

Oof! Newsweek 1-15-62

Savagely press the forehead into a desk top. Push briefly—but ferociously—against the living-room wall. Try hefting the station wagon off the ground by its bumper before driving to work. Family and neighbors may stare goggle-eyed at such goings-on, but there is a reason behind this aggression against the inanimate. It is called "isometric contraction" which, simply speaking, amounts to pitting the muscles against an immovable object for a few seconds without moving. According to physiological theory, IC could well build the U.S. into a nation of deceptively unbulging Samsons.

"I am absolutely convinced there is something great here," says Vic Obeck, a onetime professional football player and now director of athletics at New York University. So convinced is Obeck, in fact, that he has taped a \$3.98 LP for Riverside Records—to be released this week—aimed right at the sagging executive midriff. Its title: *Isometric Exercising*. Its paradoxical subtitle: *How to exercise without moving a muscle*. For those Inclined, Obeck promises that a daily, five-minute dose of IC will augment strength some 5 per cent a week. "The beauty of it all," he says, "is that isometric exercising can be done any place at any time."

In the recording, which spells out basic exercises as well as a few IC keys to everything from easier bowling to more powerful golf, the 43-year-old athletic director explains that when isometrics first gripped the imagination of American sports circles a short while back, it was considered "a new secret of strength" perhaps best kept confidential within the orbit of the Western world. As it turned out, Russia had already seized on IC, so isometrics is now anybody's game.

The Greatest: Actually, IC has been around since the early 1920s when scientists tied down one leg of a frog and found that in straining against its bonds, the tied-down leg grew stronger than the free one. Indeed, Charles Atlas, brawny patron of the 97-pound weakling, borrowed a few isometric notions for his body building scheme. It was just recently, however, that IC appeared on the playing field. The Notre Dame and LSU football teams have tackled it with enthusiasm; so have the San Francisco 49ers and the Pittsburgh Pirates. Bob Hoffman, the Olympic weight-lifting coach, thinks IC is "the greatest thing the world's ever seen."

It was therefore inevitable that someone like Vic Obeck (6 feet, 220 pounds) should muscle in on a good thing and present it to the sedentary public. He is careful to point out that isometrics does not directly affect endurance and stam-



In a flap over flab? Door jambing . . .



. . . wall pushing . . .



Newsweek—Vytautas Valaitis

. . . and desk denting may help

ina. Nor does it cut weight. But IC does tone muscles (without increasing girth) at a startling rate. If, for example, a man sucks his belly back toward the spine and—ugh!—holds it there for ten seconds five times a day, he can expect to flense down his waistline 1 to 2 inches within a month. Similarly, placing the hands against any available wall or door jamb and pushing as hard as possible for 10 seconds, believe it or not, is a more powerful tonic for slack arms and shoulders than 50 agonizing pushups.

"There is no danger of strain," says Obeck, who practices isometrics everywhere from showers to subways. "When a muscle is in a static condition—whatever the load—it can't be injured. Sudden motion, like a halfback reversing his field, is what causes injuries."

Should the average homeowner feel hesitant about pushing his walls too vigorously,* Obeck is preparing an aluminum bar that can be set up anywhere. "But a bar isn't really necessary," he said last week. "Launch into isometrics at any idle moment. Think of all the time men stand around waiting for women. What a chance to suck in the stomach and build up the abdominal wall."