

History of SiSu and the “White Buffalo”

When SiSu Systems first started working with organizations, we were always posed with two questions 1) What does SiSu stand for? and 2) What is the significance of the White Buffalo? For the few that have trained or worked with us, these two become symbiotic, however, for those that do not know the folklore, history, and significance – this may help explain who we are and what we stand for!

The word SiSu is not an acronym but actually a finish word. According to the Finish/American dictionary, SiSu translates to the following:

SiSu *see-soo* (n.): 1. An inherent magical quality of unyielding determination, courage, stamina, endurance, and perseverance held in reserve for times of adversity. 2.(n.) Tenacity of purpose.

Based on that definition, we like to state that our Mission and Vision are the definition of our name – regardless of endeavor; we want to help our athletes reach their full potential using the guiding principals of hard work, discipline, dedication, honesty, and integrity.

So now that SiSu is established – what is the significance of the White Buffalo? This issue is a little more complex and a much more entertaining story. To truly understand it – you need to be serious athlete. When you travel among athletes that take their sport, and its training serious, you will hear them speak of “The White”. The euphemism is best know across the globe in the world of Olympic weightlifting and has many meanings.

Yuri Vlasson, one of the world’s premier Olympic weightlifters describes “The White” as the following:

“ At the peak of tremendous and victorious effort...while the blood is pounding in your head, all suddenly becomes quiet within you. Everything seems clearer and whiter than ever before, as if great spotlights had been turned on. At that moment you have the conviction that you contain all the power in the world, that you are capable of everything, that you have wings. There is no more precious moment in life than this, the white moment, and you will work very hard for years just to taste it again.”

So whether you are in Russia talking about “The White” or in Finland discussing SiSu – the results are the same; hard work, tremendous effort, and a consistency for excellence.

In the late 1950’s and early 1960’s York Barbell and its gym was home to our best Olympic weightlifters and strength athletes. Individuals such as Ken Patera, Tommy Kono, Bill Starr, Norb Shemanksy , Bob Bednarsky, Jim Bradford, and several other legends trained together and constituted our Olympic weightlifting team. They often pushed themselves to the limit outworking their peers, taxing their nervous system until they would see “stars” or “the White”. It started happening with more frequency and became term thrown around the training hall as validation for successful training session.

Bill Starr, who coached at the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins University, SMU, and the University of Hawaii, as well as the 1968 Olympic Team and the Baltimore Colts is credited with giving the United States its own version of “The White”. Coach Starr always had an affinity for Native American folklore and understood that the “White Buffalo” was symbol of peace, good luck, and solidarity. He also knew that warriors that claimed to see the White Buffalo before battle felt that Victory would be theirs – it was thought to be the Spirit Animal of Victory.

With this in mind, Bill Starr transformed “The White” to “The White Buffalo” – a term that has been used by serious athletes throughout our great land for decades. If you have traveled among elite training circles, be it Olympic weight lifting, track and field, power weight lifting, or strong man training, you can hear people talking about “the Buffalo” or seeing “the White Buffalo”. It is a term of respect, a right of passage to some, and it is real – and you can trust anyone at SiSu that if you are not sure if you have ever seen “the Buffalo”, then you haven’t – you will know when that time comes.

With this in mind – SiSu felt that this magical apparition of victory had to be our logo, creed, and battle cry. We strive to chase the Buffalo down and celebrate those that have worked hard enough to truly understand what it means to see this animal. He, or She is an elusive creature that comes when you are fatigued, tired, and strained. During the moment of uncertainty, the Buffalo will lead you to Victory.

As stated in the beginning - people often ask 1) What does SiSu stand for? and 2) What is the significance of the White Buffalo? So know that you know what we are as well as what motivates us - we two questions in return:

1) Do you have SiSu? And 2) When was the last time you saw the Buffalo?

If you can’t find him – keep looking – you just aren’t working hard enough, but we can help!

To discuss any of our services please contact customer support at support@sisusystems.com