

Team Impact Forges Ahead After Split From Power Team

The outreach team has grown from five to 18 strongmen after it broke away from John Jacobs' ministry last year

Although Team Impact is new to the strength-evangelism circuit, most of its members have wowed youngsters for years with their incredible feats of strength.

In June last year, five men from John Jacobs and The Power Team left the ministry to form their own. "We felt our season was over at The Power Team, and God was leading us in a slightly different direction," said Team Impact's Brandon Hensley.

Hensley said they sought counsel from several pastors before forming their group. "They told us that our calling was still to evangelize," he said, "and they encouraged us to use our athletic backgrounds to win people to Jesus."

Team Impact has chosen more of a "knights of the round table" approach instead of centering on one person, said Hensley, who was voted in as president. To date, Team Impact has 19 members, 16 of whom hail from The Power Team.

At their five-night crusades, the members perform dramatic stunts such as tearing phone books in half, breaking huge stacks of ice with their bare hands and rolling frying pans into the shape of a burrito. The guys take turns sharing their testimonies and presenting a soul-winning message.

Many athletes have expressed an interest in joining the group, said Hensley, but the screening process is tough.

“We don’t want someone who can just stand up and share his testimony, but someone who is called into ministry,” he said. “It can be very difficult to find the right athletic ability with the call into ministry.”

So far, Team Impact is not recruiting women. Hensley said the group follows the “Billy Graham rule of ministry”: Avoid being alone with a woman. Because the members’ wives don’t accompany the group for most events, having women members could present potential problems, he noted.

Further, if a woman attending a crusade requests prayer from a Team Impact member, he finds a woman in the church to pray with her.

Despite the size of these power lifters—290 pounds is typical—Hensley said they are among the “most humble men you’ll ever meet.”

“You get up there on stage with thousands of people screaming and cheering you on. If you’re not grounded in the Word of God, you could get a ‘god complex.’ We’re just so careful. All of our men stay in the Word and in prayer. They put on the full armor of God.”

Larry Jones, president of Feed the Children, sits on the group’s board of advisers.

“They consult me as well as many other pastors regularly in

their quest to operate their ministry with integrity and to be completely above-board in the decisions and direction of Team Impact," he said. "They have shown the commitment to stay true to their focus of winning the lost, building the local church and encouraging pastors."

Team Impact puts on at least four crusades a month, each lasting five nights. Hundreds of people come forward for salvation—and it isn't just youth.

"I'm surprised at the number of whole families making commitments to Christ," said Hensley, adding that they tell churches to promote the crusade as a family meeting rather than a youth meeting.

Hensley believes the crusades provide a great way for pastors to reach out to the untouched sectors in their communities.

"Not everyone will come to a typical revival or church event. We want to be there for the pastors—to have a tool they can use to reach every corner of their community."

When Team Impact plans a church crusade, they ask the pastor to list all of the schools within a 10-mile radius of the church. The members try to hold an assembly at each school while they are in town for the crusade.

Although they can't present the gospel, they can teach biblical principles. At the end of their presentation, they encourage the kids to come to church that night.

In addition to domestic crusades, Team Impact plans to

minister internationally. During the summer, a team was slated to travel to Zimbabwe. Crusades are scheduled for Singapore, Cayman Islands and Brazil.

"We've seen God enlarge our territory, and it's exciting to see all the doors the Lord has opened," said the ministry's executive director, Jeff Audas, who worked with John Jacobs for 10 years. "I never thought we'd be doing all that we're doing as a young ministry."

Feed the Children is partnering with Team Impact to produce a nationwide television program that will air on Christian and secular networks.

Although The Power Team lost many of its members last year after Jacobs divorced his wife, Ruthanne, the team has rebuilt and plans to cover 115 cities and more than 700 schools this year.

—Carol Chapman Stertzner in Dallas