us to eat healthier and make better choices. We talk about a lot of things. We’re like a big family.”

At age 51, Kitzerow said, he’s happy that he can keep up with the young men who are in their prime.

“I told them when we started three months ago, ‘You’re going to pass me up.’ It’s amazing what the young body can do,” he said.

“I’m a firm believer of leading by example, so I lift with them. I can’t do everything that they can, but even at my age, it’s amazing that I can still stay with them. I can’t surpass them, but I can stay with them.”

Kitzerow lifts weights with the students every day after school. They concentrate on upper-body strength on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and lower-body strength on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The sessions include cardio work — running on treadmills or using elliptical machines after upper-body workouts and cycling to loosen leg muscles before lower-body workouts.

When the weather is nice, Kitzerow’s cardio workout is biking to and from the Y.

Kitzerow played football in high school and at Concordia College Wisconsin in Mequon. He was a varsity football coach at Cedarburg High School and served as an assistant football coach at Port High.

Students in the Ozaukee County jail were his pupils for three years while he was getting his master’s degree in guidance counseling. He then found his niche counseling students.

Kitzerow began his fitness routine in the mid-1980s after an injury prevented him from playing football and he turned to coaching.

“I was a child of the ’70s. In those days, athletics wasn’t as risky as it is now,” Kitzerow said.

“Now, you have to develop muscle around the bone to be safe. I got into the mentality you have to lift to prepare and protect yourself.”

Kitzerow injured his shoulder and back. He’s had four surgeries — three on his shoulder and one on his back.

“I try to stay away from pain. I don’t want these guys to get hurt like I did,” he said. “It’s important to give your body rest.

“When you’re working out, you’re breaking down muscle. When you’re resting and getting nutrition you build muscle. I don’t mean sleeping until noon.”

Kitzerow doesn’t want the young men to lift to their maximum, saying it doesn’t prove anything unless they plan to compete in power lifting.

“Even then, they should lift to their maximum only three times a year,” he said. “I see too many kids come into the weight room and talk about how much they lifted.”

He prefers more repetitions with lighter weights.

Kitzerow’s entire family is health and fitness conscious. His wife Jeannine, an Ozaukee County public health nurse and Weight Watchers leader, is a triathlete and prepares nutritious meals. Their three daughters — Jessica, 22, and 19-year-old twins Nicole and Megan — are also triathletes and attend college.

Nathan is a sprinter in track and wants to join the track team at University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Kitzerow said 90% of being fit is proper nutrition and hydration.

“My wife teaches about nutrition and that rubs off on us,” he said.

“It’s not a diet. It’s a way of life. Your body needs fuel — good fuel — green vegetables, high-quality protein. You learn about healthy carbs and not healthy carbs.”

Even the holidays didn’t wreak havoc with his weight.

“I’m the type of person who can have a taste of something and I’m content. I don’t have to have a whole piece,” he said.

Kitzerow eats four to five times a day. He takes vitamin supplements that include calcium, fish oil and flax seed oil. He doesn’t eat candy bars or drink sodas, but he likes protein bars and drinks.

Kitzerow starts every morning with the same breakfast — an oatmeal egg pancake that he fries in olive oil and eats with half a grapefruit and a protein drink. He may put honey or

jam on the pancake, but not syrup.

At 9:30 a.m., he has a protein shake and apple or other fruit.

Lunch is usually leftovers and could include chicken, fish, salad and vegetables. He eats a protein bar before going to the Y at 3:30 p.m.

The evening meal is often chicken or fish and vegetables, and Kitzerow has a late snack that could be a chicken breast or fruit.

“I try to get a lot of color. Yellow, red and orange peppers are good, and lots of leafy green vegetables,” Kitzerow said.

The frequent meals, he said, keeps the metabolism burning calories for energy.

“It’s like stoking an engine. It isn’t rocket science, but it does require discipline,” he said.

“Once you get used to it, you feel better.”

If he skips a meal, Kitzerow said, he gets over-hungry and eats too much at the next meal.

When choosing protein drinks and bars, Kitzerow tells people to check the protein, fat and sugar contents.

“The fat and sugar makes it taste good, but you’re defeating the purpose,” he said.

Kitzerow said he likes seeing new people at the YMCA fulfilling their New Year’s resolutions to get fit.

“But it’s amazing how many give up by about March,” he said. “You have to continue year-round.”

Following is Dave Kitzerow’s recipe for oatmeal egg pancake.

Oatmeal Egg Pancake

1/2 cup old-fashioned oats

Splash of water

1 egg

1/2 cup egg whites

Dash of cinnamon

Olive oil

Microwave oats with water for one minute. Stir in egg, egg whites and cinnamon.

Fry pancake in olive oil until lightly browned on one side, flip and continue to fry until done.

Serve with jelly or honey if desired.