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Off-Season Training With Harvard Football - Mar 11, 2008 |

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posted by: [Josh](#)

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Harvard's Carl Ehrlich describes a unique off-season training program.



Today, Harvard Football opened up an entirely new chapter in its already extensive repertoire of unique off-season training techniques.

Rising seniors such as myself have been around for hundred-yard partner wheelbarrows on the stadium field, towel fights (not literally a fight, but a battle to rip the towel out of an opponent's hands) in the sand pit, the "Daytona 500" push-up circuit in the mud outside of our weight room, and countless other seemingly Herculean tasks, but we may have found a new highlight in our off-season competitions. It's called the "Great American Tug Off," and I can almost guarantee that there is no program in the country that has experienced anything like it.

The "Tug" itself is a round, brown piece of plastic roughly a yard in diameter that can be filled up with water until it weighs roughly 100 pounds. On both sides of this soul-robbingly heavy disk are two handles and the usage directions probably read something like this;

1. One person stands on each side of the tug and grabs the handles.
2. Tug

With the purchase of the tugs, the company included shirts that the strength coaches proudly don that read "You can't hide from the tug,"

And I think this pronouncement pretty accurately summarizes the group sentiment towards the exercise. I say this in jest, only because of how exhausting it is to pull the tug (and consequently the other person) the five yards necessary to win. A quick Google search got me to their website, where the promotional video pronounced: "two players of equal strength could end up tugging forever" (how philosophic)!

Actually, I was in California for the unveiling of the tug, so I got a full summer of tug-lore before I was able to return to campus and see the beast with my own eyes.

So the "Great American Tug Off" consisted of four brackets, divided by positions, where the winner of each division advanced to the "Final Four." The contest mirrored the design of the March Madness brackets for basketball and

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was flawlessly designed by Coach Fitz with the steady consultation of strength coach and resident bracketologist, Tim "The Mullenator" Mullen. And in addition to all the pride associated with winning a competition like this, the tug champion would win 60 points for his team!

I think the tug is a good example of what makes our training program unique from other schools; it's designed not only to make you stronger and faster but it puts a large stress on making its players tougher.

The tug competition probably didn't make our 40 times drop or increase the team bench press, but it plays just as important of a role in team development. Especially coming off a season where we won the Ivy League Championship, it's important that no one in the program get a big head about football and the tug is maybe the greatest defense against this. It's hard to be full of yourself when the tug starts leaking and you're covered in "field turf mud," a combination of leaking tug water and the black pebbles from the field.

And a quick team update: After the Titans took down the 60 points from the tug competition, we are now sitting in second place and ready for our late spring-workout push.



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