

THE VALUET

A DECADE OF PR-SHATTERING TRAINING TIPS BY DAVE TATE



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See your physician before starting any exercise or nutrition program. If you are taking any medications, you must talk to your physician before starting any exercise program. If you experience any lightheadedness, dizziness, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop the movement and consult a physician.

Don't perform any exercise unless you have been shown the proper technique by a certified personal trainer or certified strength and conditioning specialist. Always ask for instruction and assistance when lifting.

You must have a complete physical examination if you are sedentary, if you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, if you are overweight, or if you are over 30 years old.

Introduction

Congratulations on joining the EliteFTS Strength Club, and thank you. In order to show our appreciation, we've compiled this e-book. In the following pages you will find training knowledge that has been put to the test by Dave Tate or the other faces of EliteFTS. There are years of knowledge in this book, knowledge acquired not in a laboratory or under a microscope, but under the bar.

It seems like a simple gesture, signing up for a newsletter, but by choosing to become part of the Strength Club you've made an affirmation. You've declared that you want to put into action the massive amounts of knowledge that EliteFTS offers. You've declared that you want to improve from your current standing, becoming stronger, bigger, or faster. It doesn't matter if you've just recently stepped into a gym for the first time or if you're a world record holder, there will be something in these pages that can help you reach your goals. The programs at the end of this e-book are real. They were done by real lifters and resulted in real PRs. This is not a book of theories; it's a book of results.

At EliteFTS, we take pride in empowering others to reach their goals. This e-book is full of exercises, examples, methods, and detailed programs to help you get there. Enjoy, and welcome to the club.

TATE'S TRAINING TIPS





Training Philosophy

Every athlete, coach and trainer should have his own philosophy of training based on where he's going. Do you want to get stronger? Do you want to add more mass? Do you want to get ripped? Do you want to use training to better your sport of choice? Do you feel being stronger is the key to success? Do you feel being better conditioned is the key? Do you feel you need all these variables? In other words, what do you really want to achieve from your training?

Once you know this, the next step is to select what "key indicators" you'll use to gauge your process. For a powerlifter, some of these may include: the bench press, the squat, the deadlift, weight used for dynamic training, specific max effort movements, weights used for triples, etc.

To further illustrate, I can gauge my squat on my best three-rep max on the good morning, and I can base my bench press on a specific percentage of my best two-board press or floor press. I know others who can predict their best bench or squat on their best triple while training for a meet. These items are very specific to each individual but are indicators used to determine if you're moving closer to, or further away from your goal.

If adding mass is your goal, then your indicators would be lean body mass, circumference measurements and body weight. When you have your indicators set, then you make sure to track them as your training progresses. If your indicators are going in the right direction, then you stay with what you're doing.

If one indicator falls off or quits progressing, then you address it in your training to get it back on track. The larger and more specific your list of indicators, the better your progress will be.



Let the Program Be Your Guide, but Be Prepared For Detours

While programming does not play as high of a role as many people claim, you still need to have a solid program designed to help you achieve your training goals. The difference between a general program based on what an author perceives to be effective, is a far cry compared to a program designed around your own strengths and weaknesses. Time and experience will give you the best training. Learn how to do this for yourself.

For beginners, I'd suggest jumping on some of the pre-designed programs to help get your feet wet. While they are still not as effective as a personally designed program, they are *much* better than what you'll come up with on your own. That's why they were written in the first place: not to be the Holy Grail of programming, but to serve as a launching pad.

For the intermediate and advanced lifters, you need to think about your program as you're a car driving on a highway. You need to get on the right one that will get you where you want to go. If you need to go north, then it's not a good idea to get on a highway going south - regardless of what anybody tells you. The difference between getting there, or breaking down in the middle of nowhere, is knowing how to read the signs. In any long trip, there'll be slowdowns, stops, construction and detours. As travelers we expect this, and while we still get frustrated, we know they'll be there.

Similarly, as a lifter you have to expect detours. They are part of the game. There will be things that will screw up your training. No training phase ever goes as planned. You have to be ready, expect detours and find ways to keep moving forward. To think everything will go smooth is a false reality. Actually, if you find you're ahead of schedule and things are very smooth, be on the lookout. The old saying, "If it ain't broke, *break it!*" applies here.



Busting Ass!

You've just read about the dynamic and max effort methods and are excited to get rolling. Problem is you just began training six months ago and look like a beanpole. Still, you feel this is the best way to train for strength and have heard many other people say the same. Well, you've done the research and have read all the articles, but you've still missed the boat.

Yes, you can use these methods, but only when they're implemented into a program based around your weaknesses. Now follow me here for a minute. What really is your weakness? Is it your hamstrings? Triceps? Or could it be that your entire body needs to be built up?

A beginner doesn't need to start with advanced training principles. He needs to first build a solid foundation with basic movements.

It's not easy – Get over it!

Are you worried you're not progressing fast enough? Well, you know, I've never been approached by a person who was worried he was gaining too fast. Look, there are those who can gain strength just by looking at weights. I've seen the type and nothing pisses me off more. These guys show up to train once a week and grow like weeds. You know what? It's not me and I'll bet 1000 to 1 that it's not you either!

Take what you get and keep working. It's the one who trains the smartest who'll last the longest, and in time, your day will come. The road is never easy and it may take a few years to put ten pounds on your bench if you've been training for a while. I've walked this road.

If it were easy, everyone would be doing it. This isn't an easy game for anyone, even the guys who progress quickly. This is because it all slows down in time. It just happens to be different times for all of us. If you can't handle it, then try the Stairmaster and stay the hell out of the weightroom! The rest of us have work to do and don't need your negative ass in the way.

Fanatically Believe You Can

If you want to do anything of value, in or out of the gym, you must believe fanatically in your own ability to overcome and succeed. Here's one of the best examples I can think of, and it also stars Matt Kroczaleski.

Just a few weeks out from the Arnold Classic, Matt noticed that his knee was hurting. It was hurting him badly, and it just kept getting worse.

"I think I need to take it light today," he said on Monday. "My knee is sore and bothers me."

"Man, something really feels funny inside my knee," he said on Tuesday. "It almost feels swollen."

On Wednesday it was no better. "You guys aren't going to believe this," he said, "but I had to sit down at work today and talk to patients from a chair. My knee hurts so bad I can't put pressure on it. I haven't been able to train, and I'm starting to get a bit concerned. I have no idea what's wrong."

By Thursday it was even worse. "This is unbelievable," he grimaced. "I can't walk today and had to go get crutches. My knee is swollen and hurts to the touch. I can hardly bend it. I'm very concerned I might have some sort of infection or something. I can't train and the pain is unbearable."

That Friday, he was practically beside himself. "I went to the doctor today and they don't know what's wrong," he told us, still hobbling on crutches. The Arnold was only two weeks away, and to say he was frustrated would be an understatement. "I've trained my ass off for this," he growled. "All the work is done. I can't believe I'm dealing with this right now. And I don't even know what the hell is wrong!"

Then he answered the question none of us had the heart to ask him. "You bet your ass I'm still going to compete, though," he said, the fire building in him. "I'm going to will this knee better, and convince myself that it's healed. I won't let this defeat me, and I'm going to do everything humanly possibly to step onto the platform and win."

At the Arnold, despite the fact that he literally was unable to walk only two weeks earlier, Matt ended up squatting 970, and won his first World Championship. That friends, is the power of belief.

Build Your Upper Back

Upper Back Shrugs

One of the other biggest weaknesses I see with lifters is the upper back. This causes problems coming out of the bottom of the squat and makes the lockout of the bench press much harder. There are many things to correct this, but this is one of the best I've seen and used.

You'll need to use a **Yoke Bar** to do this movement.

Get under the bar, unrack the weight, and take a moderate to wide stance. This is a very simple movement to do and you can use the pictures as a guide.

Start in a standing position and let the upper back round forward as your hips stay in the same place. From this point, arch your upper back into the start position. I wish there was more I could say to describe this, but that's about it!

This is a movement where higher reps (10-15) with multiple sets (3-5), will work better. Make sure to keep your upper back as tight as you can when you're in the start position. To top this off, add in 15-20 shoulder shrugs at the end of your set.



Yoke Bar
elitefts.com/yokebar

How Often Should you Deload?

Here are a couple of things you should know:

1. If your program is solid you won't need a deload except before a meet. This is assuming you mean taking a light session in place of a heavy one.
2. This brings up the next point; if you are hardcore then you should be competing two to three times per year. Each time you will have a one week deload before the meet and another light week after. This is six weeks a year of deloading. Now if you factor in those days you have to back off due to muscle pulls and training partners who don't show up, you can add in another four weeks minimum.

This is 10 weeks over 70 days, not counting your normal days off right?

Keep in mind I didn't add in any vacations so it could be more.

Maybe you just need to get in better shape.

OK. I'm kind of joking. KIND OF...

Personally I would rather see four to six light weeks after a meet with no squats, pulls or barbell benches than programmed deloads.

Training for meets will beat lifters up. This is a fact. In my mind there's no way a few "light" days every few weeks is going to keep anyone from breaking down. In my own experience it just makes the next heavier workout even harder to do. Four to six weeks after a meet gives the body plenty of time to rest and recover from the trauma of the training and meet. Yes, you will get weaker in this time and it will take six to eight weeks to get your strength back up to begin another meet cycle, BUT you'll be healthy and ready instead of always beat up.

You can also just wait for the next major injury to happen – this can give you up to four to eight weeks off of a main lift (if surgery is required). This is how I did it. Maybe that's not the best idea...

Last note: If you really are Hardcore and have a Pro total, you know when you can push it and when you can't. Many times you can't trust how you feel until after you warm-up and start your work sets. What feels like a crappy day often ends up your best and what feels great warming up turns out to feel like a ton of bricks when you get to the work sets. You can and will learn how to make these calls the longer you train.

Here is an answer I provided a few years back that might help:

Dynamic Work

Because of the SPP of the sport it is best to keep the movements the same. These include the dead lift, bench press and squat. Since the movement stays the same, the loading patterns need to change. This is where you see all the different dynamic training cycles. We have two manuals detailing these for the squat, deadlift and bench press. Using many different cycles is very important for constant progress.

Average Cycle Length: 3-4 weeks

Deload: after one or two cycles

Max Effort Work

Because of the increased intensity (the load) needed to use this method the cycles are more limited. The GPP and experience of the lifter also limits the number of weeks one can use the same movement. The point is this movement may need to change every one to three weeks. There are several articles addressing the max effort work available at EFS.

Average Cycle Length: 1-3 weeks

Deload: every 3 to 6 weeks

Supplemental Work “Main”

These are the main movements you use to drive your lifts. These are different for everyone but could include 4-board presses, GHR, shoulder presses and so on. These will be the movement that you feel and know have a direct relationship with your three main lifts. It is very important to train the hell out of these movements so longer cycles can and should be used with higher rep ranges. These movements might cycle for 8-12 weeks. Remember that these are movements that you know can directly influence your main lifts. Choose these wisely!

Most lifters will keep these main movements in during the entire meet training phase. The key is to change the load, sets and reps in a direct attempt to make these lifts as strong as you can.

Average Cycle Length: 5-8 weeks

Deload: every 8 to 10 weeks

Supplemental “Hypertrophy” Work

These are the movements and methods that are used to build mass (if needed). These can change every session to tear the body down as much as you can. This work should not be part of a pre-contest phase. Recovery is more important than mass at this time.

Average Cycle Length: N/A

Deload: every 6-8 weeks

Accessory Work “Prehab”

This is the crap you have to do to keep from getting beat up. This could be external rotator work, lower back work and so on. Usually higher reps are used with lower intensities so movement change doesn't have to happen that often. These shouldn't be too taxing. Remember that these movements are for prehab and are not supplemental work. This means that you wouldn't have to have the same kind of RPE for these movements as you would for your max effort, dynamic or supplemental work.

Average Cycle Length: 8-12 weeks

Deload: every 8-12 weeks

Accessory “Stretching”

Stretch as needed. Usually these movements will not change, but always be learning new ones just in case. I highly recommend the Parisi Warm-up Method DVD and the book Core Performance by Mark Verstegen to help you choose movements.

Average Cycle Length: N/A

Deload: N/A

As you can see, everything changes at its own rate, but you also need to look at the inter-relationships that are going on to determine what changes need to take place. I ripped this off the top of my head with my two kids tearing into everything, so take the numbers for what they are (estimates). They will be different for everyone because we all have different recovery needs and training backgrounds.

Some abilities may be deloaded, while others are being pounded. This should be the way most of the year goes. Before a meet or when worn down; a full-blown deload should take place. A full blown deload involves deloading all abilities.

This process will change based upon what sport you are involved in because of different types of skill-based training.



Teamwork

If you train alone, you're putting limits on yourself. Training partners are critical for many reasons, including group energy, subgroup coaching and competing. Have you ever noticed when you go into a gym all the strong guys train in their own little clique? Did you think they were always strong, or could a couple of strong guys have taken another guy under their wings to bring him up? That's usually what happens with a team. In fact, they're all stronger because of the team.

The energy a team can provide is enormous. We all need relationships in our lives to take things to the next level. Think back to your football or other team sport days. Remember the locker room talk before the big game? You find yourself sitting on one knee listening to the coach. As the coach speaks and the game gets closer, your energy meter is getting jacked up. Your blood is moving fast in your body and you can feel the adrenaline flowing. You're jacked up and ready to go. You're at maximum level!

Now what if I was to tell you there's a way to take it one level higher, but this can't happen when you're alone? You'll need others to make this work. Go back to the game. What happens after the coach finishes his speech and you stand up? You find everyone in the room is jacked up. There's fire in everyone's eyes and you're taking in more energy from them. It's almost unreal! There are high-fives, head butts, screams, rage, and extreme motivation. This happens because everyone in the room has his own level ten, but when it's combined for one purpose and one goal the energy goes off the chart! You find yourself at a level you never thought possible. This can't be achieved alone.

I use this as an example of group energy. I'm not telling you to go nuts with your training partners each session. I'm saying there's energy there that can't be found any other way! If you want to take it to the next level, find some training partners who share the same goals. You'll be amazed.

Training partners are also a great subgroup of coaches when you're training. When you're bench pressing, are you pressing the bar on the right path? Are your elbows tucked? Are you sure? A training partner can do two things: point out the mistakes and provide the proper verbal queuing during the movement to make sure you don't screw up the next one.

You'll also notice one key thing in all lifter interviews. They always thank their training partners. Why do you think they do this? They know that without them they wouldn't be where they are today. If you train alone, stop messing around and get a partner!

Eat!

I know I'll catch hell for this, but you need to have walked in my shoes to know where I'm going with this one. You must have seen what I've seen over the past few years.

How many times have I looked at someone and said, "You have to get bigger because you can't flex bone." If you can feel bone in your upper arms, shoulders, upper legs and lats, then yes, you need to gain some fast mass!

I'm not a nutritional guru by any stretch, but I do know when someone needs to freakin' eat! I don't care what it is, just eat it and keep eating until you begin to grow. There are tons of articles. Read them and get to eating.

"But Dave," you may say, "if I gain weight I won't be as strong in the next weight class!" Listen man, you're 6'2" and 145 pounds. Just how many lifters are 6'2" in any weight class under 275? What came first, the muscle or the strength? I'll agree a huge amount of muscle mass may not be needed to lift huge weights, but come on, 6'2", 145 pounds? Eat something!

Stay Focused

This is the most important secret of all. Lock yourself into your destination and eliminate any possibility of not getting there. Make your goal the core essence of your existence. Fix your focus 100% onto your desired outcome and the process of achieving it.

Let nothing stop you from training toward your goal, short of a crippling injury or major life trauma. And as you'll see below, not even that is enough to stop some highly motivated individuals.

A lot of people are afraid of making this kind of commitment. They don't fear failure so much as they're simply unwilling to sacrifice certain parts of their lives. This isn't a bad thing as such, and anyway, most of you reading this probably don't have the kind of aspirations that demand heavy sacrifices. There's nothing wrong with that. If everyone was exceptional, no one would be.

However, for those few who do aspire to the highest level of sport, you need to understand that greatness comes at a high price. The price is the time and energy that you won't be able to devote to the other aspects of your life.

We all have the same 24 hours, and the choice of where to focus our attention. There's no way you can focus on your work, family, church, personal development, friends and on your training.

Yes you can achieve balance, and as I said, this isn't a bad goal. All I'm saying is that you can either be balanced, or you can be great. You shouldn't expect both at the same time.



I can already hear the murmurs of dissent from the peanut gallery.

“Dave, you have to keep a balance in your life to move ahead. How can you say balanced people can’t be great?”

My response is, show me one great person who achieved balance at the time of their greatness. To be in the top 10% of anything requires a selfish, fanatical drive that most people will never understand, let alone possess. *Maybe* there’s someone, somewhere, who can be great at everything, but I haven’t seen it.

The Most Underrated Movements

There are no special mystery exercises that only the best of the best know. The cards are known and are the same to everyone. The game is to know what cards to play at the right time. Most people have no fucking clue.

A better question to ask would be, “Why are you doing the movements you’re doing now? Is there a real reason or is it just because you like to do them?” If your goal is a bigger bench press, then your reason for the movements you do should support the goal of the program.

This is something to understand about strength: you have three compound movements that make up your core exercises, but you’re not going to get stronger on these movements by doing them alone. Strength needs to be built using other special exercises intended to reinforce or build your technique, skill and strength. You should select movements based on your weaknesses and skill level.

Let’s use the squat as an example. Let’s say the lifter drops his chest at the 3/4 point and falls forward. He can’t keep his upper back locked-in, but it only happens with max weights. One solution would be high arch back good morning with a safety squat bar.

This will strengthen the upper back and traps to hold the position, while also teaching the lifter how to keep his chest up. But maybe he’s a low-skilled lifter who won’t be able to keep the proper torso position to do the movement listed. If that’s the case, we need to back up and work our way into the movement with exercises such as Supermans on the floor, reverse hypers, etc.

There needs to be a process to get from point A to point Z and most people just think they can jump in at Z and make it happen, but nothing is further from the truth.

Personally, I hated doing reverse hypers and ab work with a passion, but without it my lifts sucked. I also hated sled work, but had to do it. It would be safe to say I hated half the shit I did. But in the end I was 100% happy with the results.

But then again, life would be too easy if all we had to do were the things we liked.

Build Yourself Up, Don't Tear Others Down

Here's something that always comes to my mind when I think about people who try to tear you down, especially online. Years ago I made a trip to the Show of Strength in Atlanta, where I was going to help Chuck Vogelpohl, Brian Schwab, and Ano Turtiainen, who are all great lifters and multiple world record holders.

During one of the breaks I found myself having lunch with a small group of people, one of whom just didn't fit in at all. Granted, he had an opinion on everything, but nothing to show for it in the way he looked, his lifts, or who he coached.

Later, I discovered he couldn't even cut it in three well-known powerlifting groups in his area. He received zero respect from all the local lifters on account of his big mouth, his inconsistency, and not having the balls to train hard and help others in the group.

About a year later, I see the same guy talking shit about everyone on a powerlifting forum with an "I'm the man" attitude. A few phone calls later and there were three of us on the phone just busting up laughing about this. I no longer have the time to read all the forums, so I have no idea whatever happened to this guy, but I can pretty much guess he's the same crappy lifter he always was.

I'm pretty sure that most of these people have done nothing of value in their lives, so all they can do is find fault in others. It's always easier to tear others down than it is to build yourself up, and easier to demand respect than to earn it. Of course, the easy way isn't always the best way.

Conditioning

If you think you can excel in any sport without a base level of conditioning... you're out of your mind. The days of over-fat, bloated, can't breathe, can't sleep powerlifters are over!

Let me describe what I define as a "powerlifter" so everyone is on the same page. A powerlifter is one who competes in the squat, bench and deadlift to arrive at the highest total. A full-meet can last up to nine hours and nine max lifts will be attempted. To be able to do this, a lifter must be in great condition or he'll pay the price come the deadlift.

Here's where one of the biggest mistakes I've seen over the past few years will come into focus. You can get conditioned by adding extra workouts and GPP (General Physical Preparation) training, but I've seen lifters go from three workouts per week to fourteen and wonder why they can't recover. There are many ways to get conditioned (increase work capacity and GPP), but what I suggest doing is taking a slow build-up process to condition the body to the extra work. To do this, add in warm-up work for a few weeks.



For example, a startup warm-up session would look like this:

Warm-Ups

- Sled Dragging: 3 sets of 20 steps
- Glute Ham Raises: 1 set of 6 reps
- Push-Ups: 1 set of 10 reps
- Lat Pulldowns or Chins: 1 set of 10 reps

Over the next few weeks, the sets, reps and movements will increase to something like this:

- Sled Dragging: 4 sets of 80 steps
- Glute Ham Raises: 4 sets of 12 reps
- Push-Ups: 4 sets of 15 reps
- Lat Pulldown or Chins: 3 sets of 15 reps
- Incline Sit-Ups: 3 sets of 20 reps
- Neck Raises: 3 sets of 10 reps
- Dynamic Band Stretching: 5 minutes

As you can see, the total volume and work has increased and the main part of your training session has remained unchanged. When your warm-up gets over seven to eight items, then you can cut it in half and move four items to an afternoon session (in an extra workout). Now you can add four more movements (over time) to the morning warm-up session and four more (again, over time) to the afternoon session.

You may find that keeping it all in the morning session is the best way for you and you won't need the afternoon sessions. You may also find you need different movements to get your body ready for the real work of the day. Whatever you choose to do, remember that extra work should be added in a slow process over time. And as long as you're making gains, don't be so quick to add extra work.

Listed below are a few items I feel are great for extra workouts and warm-up sessions:

- Light Plyometrics: Rope Skipping and Low Box Jumps (under 10")
- Glute Hams Raises: Not the "natural" glute ham raises everyone seems to think are GHR's. You need a special bench to do these. The natural GHR is too intense for warm-up and extra work and is better left in the main session.
- Reverse Hypers
- Any Abdominal Training
- All Type of Sled Dragging
- Any Light Band Movements
- Free Standing Squatting
- Light Deadlifting (under 40% of max)
- Push-Ups
- Dumbbell Shoulder Raises

Coaching

A coach is a mentor, training partner, motivator and leader. There are many other functions the coach will fill but the most important is this:

The coach should strive to make you better than he is.

A great strength coach will be one who's lived in the trenches and has paid his dues with blood, sweat and iron. If you want to squat 800 pounds, why would you ever listen to someone who has never squatted 455?

Ask yourself this question and you'll see my point. How much do you bench press? The answer doesn't matter that much, but let's say it's 400 pounds. Now ask yourself, how much more did you have to learn about training to bench 400 as compared to when you pressed 200? Would you also agree that there's much more to learn to take your bench from 400 to 500? I think so.

Now, how much more training did you have to do to go from 200 to 400? Did it come overnight? Or did you have to work hard and work smart to get there? Nobody will ever be able to convince me that no knowledge was gained in the 200 pound process!

The next question would be, could this same under-the-bar-knowledge be learned from a book? In other words, is there another way to gain this same knowledge? I don't think so. I feel the best coaches are the ones who've attained both under-the-bar knowledge and book knowledge. If you had to only choose one, it would have to be the under-the-bar coach. He knows how to get you where you're going because he's been there.

After all, how do you know what really works if you never put it to the test? I see tons of new programs on how to get strong and the first thing I ask the author is, "Have you done it? What did it do for you?"

I could go on and on about coaches, as it's one of those topics that drives me nuts, but it would become a huge rant article. I'll leave you instead with this short story. Years ago I came to train with Louie Simmons at Westside Barbell. He was semi-retired at the time. We had a big group of lifters, but only two or three were elite and most were below average. I believe there was only one 900 pound squat. When Louie decided to make a comeback and begin training hard again, the entire gym changed and a few years later, we were all elites and had over six 900 pound squats. The rest was history.

Tell me a coach who trains isn't a better coach! If you're a coach, get your ass in the gym and get strong again. You owe it to yourself and your team.



Set your goals high and keep them to yourself

At one of his seminars, Jim Wendler asked how many of us had set training goals. Out of 60 people, only five raised their hands, myself included.

You can't know where you're going without good goals. However, I just want to mention one aspect of training goals that you may not have considered: your goals can limit you. You should set that goal out there, not to work toward, but to smash. Too many times, I've heard people say, "My goal is to bench 300 pounds." Then when they finally get there, they could have done so much more.

That's why Louie Simmons always taught me to break my PR by five pounds on my second attempt (in a powerlifting meet you get three attempts), and go for broke on my third. It's also why when I was dieting for fat loss, I also set a timetable based on a number of weeks. If I reached my desired percent bodyfat early, I keep going. If I didn't reach it in time, I shut it down for another cycle.

The other thing I suggest when setting goals is to keep your goal specific to yourself and a select few, and general to all others. In other words, if your goal is to bench 400 pounds, keep that as a marker in your mind, but if others ask just tell them, "I'm training for a bigger bench," or "I'm working toward a new PR." Your goal may be to get your bodyfat down to 6%, but all the masses need to know is, "I'm dieting right now."

The reason for this is simple: 90% of everyone you meet are negative pricks who will go out of their way to tell you why you can't do something. Once they know your goal, they'll try and tear you down. Just keep it vague, and all they can do is wish you success.

Of course, they may still try and tear you down once you've actually accomplished your goal, but who cares. You've done the work and have the results to show for it. They couldn't have done it. So fuck 'em.

I do feel it's important to still put the goal out there to make you accountable, but I'd only tell those who know you can do it and will hold you accountable. Take a good look at the people around you, and consider yourself lucky if you know even a small handful of people like this. But all you really need is one: you.

The Strength and Resolve of a Five-Year-Old Kid

I've volunteered in my son's kindergarten class most of the year, and it's been a great time. I was there yesterday, walking down the hallway listening to the morning announcements. I heard something about a fire and donations for the family.

So I go to the classroom and I'm sitting there not even thinking about it. At the beginning of reading time, the teacher brings up one of the kids in the class. Well, it's the kid who just lost everything in the fire over the weekend. You could tell the kid wasn't in the highest of spirits.

The teacher's explaining to the class that the important thing was that nobody was hurt. She's doing exactly what she should do because the kids have questions, you know?

"Did you lose your clothes?" "Did you lose your toys?"

He starts talking about how one of his cats ran off because it was scared of the fire, and his two dogs are now in heaven. And it's just killing this kid to sit up there and talk about it.

All of a sudden these little kids start saying things like, "You can have some of my clothes" and "you can have my dog" and "you can stay at my house." Every single kid in this class is willing to give this kid their toys. He looks up and says that everything's fine and he has everything he needs right in front of him.

I had to get up and fucking walk out of the room.

All these kids know the most important things in life are friends and family. And I'm standing in the hallway and it just dawns on me. Where did we get so fucked up? Because we're really starting off okay. It was one of the most inspiring moments I've had in my entire life, seeing the strength and resolve of a five-year-old kid.



You're a Lot Stronger Than You Think You Are

Look, any dog will bite if you fucking kick it hard enough. You've got to be willing to fix your attitude and get your shit tuned in. You've got to be around people with the same attitude that you want to cultivate. If you start hanging out with successful people, you're more inclined to be successful.

If you see guys busting their ass, straining and pushing against weights you didn't think they could move, it's going to teach you a lesson. You're going to find out that you're a lot stronger than you think you are once you stop being a pussy. I think you can learn attitude. Everyone's got it in them.

And everybody's emotional strength falls on different levels. Just because one guy is psyched up and has a look of intensity doesn't necessarily mean that the other guy next to him who looks like he's falling asleep isn't internally just as driven as the first guy. That's where people get a lot of this confused.

Attitude is contagious, right? But it's also the fucking plague. So if you get a guy in there who's working against the group, who won't shut up or is asking stupid questions, you need to get rid of the dipshit and move on.

Shut Up and Listen

It's very hard to be an athlete and coach at the same time.

I've been very fortunate in my 25 years of training, in that I've always found people to look over my shoulder. I'm sure I know how to train myself better than anyone else knows how to train me, but I also accept that I don't know everything. I also recognize that no matter what, there's probably always a better way.

We'll never know for sure what the "best" way is, but something tells me that we miss more than we hit. Having someone look over your technique, training plan, diet, and other training aspects can save you time and mistakes down the road.

Let me say something here about programming. We all know there are different aspects to program development, ranging from (but not limited to) flexibility, strength, endurance, mobility, pre-habilitation, and all their subcomponents such as strength-speed, strength-endurance, dynamic flexibility and a host of others. The thing most people seem to miss is you can't have it all.

Think of it as a stereo equalizer, with each aspect having its own control. If you were to slide all the controls to the right, all you would hear is distortion (overtraining, imbalances, injury, etc.). If you were to slide them all to the left you wouldn't hear anything (no training; no results).



The key is to find the right settings that produce the perfect sound for the goals you're training for. This is where a coach or someone with experience can help out because what you're used to hearing may not be the best sound because you've become accustomed to it (your cheap Walkman sounds great until you walk into a BOSE store).

The other thing to remember is that there are lots of different settings, and what sounds good to one person might not sound the best to you. If you're getting the results you want, then you're good to go.

Finally, if you do ask or seek help, then shut the hell up and listen. If you asked the right person, then they have something to offer you. Even when you don't ask, keep your ears open. Believe it or not, there are people who are better than you, and who know more. They just might say something that can help you. You may have been missing something that they were able to spot.

People always ask me, "knowing what you know now, would you have changed anything about your training or diet from years ago?" My answer is always the same: no. You can't turn back the clock and change the past. You can only do what you can do today. I see no reason to answer what I can't do anything about. Do I offer people different advice now based on what I feel were my mistakes of the past? Yes, of course. I've made some huge mistakes, but they were necessary, because without them I wouldn't have learned anything.

The best way I've found to use coaches is to make your training result a team effort. So you're not just training for yourself, but for everyone who's involved in the process. When all's said and done, they'll get (and deserve) the credit, but you're the one who'll get the result.

I have and will always consider this a fair trade, and because of this I've been able to enlist the help of many of the best coaches in the world. You may recognize some of the names: Alywn Cosgrove, Justin Harris, Dr. John Berardi, Dr. Eric Serrano, Jim Wendler, Louie Simmons, Todd Brock, Chuck Vogelpohl, Joe DeFranco, Dr. Ryan Smith, and many others. Without their help over the years, I wouldn't have been able to achieve all the goals I had set for myself.

The Western Method of Periodization

The Western or linear method of periodization is the most practiced yet most misunderstood form of periodization used by lifters and coaches today. I was first introduced to the Western method from the NSCA journal and from the “workouts of the month” section in *Powerlifting USA* magazine. This method consists of a hypertrophy phase, basic strength phase, power phase, peak phase and a transition phase. Many times other terms will be used but the parameters are basically the same.

The Hypertrophy Phase: This phase is intended to condition and build muscle mass. This phase is characterized by a high volume and low intensity. In this case, the volume refers to the amount of repetitions being preformed while the intensity refers to the amount of weight lifted in relation to your one rep max. The typical load or intensity lifted is in the 50 to 70% range for three to five sets of 8 to 20 reps. The average rest between sets is two to three minutes and the average length of the entire phase is between four to six weeks. These parameters are intended to build a solid base of support for the upcoming strength phase.

Sample Hypertrophy Meso Cycle

Week	Sets	Reps	Intensity	Rest
1	5	10	62%	3 Minutes
2	4	10	64%	3 Minutes
3	3	10	66%	3 Minutes
4	3	8	68%	3 Minutes
5	3	8	70%	3 Minutes



The Strength Phase: The goals of the strength phase is to, you guessed it, increase muscle strength. The parameters for this phase are characterized with a typical load between 75 to 86%, utilizing three to five sets of 4 to 6 reps. The average rest is two to four minutes and the duration is four to six weeks. As you can see, the intensity is beginning to increase while the volume is beginning to decrease.

Sample Strength Meso Cycle

Week	Sets	Reps	Intensity	Rest
1	5	6	75%	3 Minutes
2	5	6	77%	3 Minutes
3	4	5	79%	3 Minutes
4	4	5	82%	3 Minutes
5	3	4	85%	3 Minutes

The Power Phase: This phase is designed to increase the overall power of the athlete. The parameters of this phase are characterized by performing three to five sets of 3 to 5 reps with 86% to 93% intensity. The duration of this phase is normally four weeks. The rest is usually between three to five minutes.



Sample Power Meso Cycle

Week	Sets	Reps	Intensity	Rest
1	3	4	87%	3 Minutes
2	3	3	89%	3 Minutes
3	3	3	91%	4 Minutes
4	3	3	93%	5 Minutes

The Peak Phase: This is the final phase of strength development. This phase is designed to “peak” on all the abilities that have been developed earlier. The peak phase is characterized by performing two to three sets of 1 to 3 reps with 93% or more. The average rest is now increased to four to seven minutes and the duration is two to four weeks. You’ll again notice that the volume is lower and the intensity is increased.

Sample Peaking Meso Cycle

Week	Sets	Reps	Intensity	Rest
1	3	3	95%	5 Minutes
2	2	2	97%	7 Minutes
3	2	1	99%	7 Minutes

The Transition or Active Rest Phase: This is the final phase of this macro cycle known as the Western method of periodization. This phase can be done a couple of ways. The first is to perform three to five sets of 10 to 15 reps with 50% of your new one rep max.

The second way is to break away from training altogether and only perform light physical activity. For many powerlifters and strength athletes this phase is normally just taking time off and performing no weightlifting. Others may choose to go to the gym and perform bodybuilding style exercises with very little work done in the classic lifts (squat, bench and deadlift).

The Max Effort Method

The max effort method is considered by many coaches and athletes to be the superior method of strength development. It places great demands on both intramuscular and intermuscular coordination and also stimulates the central nervous system. These demands force the body into greater adaptation and this adaptation is what's responsible for strength gains.

When training using the max effort method, the central nervous system inhibition is reduced. Thus the maximum numbers of motor units are activated with optimal discharge frequency (Zatsiorsky). The one drawback to using this method is that you can't train with weights above 90 percent RM for much longer than three weeks before the nervous system begins to weaken. When this happens your strength will begin to diminish.

This is one of the major reasons why progressive overload will only work for so long. With this in mind, Westside set out to find a way around this three-week barrier. The way to overcome this barrier is to switch the exercises used for the max effort method every one to three weeks. This keeps the body fresh so the method can be used year round.

So how do you use this method? First, decide on one main exercise that will be trained with this method. After a proper warm-up, proceed to this exercise and begin to warm up with the bar. Taking small weight increases, you begin to work up in weight with sets of three reps. When three reps begins to feel heavy, you drop down to single reps. This is when you begin to try to max out on the exercise. Keep increasing the weight until you've reached your one rep max. Make sure to keep track of what this record is because this is what you'll try to beat next time out.





A max effort exercise would look like this:

Floor Press		
Sets	Reps	Weight
2	5	45
2	3	95
1	3	135
1	3	185
1	3	225
1	3	275
1	1	315
1	1	365
1	1	405
1	1	425
*A floor press is done just like a bench press, but while lying on the floor.		

In the above example, 425 would represent the lifter's one rep max. This is the number that should be recorded and that you'll try to break on a later date. It's very important to use this method with only one exercise per workout and no more than one time per week for each lift. The Westside method schedules one max effort day for the bench and one for the squat and deadlift as follows:

Monday: Max effort day for building the squat and deadlift (while this seems contradictory to the above statement — doing only one exercise per workout—it's not, in that you'll be doing one exercise to build both movements).

Wednesday: Max effort day for building the bench press.

Since many of the same muscles are used for the squat and deadlift, they're trained on the same day. Actually, very little deadlifting is performed with this style of training because of these reasons.

The best max effort exercises for the squat and deadlift are good mornings, low box squats and deadlifts themselves. The good morning is probably the best overall exercise for strength development and should be utilized 70% of all max effort days. There are several different types of good mornings that can be performed. Good mornings using a variety of different bars such as the safety squat bar, buffalo bar, and cambered bar are classics at Westside Barbell.

Many of these good mornings are performed with the bar suspended from chains. By suspending the bar from the power rack (called suspended good mornings), you're creating the same specificity as when you deadlift. This is because you start the deadlift without any eccentric or lowering motion. This is also true when you have to squat under a suspended barbell and lift it to a standing position.

The best max effort exercises for the bench press are the floor press, board press, close grip bench press, JM press, and reverse band presses. All pressing motions! As with the squat and deadlift max effort exercises, there are several variations of each movement. Each exercise has a specific function.

For instance, the floor press (basically lying on the floor, benching sans bench) takes your legs out of the motion so greater emphasis is placed on the pecs, delts and triceps. The close grip incline press takes your lats out of the motion so there's greater emphasis placed on the deltoids and triceps. The board press also takes your lats out of the motion and provides you with the opportunity to train at specific points of the bench press.

The max effort mesocycle should only last one to three weeks with the latter being for the novice and intermediate strength athlete. The more advanced the athlete, the shorter the time spent per cycle (or time spent per max effort exercise). This is due to neuromuscular coordination and motor learning. The advanced athlete can call upon more motor unit activation (use more muscle) than the novice. For example, the novice may use 40% of his total muscle while the advanced lifter will be able to use 80%.

The second reason involves neuromuscular and muscular coordination. The advanced lifter has already figured out and mastered how to do the movement. His body knows what to do and when. The novice athlete hasn't figured out how to do the movement and is far from mastering it. This will allow the novice to progress and break records for around three weeks on each max effort exercise. However, this won't be the case for the advanced athlete.

These advanced athletes will have one good week where they break a record then will be unable to break it for the next two weeks. So the solution is simple: switch every week! This will allow you to break records on a weekly basis and avoid overtraining. (Max effort training, by the way, is a process of learning how to better synchronize the muscle involvement. This is because of the activation of the central nervous system as well as other factors such as motivation and concentration.)



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If you don't always break a record, don't worry about it. The strain is more important than the record itself. With this in mind, if you happen to break your record and it was very easy, to the point that you really didn't strain, then you must go for an even higher record where you actually strain.

Max Effort Parameters	
Load (Intensity)	90 to 100%
Number of Exercises	1
Repetitions	1-3
Rest Interval	2 to 5 minutes
Frequency / Week	1 (Squat Day) / 1(Bench Day)
Weeks per Exercise	1-3

The Dynamic Effort Method

The dynamic effort method is used to train the box squat and bench press. This method is defined as lifting a non-maximal load with the greatest speed possible. This method should be coupled with compensatory acceleration. This means you must apply as much force as possible to the barbell. For example, pushing as hard and as fast as you can in the concentric phase of the lift. If you squat 700 pounds and are training with 400 pounds, then you should be applying 700 pounds of force to the barbell.

The weight used should be non-maximal in the 50-75% range. In the text *Supertraining*, Siff and Verkeshonsky state the best range for developing explosive strength in the barbell squat is two-thirds of your best one rep max. Angel Spassov defines this as 50-70%. This method isn't used for the development of maximal strength, but for the improved rate of force development and explosive force. Let's assume an athlete can only get so strong for genetic reasons. If this lifter has reached his genetic strength potential and has been stuck for five years, can he not get stronger?

I was told at one time that I had reached this limit. I was told this by several university professors in the field of exercise science. What they forgot is that if I learned how to better synchronize my muscles to perform, then I could get stronger by better neural activation. The result was 300 more pounds on my total! This is because at the time, I may have only been activating 50% of my absolute strength potential. Through dynamic effort training I was able to activate 70 or 80%. (The percents are used as examples, this was never tested.) This is also a reason why the percent should never be as important as bar speed. Everybody has different motor learning and the advanced strength athlete will activate more than a novice athlete. This is why the more advanced the lifter is, the harder the work is.

For example, if both athletes performed a set of 10 reps in the barbell squat with 80%, the novice would walk away like it was no big deal, while the advanced athlete wouldn't be walking anywhere because he'd be on the floor! If you've followed Louie Simmons' articles over the years, you'll notice how the percents he writes for the squat and bench press have reduced over the years. This is because the gym as a whole has gotten so much stronger and more experienced. The percent for the bench press used to be around 70, now it's around 45-55%. Many have asked, "How can this be?" Well, as stated above, the athletes are now recruiting more motor units than before, so less percent is needed to produce the desired results.

The best way to determine what your training percent should be, is to begin with 50% and have someone videotape your bar speed. If you can maintain this bar speed, then increase the percent. When the bar slows down, then decrease the percent.

The dynamic days are scheduled as follows:

Friday:	Dynamic effort squat day
Sunday:	Dynamic effort bench day

These dynamic days are to be done 72 hours after the max effort day to allow for proper recovery. The training scheme for the dynamic days begins with plenty of warm-up sets and progresses onto the work sets. For the bench press, use 8 sets of 3 reps and for the box squat use 8 sets of 2 reps. There are many reasons for this set and rep structure.

The first reason is because of Prilepin's charts (see below). Prilepin studied weightlifters to see what the optimal number of reps in each intensity zone should be. Louie applied this research into the training of the powerlifts. At the time the bench press was being trained in the 70% range, while the squat was being performed in the 80% range.

This would equate to an optimal number of 18 lifts for the bench press in a range of 12 to 24 reps, and 15 lifts for the squat in a 10 to 20 rep range. He decided on two reps for the squats and three reps for the bench press because of time specificity of the competitive lifts. The time to unrack the weight to the completion of the lift in competition came out very similar to two reps in the box squat and three reps in the bench press.

Optimal Number of Lifts by Percent (Prilepin 1974)

Percent	Reps	Optimal	Range
70	3 - 6	18 Lifts	12 -24
80	2 - 4	15 lifts	10 -20
90	1 - 2	7 - 10 Lifts	4 -10

The second reason for this set and rep structure is because it has stood the test of time and has worked over and over again without flaw. This has created an evolving system where the optimal number of lifts has remained 16 for the box squat and 24 for the bench press for weights under 80%. We've also found that weights above 80% needed to be handled for 10% of all lifts. This is accomplished by working up after your sets are completed. These extra bonus sets shouldn't be used every workout, but should make up ten out of every 100 lifts.



Sample Dynamic Box Squat Workout

Sets	Reps	Weight	Rest
2	2	135	1 Minute
1	2	225	1 Minute
1	2	315	1 Minute
1	2	405	1 Minute
8	2	455	1 Minute

The squat workout should begin after a general warm-up of exercises such as reverse hypers, sled dragging and pulldown abs. These exercises should be light and used to warm-up and get loose. The first sets should be light and concentrate on good technique. Do as many sets as you need with the lighter weight until you feel warmed up. Then, progress up to your desired training weight. Once at your training weight, the rest period becomes critical. You'll only rest one minute between sets.

The goal of this is to fatigue the fast twitch muscle fibers. These are the fibers responsible for explosive strength and power. We want these muscle fibers to become fatigued because over time, they'll adapt and become stronger. The other reason is that the more you fatigue, the more fibers will become activated with each set. A fatigued muscle fiber won't work as well, so the body will activate more and more muscle fibers to complete the workout. A one-minute rest constitutes about a 1:6 work to rest ratio and anything over 1.5 minutes will defeat the training effect.



Sample Dynamic Bench Press Workout

Sets	Reps	Weight	Rest
2	3	45	1 Minute
1	3	135	1 Minute
1	3	185	1 Minute
1	3	225	1 Minute
8	3	275	1 Minute

The bench press workout should begin with a light general warm-up consisting of upper body sled work and warm-up exercises for the bench press. These can include light shoulder raises to the front, side and rear, as well as some light tricep extensions or pushdown movements. After the warm-up is when you move onto the actual bench press movement.

Begin with the bar for as many sets as necessary to feel loose and warmed up. Increase the weight with 20 or 50 pound jumps depending on your strength level and begin the dynamic work sets with whatever the prescribed percentage is for the day. You'll perform 8 sets of 3 reps in a dynamic fashion. These reps should be performed with compensatory acceleration.

When you finish the bench press movement, you'll move onto the supplemental exercise for the day. This exercise should be some type of tricep press or extension movement. The best ones for this purpose are the close grip bench press, JM press, barbell extensions or dumbbell extensions. The intensity should be high and the volume low. We've found sets in the range of two to four with 3 to 8 reps to be excellent. These sets are started after all warm ups for the exercise have been completed.

The accessory exercises that follow should include movements for the shoulders and lats. These movements should be of moderate intensity for intermediate rep ranges. This may be three to five sets of 8 to 15 reps. You should leave one or two reps at the end of every set. This means you won't go to failure, which will ensure proper recovery for the next workout. Upon completion of these movements you'll move onto prehabilitation work consisting of external rotation moments for the shoulders and light pushdowns and/or light sled work for the upper body.

The Micro Cycle

The micro cycle is the recruitment of a number of different training sessions. There should be at least two training sessions per micro cycle that consist of different types of workouts. The micro cycle also should have specific meaning and purpose. There are many different types of micro cycles including the introduction, restorative, competitive and the shock micro cycle. The average micro cycle will range five to ten days with the average being seven days.

The Introduction Micro: This cycle can and should be used for a number of introduction purposes. It can be used for educational purposes to teach the clients or athletes about the training program and all its variables. This is a very important aspect of training that many coaches and trainers overlook. I believe that the client or athlete must know how the program was designed and why it was designed that way. Better yet, they should be a part of the program design.

Whenever I design a strength-training program, the client is a very large part of the process. Who knows better than the trainee what works and what doesn't work for him? The client has more experience training themselves than anyone, so why not use this knowledge to better the program? The trainee must know where they're going and how and why this program will help them get there.

A second type of introduction micro cycle may be used to introduce the trainee to the exercises he'll be performing over the next few cycles. This gives him a chance to have a "walk through" of the different exercises and get used to the correct form and technique that'll be needed for the higher intensities later on.

Exercise technique is another overlooked aspect of most training programs today. When I walk into any gym or health club I'm impressed with the lack of technique being practiced. You'd think with the number of trainers and coaches around today that this problem would be getting better, but in many ways it's worse. Now you have trainers who have no idea what they're doing showing a client how to perform an exercise!

Not all trainers are bad, of course. There are many excellent trainers I've spoken with across the world and I've learned a great deal from many of them. These trainers are usually very expensive and hard to find, so it would be best for most people to buy a book on exercise technique or attend one of the many seminars offered by today's top strength coaches.

The Restorative Micro: This cycle is designed to aid in the recovery process. It can involve anything from taking a week off, to implementing some restorative techniques such as contrast showers, steams, saunas, massage, active rest or "feeder" workouts. Active rest involves those workouts that implement a type of training other than what the athlete normally does. For a weightlifter this can include walking, or for a football player, playing basketball.



The “feeder” type workouts are those intended to better prepare the muscle for an upcoming training session. When these workouts make up the majority of the training micro cycle it then becomes a restorative cycle. Active rest and feeder workouts will be discussed later because of the importance they have in the total development of a strength training program. After all, if you’re not recovering, then you’re not making gains!

The Competitive Micro: This is the cycle leading up to the competition or event. For a powerlifter this would consist of the five to seven days right before the competition. During this time, they should lower the training volume and intensity.

The week before can make or break the outcome of the competition. Too much work and the lifter will go into the meet overtrained and tired. Too little work and he’ll go in under-prepared. For a football player, this can be the last three to six days before the game. It becomes a tight balancing act during the season to ensure the optimum amount of training with the right amount of recovery and restoration.

The Shock Micro: This micro cycle is designed around shocking the body into new growth and adaptation. This shock can come in many forms and can range from taking a week off to a high volume training cycle.

The Meso Cycle

This cycle is made up of many micro cycles designed around one specific purpose. Most programs use this cycle to develop one component of fitness such as strength, power, endurance or some other physical ability. These cycles range from one to four months. There are many types of meso cycles including introduction, base, competitive, restoration, strength and power cycles.

The Introduction Meso: This cycle is designed to introduce a person to fitness or strength training. Like the introduction micro cycle, most of the time is spent on the teaching of the movements and training program.

The Base Meso: It has been said many times that you can’t build a house on a weak foundation. The base meso cycle is usually designed to build a strong and fundamental base of fitness (a solid foundation).

An example of the effectiveness of a base-building meso cycle would be my wife, Traci. When she first came to train with us at Westside, her back was so weak and sore that she had a hard time picking up an empty barbell.

Most of her training during the first few months consisted of building up her abdominal, lower back, glutes, hips and hamstrings. She performed endless sets of reverse hypers, glute-ham raises, and abdominal pulldowns. When her base was built up, heavier training was introduced and within the first year she’d totaled her first “Elite” with a 360 squat, 240 bench, and 315 deadlift in the 123 pound class. Not bad for not being able to pick up a barbell without pain 12 months earlier. Without taking the time to develop a solid foundation, her gains wouldn’t have been possible.

Other Meso Cycles: The strength and power meso cycle is designed around building strength, while the competitive meso cycle is that cycle leading up to the competition or test date (the day you attempt a new PR). These meso cycles can be designed a number of different ways and all are intended to bring out the highest level of competitive strength. Competitive strength is different than maximal strength because it utilizes the elements of the competition to bring out the highest strength levels. With competitive strength, many times there's a break from training right before the competition to help the body restore and prepare for peak performance. There's also the element of the spectators and a "psyche up" to help bring out higher strength levels.

Maximal strength is the max level of strength that can be displayed in the gym. This is why many times we don't recommend training with a psyche-up in the gym. Psyching up during training can actually be detrimental to strength performance because of the increased demand on the central nervous system.

The Repetition Method

The repetition method, otherwise known as the bodybuilding method, is the best method for the development of muscle hypertrophy (growth). This is the method in which all supplemental and accessory exercises are trained. This method is defined as "lifting a non-maximal load to failure." It's during the fatigued state when the muscles develop maximal force. According to this method, it's only during the final lifts that, because of fatigue, the maximal number of motor units are recruited. This system of training has a great influence on the development of muscle mass, which is why it became so popular among the bodybuilding population.

The fact that the final lifts are performed in a fatigued state makes this method less effective compared to the others when it comes to maximal strength development. This is one of the reasons why powerlifters are much stronger than bodybuilders. Another disadvantage of this method is that each set is carried to failure. This makes it very difficult to increase your volume and work capacity over time because of the amount of restoration needed. Training to failure is very hard on your ability to recover and, in my opinion, should only be used sparingly. When you extend a set to failure many times, the last few reps are performed with bad technique and this, of course, can lead to injuries.

Westside has modified this principle to what I refer to as the modified repetition method. With the modified version, all sets should be stopped with the breakdown of technique and there should always be a rep or two left in the tank. Remember this principle is applied to all supplemental and accessory movements. These movements are designed to be exactly what they are: supplemental and accessory. The main goal of these movements is to complement the overall training program, not take away. By training to failure on every set you'd be taking away from the general purpose of the movements, which is to increase work capacity.



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Perform
Prevail**



The parameters of this method are varied and depend upon the individual. Some athletes develop muscle mass with high reps and other with low reps. It would be crazy to assume one specific rep range works for everybody. What we've found to be best with supplemental and accessory work are sets in the range of 5 to 8 with repetitions between 6 and 15. This is a rather large range, but as I mentioned before, everybody is different. If you've been training for some time, I bet you have a better idea of what works for you than I could ever prescribe.

The load or weight to be used should fall in the 60 to 80% range and you should always leave a rep or two at the end of each set. Try to switch the exercise after every one to five workouts in which it's used. If you decide not to switch the exercise, then switch the way it's trained. Try to add an extra set for a few weeks. Try to work it up for four weeks, then deload it for four weeks. The point is to change it up as much as possible.

Modified Repetition Method Parameters	
Load (Intensity)	60 to 80%
Number of Exercises	All Supplemental and accessory
Repetitions	5-8 / 6 - 15
Rest Interval	1 to 3 minutes
Frequency / Week	All workouts
Weeks per Exercise	1-5

How to Increase Work Capacity

Many years ago during a conversation with the late Mel Siff, the topic of periodization training came up. Mel made a statement that I'll never forget. He told me about something Medvedyev, one of the originators of the periodization concept, had said years before: "Periodization training in the United States has been set back 40 years by some of the current books written on the topic."

This is a statement I have been writing about for years. Not only will this Western style of training lead to overtraining and stagnation, it also ignores one basic concept of training: increasing work capacity. Yet, when you mention this lifters want to start adding as many extra workouts to their training as they can thinking it will yield some miracle results.

Work capacity is the underlying component of any training program. It's the ability to perform work, which determines your level of fitness that will, in turn, determine your level of preparedness. If you raise your work capacity too fast, you'll overtrain; if you reduce it under your current level, you'll regress. If your work capacity is still at the same level it was two years ago, then I'll bet you're at the same strength and hypertrophy level you were two years ago!

So how do you increase work capacity? You can increase your work capacity by several means; ONE of the best ways is to incorporate extra training sessions. In other countries, it's not uncommon to see athletes performing up to three or four workouts per day! There are several types of extra workouts that can make a tremendous difference in your training. Each type of workout is designed to illicit a certain outcome. Here are some examples:

1.) Recovery Workouts: These training sessions may also be known as "feeder" workouts and are designed to aid in the recovery process. For example, if you performed a heavy bench press workout on day one with 400 pounds, then on day two you'd use the same exercise with very light weight for higher repetitions, such as 135 pounds for two sets of 20. The idea is to induce blood into the muscle to speed the recovery process.

Another type of feeder or recovery workout is sled dragging. This has helped lifters with a multitude of training situations. I've seen the use of the sled add 30 to 60 pounds to the deadlift, aid in the recovery process, add lean body mass and bring up weak points.

The sled can be used for a number of different exercises for both the upper and lower body. Some of these include standard around-the-waist dragging, ankle dragging (where you drag the sled with the use of your legs), and pull-through dragging (where you drag the sled by holding the sled strap between your legs). You can also perform upper body dragging where you drag the sled by performing front raises, rear raises, side raises, presses and extensions.



A great benefit of the sled is that there's no eccentric (negative) motion for many of the exercises. It's believed that the eccentric is responsible for DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness) and when the eccentric is taken away from the exercise, you're left with a concentric motion that'll induce blood flow to the muscle without causing soreness.

2.) Work Capacity Workouts: The sled and Prowler can be used for increasing work capacity, by dragging heavy twice a week. In this case, the athlete would start with one 45-pound plate on the sled and drag it for 200 feet, then rest for 30 to 45 seconds, put another plate on the sled and drag it for another 200 feet. This is repeated until the weight can't be pulled the desired distance.

3.) Targeting Weak Points: These workouts are extra training sessions devoted to your weak points. For most athletes, the abdominals are a great example of where extra training sessions can make a real difference. This workout would be preformed separate from the main training workout and would be specialized for that one area.

This is the one most people get into trouble with. If you decide to do this, then you begin with one light movement and keep it that way until you see how it affects your program. It's usually better to just add this extra movement at the beginning or end of your other training sessions per week first and see how that works.

This type of training takes years to build up to, of course, but I wanted to show you that increasing your work capacity is needed to reach the next level. PLEASE read that last sentence again. NOW, go read it one more time.

Work Capacity will automatically increase as you get stronger (this is another way to increase it). You can also build phases into your training with only this intention in mind (using more of a block model). There are other ways to increase work capacity, but they all need to be well thought out and introduced slowly over time.

Years ago the extra workout thing was very misunderstood and got way out of hand. Unless it's for recovery, I wouldn't toss in extra workouts from the start. I would rather focus on your training density and go from there.

If you are going to go back and look at your training from an analytic standpoint, you need to look at things like work capacity because it is a component that effects all others. If you want to analyze your program to see what is really going on, you need to look past just sets and reps. You need to look at workload and volume in regards to the type of load lifted. How many lifts are down with maximal weights and what is the total workload in the 90% and above range? What is it with sub maximal weights? What is the break down with core movements, max effort movements and speed work? What correlations exist? What is the desired dynamic effort workload needed to squat 700 pounds and for how long? What is the ratio required between vertical pushing and vertical pulling? If you get out of this ratio, do you get hurt or do your lifts go up? What is the optimal volume of accessory work that is needed and should it ramp up or down before a meet?

If you want to overcomplicate things, there are far better ways to do it then by adding in extra training sessions that you “think” might help. The point is to use your head. If you want to add in extra things, do it slow or as recover first. From there, you can begin to ramp it up (or cycle it) if it’s helping.

The Turning Point

The real turning point in the training process is when you begin to “know” what you need to do, how to do it, and when to do it. I discovered this years ago when speaking to very successful bodybuilders, powerlifters and strongman. They all agreed that there was a time when they became accountable for their own results. They took it upon themselves to discover what worked for them, created their own basic training template, and built the program from week to week, and day to day.

The trick is, how do you take the average guy and get him to this level of thinking?

Two ways:

1. Get your ass in the gym.
2. Study the training process



This Sucks!

Do the Stuff You Suck At

Do you ever wonder where your weak points come from? They're a combination of your strengths overpowering the rest of your skills, which means that you're simply not doing the stuff you hate to do.

Think about it, if your abs and core stability are your weak points, is it because you're training them too hard or too often? Not on your life! Show me a weak point, and I'll show you a movement that isn't being trained because the athlete doesn't like to do it.

Is this something you hate to do? Then do it.

Let me tell you about how I discovered this secret.

It was at the IPA Worlds (a.k.a. the York Barbell Hall of Fame), my first meet after a nine-month hiatus. I took some time off to heal up, regroup, and push my bodyweight up higher. I was looking forward to this meet because my training was going very well and things seemed to be going my way. My warm-up for the squat attempts felt great, fast and very explosive. I was definitely getting jacked up about the meet.

I was on deck, next up. My wraps were on, tight as hell, and I was ready. The moments right before I hit the chalk, were the best moments of my life. The anticipation, the aggression, the work it took to get to this moment were unmatched.

Finally, over the loudspeaker came the words I'd waited nine months to hear, "Load the bar to 860 pounds for Dave Tate." It was a weight I'd squatted several times before, and it was to be my opening attempt. Full of rage, I began chalking my hands.

This is the moment with every big lift that I "detach" from myself, and go on autopilot. Rarely do I remember anything from the time I leave the chalk box until after the lift.

However, this lift I do remember because I couldn't get it out of the rack.

I remember trying to stand up with the weight, but I couldn't budge it. It felt welded to the rack. I tried a few times and still nothing. This pissed me off to no end, so I stepped back and increased my rage as high as I could, got back under the rack...and nothing.

My helpers stepped in and pulled me from the rack. Needless to say, this was not a good moment for me. Nine months of training and I couldn't get my damn opener out of the rack.

Just then, I heard Louie call out, "Dave, you're done. Pull out." I glanced back at him, figuring he was just trying to piss me off. But he looked straight at me and said, "I'm serious, Dave. You're done. Pull out, and we'll talk later. It's not worth what could happen right now."



Now, Louie is one of the best coaches in the world, and I was part of his team, WSBB. This club is known to be the strongest gym in the world and I was one of Louie's boys.

So I pulled out, and spent the rest of the meet watching the rest of my team lift well. I just sat, eating hot dogs and wondering what the hell my problem was.

On the drive home, I told Louie, "I don't understand what happened today. My training went well. I was strong as hell on everything in the gym."

Just then he stopped me and said something I'll never forget: "That's exactly your problem."

As we turned onto the interstate, I sat there thinking that Louie was out of his mind.

How could being strong in the gym be a bad thing?

How can being strong as hell in the gym be a bad thing?

"You know what you need, Dave?" Louie continued. "You need to do those things you suck at. You're at a point where your weaknesses are killing you, and you're doing nothing to address them. Your legs and upper back can easily squat a grand, but your abs and lower back can't squat 860 pounds. Which do you think you'll squat, 1000 or 860?"

The simple truth hit me like a half-ton of iron. Louie was exactly right. In training, I hated doing reverse hypers and standing ab work. As a matter of fact, I hated all lower back and ab work, so to be honest, I skipped it most of the time.

Once again: your weak points are caused by not doing what you hate to do. And this is the difference between competitive athletics and "working out." You can always get into better shape by doing things that you like to do, but to excel at a sport, you have to master doing the things that you hate to do.

So, for the next six months I trained my lower back and abs four days a week. I did this once at the beginning of every session and at the end of each session. At the Nationals in November, I squatted 900 pounds for the first time. For the next meet, I increased my torso training to six days a week, with three days being very heavy and three days being light.

In July, I went back to the IPA Worlds, the same meet I had to pull out of the year before. I squatted 860 pounds, then 905 pounds, and onto an easy 935 pounds.

While training for the 935 pounds, my main gym lifts that I had bragged were so strong were actually down 15 percent from the previous year. However, my torso strength was the strongest that it had ever been

Personality Traits

The most important personality trait a coach or trainer must possess is awareness. Going further than listening, you need to be able to understand the personality of the person you're working with. If you're working with someone who is motivated by positive reinforcement, you need to be aware of that. If you have someone who responds better to negative reinforcement, you need to be aware of that. You need to look at every client or athlete first as a puzzle and second as a person because you need to figure out what goes where. You need to know how to pick up on the simple things. At a recent seminar, I was teaching someone how to squat. I would tell her to sit back, keep the chest up, knees out, and so on. This wasn't working so I had to look for reasons why the message wasn't being received. I figured out that every time I gave a command, she would look at herself. If I said knees out, she would look at her knees. Right away, I knew I was using the wrong cues. Because she was a very visually oriented person, I had to change my commands to "picture your knees out" instead of "knees out." After I did that, her head stayed up, and she used her mind's eye to see what she had to do. This fixed the problem right away. If I hadn't picked up on this, I may still be there trying to teach her how to squat. This isn't rocket science, but basic communication skills are more important than people think. Coaching and personal training is nothing more than communicating training to the person that you're working with. Everyone spends countless hours on the training aspect. But if the message isn't passed from one to another, then it doesn't matter how much or what you know.



Your Program Sucks!

The New Breed

We have entered into a new age of strength and conditioning. I have seen this coming for some time now but tried to dismiss it as a fad. Actually, this has been evolving since the first strength coaches were put into place but it has picked up speed with the popularity of personal training over the past 10 years. I began to see this first hand five years ago when I began giving seminars, but at the time it was very infrequent. Today I see it everyday. I see it on the internet, in journals, magazines, on TV, you name it. I have termed this new breed The Savvy Strength Specialist, or SSS for short.

Here is an example of what I am speaking about: While conducting a seminar, a thin hand goes up in the front of the room. When called upon, I get asked a question like, “So what are your thoughts on the inverse bio-sequential process?” This is then followed with, “Have you ever used imbalanced adductocentric patterns?” This causes my head to spin, as I have no freakin’ idea what he is talking about.

It then dawns on me that this guy has done his homework and is much more educated than I am, but at what expense? His program still sucks!

Ability to Think

It seems to me that we are now in the age of the over-educated under-trained strength coach and trainer. This new breed owns and studies everything they can find on training to the point it has become too much and they have totally fried their ability to think for themselves and use common sense in the development of strength programs.

They have also developed the ability to take these concepts and package them into articles and seminars to make themselves appear as experts in the field, but the program still sucks!

The Great Process

Their published articles and concepts then hit the market and become “the next great training process.” The circle continues and training becomes more and more complicated for the average coach and trainer to understand and implement. This is coupled with the fact that the concepts are usually based upon theory with little or no application. What we are left with are dozens of self-proclaimed experts who have little to no training experience to back up their theories coaching thousands of readers on the “best” way for them to train.

Three Steps

I was once told that the way to truly seek out a good coach or trainer involves a three-step process. These three steps include: education, ability, and action. I do not hold each of these three steps at the same value because each step can be more important than the other depending on the profession the coach or trainer wishes to seek. For example, a professor would need a higher education base to teach in a classroom while a coach needs to have a very strong ability. Ability, in short, is getting the job done in the weight room while action is showing you believe in your process.

**Balance**

Let's examine these three steps in regards to the strength and conditioning coach or trainer. I am very close to these professions and feel I know the market from both ends of the spectrum. I have put my time in as a coach, trainer, writer, speaker, and small business owner. I have also come to know many athletes, trainers, coaches, and professors from the fitness field. Not only do I know these markets, but I can tell you the average age, hobbies, income, and dozens of other demographic variables associated with these groups. The one thing I have found is there are no experts. Not one, nada. I also know we are all looking for the same things: To better ourselves, our teams, and our athletes. As long as these three are kept in balance, things move forward.

When the desire to better yourself becomes greater than the desire to better your client, team, or athlete, then your program sucks!

Education

Education is very important to the strength coach and trainer. Education also comes from many forms, styles, and places. You should look everywhere for new ideas and thoughts. These can be found in trade journals, conferences, networking opportunities with other professionals in the industry, magazines, web sites, forums and discussion groups, seminars, and books. You should also look outside of the strength and conditioning profession for other ideas you may have never thought about. Staying in your own field will also place limits on your growth because you will only be using what has already been done before. You want to position yourself as a leader not a follower. Do not overlook the educational resources at your local gym or private training center. If you want to learn strength then you have to get to the source and talk with those who possess it.

The most common problem I see with trainers and coaches today is that their education is over-killed to the point of being ridiculous. They look like they have spent thousands of hours reading with no time in the gym. This is great if you wish to be a professor but if you want to get great results as a coach you need to realize that there is a huge difference between "book smart" and "gym smart." To this day I still hear remarks about very smart people such as, "Yes, he's smart as hell and has a very high IQ, but he has no common sense." This is the same with coaching and training. "Yes, he really knows his stuff but his exercise technique is the worst I have ever seen."

Education is important but it all has to work into what your own training philosophy is. We all come from different places, with different experiences, so why do so many try to copy others' training philosophies? Strength training is as much an art as it is a science and the only way to have a high level of success is to build upon what you truly believe is correct. I am blown away by the number of times I have asked a coach or trainer what their training philosophy is and all I get in return is a blank stare. Yet, they still have a ton of questions to ask. How can you ask a question when you have no idea how you will use the answer? Your questions should always be building upon what will help your philosophy and keep in mind your philosophy can and will change over time.

In short you may think you have a great program but without a real base of education you are training in the dark and your program sucks!

Ability

You must have the ability to make your team or clients stronger. By this I do not mean taking someone who is below average and making him or her good; anyone can do this. You have to have the ability to make a good athlete great.

Ability is taking your philosophy and making it work. If your training philosophy holds strength at a very high level, then you have to be able to make your athletes or clients stronger. This determines the success of your program. I am amazed at the number of times I have heard, “We have a great program, it is from so-and-so university and it always works for them but it didn’t work for us.” No, it worked for the coach who had the ability to implement the program because it was based on his philosophy. How can you be expected to have the ability to implement a program that is not based on your own philosophy? This is also true for all those who say, “We tried the Westside program and it did not work for us.” I would also bet these same coaches have also tried many “other” programs and they also did not work for them. If they do not have the ability to make it work then no, it will not work.

So how do you develop ability? First pick a program you believe in and know. This will be a program based on your training philosophy. Second, you must learn communication skills ranging from the verbal to non-verbal. You have to be able to read your athletes and clients to know how they feel about the program and what they are putting into it. You also have to know when to push them and when to back it off. These are skills that come with time and can’t be taught in any classroom or books because different people will react differently to the same stimulus.

In short you can have great education but without the ability to put it to use your program sucks!

Action

Lastly, the coach themselves must be above-average in the weight room. I personally feel that this is the most important of the three. This is my biased opinion because I have been training for powerlifting competitions since 1983. I can honestly say everything I have learned about training has been directly related to my time under the bar and the people I have met along the way. When you passion in strength, you always find a way to get better. Let’s look at it this way. The average personal training client will not last one year, the high school strength coach will have an athlete for 3-4 years, and the university-level coach will also have the athlete for 4 years. Most of the time you get these athletes and clients with a very limited training background and knowledge. If this is all you have, then the only knowledge about training you will have particular experience with is with athletes who have only 1-4 years of training experience. This cycle continues over and over and what have you really learned? Compare this to training yourself (seriously, not some get in shape fitness crap program) for the past 10 years. You would have ten years of evolving experience to build off.



You will also gain the ability and experience of:

1. What real straining should feel and look like.
2. What being in shape really is really about.
3. How to set the bar for each lift.
4. What it means to stay tight.
5. How to breathe under tension.
6. How to grip the bar for the best results.
7. How the slightest correction can make all the difference.
8. That strength can be limited depending on who is coaching it.
9. What bar speed feels like.
10. Plus a million other things you will not read in books.

When you train yourself you also gain the respect of your clients and athletes. They will look up to you for what you can do. They will want to seek your advice to be better. I can't count the number of times I have had conversations with athletes and clients of other trainers about strength development. They all want to know what they should be doing. At the same time I hear the coaches saying that their athletes do not care about training. Funny how many times I have spoken with their athletes and they seem pretty damn serious to me. I often wonder, if the coach did not look like a pencil-neck, maybe their athletes wouldn't be asking me questions.

If you look like a pinhead and could not lift a heavy weight to save your life, then your program sucks!

Summary

Get educated, put a weight on your back, develop the ability to implement your training philosophy or your program will suck!

Business Tip

I just read this quote...

"Successful generals make plans to fit circumstances, but do not try to create circumstances to fit plans"

- General George S. Patton

It might be worth going back and reading that again.

There are many ways to look at this but the real take away is you need to know where you are going while learning how to be flexible in getting there.

In business (as well as in training and life) things pop up that are totally unexpected. They can -and will- tap your time and energy, thus detracting from the major purpose of moving you toward your vision. When you really consider what these issues are and how they fit into the overall plan you see they are a necessary part of the process. As I was once told, they are like gaining a master's degree in a different aspect of business. Without them your education and experience stays the same. While you can still gain "book smarts" you will not learn the "street smarts" that are necessary to move forward.

If the example was training you could say a serious injury can teach you more about the training process than if it never happen in the first place. This injury can teach you:

- ▶ **Patience**
- ▶ **Focus**
- ▶ **Attitude**
- ▶ **Why you are doing it in the first place**
- ▶ **Fortitude**
- ▶ **Courage to look at other ideas you would not have considered before**
- ▶ **How to drop your ego and ask for help**
- ▶ **Direction**
- ▶ **Organization**
- ▶ **The source of weak points**

Coming face-to-face with some of these concepts in the weight room is why most people cease to make gains and ultimately quit. They don't know what to do, they get ate up with fear and become frustrated and lost. Before the crisis (the injury), they relied on the circumstances to fit their plan. The problem is circumstances change, will always change, and should be expected to change, thus our plans have to reflect this.

This is the same in business. It's not so important to have a good plan. It's more important to know where you are going and understand it's not the means that need to be studied it's the circumstance that has to be understood first. Then figure out the best plan to fit that circumstance while keeping your eye on the vision and aim of the company.

Back to injuries in training- you need to know the extent of the injury before you can decide to work around it, get it fixed, take time off, etc. This is a given; everyone knows how to execute this. Where the ball gets dropped is when the execution doesn't factor into the long-term goal of the athlete. What may seem like the right idea at the time may look totally different when you look at the long-term objectives.

This is otherwise known as Strategic Thinking.



Strategic Thinking

If your weak point can be addressed with a bodyweight movement try adding it to the beginning of every workout as part of your warm up.

- ▶ Weak hamstrings - A few sets of GHR before each workout 3-4 times a week
- ▶ Weak abs - A few sets of hanging leg raises
- ▶ Weak triceps - Manual extensions or close grip barbell pushups
- ▶ Weak lats - Manual rows
- ▶ Weak quads - One-leg squats
- ▶ Weak delts - Bands pull-aparts (not really a BW movement but fits the bill)

This will increase your volume and make your warm up more specific to your own training goals.



Max Effort Pressin'

For the second bench day of the week (72 hours after the dynamic day) you should concentrate on the maximal-effort method. This is best defined as lifting maximal weights (90% to 100%) for one to three reps. It is one of the best methods to develop maximal strength. The key here is to strain. The downfall is you can't train above 90% for longer than three weeks without having adverse effects.

Try performing a max bench press every week for four or five weeks. You'll see that you may progress for the first two, maybe three weeks, then your progress will halt and begin to work its way backward. We've combated this by switching up the maximal-effort exercises. We rotate maximal-effort movements such as the close-grip incline press, board press, floor press and close-grip flat press. These exercises are specific to bench pressing and all have a very high carry-over value.

Speed Pressin'

According to Vladimir Zatsiorsinsky in his text *Science and Practice of Strength Training*, there are three ways to increase muscle tension. These three methods include the dynamic-effort method, the maximal-effort method, and the repetition method. Most training programs being practiced in the U.S. only utilize one or two of these methods. It's important, however, to use all three.

The bench press should be trained using the dynamic-effort method. This method is best defined as training with sub-maximal weights (45 to 60%) at maximal velocities. The key to this method is bar speed. Percentage training can be very deceiving. The reason for this is because lifters at higher levels have better motor control and recruit more muscle than a less experienced lifter.

For example, the maximal amount of muscle you could possibly recruit is 100%. Now, the advanced lifter (after years of teaching his nervous system to be efficient) may be able to recruit 70 to 80% of muscle fibers, while the intermediate might be able to recruit only 50%. Thus, the advanced lifter would need less percent weight than the intermediate. This is one of the reasons why an advanced lifter squatting 80% of his max for 10 reps would kill himself, while a beginner could do it all day long.

If you base the training on bar speed, then the percentages are no longer an issue, only a guideline. So how do you know where to start? If you're an intermediate lifter, I suggest you start at 50% of maximal and see how fast you can make it move for three reps. If you can move 20 more pounds with the same speed, then use the heavier weight.

Based on years of experience and Primlin's charts for optimal percent training, we've found the best range to be eight sets of three reps. Based on Primlin's research, the optimal range for 70% and less is 12 to 24 repetitions.

We've also found it very beneficial to train the bench using three different grips, all of which are performed within the rings. This may break down into two sets with the pinky fingers on the rings, three sets with three fingers from the smooth area of the bar and three sets with one finger from the smooth area.

Strong Lats = Big Bench

You need to have strong lats if you want a big bench; there's no way around this. To illustrate the point, try this:

- ▶ In a standing position, hold your arms in the bottom bench position
- ▶ Now flare your lats.
- ▶

What happened? Your arms moved forward. This is part of the same movement that happens when you bench press.

The trick to getting and keeping your lats in the movement starts long before the bar hits the chest. It begins with the setup at the beginning of the lift, before the bar leaves the rack. Once again, you need to have the proper tight position. Now you want to tuck your elbows some and pull the bar out of the rack. You do not press out of the rack!

When you press out, your shoulders come apart and your lats aren't tight. Almost 100% of the time this will happen because of the type of bench you're using. Many benches today have j-hooks or uprights that are too damn deep. Therefore, you have no choice but to press it out. In this case you have two options. First, find another bench. Many times the power rack will work out to be the best option. The j-hooks aren't as deep and all you have to do is drag a bench over. The second option is to take a lift-off from a training partner. I personally don't like the lift-off option because it's still hard to keep the lats tight, but if there's no other choice, then by all means use it. This is actually one of the reasons why a lift-off helps you lift more weight.

If you're pressing the bar in a straight line from the lower chest, then there is no way you should ever hit the uprights. So don't be afraid to get under the bar more from the start. Many coaches will tell you to line the bar up with your eyes. I feel it should be lined up with your nose or chin. This way you don't need so much shoulder rotation to get the bar out.

Your program should have the right kind of lat work. You want to use those movements that work on the same plane as the bench press. This means any type of row. There are several to choose from, so pick based on the ones you're the worst at. You should be training your lats two to four times a week, but you don't need a full-blown lat workout as bodybuilders do. One movement for four to five sets should do the trick, but you do need to do them many times a week to try to maintain some type of balance.

Keep Your Blades Together

This is a very important and often overlooked aspect of great bench pressing. While pressing you have to create the most stable environment possible. This can't be done if most of your shoulder blades are off the bench. The bench is only so wide and we can't change this, but we can change how we position ourselves on the bench.

When you pull your shoulder blades together you're creating a tighter, more stable surface from which to press. This is because more of your body is in contact with the bench. The tightness of your upper back also contributes. These techniques also change the distance the bar will have to travel. The key to pressing big weight is to press the shortest distance possible.

Train the Triceps

Years ago, if you had asked Larry Pacifico how to get a big bench, he'd have told you to train the triceps. This same advice applies today. This doesn't mean doing set after set of pushdowns, kickbacks, and other so-called "shaping" exercises. Training your triceps for a big bench has to involve heavy extensions and close-grip pressing movements such as close-grip flat and incline bench presses, close-grip board presses, and JM presses. Various barbell and dumbbell extensions should also be staples of your training program. Don't let anyone try to tell you the bench press is about pec strength. These people don't know the correct way to bench and are setting you up for a short pressing career with sub-par weights. I just read an article in one of the major muscle magazines by one of these authors on how to increase your bench press. The advice given was to train your pecs with crossovers and flies and your bench will go up! This, along with many other points, made me wonder how this article ever got published or better yet, how much the author himself could bench.

I believe articles should go under a peer review board before they get printed. I'd like many of my peers to review these authors in the gym or better yet on the bench to see how much they really know. Bottom line: Train the triceps!

Push in a Straight Line

Try to push the bar toward your feet. The shortest distance between two points is a straight line, right? Then why in the world would some coaches advocate pressing in a "J" line toward the rack? If I were to bench the way most trainers are advocating (with my elbows out, bringing the bar down to the chest and pressing toward the rack) my barbell travel distance would be 16 inches. Now, if I pull my shoulder blades together, tuck my chin and elbows, and bring the bar to my upper abdominals or lower chest, then my pressing distance is only 6.5 inches. Now which would you prefer?

If you want to push up a bar-bending load of plates, you'd choose the shorter distance. Here's another important aspect of pressing in this style. By keeping your shoulder blades together and your chin and elbows tucked, you'll have less shoulder rotation when compared to the J-line method of pressing. This is easy to see by watching how low the elbows drop in the bottom part of the press when the barbell is on the chest. With the elbows out, most everyone's elbows are far lower than the bench. This creates a tremendous amount of shoulder rotation and strain.

Now try the same thing with the elbows tucked and shoulder blades together while bringing the barbell to your upper abdominals. For most people, the elbows are usually no lower than the bench. Less shoulder rotation equals less strain on the shoulder joint. This means pressing bigger weights for many more years. I've always been amazed at trainers that suggest only doing the top half of the bench press, i.e. stopping when the upper arms are parallel to the floor. This is done to avoid the excess shoulder rotation. All they have to do is teach their clients the proper way to bench in the first place!

Your Belly and the Bench Press

For maximum attempts and sets under three reps, you must try to hold your air. Everyone must learn to breathe from their bellies and not their chests. If you stand in front of the mirror and take a deep breath, your shoulders shouldn't rise. If they do, you're breathing the air into your chest, not your belly. Greater stability can be achieved in all the lifts when you learn how to pull air into the belly. Try to expand and fill the belly with as much air as possible and hold it. If you breathe out during a maximum attempt, the body structure will change slightly, thus changing the groove in which the barbell is traveling.

Drive the Traps into the Pad

This is another misunderstood aspect of pressing. You want the pressure around the supporting muscles. This is accomplished by driving your feet into the floor, thereby driving your body into the bench. Try this: Lie on the bench and line up so your eyes are four inches in front of the bar (toward your feet). Now using your legs, drive yourself into the bench to put pressure on the upper back and traps. Your eyes should now be even with the bar. This is the same pressure that needs to be applied while pushing the barbell.

Elbows and Wrist Placement

This is probably the most important aspect of great pressing techniques. The elbows must remain tucked to keep the bar in a straight line as explained above. Keeping the elbows tucked will also allow lifters to use their lats to drive the bar off the chest. Football players are taught to drive their opponents with their elbows tucked, then explode through. This is the same for bench pressing. Bench pressing is all about generating force. You can generate far more force with your elbows in a tucked position compared to an “elbows out” position.

The most important aspect of this is to keep the barbell in a direct line with the elbow. If the barbell is behind the elbow toward the head, then the arm position becomes similar to an extension, not a press.

Pull the Bar Apart

Regardless of the lift, you have to keep your body as tight as Monica Brant’s behind. You’ll never lift big weights if you’re in a relaxed physical state while under the barbell. The best way to get the body tight is by squeezing the bar. We’ve also found that if you try to pull the bar apart, or “break the bar,” the triceps seem to become more activated.

The Reverse Band Press

I still remember the first time we did this movement. We set the bands up from the top of the rack so that the barbell was suspended by the bands. We used a strong band for this. We found it took around 145 pounds for the barbell to touch our chests with a seven-foot power rack.

I was excited as hell to do this. Who wouldn’t be? You now have a band helping toss the weight off your chest. I was all jacked up thinking about the huge weight we’d be lifting. Then, as we worked up, something strange happened. The weight got freakin’ heavy! The bands didn’t help so much at lockout. Next thing we knew we had a great training device to bring up a lifter’s lockout strength. This has since become a staple of our training. So, on some days we’ll use an average band, and on others, a strong band. This movement became part of the great max effort mix of the floor press, board press, chain press, close-grip inclines, and rack lockouts. Our arsenal was growing and has kept growing ever since the first day I stepped into the gym.

To do the max effort reverse band press, all you do is anchor the band around the top of your power rack, load the bar and work up. Many lifters like to do this for 5, 3 or 1 rep maxes. This just depends on what works best for you. This is really all there is to it. This is one of the ways I’ve used the reverse band press for injury recovery and restoration.

Post Injury Phase — Reverse Band

Application: This cycle is intended for recovery and post-injury training. The weight and band should be set up so there's zero weight at the chest. You'll have three options:

1. Light band and 65 pounds
2. Average band and 95 pounds
3. Strong band and 135 pounds

This is one of the best post-injury cycles we've seen. The key to making this work is to let the band do most of the work and keep the muscle tension to a minimum. This workout should be done every bench day until your strength begins to return. This is also a great restoration workout that can be used during regular training phases at the end of the entire session.

The Lat Work Network

I'm talking about the horizontal plane here. In other words, you must perform rows, rows and more rows. "If you want to bench big then you need to train the lats." I've heard both George Hilbert and Kenny Patterson say this for years when asked about increasing the bench press. When you bench you're on a horizontal plane. So would it make sense from a balance perspective to train the lats with pulldowns, which are on a vertical plane? Nope. Stick to the barbell row if you want a big bench.

Now that my trip is over and I'm back in Columbus, I no longer feel like an authority on bench pressing. My 585 pound bench press is considered sort of "puny" by Westside standards, after all. By writing this article, however, I've realized a few things I need to change about my bench pressing. I bet you have too. Hopefully, I've helped you correct a few problems that might've been keeping you from breaking your own personal record. Remember, the smallest things often bring the biggest results.

Elbows out extensions

This is one of the best movements for the lower part of the triceps. If you ever get a chance to see a great bencher, look at the mass around the lower upper arm, right above the elbow. This is where the big benches come from, not the upper part of the tricep.

The elbows out extension is designed to bring this area up to par. To perform the movement, press the dumbbells to the starting position above your chest. You want to keep the butts of the bells together as you lower them to your chest, keeping the elbows out. Pause on your chest for a second then press and extend the bells back to the starting position making sure to keep the butts together. This movement can be performed on a flat bench or incline.



Missing Halfway up in the Bench Press

This sticking point means the lifter is blasting the weight off the bottom very well and then dies a few inches off the chest. This can also be fixed with more bar speed, as this will allow the lifter to bust through this sticking point.

This can also be caused by weak triceps. The best max effort exercises for this problem are mid-position pin presses, two board presses and floor presses.

When the bar flies off your chest and straight back into the rack, it is mostly a bench shirt issue. You either don't know how to use the shirt or you have a bad shirt. With a shirt, you have to bring the bar low and not heave it off your chest. If you heave, the bar will fly back. You have to press the bar up off the chest and build speed as the bar leaves the chest. If your shirt is bad it'll also cause the bar to fly back.

This problem can also occur because your shoulders are stronger than the triceps. You're trying to get the load off the triceps and onto where you're the strongest and that's causing the problem. On the flip side, it can also be because your shoulders aren't strong enough to keep the bar in the right path.

Another technical reason this may happen is because you aren't keeping your arms under the bar. This can happen if your wrists get folded back and the bar ends up being behind the forearm. If this happens, then the force isn't under the bar. These problems can all be fixed with proper coaching and training. Make sure your form is on and bring up the lockout power with specific triceps work and high board and high pin presses for max effort work.

Lockout Strength

This is really one of the best problems to have and the easiest to fix. When you're dealing with sticking points in the bench press, you have to remember that there are several ways to correct the problem, but most won't work for you. So don't beat a dead horse! In other words, if what you've been doing isn't working, then try something else. You have plenty of ammo. I've had this same problem with my bench and sometimes it takes years to stumble upon the right movement to fix the problem. Other times, I hit the right movement the first time out.

1.) Get your head right.

This is true with all sticking points regardless of the point at which you stall out. If you believe you always miss at the top, then you'll always miss at the top! Your mind has a lot to do with your sticking points. I try to teach all the athletes I work with to visualize their sticking point at a higher position and focus very hard on driving the bar through it. In other words, when you bench, you must focus on pushing the bar very fast through your sticking point. Focus will make a big difference.

2.) Learn to use your triceps.

This is done by keeping your body tight and focusing on pulling the bar apart. This will involve your triceps more throughout the movement and will also keep the bar moving in a straight line. A good trick to teach you to do this is to use an EliteFTS mini band. You double the band up and wrap it around your wrists while you bench. This forces you to pull the bar apart and grasp the barbell tight. If not, your hands will be shot together. Pull the bar apart and watch that sticking point disappear!

3.) Start the bar where you want to finish.

This is a very simple concept, but it's very seldom practiced. Most lifters will unrack the bar and lower it to the chest without setting the bar first. This is usually done by habit and will cause you to lower the bar in a diagonal pattern that will result in you pushing it back up in the same pattern. When you push the bar back toward the rack there's more rotation and less emphasis on the triceps.

You need to unrack the bar, then "set it" in the same exact position in which you want to finish. This should be directly above where you lower the bar. If you bench to your lower pecs, then the bar must start above the lower pecs. This will create a straight line both on the eccentric and concentric. Remember, the shortest distance between two points in a straight line.

4.) Move the bar fast.

You need to make sure you're pressing as fast as possible to bust through your sticking point. A slow press won't build enough momentum to bust past your sticking point. If you're trying to open a stuck door would you try to open it slowly or would you bust into it as hard as possible? Speed is key!

5.) Strengthen the top half.

There are several movements that can help you strengthen the muscles that lockout the bench. These are best done using the max effort method. This is the method where you work up to a one or three-rep max on the movement.

The best movement for a weak lockout is a three or four board press. (A board press is preformed by using three or four 2 x 6 boards placed on your chest.) Lower the bar to the boards, pause and press back up. In extreme cases you may want to use a set of mini bands on the bar as well.

A second movement that works very well is the floor press with the use of chains. The floor press is performed the same as the bench press except you're lying on the floor. Work up to about 60 to 70% of your best bench, then begin adding one set of chains on the bar with each additional set. You fail when you can no longer add any more chains.

You can look these movements up on our [Elitefts Exercise Index](#)

For more articles on the bench press click [HERE](#)

Strong(er) Triceps

I've always found extensions to be one of the best movements for lockout strength on the bench press, as well as tricep development.

The problem I share with many others is that when you really begin pushing various extensions in training, your elbows can get beat up.

Most of the lifters I know do not use any logical approach to their supplemental or accessory training and just see this as another tricep movement.

Some thought should go into how you program and rotate your accessory and supplemental work. This is in regards to sets, reps, intensity, how the movement is performed and what movements are done.

Keeping this simple, let's look at tricep extension movements. You have JM Presses, Barbell Type Extensions, Machine Extensions, Dumbbell Extensions, Band Extensions, Chain Extensions, Cable Extensions, Kettlebell Extensions and so on. It's easy to see that a straight barbell extension would be harder on the joints than any of the other movements. This can also be seen as being one of the best because you can use more weight and it's a nice basic movement. I agree that it's one of the best extension movements you can do, but it will take its toll over time.

My suggestion is to cycle your extensions in either an ascending, descending fashion or wave pattern (based on your overall program design).

Suggestion (ascending):

- 2 weeks band extensions
- 2 weeks chain extensions
- 2 weeks dumbbell extensions
- 2 weeks barbell extensions
- 2 weeks JM presses

Suggestion (descending):

- 2 weeks JM Presses
- 2 weeks dumbbell extensions
- 2 weeks machine extensions
- 2 weeks chain extensions
- 2 weeks band extensions

Suggestion (wave):

- 2 weeks JM Presses
- 1 week chain extensions
- 2 weeks barbell extensions
- 1 week band extensions

» MORE INFO

[Exercise Index](#) - Extensions

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Keep Your Ass Down

This is a very common problem with many lifters who don't know how to stay tight on the bench. This problem can range from a small lift of the butt to something resembling the golden arches at Micky D's. This can be caused by several factors but all can be fixed with the right training. I've come across several solutions to this problem:

1) Know your bench. This is probably the biggest reason most powerlifters miss a lift at a meet. They train on a bench that's somewhat higher than the one they use in competition. So in training they know how to position their bodies and stay tight on the bench, but when they go to a meet they find their asses are one inch off the bench. In this case there are several solutions.

First, get on the bench before the meet and see if it feels lower. If it does, then tell your coach to remind you to get your feet out in front of you more; this way, when you go to drive the bar with your legs most of the drive stays lower. If you find this happens at every meet you go to, then you may also want to find another bench on which to train. Another solution is to place a one inch rubber mat under your feet when you train.

2) Know your position. You want to make sure you keep your body tight throughout the motion. Some people like to use a tight arch with their feet tucked back. While I don't agree with this type of benching, you still need to be tight and squeeze your inner thighs into the bench as hard as possible. This creates an anchor to lock you down.

If you bench with your legs out in front of you, you want to make sure you're driving your upper back and traps into the bench. You drive off your heels and through your shoulders. This will give you more power. If you're only driving into your mid-back, then a lot of the force will be lost in the hip when you press, thus your ass comes up.

3) Get the rope. This is a great trick I borrowed from Bill Gillespie. Bill is the head strength and conditioning coach for the Washington Huskies who also happens to have a 635-pound bench. He found many of his athletes couldn't keep their asses on the bench and had to find an easy and quick way to fix it. He came up with one of the best ideas I've seen in a long time.

What he does is attach a five or ten pound plate to a rope. He then has the lifter position himself on the bench and then sticks the rope under his butt so the plate is suspended in the air under the bench. If the lifter comes up, the plate falls to the floor. This is a great feedback device that has worked very well for many athletes.

Benching with Bands

Benching with bands is much harder on your body than benching with chains. For this reason I don't recommend training with the bands for longer than four weeks at a time. It's best to cycle a four-week wave with the bands followed by a four week wave with the chains. When you cycle with the bands you'll want to deduct the added tension the bands create at the bottom off the barbell for the training. The training sets and reps stay the same as the dynamic day with chains. You'll place the bands on the inside part of the bar sleeve then begin adding the plates.



The other end of the band will need to be anchored around the bottom of the band pegs, bench, power rack or a set of dumbbells. To adjust the tension, make the anchor bigger. For example, to create more tension, spread the band pegs further apart or wrap the band under two dumbbells rather than one.

Band Tension Chart		
Max Bench	Tension top	Tension bottom
200-300	40	20
300-400	60	30
400-500	90	45
500-600	90	45
600-700	90	45



Benching with Chains

Training the bench with chains is still one of our most effective ways to push up our max lifts. After warm-ups you'll train your bench at 60% of your shirtless (raw) max for the intermediate lifter. Eight sets of three repetitions will be performed as quickly as possible. This means you'll drop the weight quickly (under control), then catch and explode back up as fast as possible. There's no pause between reps. When using chains you'll throw them on with the training weight. There's no need to reduce the training weight because most of the chain weight will be deloaded onto the floor at the bottom of the lift.



You'll use the same chain set-up as the squat. While the bar is in the rack, one half of the training chain should be on the floor. This will allow for a total deload at the bottom. As a side note, if you were to attach the training chain to the bar sleeve without the support chain (as some manufacturers are doing with their devices), you'll get very little deload because most of the chain will remain off the floor while very little chain will actually end up on the floor. This is why those who don't know how to use a product should never try sell it!

Recommended chain loading for dynamic day:

Chain Loading Chart		
Max Bench	Chains per side	Weight of chain (top)
100-200	1 (1/2)	20
300-400	1 (5/8)	40
400-500	1 (5/8), 1 (1/2)	60
500-600	2 (5/8)	80
600-700	2 (5/8), 1 (1/2)	100

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What Should Be Going Through Your Mind When You Squat?

First of all, it shouldn't matter if it's a PR or not. Squatting is a skill that should be practiced perfectly with every rep when you get under the bar. If you wait until the weight is a PR, then it's too late. The goal of any skill is to master it. So when it comes to PR time, your reaction will be automatic.

Before I get into the specific aspects of squatting, a basic understanding of how to learn and master a skill is in order. Fitts and Posner (1967) suggested the learning process follows sequential stages of learning. These three stages include:

1. Cognitive Phase: This involves gathering and collecting information about all the components of a skill. Let's use the squat as an example. Reading this article, reading other articles on squatting, watching videos, speaking to other lifters and looking at pictures are all examples of this phase. This also includes learning and developing "parts" of the skill. Using the squat again, this would mean learning the walk out, learning how to sit down, etc.

2. Associative Phase: In this phase you begin to link it all together by practicing and using feedback to perfect the skill.

3. Autonomous Phase: This is when the skill becomes automatic and requires little or no conscious thought.

From what I have seen, most readers will have no problem with phase one, but the problems begin when they hit phase two.

Most guys will think they know what they're doing and essentially end up practicing poor technique. In phase one, you squat while having someone else tell you what to do. If I showed you how to squat, I'd be yelling cues at you. In time, you'd begin telling yourself what to do.

Finally, if you master the skill, it will be automatic. The fact to keep in mind is that competitive lifts are never perfect. Even the most skilled have to deal with bodyweight fluctuations, injuries, overtraining states, lack of focus and other things that can affect technique. This is also why you see so much verbal cueing in powerlifting gyms. You will rarely see a lift that isn't being coached during the lift, at least at the better clubs. There are many reasons for this, but the most important is to make the skill automatic.

Strong(er)







How to Box Squat

To take the bar out of the rack, the hands must be evenly placed on the bar. Secure the bar on the back where it feels the most comfortable. To lift the bar out of the rack, one must push evenly with the legs, arch the back, push your abs out against the belt, and lift the chest up while driving the head back. A high chest will ensure the bar rests as far back as possible. Slide one foot back, then the other, to assume a position to squat. Set your feet up in a wide stance and point your toes straight ahead or slightly outward. Also, keep your elbows pulled under the bar to ensure tightness in the upper back.

When you're ready for the decent, make sure to keep the same arched back position. Pull your shoulder blades together and pull as much air into your stomach as possible. Again, push your abs out. You'll maintain this tightness throughout the set. To begin the descent, push your hips back and push your knees out to the sides to ensure maximum hip involvement. Once you reach the box, you need to sit on it and release the hip flexors while keeping the back arched and abs pushed out. At the same time, drive your knees out to the side.

To begin the ascent, keep pushing out on the belt, arch the back as much as possible, and drive the head, chest, and shoulders to the rear. If you push with the legs first, your buttocks will raise first, forcing the bar over the knees and causing stress to the lower back and knees, thus diminishing the power of the squat. You need to keep the barbell in a direct line with the heels throughout the entire movement and this can only be done by keeping your back arched.

As a final note, many lifters freak out when the box is taken away. Because of this, they go back to sitting straight down instead of sitting back. Don't let this happen to you; make sure you squat how you've been trained to squat and you won't have this problem. If you squat 10,000 times on a box at the same height with the same form, then squatting without the box is automatic. The movement becomes instinctive and our lifters have no problem hitting slightly below parallel in a meet.

At Westside, the only type of squat we ever perform is the box squat. We never performed a free squat until the competition. By using the box squat with many other special exercises, we've created two 1000-pound squatters, eight 900-pound squatters and twenty-three 800-pound squatters. We don't have records for any squats lower than that because almost anybody can squat 700 pounds, including you!

Advantages of Box Squatting

- 1.)** Training on a box will allow you to sit back onto the box to a point where your shins are past perpendicular to the floor. This places all the stress on the squatting muscles (hips, glutes, lower back and hamstrings.) When you can increase the stress on these muscles and lower the stress on the quads, then you'll be ready to see your squat weights start moving.
- 2.)** Restoration is another major advantage of box squatting. You can train more often and recover faster compared to free squatting. Test this for yourself and you will see what I mean.
- 3.)** When performing box squats, you never have to guess how low you're squatting. It'll always be the same. Think about it...when most people start adding weight to the bar, their squats get higher and higher. You see this all the time in any gym you go to. They look good with the light weights, then begin doing quarter squats when the weight gets heavy. With box squats, you'll always go low enough.
- 4.)** The box squat reinforces good squat technique. Many times for the intermediate or beginning squatter, the hamstrings aren't developed yet and "sitting back" into a squat is impossible without falling over backward. To teach these athletes how to free squat properly would take months. The squat wouldn't look right until the hamstrings and glute strength increases. Why wait two or three months? Put them on the box and you'll have them squatting properly within five minutes. Within one month the hamstrings will begin to kick in because of the added stress of sitting back on the box.
- 5.)** The box squat will help build confidence because the lifter knows there is something there to catch them if they can't come up.
- 6.)** The box squat is "kind of" like a plyometric movement, except instead of your feet, it's your ass that will absorb and reflex (do not drop hard on the box!).
- 7.)** When teaching a squat, the bottom position is very hard to "correct" and "cue" with the lifter. With the box, you can have them stop and position them where they need to be.
- 8.)** The box squat will teach you to "flex" out of the bottom - not bounce. There are however advantages and disadvantages of this based on your training goals.
- 9.)** The box squat can be used to work hip flexibility by using a lower box with a wider stance.
- 10.)** "Doing static-overcome-by-dynamic work will build a great amount of explosive and absolute strength. Going from relaxed to dynamic work will also build tremendous explosive and absolute strength. Both types of work occur when box squatting. Some muscles are held statically, while others are actually relaxed." - Louie Simmons PLUSA



I will also say from my own first hand experiences that box squats allowed me to squat more on the platform than non-box squats. They were and are also easier on my back and knees than regular squats and helped improve my technique more than anything else I ever did.

Squat Arch

You must learn to develop the strength to keep a tight arch in the lower back. This arch must be kept throughout the entire movement. The moment you begin to lose this arch, the bar will begin to drift forward and out of the natural barbell path. When the bar starts to drift toward the toes, you'll lose the squat and end up stapled to the floor. The bar must stay close to the hip joint and away from the toes.

You must also keep the shoulder blades pulled together with your elbows pulled forward. This will create the much-needed upper back tightness to keep the barbell in proper position. Remember, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so you must keep the barbell in the proper path.

When your elbows turn out toward the back, the bar will drift forward again and end up stapling you to the floor as well as ripping your head off. This is one common mistake I see in the gym, seminars and videos.

One quick solution for many people is to just move their grip in on the bar. This might only work for 4 out of 6 people but if you are one of those four, now you know.

Pushing the GHR

To the beginner, a GHR should be hard to do. If you get on a bench and can knock out 10 to 15 reps the first time you do it, then the machine isn't built correctly. The toe plate should be long enough to push your toes into it. The pad should have an angle on it to keep your body in the correct position so you don't fall off at the top.

I can go on and on with this, but the fact is that too many companies build equipment designed by people who've never lifted a real weight in their lives! In short, you aren't going to get a good GHR for less than \$500. I don't care who you are or what you say, I've seen them all and 90% of them are junk you should never invest in. It's far better to stick with movements such as Romanian deadlifts, pull-throughs and stiff-leg deadlifts than it is to use a crap GHR.

To do a GHR, you'll start with your body in a horizontal position on the bench with your toes pushed into the toe plate. Your knees will be set two inches behind the pad and your back will be rounded with your chin tucked. You then push your toes into the pad and curl your body up with your hamstrings while keeping the back rounded. As you approach the

top position, squeeze your glutes to finish in a vertical position.

The sets and rep scheme for the GHR depends on the strength of the lifter. I find most athletes and lifters to be very bad at these, as the hamstring strength of most people is downright terrible. For those who fall into this category, I'd have them do two to three sets of GHR as part of their warm-up for every workout of the week. I suggest they strive to get 3 sets of 10 reps. This will mean for most that they'll be doing three sets to failure, failing around 3 to 5 reps each set. Over time, this will improve.

Once they get better, I'd have them keep the GHR as a warm-up movement and drop the sets and reps to 3x8. At this time in the program, they'd now add the GHR as a main movement as part of the main session at least one time per week. Yes, they'll be doing GHRs five times per week!

For the main session, there are several suggestions to follow for the highest success. While doing the GHR as the main movement, it's "bust ass" time. The reps and sets will fall into several categories and should be rotated every few weeks. Examples of these programs would include:

1. Three sets to failure

2. One hundred total reps (using as many sets as needed).

3. Three heavy sets of 5 to 6 reps while holding weight across chest.

4. Three heavy sets of 5 to 6 reps while holding weight behind head.

5. Three heavy sets of 5 to 6 reps with the back of machine inclined up 4 to 30 inches.

6. Dynamic GHR sets: Here you get to the top position and drop fast and rebound out of the bottom with as much force as you can. You can use a heavy medicine ball or weight to lower faster and drop the weight at the bottom.

7. Static-Dynamic GHR: Start at the horizontal position and have a training partner place his hands on your back for a three to five-second count. While doing this, drive into your partner's hands as hard as you can. After the five seconds, your partner will pull away and you should fire up as fast as you can to finish the rep. This is best preformed with 5 to 6 sets of 3 reps.

8. Yielding GHR: For this version, you'll break the movement into three holding positions, each for 5 to 10 seconds. Start at the horizontal position and hold for 10 seconds, raise halfway and hold for another 10 seconds, then rise to the top and hold for 10 more.

9. Timed GHR: In this version you'll give yourself a set time and do as many reps as you can. For example, you use five minutes and end up with 70 reps the first time you do it. The next time you'd use the same time and try to beat the 70 reps.



10. GHR with bands: This is a movement for the more advanced lifter. Strap each of the bands around the bottom of the GHR and place the other end around your upper traps. The bands will add heavy resistance at the top.

11. Forced GHR with heavy eccentric: This is a good version for those who aren't strong enough to get one rep. With this version, the training partner will help the lifter get to the top and then he'd lower the rep on his own. Only enough assistance should be applied to help the lifter get one rep. Sets of 3 to 5 reps are best with this style of the GHR.

12. Incline GHR: Incline the back of the GHR bench anywhere from 4 to 30 inches. The change in angle places an increased amount of stress on the hamstring and glutes.

13. Decline GHR: For those that have a hard time getting 5-8 reps, you can place boards under the front end of the GHR bench. This will make the movement easier to do, allowing you to get a few more reps. I've suggested this hundreds of times with our customers. A large percentage of them find they can only get two reps with our pad angle (compared to 10 to 15 reps on their old unit) and are looking for a way to get stronger fast. Placing boards under the front end is the fastest, easiest way to get the job done.

Squat Cycles

A note about the percentages: These are taken off a contest squat with equipment. So if you're lifting off a raw or no-equipment max, then add 5 to 10% to all the percentages listed.

Squat without Chains and Bands

Years ago, I'd have recommended a four week squat wave, but after the success we've had with band training, I feel a three week wave would be the most efficient. I also believe that there needs to be slightly different percentages based on the motor control of the athlete. This control is based on years of training, not the status of the athlete. For example, a beginner would have one to three years of training, the intermediate three to five years, and the advanced lifter over five years. The reason for this is quite simple; the more advanced athlete knows how to use his body more efficiently than the beginner and gets more out of a smaller percentage.

Beginner:

Week 1: 63% for 10 sets of 2 reps

Week 2: 65% for 10 sets of 2 reps

Week 3: 68% for 10 sets of 2 reps

You'll notice the beginner has a couple more sets than the advanced and intermediate lifter. This is to improve the form of the lifter. The main goal of the beginner is to have perfect form, so in many cases ten sets still won't be enough and should be taken as high as twelve sets.

Intermediate:

Week 1: 60% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 2: 63% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 3: 65% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Advanced:

Week 1: 55% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 2: 58% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 3: 60% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Squatting with Chains**Beginner:**

Week 1: 63% for 10 sets of 2 reps

Week 2: 65% for 10 sets of 2 reps

Week 3: 68% for 10 sets of 2 reps

Four to six reps over the three weeks must be above training percent. This is done in addition to the regular sets.

Intermediate:

Week 1: 60% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 2: 63% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 3: 65% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Four to six reps over the three weeks must be above training percent. This is done in addition to the regular sets.

Advanced:

Week 1: 55% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 2: 58% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Week 3: 60% for 8 sets of 2 reps

Four to six reps over the three weeks must be above training percent. This is done in addition to the regular sets.

Recommended Chains for Squatting

Squat Max 200-400 Pounds = 60 pound chain

Squat Max 400-500 Pounds = 80 pound chain

Squat Max 500-600 Pounds = 100 pound chain

Squat Max 700-800 Pounds = 120 pound chain

Squat Max 800-900 Pounds = 160 pound chain





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The chains are added to the weight of the barbell. Make sure to warm-up with the chains on the bar first, then add the weights. When the barbell is in the rack, four to five links of chain should be resting on the floor. At no point in time should all of the chain be off the floor during the squat.

Squat Cycles with Bands

These cycles are only for the intermediate and advanced lifters. The beginners would be better off sticking with straight weight or chains. If the beginner would like to use bands with his squat, then I'd suggest keeping the tension minimal and reducing the training loads by 10%.

Regular Training Phase (or Strength Speed):

Week 1: 47% (RG Band) 8 sets of 2

Week 2: 51% (RG Band) 8 sets of 2

Week 3: 53% (RG band) 8 sets of 2

Four to six reps over the three weeks must be above training percent. This is done in addition to the regular sets.

This phase should be the core of your training and can be “waved” one after another. For better results, it would be best to mix in one of the Speed Strength phases after every couple of regular phases.

Speed Strength Phase A:

Week 1: 15% (SS Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 2: 20% (SS Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 3: 25% (SS band) 5 sets of 2

Three to five reps over the three weeks must be above training percent.

This is a great phase for those who've never been through a speed strength phase before. It lasts three weeks, with the first one being an introduction week to get used to the higher band tension. You'll also notice the number of sets has been reduced because of the high physical demand on the body. After one or two times through this phase, you'll never need to use it again because of the body's adaptation process. Once the body has learned to adapt to the band tension with the three-week phase, it's best to stick with phase B or C.

Remember, a speed strength phase will cause the barbell to move very slowly, so you must always follow a slow phase with a fast phase. As a final note, make sure the bands are very tight in the bottom position.

Speed Strength Phase B:

Week 1: 20% (SS Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 2: 25% (SS Band) 3-5 sets of 2, after sets work up to 1RM

This is the same phase as “A” except we’ve taken out the first week. The other notable difference is in week two. After completing three to five sets, you’ll want to start increasing the weight until you get to a one rep max. By the time you get to the last set (your max), you’ll feel like your head is going to pop off. This is how you know you’re doing it correctly!

Speed Strength Phase C:

Week 1: 25% (SS Band, plus more as needed) 2-3 sets of 2 - then work up to a 1RM

This phase is designed for those who have a lot of experience with bands. Basically, you want to pile on as much band as you can handle and start working up to 25% for a few sets of two, then head up to a one rep max. This phase is not for the weak at heart!

Circa-Maximal Phase:

Week 1: 47% (CM Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 2: 51% (CM Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 3: 53% (CM Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 4: 47% (CM Band) 5 sets of 2

Three to five reps over the three weeks must be above training percent.

This phase is designed for pre-contest or pre-max training. This phase, along with the following de-loading phase, has been responsible for more personal records being crushed by a huge margin than any other training phase I’ve seen, including at least ten 900-pound squats.

De-load Phase:

Week 1: 53% (RG Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 2: 47% (RG Band) 5 sets of 2

Week 3: Meet or Test Date

This de-loading phase is designed to bring the speed back into the training before the max attempt or competition. This phase is a must after the circa-maximal phase. Some have done very well with a two week de-load, while others only like to do one week. If your choice is a one-week de-load, then drop the first week of the phase.



Recommended Bands for Squat Training Phases:

Squat:

300-500

RG Band: Orange

SS Band: Black

CM Band: Silver

501-750

RG Band: Green

SS Band: Black & Silver

CM Band: Black & Orange

751-1000

RG Band: Black

SS Band: Black & Silver

CM Band: Black & Silver

Keep in mind, for the bands to work properly, you must have tension at the bottom!

After your squat training, you should hit the hamstrings, abdominals and reverse hypers, then call it a day. As you remember from the other articles, a max effort day should be performed later in the week to complement the dynamic effort work.

Getting Smashed in the Squat

There are many things that can cause this to happen. The first and most apparent problem is that there was just too much weight. I know many of you are thinking, “Well, no crap!” but you’d be shocked at some of the e-mails and calls I get.

For example, I had one guy call because he got crushed with a 315 bench and couldn’t figure out why. I later find out he barely made 275! It was simply too heavy for him!

This could also be improper set up from the start. If you don’t start with a good arch and tight abs and then don’t sit back, you’ll sit straight down. You have to sit back into the squat to get the most out of your hamstrings, lower back and hips. If you sit straight down, you’re forcing most of the weight onto the quads and allowing the bar to actually travel forward.

The third reason could be that you're not forcing your knees out on the way down and keeping them forced out of the hole. This could be fixed with a simple verbal queue like "Knees out!" You may also need to do more hip work. Some great things for this are seated abductions with bands around the knees. We call them "knee-outs with the band." A second thing that'll help with this is wide-stance low-box squats with light weight and higher reps (around ten). Squat to the bottom position and then only raise half to one-fourth of the way up, then go back down.

This will keep the tension in the range of motion you're having a problem with.

A fourth reason you may miss in the hole is you're letting your chest drop on the way down. A fifth reason is that your hamstrings aren't strong enough to sit back on. I see this one all the time in the seminars we conduct. What happens is the lifter will sit back so far and then just drop. The strength is just not there to keep sitting back. To fix this, use a box height on speed day that you can sit back on and keep good form. Who cares if it's four inches high? Just do it! Then, over the next few weeks, lower the box half to one inch each week, but keep the form 100% correct.

You can also strengthen the hamstrings with glute ham raises, reverse hypers, good mornings, pull-throughs and many other movements. This could be due to weak abs and lower back muscles. This is another reason why we all need more ab and back work.

Weak at the Top of the Squat

In this situation, you stall out near the top of the lift, but don't fall forward or backward. This is one of the best problems to have, as you've kept the proper squat form, but just stalled out. There are no technical problems for this except not driving your hips forward. Usually this isn't the problem.

The first thing to do to fix this problem is to get stronger! This sounds simple and it is. Sometimes you don't have to look so hard for what your weaknesses are. I think too many people feel they're being held back by some secret weakness, when in fact, they just need to get the entire body stronger.

The second thing you can do is get faster. If you get fast enough, the momentum will bust you through the sticking point. The third thing you can do is to take a reality check. Is this your sticking point because you now own it? What I mean here is, do you always fail at this same spot? Have you always failed there? Have you engrained it in your mind that this is where you fail? If so, fix it!





Progressives (Extended Sevens) Sample for Legs

1. Squats - 10 reps
2. Leg Press - 15 reps
3. Leg Extensions - 10 reps
4. Step Ups - 15 reps
5. Stiff Leg deadlifts - 10 reps
6. Leg Curls - 15 reps
7. Lunges
 - a. For No. 1, you will do one set of ten reps, then rest 1-2 minutes.
 - b. For the next rotation, you will add weight to No. 1 and do 10 reps and move straight to No. 2 for 15 reps, then rest 1-2 minutes.
 - c. Next rotation, you will add weight to No. 1 and No. 2 and do the same reps and move directly onto No. 3, then rest.
 - d. Keep doing the same for each rotation and add weight each time you go through.

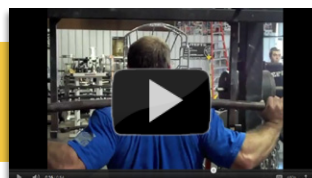
Squat Mistake – Upper Back Tightness

I see this mistake all over YouTube. This has to be the No. 1 mistake I see with beginners, intermediates and non-powerlifters. They're wasting far too much effort getting the bar set up and then when they do get ready to squat, their upperback are never set, nor tight. They may be squeezing the bar, but they are not making the back tight from all angles. The goal is to have the upperback as tight as humanly possible. This happens by having your feet grounded, lower back arched, hands tight on the bar, shoulder blades pulled together and head back.

Why? There are any reasons why you need to keep your upperback tight. These include:

1. It will keep the torso tighter allowing for more strength to be transferred to the bar.
 2. It will help keep the bar path in a straight line. If the bar falls forward, the distance increases and the load shifts forward, making the lift harder.
 3. If the bar does shift forward, more stress is placed on the spine.
 4. It will also allow you to lift more weight and will become a more fluid movement.
- Often, when a lifter falls forward either on the way up or down, they want to know what movements they can do to bring up this weak point. Many will also feel all they have to do is train harder...or use a better training cycle. Usually the last place they look is the first place they should – technique.

Here's a video of the [Number One Squat Mistake](#)



Falling Backwards in the Squat

This is actually the best thing that could happen because you're squatting the bar back and all the strength is there. The only thing that really needs to be done here is technical. You just need to sit back more to allow the torso to lean in some. You may also not be sitting back because of weakness in the hamstrings.

Knees coming in while squatting, is also a very common problem with beginners and intermediate lifters. This can happen for many reasons: weak hips, poor flexibility or bad form. If the lifter has bad form, all he needs are verbal queues of "Knees out!"

If this is a flexibility problem, then the lifter should squat on a higher box at the point where he can keep the knees out. Over time, the box height will come down as he gets more flexible. If this is a strength problem with the hips, then the same solutions as "getting smashed at the bottom" should be followed.

Falling Forward Halfway up in the Squat

This is probably the second most common problem, or sticking point, I see with the squat. What happens here is that the lifter comes out of the hole strong and then about halfway up, he begins to fall forward. This happens because he has great reversal strength out of the bottom, but then, as he begins to hit the mid-point, he stalls. He can't continue to strain because the torso is beginning to die out and the force of the movement keeps the hips coming up, yet the upper body can't stay upright.

To fix this, he needs to make sure the time-under-tension on the max effort movement is specific to the time of the strain needed in competition. This will be around 3 to 4 seconds. Second, the ab work has to come up and be heavy. A third remedy for this problem is to do static work in the position at which you lose the lift. To do this, use a bar with a light weight (around 20%) and a band. Squat down to the spot you lose it at and hold for five seconds, then squat back up and hold at the top for five seconds. This would best be done with 3 to 5 sets of 5 reps. The good morning can also be used for this and may even be a better choice, as there'll be more work on the torso when compared to the barbell squat.

One last solution for this problem is to use the safety squat bar for max effort work. The safety squat bar tries to toss you forward as you squat up because of the design of the bar. If the bar is trying to toss you forward, there's only one way to keep this from happening. You have to fight to keep the bar in position, thus developing those muscles.



Chaos Squats

Chaos training is a system of training that will make or break your squat. A cardinal sin of squatting is falling forward during the lift or dumping the bar over your head. When this happens it means only one thing; you haven't done the necessary work to squat big.

When a barbell falls forward, it's known as a chaotic event. You have to train to avoid these situations. This is why we have a max effort day. On this day you'll perform a one rep max with some type of low box squat, deadlift or good morning. You'll want to use some type of good morning seven out of ten workouts, or 70% percent of all max effort days for the lower body. The low box squat should be used 20% of the time, the deadlift 10%. This would be a once a week workout.

The reason for so many good mornings is two-fold. First, we've found this type of movement to be the absolute best for the development of the squat and deadlift. Second, remember the cardinal sin of falling over? Well that's exactly what happens with a good morning. If your good morning is strong enough, you'll be able to keep the arch and not fall forward. If you do begin to fall forward, you'll be able to arch the bar back into position without even thinking about it. You'll have the strength and it'll be automatic. We've found a minimum good morning of 60% of your max squat to be a very important element of squatting big.

SPEEEEEED Squats

If you were to jump up on a table, how high would you get if you jumped slowly? How much force would you develop? Not much, huh? So why in the world would you want to train to be slow? Why not train to be faster? The faster you are, the greater the chance you'll have of blasting through your sticking point.

This is what the dynamic training day is all about. If you're a 500-pound squatter and train with 250 pounds, then you must apply 500 pounds of force to the bar during the lift. Think blast! For most readers, I'd suggest a four-week wave using the box squat. The percentages listed below would be of your best squat. For you competitive powerlifters out there, percentages would be lower since you may be using squat suits.

Week 1: 10 sets of 2 reps with 65%

Week 2: 10 sets of 2 reps with 70%

Week 3: 10 sets of 2 reps with 73%

Week 4: 10 sets of 2 reps with 75%

Only take 45 to 60 seconds rest between sets and use compensatory acceleration when performing all of your reps. This means that you should really try to explode the weight up.

Strong(er) Hamstrings

As I've written many times, the hamstrings are one of the most important muscle groups for athletes, if not the most important muscle group. The hamstrings are what drive the squat and deadlift, as well as determining how fast an individual will run. Any coach you speak to will tell you the same thing, but most go about training the hams the wrong way. You first need to dump the seated, lying and standing leg curl machines and start training your hamstrings using movements that hit the muscle from both the hip and knee joint at the same time. This is how the hamstrings work in sports, so why not train them the same way? Here's how to do it:

1.) Get to know the glute ham raise and the reverse hyper machine. These movements are the best I've found for training the hamstrings, but most athletes are far too weak on them. I can't count the number of Division 1 ball players who couldn't do one single rep properly on the glute ham raise. And then they wonder why their knees come forward when they squat!

I see the same thing with the reverse hyper. Most people are afraid to use any kind of weight on the machine. You should be able to do eight to twelve reps on the reverse hyper with 55 to 60% of your best squat. Many of the gyms and schools I go to will only have their athletes use 20 to 50 pounds on the machine. This has always blown my mind. Our women at Westside use over 300 pounds!

These movements should be staple items in any training program. I've actually prescribed three to four sets of six to eight reps on the GHR (glute ham raise) four times a week as a warm-up to many of the lifters and athletes I consult. These would be performed as part of the general warm-up and then again later in the workout with heavier weight as a supplemental movement.

2.) Bring up the volume! As stated above, you can train the same muscle more than one to two times a week if done properly (and especially if it's a weak point.) Whoever came up with this "one time a week" stuff never had to display their strength or bring up a weak point. How are you ever going to get better doing something only one time per week?

There are many ways to change the parameters of a program to accommodate training a muscle more than once a week. You can include a "feeder" workout the day after training a muscle hard to help facilitate recovery. These feeder workouts are light in intensity and medium in volume. For example, if you did heavy glute ham raises on Monday and your hamstrings are sore as hell, then you could do them again on Tuesday with no weight for a few sets of eight reps. This will help to bring fresh nutrients and blood into the muscle. This is also known as a form of active restoration.



You could also try driving the volume of a certain movement up over two weeks. For example, you could use a resistance band during an extra workout. Sit on the end of a bench with one end of the band around your heel and the other anchored to a power rack or other heavy object. Then do seated leg curls by pulling the band straight in for five reps, off to one side for five more, then off to the other side for another five. Performing two sets would be a great place to start. This would be a total of 15 reps per set, for a grand total of 30 reps. Then each day for the next 10 to 14 days, you add one rep to each position. After 10 days you'd have 15 reps per position, or a total of 45 per set. This is a great shock method for the hammies!

3.) Learn to sit back on your good mornings. Most people don't realize a good morning is really a builder of the entire posterior chain. When you bend over, you want to try to keep a neutral back and push the hips back so you feel the hamstrings stretch. You don't want to just bend over because as you work up in weight, the movement will turn into more of a quarter squat. This places too much stress on the spine and not enough on the hamstrings.

Belly Belly Belly

I've caught more shit over this than any other aspect of training. But the truth is that every big squatter I know has learned how to use his abdominals while squatting. You must learn how to breathe into your belly. You want to pull as much air as you can into your belly, then flex and force your abdominals out.

Walk over to a mirror. Take a look at your shoulders and take a deep breath. Did they rise? If they did, then you're pulling all the air into your chest, not your belly. You need to learn how to breathe into your belly. This is how we teach everyone to squat. For the squat, we advise the use of a weight belt worn one notch loose. This is to teach you to pull air into your belly then push out into the belt. The belt acts as a great training aid to push against. As a side note, we use the same technique for all of our max-effort work, but don't use the belt in that situation. This is one aspect of our training that has been misunderstood for too long. We use the belt to teach how to use the abdominals for the squat, bench and deadlift. We do not advocate its use for anything else, unless the lifter feels it's needed. Many powerlifters have worked up to 600 and 700 pound good mornings without any adverse effects and have been doing them this way for over ten years.

This brings me to the next point. We've been told breathing and using the abdominals this way will lead to back injuries. Louie Simmons has been coaching this for the past 20 years at Westside and hasn't had any lifters with these problems. Learning to use the belly has made a profound difference in all of our squats, especially for those who've never tried it. I've seen squats increase by 25 to 50 pounds on this aspect alone. Now that's what squatting big is all about.

Filling your belly with air will also create a larger torso and give you a bigger base of support from which to drive. Ever wonder why those with bigger waists squat so much? Think about it. We want as much tightness and support as we can get from the gross muscles of the spinal erectors, abdominals and obliques.

Get on the Box!

The greatest secret to big squats is the use of the box squat. We don't do any full squatting at all, except for in competition. We haven't had any lifters over the past 15 years have any lower back or knee injuries, either. The only side effects we've seen with box squatting are big squats! The key is to do them properly.

The benefits of the box are many. First, you can sit back further than you could without it. This places more stress on the posterior chain muscles. Second, you always know how low you're going. If you want to squat two inches below parallel then set your box up at that height. This way your body will always sit as low as it's conditioned. If you want to squat one inch high, then set the box higher. We suggest one inch below parallel since this is what's needed to pass in a powerlifting competition.

Third, squatting on a box breaks the eccentric/concentric chain. This is one of the best ways to develop explosive strength. Fourth, the box is great for teaching proper squatting technique. Most athletes and lifters have very poor squat technique because of bad coaching, muscle imbalances and flexibility. The box can work as a great aid to teaching the proper way to sit back into a squat.

I'll be the first to tell you that the competitive power squat isn't an easy thing to master. It takes many years of work and technique is very important. The stronger you get, the more you need better technique. One inch in the wrong direction and you'll miss the lift.

Hips, Hips, Hips

If your knees are the first to move while beginning a squat, then your path is going to be straight down. As discussed before, the tension must be on the glutes, hips, and hamstrings. These are the muscles that squat big weights, not the quads.

Think about this: Why can't a lifter with a 400-pound deep Olympic squat perform a 700-pound power squat? A powerlifter who can squat 700 can do an easy 400-pound Olympic squat. This is because the Olympic squatter doesn't have the back, glutes or hamstring to support the 700 pounds! What's that tell you about the quads and squatting big weights? (Hint: They just aren't that important!)



Drive your head into the bar!

This doesn't mean look up toward the sky like your old high school coach told you to. You must look straight ahead and drive your head back into the traps. Your body will always follow the head so you want to make sure your head is driving back into the bar.

As a side note, what's the last thing to move when you squat? It would be your head. So what should be the first thing to move when coming out of the hole? You got it, your head. This only makes perfect sense. You have to think about driving your back and head into the bar first during the ascent. We tell our lifters the chest and head should always be first. You're trying to raise the bar, so move it first! If the quads flex first, the hips will rise before the bar and force the barbell forward.

Here's another coaching tool: watch the lifter's quads. If they flex first get him to sit back more and force his knees out. The glutes should flex first.

Spread The Floor

Spread the floor with your feet as you squat. Remember the wide stance? Well, you must also force your knees out hard during the entire motion and push out on the sides of your shoes while you squat. This keeps the tension in the hips where it should be. This is also why most squat shoes, tennis shoes, and cross trainers suck for squatting. The best shoes for squatting are Converse Chuck Taylor All Stars. The soles are flat and the side construction is rugged enough to push out against without a blowout or rolling over the sole.

Arch! To squat BIG

You must learn to develop the strength to keep a tight arch in the lower back. This arch must be kept throughout the entire movement. The moment you begin to lose this arch, the bar will begin to drift forward and out of the natural path. When the bar starts to drift toward the toes, you'll lose the squat and end up stapled to the floor. The bar must stay close to the hip joint and away from the toes.

You must also keep the shoulder blades pulled together with your elbows pulled forward. This will create the much-needed upper back tightness to keep the barbell in proper position. Remember, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, so you must keep the barbell in the proper path.

When your elbows turn out toward the back, the bar will drift forward again and end up stapling you to the floor as well as ripping your head off. This is one common mistake I see in all my seminars. When I ask attendees who taught them to squat with their elbows back, nine out of ten times they say, "My coach." This is another example of those who

think they know how to squat not knowing squat!

Squatting with Bands

Squatting with bands is perhaps the greatest thing to happen to our squat poundages in the last few years. When we first started training with the bands I hated them. I felt they slowed the bar speed down too much. I stuck with it, well, because I really didn't have a choice. It was either use the bands or get called "scared" every squat day!

After my first meet for which I trained with the bands I was sold. There are two ways we use the bands for the dynamic squat day. I'll discuss the first, the basic training phase. The second way to use them is with a circa-maximal phase. (This is a very intense, detailed phase that requires it's own section.)

To use the bands for the basic training phase you'll have to reduce the training percentage by 10%. The normal suggested percent for an intermediate lifter is a four-week wave, cycling the percent from 60% to 70% of your competitive squat max. It may look like this: week 1 at 60%, week 2 at 63%, week 3 at 67%, week 4 at 70%. After the warm-up sets, perform 8 to 12 sets of 2 reps with one minute rest between sets. With the use of bands the percent range would drop to 50%-60% of your competitive max squat.

We've found the bands to be superior to chains in accommodating resistance. This is because of several reasons. With the bands the weight is being pulled downward to the floor at a greater force than without the bands. This is a form of maximal eccentrics and can be very demanding on the system. This style of training can and will make you very sore!

This maximal eccentric loading can also help to develop an incredible amount of explosive strength. Picture a basketball. If you were to just drop it to the floor it'll only bounce so high. Now, if you were to throw it down with more force wouldn't the ball bounce higher? Of course it would. The key is to make sure there's still tension at the bottom of the lift. If the band tension lets off at the bottom, you'll lose much of the training effect. We found this out through trial and error.

Another theory I have with the bands deals with the intensity of the movement. Let's say your max squat is 600 pounds. Now let's say you set the training up so the resistance is 400 pounds with an additional 150 pounds of tension. This is 550 pounds at the top of the lift. Because of the acceleration of the bands as you squat down, the force of the movement keeps the intensity very high, possibly the same as it was at the top. Even though the bands are getting shorter, the tension is getting higher because of the added force throwing you down.

When you sit on the box the intensity will become deloaded to the tension of the band at the bottom (say 40 pounds of tension.) As you raise the weight (the concentric phase) then tension is progressively being loaded back onto the bar. This is known as accelerated eccentrics and progressive concentric. Whatever you call it, our average squat increase has been 40 to 60 pounds after the first mesocycle with bands.



To use the bands you'll attach one end of the band around the inside part of the barbell sleeve. The other end will be anchored around a set of dumbbells or around the bottom of the power rack. The best way to train with the bands is with the use of a Monolift. If you don't have access to one you'll have to make do with what you have. If you have to use the dumbbells or a power rack to attach the bands you may not be able to use the desired tension as listed below. This is because you'll have to walk the weight out. As soon as you break the J hooks the weight will be slamming you backwards. This could potentially send you flying backwards on your ass. While this may be entertaining to some in your gym, I'd rather not see you kill yourself. For you, I recommend using as much band as you can and making up the difference with chains.

This chart will help you figure out how much band tension you need:

Band Tension Chart (Squat)		
Max Squat	Tension top	Tension bottom
200-400	115	40
400-500	175	60
500-600	290	80
700-800	355	100
800-900	375	120

Squatting with Chains

This is the exercise that started it all. As mentioned in earlier articles, the squat is to be trained with a four-week wave using between 50 and 60 percent of your competitive max. If you don't have a competitive max with equipment (suits, wraps etc.) then you'll need to add 10 percent to make up for the advantages these implements would give you.

After the completion of your warm-up sets, you'll perform 8 to 12 sets of two reps. Most will want to keep the rest periods at 45 to 60 seconds. A larger man over 242 pounds may want to go up as high as 90 seconds. These short rest periods are responsible for a great release of growth hormone and testosterone.

You must pause for a split second on the box and explode up. The faster you move the weight, the more your neuromuscular system will get involved. The more neuromuscular system involvement, the stronger you'll become. When using chains with the squat, the chains aren't added into the percent. This is because the chains should be deloaded at the bottom of the squat. This keeps the training percent low enough to build an incredible amount of explosive force out of the hole. As you stand up with the bar, the weight of the chain is lifted off the ground.

To set up the chains you'll need a five-foot, $\frac{1}{4}$ " inch chain to act as the support chain. This chain is suspended from the bar sleeves. A metal ring will be suspended in the $\frac{1}{4}$ " support chain. Then the training chains (five feet long, either $\frac{5}{8}$ " or $\frac{1}{2}$ " thickness) will pass through the metal rings so one half of the chain falls on each side of the ring. You'll set the support chain so three links on each side of the training chain are on the floor at the top of the lift. When you sit down on the box, most of the training chain will be on the floor. You have to keep a certain amount of the chain on the bar to avoid the chains swaying back and forth throughout the movement. The recommended amount of training chain weights for the dynamic squat day is listed below.

Chain Tension Chart (Squat)

Max Squat	Chains per side	Weight of chain (top)
200-400	1 ($\frac{5}{8}$ ")	40
400-500	1 ($\frac{5}{8}$ "), 1($\frac{1}{2}$ ")	60
500-600	2 ($\frac{5}{8}$ ")	80
700-800	2 ($\frac{5}{8}$ "), 1($\frac{1}{2}$ ")	100
800-900	3 ($\frac{5}{8}$ ")	120

Note: When squatting with chains it's also important to use them throughout all the warm-up sets. So, if your maximum squat is 500, you'll need to load 2 of the $\frac{5}{8}$ " chains on each side.

Squat Wide

If you squat with a close stance, move your feet out. If you think you squat wide already, move your feet further out! We teach everyone at Westside to squat wide. We don't believe in a close-stance squatter. When you squat wide you create better leverages for the squat. The distance between your knee and hip is greater with a close stance, thus a longer and more difficult squat.

By using a wide squat you cut this distance back as well as place the emphasis on the glutes, hamstrings, and lower back. These are the muscles that squat big weights! While squatting wide, try to keep your toes straight ahead or slightly turned out. This will create a tremendous amount of tension in the hips and glutes and make it hard to squat down. This tension will create a great stretch reflex out of the bottom of the squat. This is vital to the development of barbell speed.



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Starting with the Hips too Low

This is the king of all mistakes I see. Too many times lifters try to squat the weight up rather than pull the weight. Think back to the number of times you've seen a big deadlift and thought to yourself how much more the lifter could've pulled if he didn't damn near stiff-leg it? I see it all the time. Someone will say, "Did you see his deadlift?" Then the other guy will comment, "Yeah, and he stiff-legged the thing." Am I telling you to stiff-leg your deadlifts? No, not at all.

All I want you to do is look at your hip position at the start of the lift when you pull and watch how much your hips move up before the weight begins to break the floor. This is wasted movement and does nothing except wear you out before the pull. The closer you can keep your hips to the bar when you pull, the better the leverages are going to be. Once again, next time you see a great deadlifter, stand off to the side and watch how close his or her hips stay to the bar throughout the pull. If you're putting your ass to the floor before you pull, your hips are about a mile from the bar. You're setting yourself up for disaster when the lever arm is this long. This is also the second reason why lifters can't get the bar off the floor. The first reason is very simple: the bar is too heavy!

You need to find the perfect spot where your hips are close to the bar, your shoulders are behind the bar, your lower back is arched, your upper back rounded, your belly full of air and you can pull toward your body. Nobody ever said it was going to be easy, but then again, what is? Definitely not training in a commercial health club...

Where to Look When You Pull

Your body will always follow your head. If you're looking down then the bar is going to want to travel forward. At the same time you don't want to look at the ceiling. Focus on an area that keeps your head in a straight up and back position with the eyes focusing on an upper area of the wall.

Dimel Deadlifts

This exercise helped Matt Dimel increase his squat from the mid-800's to over 1000 pounds in a two-year period. To perform this exercise, grab a barbell with an overhand grip, hands about shoulder-width apart. Pull the bar up to a standing position.



DIMEL DEADLIFT

At this point, arch your back and get your abs tight. Keep the back as arched as possible, push the glutes out, and keep the knees slightly bent. Lower the bar by pushing your body weight back onto your heels while pushing your glutes out. Try to lower the barbell to a position just past the knees. At this point, you should feel a tremendous stretch in the glutes and hamstrings.

Raise by contracting your glutes first. At the top of the movement, contract the glutes as hard as possible. Perform the exercise in a ballistic fashion. You want to drop to the mid-point position and explode back to the starting position. This is best trained with moderate weight for sets of 15-20 reps.

Training Mistakes

- Going too low. Make sure to keep the tension on the hamstrings.
- Not pushing the hips and glutes back. This is also to keep the stress on the hamstrings.
- Rounding the back. Keep your back arched to help keep the stress on the hamstrings.
- Using a slow tempo. This movement is designed to be trained fast. You'll begin with a slow tempo and build the speed up with each additional repetition.

Applications

- One of the best ways I've seen this implemented is as a finisher movement (using 2 sets 15-20 reps) at the end of 3-4 workouts per week for 3-4 weeks.
- The most popular way is to just toss them in once a week on your squat or dead day.

Here's an example: [Watch This](#)



A Handful of Tips

Dumbbell Holds

There are very few things that I've seen work when it comes to help with dropped deadlifts due to grip. Dumbbell holds, however, are one movement that's shown great results. Grab the top of a hex dumbbell, and make sure that you don't touch the numbers. Grab, stand, and hold for as long as you can. If you can go over 20 seconds, then up the weight.

Binder Clips

One easy thing that will help your grip for pulling is to use binder clips. These are the big paper clips that have a black end on them (and other colors). Use these like you would use grippers, but only use your thumb and little finger. You can work all fingers, but the little guy is the first to go. Ed Coan told me this one a few years ago at the SWIS conference.

Get Strong(er)

If you drop your pulls, one solution is very simple — get stronger! Let's say you always drop 700 lbs, but can pull 650 lbs easy and pulling 700 lbs with straps is no problem. Well, get strong enough to pull 750 lbs with straps and 700 lbs will feel like 650 lbs.

Get Your Head Right

Get your head right. Training isn't easy and won't always be a walk-in-the-park. There's more to getting strong than just lifting the weights. You have to get an attitude with the weights and bust your ass. Louie once told me he would NEVER train with anyone who didn't scare him in one way or another. This is some of the best advice I've ever heard. I'm not saying that you should be a dick, but there's a HUGE difference between "training" and "working out."

Multiple-Rep Deadlifts

Next time you see someone doing multiple reps on the deadlift, take note of the form of each rep. You'll notice that the later reps look nothing like the first. In competition you only have to pull once, so you need to learn how to develop what's known as, starting strength, for the deadlift. This is the strength needed to get the bar off the floor without an eccentric (negative) action before the start.

In other words, you don't lower the bar first and then lift the weight as you do with the squat and bench press. When you train with multiple reps, you're beginning to develop reversal strength, which isn't needed with the deadlift.

These two reasons are enough to keep the deadlift training to singles. If you're using multiple reps with the deadlift, then stand up in between each rep and restart the lift. This way you'll be teaching the proper form and developing the right kind of strength.

Not Pulling the Bar Back

The deadlift is all about leverage and positioning. Visualize a teeter-totter. What happens when the weight on one end is coming down? The other end goes up. So if your body is falling backward, what happens to the bar? It goes up! If your weight is falling forward the bar will want to stay down. So if you weigh 250 pounds and you can get your bodyweight to work for you, it would be much like taking 250 pounds off the bar. For many natural deadlifters, this is a very instinctive action. For others it has to be trained.

Proper positioning is important here. If you're standing too close to the bar it'll have to come over the knee before you can pull back, thus going forward before it goes backward. If your shoulders are in front of the bar at the start of the pull, then the bar will want to go forward, not backward. If your back isn't arched the bar will also want to drift forward. For some lifters, not being able to pull back can be a muscular thing. If you're like myself, I tend to end up with the weight on the front of my feet instead of my heels. This is a function of my quads trying to overpower the glutes and hamstrings, or the glutes and hamstrings not being able to finish the weight and shifting to the quads to complete the lift. What will happen many times is you'll begin shaking or miss the weight. To fix this problem, you need to add in more glute ham raises, pull-throughs and reverse hypers.

Shin Placement

I'm not too sure where this started but I have a pretty good idea. Many times the taller, thinner lifters are the best pullers and they do start with the bar very close to their shins. But if you look at them from the sides they still have their shoulders behind the bar when they pull. This is just not possible to achieve with a thicker lifter.

If a thicker lifter with a large amount of body mass — be it muscle or fat — were to line the bar up with his shins, you'd see he would have an impossible time getting the shoulders behind the bar. Remember you need to pull the bar back toward you, not out and away from you. So what I believe happens is many lifters look to those who have great deadlifts to see how they pull, then try to do the same themselves. What they need to do is look to those who are built the same way they are and have great deadlifts and follow their lead.

Pulling with Big Air

As with most exercises, you must learn how to breathe. Stand in front of a mirror and take a deep breath. Do your shoulders rise? If so, then you need to learn how to breathe. Learn to pull your air into your diaphragm. In other words, use your belly! Pull as much air into your belly as possible, then when you think you have all you can get, pull more. The deadlift isn't started by driving your feet into the floor; it's started by driving your belly into your belt and hips flexors.

One note on holding air while you pull: you do need to try and hold your air as long as possible, but this can only last for a few seconds while under strain because you'll pass out. So for a long pull, you're going to have to breathe or you'll hit the floor and people will stare. While there are several people out there who may think this is a cool thing, I disagree. It's much cooler to make the lift!

So when you reach the point where you begin to really have to fight with the weight, let out small bursts of air. Don't let it all out at one time or you'll lose torso tightness and cause the bar to drop down. By letting out small bursts you can keep your tightness, continue to pull, and lock out the weight.

Rounding the Lower Back when Deadlifting

This is another mistake I see all the time and most lifters know better. It happens most of the time because of a weak lower back or a bad start position. Even though your shoulders should be rounded, you must keep your lower back arched. This will keep the shin straight and the shoulders behind the bar and then your body will be in the proper position to pull big while keeping the back under minimal stress.

If you pull with a rounded back, the bar is going to drift forward away from the legs, thus putting you back into a very difficult position from which to recover. When the bar drifts forward, the weight of it will begin to work against your leverages and cause you to have a sticking point just below the knees or mid-shin level. When you pull, you can either arch your back in the beginning standing position before you crouch down to pull or once you grab the bar. Either way, it's important to keep the lower back arched and tight.

There are many ways to strengthen the lower back for this. Good mornings, reverse hypers, and arched back good mornings are a few. You can also use a band around your traps and feet for simulated good mornings. With this technique you only use the bands and train for higher reps (in the 20 to 30 rep range) for local muscular endurance.

Pulling Your Shoulder Blades Together when You Deadlift

This is a mistake I made for years. Stand in a deadlift stance and pull your shoulder blades together. Take a look at where your fingertips are. Now if you let your shoulders relax and even round forward a little you'll see your fingertips are much lower. This is why we teach a rounding of the upper back. First, the bar has to travel a shorter distance. Second, there's less stress on the shoulder region. It'll also help to keep your shoulder blades behind the bar. You'll read more on this later.



PRO BENCH SPECIALIST PROGRAM

Result: 600 Raw Bench



Week 1 of 7**FRIDAY****Close Grip Incline Press**

Work up to max (like you would a max effort movement so you WON'T miss a weight). Whatever this weight ends up being take 80% for 5 reps hold the lockout of each one for a count (so you lock out and count "one-thousand-one") and then lower it.

For the last set, take 50% of your max weight (what you ended up doing for your ME work) for a max set of reps but don't fail. I'm adding this because you said more volume seems to work for you plus I want to see how many reps you get to see how your strength endurance is.

Triceps Extensions

3-4 sets of 10 (push these so you are one rep shy of failure for 3 of the 4 sets)
Go heavy on these but not so heavy it bothers your joints.

Fat Bar Pushdowns

3 sets of 12
Go a bit lighter but use a slower tempo and flex harder. Make the light weights feel hard.

Side Raises

3 sets of 20 reps
Just your normal side raise.

Face Pulls

3 sets of 15-20

Week 1 of 7

SATURDAY

Make this a lat and bicep day. For this week go easy on this so we can see if it will effect Mondays training or not. I like what you are thinking with this but it needs to ease in before going too crazy with it.

MONDAY

Dynamic Bench Press

40% for 9 sets of 3 (60 sec rest) using 2 chains per side. Make sure the chains totally deload when the bar is on your chest.
Change grip as you like.

3 or 4 Board Press (medium grip)

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps.

Rear Delt Work (chest-supported)

3 sets of 20

Plate Raises

3 sets 20

Week 2 of 7**TUESDAY**

Use this as a flush out day. Wait and see if you are sore anywhere. The goal is to use this as a recovery day but if you are recovering adequately there is no need for it yet. Think of it this way: If you always do recovery work then your body will adapt to it and eventually it wont work when you really need it.

CORE DAY (I assume Wednesday)

Just keep doing what you were doing.
SSB Squats
Trap Deads
Shrugs
Abs

FRIDAY**Reverse Band Press (Strong bands)**

Thumb away from smooth.

Work up to a max (work up like you would a max effort movement so you won't miss a weight). Whatever this weight ends up being, take 85% for 3 reps. Hold the lockout of each rep for a one count (so you lock out and count "one-thousand-one" and then lower)

DO NOT F&\$#ING MISS A WEIGHT. If you do miss (like you did last week) do not repeat. If you think you could have made it the just base the 85% on that weight. The single is not the most important thing here, the sub-maximal set is. The single is being used as a gauge to determine how much to use for the triple.

Triceps Extensions

2-3 sets of 10 (push these so you are one rep shy of failure for 3 of the 4 sets)
Go heavy on these but no so heavy it bothers your joints.

Reverse Grip Pushdowns

3 sets 10
Go a bit lighter, but use a slower tempo and flex harder. Make the light weights feel hard.

Side Raises

2 sets of 25 reps.
Just your normal side raise.

Week 2 of 7**Face Pulls**

2 sets 25

For all of the above rest what you feel you need between sets*Overall we are taking the volume down a bit based on how you reacted to the sessions last week. DO NOT do extra shit!***SATURDAY**

I'm going to leave up to you. You can do some lat work if you like, but what would be nice to do is to flush out what is sore. So if your triceps are sore do 50-100 reps with band pushdowns. If your pecs are sore set up a reverse band press so the bar floats right above your chest. Do 50-100 reps with that weight. If your shoulders are sore do some high rep dumbbell raises.

MONDAY**Dynamic Bench Press**

XX% for 10 sets of 3 (60 sec rest) use 2 chain per side and make sure the chains totally deload when the bar is on your chest.

Change grips as you like

Use the same weights you did last week but lock down your technique and keep your body rock solid tight! Let's think of this as not speed work, but technical work. While you will be lifting raw and there is more room for technical error it still needs to be dead on. Very few times will a lifter miss due to strength. Almost always it is a technical or mental breakdown. These reps all need to be perfect. Start a bit slower and as you warm up and feel things "lock in," speed the tempo up. If you have to, pause 1 inch off your chest and drive the weight up as fast as you can. This will cause you to be tighter and take away the momentum you have last week. In short, you know what good technique is and what you need to feel like and look like. Do it! Push only as fast as you can to maintain proper technique. Over the next couple weeks your speed will begin to match your technique but technique must come first. Yes, I'm a "technical bitch" but I will be damned if this will be the reason someone misses. There is just no excuse for it.

Suspended Chain (whatever you did last week)

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps.

Beat the weight from last week.

Week 2 of 7

Rear Delt Work (chest-supported)

3 sets of 20

Plate Raises

3 sets of 20

Free Time

Give yourself 15-20 minutes to do whatever you want but keep the rest to 60 seconds between sets and the reps between 8-10.



Week 3 of 7

TUESDAY

Same as last week, just flush out

WEDNESDAY (back - biceps)

Chest Supported Rows

Dead stop at bottom

Hold top for two-count

Work up to heavy weight and then stay there for 3 sets of 5 reps

Reverse Band Rows

2 sets to failure

Set up like reverse band presses

Use strong band

Pull the bar down to your chest and hold on chest for one count.

Close Grip Pulldown or Assisted Chin

2 sets of 12

Nothing special except really stretch your lats out at the top

Hammer Curls

2 sets of 15

Any style you want (dumbbells, blast straps, etc)

FRIDAY

Reverse Band Press (strong bands)

Thumb away from smooth

Work up to max effort for one rep. Go for broke this week.

Triceps Dumbbell Extensions

2-3 sets of 15 (push these so you are one rep shy of failure for 3 of the 4 sets)

Go heavy on these but not so heavy it bothers your joints.

Week 3 of 7**Rope Pushdowns**

3 sets of 15-20

Go for a huge pump on these. Get tons of blood in there!

Bent Over Side Lateral Raises

Just your normal side raise.

3 sets of 20 reps

**For all the above rest what you feel you need between sets*

Sunday

Took off due to labor work.

MONDAY**Dynamic Bench Press**

XX% for 9 sets of 3 (60 sec rest). Use 2 chains per side and make sure the chains totally deload when the bar is on your chest.

Lets do this:

225 with 4 chains (same set up you have been using) for 3 sets of 3

225 with 4 chains and double mini band for 3 sets of 3

225 with 4 chains for 3 sets (You will take off the mini bands. These should feel insanely fast)

Change you grip up as you like but use your strongest grip for the middle sets.

NOTE: accessories pulled due to hard work the day earlier and feeling sore and beat up

Dumbbell Presses

Work up to the heaviest set you can do for 15 reps. Rest 5 minutes and then repeat it.

Rear Delt Work (chest-supported)

3 sets of 20

Plate Raises

3 sets of 20

Week 3 of 7

Lat Pull Shrugs

2 sets of 5 reps

Use a moderate weight (something you can do 30 reps or so with). Use your bench grip. Get set on the bench as you would for a set of pulldowns. Let the weight stretch you lats into a deep stretch. Hold for 5 count and then do a reverse shrug and hold for 1-2 seconds. Repeat for 5 reps

Free Time

Give yourself 15-20 minutes to do whatever you want but keep the rest to 60 seconds between sets and the reps between 8-10.



Week 4 of 7

TUESDAY

Same as last week, just flush out.

WEDNESDAY (back - biceps)

Dead Stop Barbell Rows

Work up to heavy weight and then stay there for 3 sets of 5 reps

Hold top for 2 count

Dead stop at bottom.

Reverse Band Rows

3 sets to failure

Set up like reverse band presses

Use Strong band

Pull the bar down to your chest and hold on chest for one count.

Close Grip Pulldown or Assisted Chin

Work up to 2 hard sets of 8

Nothing special except really stretch your lats out at the top

Hammer Curls

2 sets of 30

Any style you want (dumbbells, blast straps, etc)

Let's keep these light this week.

FRIDAY

Floor Press

Work up until you get a feel for what your 1 rep max would be (without doing it). I call this a Perceived 1 Rep Max. Once you figure this out do 85% of that for 3 reps.

Your competitive bench grip

Triceps Dumbbell Extensions

Do two sets using more weight than you did last week but keep the reps the same.

Week 4 of 7**Rope Pushdowns**

3 sets of 15-20

Go for a huge pump on these. Get tons of blood in there!

Bent Over Side Lateral Raises

Go as heavy as you can for 3 sets of 6 reps.

Just your normal side raise.

**For all the above rest what you feel you need between sets*

SATURDAY

Because you took this off last week still go heavy but stay with triples.

Squat as main movement

Deadlift as secondary

Shrugs

MONDAY**Dynamic Bench Press**

XX% for 9 sets of 3 (60 sec rest) use 2 chain per side and make sure the chains totally deload when the bar is on your chest.

Change grip as you like. Lets do this:

225 with 4 chains (same set up you have been using) for 3 sets of 3

245 with 4 chains and double mini band for 3 sets of 3

225 with 4 chains for 3 sets (You will take off the mini bands. These should feel insanely fast)

Change you grip up as you like but use your strongest grip for the middle sets.

Dumbbell Presses

Work up to the heaviest set you can for 15 reps. Rest 5 minutes and then repeat.

Rear Delt Work (chest supported)

3 sets of 20

Plate Raises

3 sets of 20

Week 4 of 7**Lat Pull Shrugs**

2 sets of 5 reps.

Use a moderate weight (something you can do 30 for reps or so). Use your bench grip. Get set on the bench as you would for a set of pulldowns. Let the weight stretch your lats into a deep stretch. Hold for 5 count and then do a reverse shrug and hold for 1-2 seconds. Repeat for 5 reps.

Free Time

Give yourself 15-20 minutes to do whatever you want but keep the rest to 60 seconds between sets and the reps between 8-10



Week 5 of 7**TUESDAY**

Same as last week, just flush out

WEDNESDAY (back - biceps)**Dead Stop Barbell Rows**

Dead stop at bottom

Hold top for 2 count

Use more weight and/or reps than last week

Reverse Band Rows

1 sets to failure

Set up like reverse band presses

Use strong band

Pull the bar down to your chest and hold on chest for one count.

Close Grip Pulldown or Assisted Chin

Work up to 2 hard sets of 8

Nothing special except really stretch your lats out at the top

Hammer Curls

Let's pull these out this week.

FRIDAY**Band Bench Double Mini and One Board.**

Work up to heavy single using your competitive grip

Close Grip 3 Board Press

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps

Rope Pushdowns

Go for a huge pump on these. Get tons of blood in there!

3 sets of 15-20

Week 5 of 7**Face Pulls**

3 sets of 12

**For all the above rest what you feel you need between sets*

SATURDAY

Keep this day in but only work at about moderately hard. Say a 7 on a scale of 1-10

Squat as main movement

Deadlift as secondary

Shrugs

MONDAY**Dynamic Bench Press**

XX% for 9 sets of 3 (60 sec rest). Use 2 chains per side and make sure the chains totally deload when the bar is on your chest.

Lets do this:

225 with 4 chains (same set up you have been using) for 3 sets of 3

245 with 4 chains and double mini band for 3 sets of 3

225 with 4 chains for 3 sets (You will take off the mini bands. These should feel insanely fast)

Change you grip up as you like but use your strongest grip for the middle sets.

After these sets pull the chains and work up to a heavy single with any grip you like. You will be a bit shot so just go up so you can get a good idea of where you are at.

Lat Pull Shrugs

2 sets of 5 reps

Use a moderate weight (something you can do for 30 reps or so). Use your bench grip. Get set on the bench as you would for a set of pulldowns. Let the weight stretch your lats into a deep stretch. Hold for a 5 count and then do a reverse shrug and hold for 1-2 seconds. Repeat for 5 reps.

Free Time

Base this on how you feel.

Give yourself 15-20 minutes to do whatever you want but keep the rest to 60 seconds between sets and the reps between 8-10.

Week 6 of 7

TUESDAY

Same as last week, just flush out

WEDNESDAY (back - biceps)

Pull Downs

3 sets of 12 reps
Dead stop at bottom
Hold top stretch for 2 count

Reverse Band Rows

2 sets to failure
Set up like reverse band presses
Use strong band
Pull the bar down to your chest and hold on chest for one count.
Make the band tension heavier than it was last week. Either loop it more or add another band.

FRIDAY

Reverse Band Press (strong bands).

Work up to max (like you would a max effort movement so you WON'T miss a weight).
Whatever this weight ends up being, take 90% for 2 sets of 1 rep with a competitive pause.
Use a grip that's a thumb length away from smooth

Close Grip 2 Board Press

Work up to 1 heavy set of 3 reps

Face Pulls

2 sets of 12

**For all the above rest what you feel you need between sets*

Week 6 of 7**SATURDAY**

Keep this day in but only work at about moderately hard. Keep things at a 5 on a scale of 1-10
Squat as main movement
Shrugs

MONDAY**Dynamic Bench Press**

XX% for 8 sets of 3 (60-90 sec rest) use 2 chains per side and make sure the chains totally deload when the bar is on your chest.

Lets do this:

225 with 4 chains (same set up you have been using) for 2 sets of 3

225 with 4 chains and double mini band for 2 sets of 3

225 with 4 chains and TWO double mini bands per side for 2 sets of 3 reps

225 with 4 chains for 2 sets (You will take off the mini bands. These should feel insanely fast.)

Change your grip as you like but use your strongest grip for the middle sets.

Lat Pull Shrugs

2 sets of 5 reps.

Use a moderate weight (something you can do for 30 reps or so). Use your bench grip. Get set on the bench as you would for a set of pulldowns. Let the weight stretch you lats into a deep stretch. hold for 5 count and then do a reverse shrug and hold for 1-2 seconds. Repeat for 5 reps.

Free Time

Base this on how you feel.

Give yourself 15-20 minutes to do whatever you want but keep the rest to 60 seconds between sets and the reps between 8-10.



The S4 Winter Program

Result: Steve Deil 230 PR Total

Week 1 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**DE Squat**

40% for 8 sets of 5 reps

Less than 60 seconds of rest

Pause on box for 2 count

Stand as fast as you can

Goodmornings (light)

4 sets of 8 reps (you should have 4-6 reps left in the tank at the end of each set)

Keep these light

Push way back on your heels as you lower

Think of this as a hamstring stretch

Flex ass as hard as you can at the top

Stretch hard

Hanging Leg Raise

3 sets of 20 reps

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

Week 1 of 15**THURSDAY****DE Bench**

40% for 10 sets 5 reps

Change grips however you like over the 10 sets BUT use three different grips
<60 seconds rest

Seated Dip Machine or 1/4 Dips

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

If you don't have a dip machine just do the top 1/4 of the dip movement

For the 4th and final set use 50% of the weight used for the heavy sets and do as many reps as you can. On this set do no lockout and slow the tempo down.

Dumbbell Rows – Rest/Pause

Work these heavy for 3 sets 6 reps

Start with the bells on the floor and return every rep back to the floor.

Wait one sec before pulling the second rep

Face Pulls

3 sets 25 reps

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

2 **Finibars**

3 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

2 scoops **Anaconda**

2 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 3-4 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 1 of 15**SATURDAY**

Take your time warming up.

Pin Pulls (off pin 2)

Work up to max single.

As the weight gets heavier take smaller jumps

Close Stance Low Box Squats

Find a moderate weight and do 2 sets of 10 reps

No gear

Back Raises or Back Attack

Work up to a heavy set of 6 reps

Blue Bench Abs

4 sets of 20 reps

This is the old blue cable ab bench in the gym

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Floor Press with Chains

Work up to 60% of best bench using triples. Then add one chain for side (keep doing triples) until the weight gets hard. Once you get to a very hard set of 3 - rest five to 8 minutes and repeat the set again.

Keep legs out straight

Use the GIANT pad under your back.

Cross Body Extensions

For this pick a weight you could do 20 reps with

This is when you lay on a bench and do dumbbell extensions but instead of dropping the bell to that same shoulder as the hand holding the dumbbell - you will take the dumbbell cross your body to the opposite shoulder.

Week 1 of 15

Do these past failure. To do this start with your right arm and do as many reps as you can. After you fail switch to the left arm. When you fail there go right back to your right arm and repeat the process. You will do this three times for each arm; this will be one set. Do two sets of this

Chest Supported Rows

Go heavy for 3 sets 8 reps

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes

Week 2 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**DE Squat**

44% for 8 sets of 4 reps
<60 seconds rest
Pause on box for 2 count
Stand as fast as you can

Goodmornings (light)

4 sets of 8 reps (you should have 2-3 reps left in the tank at the end of each set)
Keep these light but go heavier than last week.
Push way back on your heels as you lower
Think of this as a hamstring stretch
Flex ass as hard as you can at the top
Stretch hard

Hanging Leg Raise

4 sets of 15 reps

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

Week 2 of 15**THURSDAY****DE Bench**

45% for 10 sets of 3 reps

Change grips however you like over the 10 sets but use three different grips
<60 seconds rest

Seated Dip Machine or 1/4 Dips

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps. USE MORE WEIGHT THAN LAST WEEK

For the 4th and final set use 50% of the weight used for the heavy sets and do as many reps as you can. On this set do no lockout and slow the tempo down.

If you don't have a dip machine just do the top 1/4 of the dip movement

Dumbbell Rows - Rest Pause

Work these heavy for 3 sets of 10 reps with the same weight you used last week.

Start with the bells on the floor and return every rep back to the floor.

Wait one sec before pulling the second rep

Face Pull

3 sets of 25 reps

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

2 **Finibars**

3 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

2 scoops **Anaconda**

2 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 3-4 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 2 of 15**SATURDAY**

Take your time warming up.

Reverse Band Box Squats

So, 2 sets 5 reps with same weight.

Work up to heavy set of 5. You will use this weight for one more set of 5.

If you're not RAWWWWWWWWWWWWW, then use briefs

Box height at parallel

Pin 5 Pin Pull

Work up to a heavy triple

You can keep your briefs on

Back Raises or Back Attack

Work up to a heavy set of 6 reps

Hanging Leg Raise

4 sets of 20 reps

This is the old blue cable ab bench in the gym

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Floor Press with Chains

Work up to 60% of best bench using triples. Then add one chain for side until you hit a max single.

Keep legs out straight

Use the GIANT pad under your back.

Cross Body Extensions

This is when you lay on a bench and do dumbbell extensions but instead of dropping the bell to that same shoulder as the hand holding the dumbbell - you will take the dumbbell cross your body to the opposite shoulder.

Week 2 of 15

For this pick a weight you could do 20 reps with. USE MORE WEIGHT THAN LAST WEEK
Do these past failure. To do this start with your right arm and do as many reps as you can.
After you fail switch to the left arm. When you fail there go right back to your right arm and
repeat the process. You will do this three times for each arm; this will be one set.
Do two sets of this

Chest Supported Rows

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes



Week 3 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**DE Squat**

48% for 8 sets of 3 reps

<60 seconds rest

Pause on box for 2 count

Stand as fast as you can

Goodmornings (light)

4 sets of 6 reps (you should have 2-3 reps left in the tank at the end of each set)

Keep these light but go heavier than last week.

Push way back on your heels as you lower

Think of this as a hamstring stretch

Flex ass as hard as you can at the top

Stretch hard

This will be the last week of these so push them hard

Hanging Leg Raise

2 sets of 20 reps

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 reps

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

Week 3 of 15**THURSDAY****DE Bench**

40% for 12 sets of 3 reps

Change grips however you like over the 12 sets but use three different grips
<60 seconds rest

Seated Dip Machine or 1/4 Dips

Go heavy for 2 sets of 6 reps. USE MORE WEIGHT THAN LAST WEEK

For the 4th and final set use 50% of the weight used for the heavy sets and do as many reps as you can. On this set do no lockout and slow the tempo down.

If you don't have a dip machine just do the top 1/4 of the dip movement

This will be the last week of these so push it hard

Dumbbell Rows - Rest Pause

Work these heavy for 2 sets of 5 reps with the same weight you used last week.

Start with the bells on the floor and return every rep back to the floor.

Wait one sec before pulling the second rep

Face Pull

2 sets of 35 reps

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

3 **Finibars**

3 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

3 scoops **Anaconda**

3 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 4-6 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 3 of 15**SATURDAY**

Take your time warming up.

Reverse Band Box Squats

So, 2 sets 3 reps with same weight.

Work up to heavy set of 5. You will use this weight for one more set of 3.

If you're not RAWWWWWWWWWWWWW, then use briefs

Box height at parallel

Speed Pulls Standing on 2 Mats

10 sets of 1 rep (less than 45 sec rest)

You can keep your briefs on

Back Raises or Back Attack

2 sets of 30-40 reps

Abs

2 sets of 8 reps

This is the old blue cable ab bench in the gym

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Reverse Band Press (Strong Bands)

Work up to 60% of best bench using triples, then start singles. Work as heavy as you can without missing.

Chest Supported Rows

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps.

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes

Week 4 of 15

MONDAY

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY

DE Squat

40% for 8 sets of 5 reps

<60 sec rest

Pause on box for 3 count

Stand as fast as you can

GHR

3 sets to failure

If you can do more than 15, add weight.

Flat Leg Raise

3 sets of 20 reps

Lay flat on floor and keep your lower back pressed tight into the floor (don't let it arch)

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

Go heavy on these and use some swing.

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY

DE Bench

44% for 9 sets of 3 reps (2 chains per side)

Week 4 of 15

Change grips however you like over the 9 sets BUT use three different grips
<60 seconds rest

Dumbbell Extensions

4 sets of 12 reps with a moderate weight (leave 3-4 reps in the tank)

Machine Rows

3 sets of 8 reps - heavy (one rep shy of failure)

Face Pull

2 sets of 35 reps

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

3 **Finibars**

3 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

3 scoops **Anaconda**

3 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 4-6 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 4 of 15

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Yoke Bar Box Squats

Work up to heavy set of 5. After you get this set of 5, rest 5 minutes and repeat

If you're not RAWWWWWWWWWWWWW, use briefs

Box height at parallel

Speed Pulls with Fat Bar

You can keep your briefs on

10 sets of 1 rep (less than 45 seconds rest)

These should be fast and easy; around 40-50%

Back Attack

Pyramid up using 5 reps until you get to a set that makes you feel like your eyeballs want to pop out.

Back Raises

One set of 50 reps using a band

Abs

Just act like you did them this week.

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Dumbbell Presses - Flat

Work up to a max set of 15. Rest 5-10 minutes and try to break the rep record you just set.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes

Week 5 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**DE Squat**

45% for 8 sets 3 reps

<60 sec rest

Pause on box for 2 count

Stand as fast as you can

GHR

3 sets to failure

If you can do more than 15, add weight.

Flat Leg Raise

2 sets 30 reps

Lay flat on floor and keep your lower back pressed tight into the floor (don't let it arch)

Reverse Hypers

3 sets of 15 reps

Use strict form and try to pause at the top

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY**DE Bench**

44% for 9 sets 3 reps (2 chains per side)

Change grips however you like over the 9 sets but use three different grips

<60 seconds rest

On your last set pull the chains off and do as many reps as you can.

Week 5 of 15**JM Press with Fat Bar (if you don't have fat bar just do JM press)**

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 6 using the same weight

Machine Rows

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)

Face Pull

3 sets 15 reps

Go heavy

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

3 **Finibars**

3 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

3 scoops **Anaconda**

3 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 4-6 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Reverse Band Deadlift (using average bands)

Work up to a heavy single

Use deadlift suit with straps up. If you are too fat to get the suit on or up then just use briefs. This is to overload your pull but to also see if your gear still fits.

Week 5 of 15

Belt Squats or Leg Press

Work up to a heavy set of 10, rest 5 minutes and then try to get 20 reps with the same weight. After this cut the weight in half and do as many reps as you can in 2 minutes. Rest at the top or sitting on the box but don't rack or lock the weight.

Step Ups

Use a box around 20 inches and do 2 sets to failure

Abs

If you have anything left (I'm guessing no) then do some ab work. My guess is you will be doing these on one of the machines where you can sit down.

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Dumbbell Presses - Inline

Work up to a max set of 15. Rest 5-10 minutes and try to break the rep record you just set.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

FREE TIME

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes

Week 6 of 15

MONDAY

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY

DE Squat

50% for 8 sets 3 reps

<60 sec rest

Pause on box for 1 count

Stand as fast as you can

GHR

3 sets to failure

If you can do more than 15, add weight.

GO HEAVIER THAN LAST WEEK!

Flat Leg Raise

Lay flat on floor and keep your lower back pressed tight into the floor (don't let it arch)

3 sets of 15 reps

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

Use strict form and try to pause at the top

Wednesday

Off or recovery work

Thursday

DE Bench

48% for 8 sets 3 reps (2 chains per side)

Change grip however you like over the 9 sets but use three different grips

Week 6 of 15

<60 seconds rest

Work up in weight with the chains still on for a heavy set of 3 reps.

JM Press with Fat Bar (if you don't have fat bar just do JM press)

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 5 using the same weight

Use more weight than last week

Machine Rows

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)

Face Pull

3 sets of 35 reps

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

Friday

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

4 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

4 scoops **Anaconda**

4 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Saturday

Take your time warming up.

Cambered Bar Suspended Good Morning

Work up to a heavy single

Set up the bar so if you hang your hands down they would be the same position you would pull from.

Week 6 of 15

Belt Squats or Leg Press (do what you didn't do last week)

Work up to a heavy set of 20, rest 5 minutes and then try to get 20 reps with the same weight.

Step Ups

Use a box around 20 inches and do 2 sets to failure

Hanging Leg Raises

3 sets of 30

Sunday

Take your time warming up.

Stand Press with Fat Bar

Set the boxes or rubber stands up so you elbows stop the same as they would if your were doing a floor press. The stands will sit beside the bench. Think of this as a floor press while lying on the bench and still being able to use leg drive.

Work up to a heavy set of 5, rest 5 minutes, and repeat the set again.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Free Time

Do whatever you want to for 15 minutes (MAKE ONE OF THESE PUSHDOWNS OR THE NEW TRICEP MACHINES). Go for a HUGE pump on these.

Week 7 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**DE Squat**

40% for 12 sets 3 reps
<60 sec rest
Pause on box for 1 count
Stand as fast as you can

GHR

3 sets to failure with NO weight. Bang out as many as you can.

Hanging Leg Raise

75 total reps (I don't care how many sets it takes)

Reverse Hypers

3 sets of 12 reps
Use strict form and try to pause at the top

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY**DE Bench**

40% for 12 sets 3 reps (2 chains per side)
Change grips however you like over the 9 sets but use three different grips
<45 seconds rest

Week 7 of 15

Close Grip 2 Board Press

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 5 using the same weight
Hold the weight at the top for a 2 count

Machine Rows

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)
Keep elbows OUT as wide as you can.

Face Pulls

Go heavy, 3 sets of 12 reps with elbows high

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

4 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

4 scoops **Anaconda**

4 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Saturday

Take your time warming up.

Cambered Bar Suspended Good Morning

Break your record from last week

Hack Squats (do what you didn't do last week)

Work up to a heavy set of 20, rest 5 minutes and then try to get 20 reps with the same weight.



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Week 7 of 15

Seated Leg Curls

3 sets of 15 reps

Abs On GHR

50 total reps (as many sets as needed)

Sunday

Take your time warming up.

Stand Press with Fat Bar

Do this again but just work up to a heavy set of 3.

Shirt Work

Bust your shirt out and work up to a moderate triple on a three board. Nothing crazy here just get in the shirt to see how it feels.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Free Time

Do whatever you want to for 15 minutes (MAKE ONE OF THESE PUSHDOWNS OR THE NEW TRICEP MACHINES). Go for a HUGE pump on these.

Week 8 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**DE Squat**

44% for 8 sets 3 reps

<60 sec rest

Pause on box for 1 count

Stand as fast as you can

NOTE: With 7 weeks left these need to now be very focused and aggressive. When you are training the only speaking between sets should be verbal cues to address weak points. Focus on perfect technique. Also, if you are a gear whore use briefs.

GHR

4 sets of 10-12 (use weight)

Legs Raises on Bench with chains

Chains around ankles and keep your lower back flat and pressed into the bench.

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

Go as heavy as you can with loose form.

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY**DE Bench**

40% for 9 sets 3 reps (2 chains per side)

Week 8 of 15

Change grips however you like over the 9 sets BUT use three different grips
<45 seconds rest

NOTE: With 7 weeks left these need to now be very focused and aggressive. When you are training this the only speaking between sets should be verbal cues to address weak points. Focus on perfect technique.

Dumbbell Extensions on the floor

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 8

Machine Rows

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)
Keep elbows OUT as wide as you can.

Face Pulls

Heavy, 3 sets of 12 reps with elbows high

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

4 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

4 scoops **Anaconda**

4 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Week 8 of 15

Reverse Band Squat (light band)

Work up to a PM (perceived max) and then drop down and do 80% for 2 sets of 5 reps.

Full Gear

If you're RAW: no changes

Speed Pulls

40% of CM (competitive max) for 6 sets of 1 rep

Seated Leg Curls

3 sets of 15 reps

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Reverse Band Press with Shirt (strong band)

Work up to a heavy set of 3 raw and then put your shirt on and work up. DO NOT exceed your CM (competitive max) but make it touch. If you need to use the same weight for 5 sets, so be it. You need to be a TECHNICIAN to do this.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Light Side, Front and rear Delt Raises

Nothing heavy (stay under 35 pounds). Do one or two sets of each type of raise.

Free Time

Do whatever you want to 15 minutes (MAKE ONE OF THESE PUSHDOWNS OR THE NEW TRICEP MACHINES). Go for a HUGE pump on these.

Week 9 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**Dimel Deadlifts**

44% for 8 sets 3 reps

2 sets of 15-20 reps using no more than 275 pounds.

GHR

4 sets of 10-12 (use weight)

Legs Raises on Bench with chains

Chains around ankles, keep your lower back flat and pressed into the bench.

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

Go as heavy as you can with loose form.

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY**DE Bench**

35% for 9 sets 3 reps (2 chains per side)

Change grips however you like over the 9 sets but use three different grips

<45 seconds rest

NOTE: With 7 weeks left these need to now be very focused and aggressive. When you are training this the only speaking between sets should be verbal cues to address weak points. Focus on perfect technique.

Week 9 of 15

Dumbbell Extensions on the floor

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 8
Beat last week's weight

Machine Rows (use a different machine than last time)

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)
Keep elbows out as wide as you can.

Face Pulls

Heavy, 3 sets 12 reps with elbows high

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**
4 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**
4 scoops **Anaconda**
4 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Reverse Band Squat (Light Band)

Work up to a PM (perceived max) and then drop down and do 85% for 2 sets 3 reps.
Full gear, if you wear it.

Week 9 of 15**Pulls Standing on 3 Mats**

Work up to heavy triple

GHR

3 sets of 15 reps

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

2 Board Press with Shirt

Work up to a heavy set of 3 raw and then put your shirt on and work up. Do not exceed 50 pounds over your CM (competitive max) but make it touch. If you need to use that same weight for 5 sets, so be it. You need to be a TECHNICIAN to do this.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Light Side, Front and rear Delt Raises

Nothing heavy (stay under 35 pounds). Do one or two sets of each type of raise.

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes (MAKE ONE OF THESE PUSHDOWNS OR THE NEW TRICEP MACHINES). Got for a HUGE pump on these.

Week 10 of 15

MONDAY

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY

Dimel Deadlifts

44% for 8 sets 3 reps

2 sets of 15-20 reps using no more than 275 pounds.

Use the same weight as last week

GHR

4 sets of 6-8 (use weight)

Legs Raises on Bench with chains

Chains around ankles and keep your lower back flat and pressed into the bench.

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 6 reps

Go as heavy as you can with loose form.

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY

DE Bench

30% 8 sets of 3 reps with band tension

Week 10 of 15

If you bench:

100-200 Pounds – Bands not recommended

201-300 Pounds – 30-40 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

301-400 Pounds – 40-50 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

401-500 Pounds – 70 - 80 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

501-600 Pounds – 70 - 80 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

601-700 Pounds – 100-120 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

Dumbbell Extensions on the floor

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 8

BEAT LAST WEEK'S WEIGHT

Machine Rows - Change Machine

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)

Keep elbows out as wide as you can.

Face Pulls

Heavy, 3 sets of 12 reps with elbows high

Free Time:

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

4 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

4 scoops **Anaconda**

4 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 10 of 15

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Box Squat with Bands

Briefs and suits with straps down.
47% for 6 sets of 2

If you squat:

301-500 Pounds - Strong Band
501-700 Pounds - Strong and Light Band
701-900 Pounds - Strong and Average Band
900 Plus Pounds - Strong and Strong Band

Pulls against bands

Work up to a moderately heavy single (on a scale of 1-10 around a 6), and then do 5 sets of 1 rep

GHR

3 sets of 15 reps

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15, strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

1 Board Press with Shirt

Work up to a heavy set of 3 raw and then put your shirt on and work up. Do not exceed 50 pounds over your CM (competitive max) but make it touch. If you need to use that same weight for 5 sets, so be it. You need to be a TECHNICIAN to do this.

Week 10 of 15**Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)**

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Light Side, Front and rear Delt Raises

Nothing heavy (stay under 35 pounds). Do one or two sets of each type of raise.

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes (MAKE ONE OF THESE PUSHDOWNS OR THE NEW TRICEP MACHINES). Go for a HUGE pump on these.

Week 11 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**Dimel Deadlifts**

2 sets of 15-20 reps using no more than 275 pounds.

Use the same weight as last week

ADD MORE WEIGHT THAN LAST WEEK!

GHR

2 sets of 20-25 reps

Hanging Leg Raise

50 total reps in as many sets as it takes

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 6 reps

Go as heavy as you can with loose form.

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY**DE Bench**

Week 3 - 20% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa -Maximal Band tension

Week 11 of 15

If you bench:

100-200 Pounds – Bands not recommended

201-300 Pounds – 60-80 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

301-400 Pounds – 120-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

401-500 Pounds – 160-180 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

501-600 Pounds – 200-240 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

601-700 Pounds – 240-300 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

800 Plus Pounds – 320 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

Barbell Extensions

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 10

Machine Rows - Same machine as last week

3 sets of 8 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)

Keep elbows out as wide as you can.

USE MORE WEIGHT THEN LAST WEEK.

Face Pulls

Heavy, 3 sets 12 reps with elbows high

Free Time

15 minutes to do whatever you like. Keep the rest low (under 1 minute) and reps between 8-12.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

4 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

4 scoops **Anaconda**

4 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 11 of 15**SATURDAY**

Take your time warming up.

Box Squat with Bands

Briefs and suits with straps down.

Week 2 – 51% for 5 sets of 2

WORK UP AFTER YOUR SETS: This means work up to a heavy double with the bands still on. DO NOT MISS but bust your ass to get the weight!

If you squat:

301-500 Pounds – Strong Band

501-700 Pounds – Strong and Light Band

701-900 Pounds – Strong and Average Band

900 Plus Pounds – Strong and Strong Band

Pulls against bands

Work up to a moderately heavy single (on a scale of 1-10, around a 6) and then do 5 sets of 1 rep

GHR

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps using a heavy med ball.

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Shirt Work

Use the same weight you did last week on one board but touch it for a single off your chest

If you're raw, use a moderate to close grip and work up to a heavy single

Week 11 of 15

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Light Side, Front and rear Delt Raises

Nothing heavy (stay under 35 pounds). Do one or two sets of each type of raise.

Free Time

Do whatever you want for 15 minutes (MAKE ONE OF THESE PUSHDOWNS OR THE NEW TRICEP MACHINES). Got for a HUGE pump on these.

Week 12 of 15

MONDAY

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY

Dimel Deadlifts

3 sets of 15-20 reps using no more than 275 pounds.
Use the same weight as last week

GHR

4 sets of 8-10 reps (these should be to failure)

Hanging Leg Raise

50 total reps in as many sets as it takes

Reverse Hypers

3 sets of 15 reps
Use very strict form

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY

DE Bench

30% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal Band tension

Week 12 of 15

If you bench:

100-200 Pounds – Bands not recommended

201-300 Pounds – 60-80 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

301-400 Pounds – 120-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

401-500 Pounds – 160-180 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

501-600 Pounds – 200-240 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

601-700 Pounds – 240-300 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

800 Plus Pounds – 320 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

Barbell Extensions

Pyramid up to 2 heavy sets of 8

USE MORE WEIGHT THAN LAST WEEK

Machine Rows - Same machine as last week

4 sets of 12 reps, heavy (one rep shy of failure)

Keep elbows OUT as wide as you can.

USE SAME WEIGHT AS LAST WEEK

Face Pulls

Light, 2 sets of 30 reps with elbows high

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

6 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

6 scoops **Anaconda**

6 scoops **Mag-10**

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

Week 12 of 15

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Box Squat with Bands

Briefs and suits with straps down.

53% for 5 sets of 2

After these sets increase box height 2 inches, put straps up and work up to a heavy double.

If you're raw, no changes

If you squat:

301-500 Pounds - Strong Band

501-700 Pounds - Strong and Light Band

701-900 Pounds - Strong and Average Band

900 Plus Pounds - Strong and Strong Band

Pulls against bands

Work up to a moderately heavy single (on a scale of 1-10 around a 6) and then do 5 sets of 1 rep

GHR

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps using a heavy med ball.

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Shirt Work

Work up to max double off three boards

If you're raw, no changes



Week 12 of 15

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Light Side, Front and rear Delt Raises

Nothing heavy (stay under 35 pounds). Do one or two sets of each type of raise.

Week 13 of 15

MONDAY

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY

GHR

4 sets 8-10 reps (these should be to failure)

Hanging Leg Raise

50 total reps in as many sets as it takes

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 reps

Use very strict form

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY

Light Tricep and Lat work, nothing hard at all.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

6 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

6 scoops **Anaconda**

6 scoops **Mag-10**

Week 13 of 15

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.

Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Squats with Full Gear

Work up using triples. Keep doing triples until it feels heavy.

After this set jump one more time for a single. If this is easy, jump up again.

You DON'T want to miss a weight!

If you're raw, no changes

Deadlifts

Work up to 2 sets of 1 with the weight you want to open with at the meet.

GHR

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps using a heavy med ball.

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Shirt Work

Work up to max single off two boards

Raw guys, do the same as the shirted guys.

Vertical Pulls (chins, pull downs, whatever)

Go heavy for 3 sets of 8 reps

Week 13 of 15**Light Side, Front and rear Delt Raises**

Nothing heavy (stay under 35 pounds). Do one or two sets of each type of raise.



Week 14 of 15**MONDAY**

Off or recovery work

TUESDAY**GHR**

6 sets of 6 reps (these should be to failure)

Hanging Leg Raise

50 total reps in as many sets as it takes

Reverse Hypers

4 sets of 8 reps

Use very strict form

WEDNESDAY

Off or recovery work

THURSDAY

Light Tricep and Lat work - nothing hard at all.

FRIDAY

Off, but let's start bringing back in the bloat protocol for Sat.

Over the day add:

4 **Finibars**

6 scoops **Surge Workout Fuel**

6 scoops **Anaconda**

6 scoops **Mag-10**

Week 14 of 15

Also increase fluid and sodium intake.
Let's shoot for a 6-8 pound increase, so nothing too crazy right now

SATURDAY

Take your time warming up.

Squats with Full Gear

Work up to a feel good weight with straps up and wraps. This should be around 70-80%.
Do 2 or 3 sets of 1 rep.
Raw guys, no changes.

Deadlifts

No more than 315 for 5 sets of 1

GHR

Work up to 2 heavy sets of 5 reps using a heavy med ball.

Reverse Hypers

2 sets of 15 strict and tight

Pull Down Abs

3 sets of 8

SUNDAY

Take your time warming up.

Shirt Work

You should be ready for the meet right now so you have two options here. If you don't have your shirt dialed in you will need to do shirt work to your chest. If you are good with your shirt, use 40% of your best bench with 2 chains per side and do 4 sets of 3 reps.
Raw guys, you will do the speed work but may need 50%
Hit the triceps hard and call it a day.

Week 15 of 15

Rest all week.

» MORE INFO

[Read Steve Diel's Meet Report here](#)

The Force Training Seminar

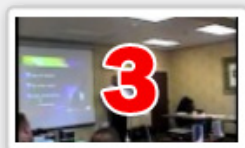


The Force Training Seminar took place at Westside Barbell in 2004. In this seminar Dave took a clear-cut approach to the concepts associated with maximal force development training. This involves a no-holds-barred approach to training information. No stone will be left unturned and no topic will be avoided. Dave does not believe in holding anything back and this seminar will leave you with a new outlook on the process of strength development. This seminar is about making gains. You will, at some time or another, run into a wall and experience a lack of progress. These are the most important times in your training program. These are the times that will make or break you. Training is not always a fast process. You will have times where you have to stop and think about what you are doing and come up with a new plan of attack. If you do not plan for these issues, you could lose valuable time trying to catch up, even years! Let EliteFTS guide you through these rough patches.

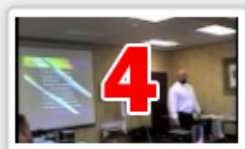
View the Force Training Seminar video clips below:



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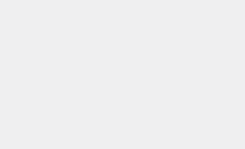
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Clip #4



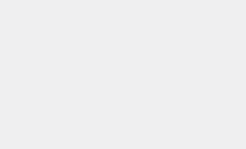
Clip #5



Clip #6



Clip #7



Clip #8



Clip #9



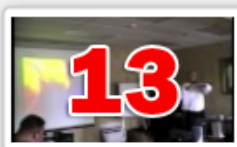
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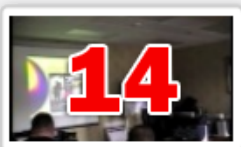
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Clip #12



Clip #13



Clip #14



Clip #15



Clip #16



Clip #17



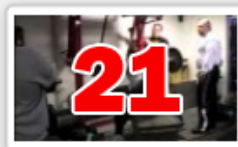
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Clip #19



Clip #20



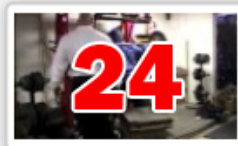
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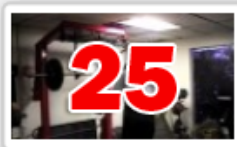
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Clip #23



Clip #24



Clip #25



Clip #26



Clip #27



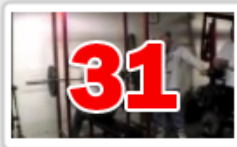
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Clip #29



Clip #30



Clip #31



Clip #32



Clip #33





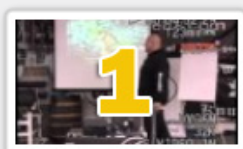
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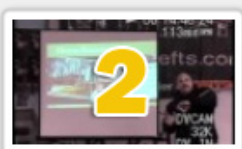
PASSION INTO PROFIT

ELITEFTS SMALL BUSINESS CONFERENCE

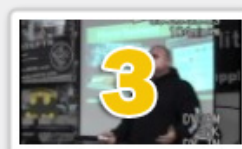
View the Passion Into Profit Seminar video clips below:



Clip #1



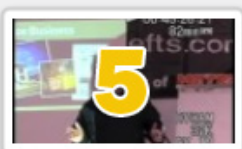
Clip #2



Clip #3



Clip #4



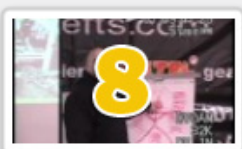
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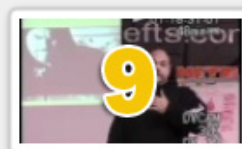
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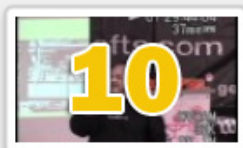
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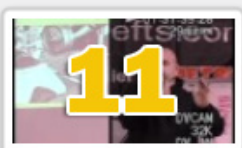
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Clip #9



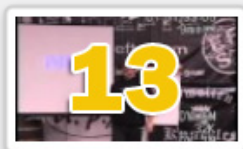
Clip #10



Clip #11



Clip #12



Clip #13

Live – Learn and Pass On

Everything can be taken away from man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.

—Victor E Frankl

We all have those times in life I like to call “defining moments.” These moments in time can be glorious or disastrous, but always shape the direction and path of who we become. From these moments we grow and become better or worse for it. The difference between better or worse is how the situation is perceived. If something bad happens to you, do you view it as a learning experience and move on, or do you let it tear you up? If something good happens, do you look back to ask why or write it off as luck?

What does all this have to do with strength training? It has everything to do with strength training, powerlifting, sports, and life! There are many qualities needed to succeed in the strength training game. I like to sum them all up with three very simple words: Live, Learn, and Pass On.

Live — The most important quality is to live the life you want to have, not the life you have. In other words, if you're a bottom 100 powerlifter but want to be a top ten lifter, do you live the life of a top ten lifter or a bottom 100 lifter? Do you do the same things the top ten lifter does? Do you think the same way he does? Do you skip sessions? Are you as serious as he is? If not, then how are you ever going to get where he is?

You only go around once so you may as well make the best of your time here by living the life you really want to live! “Well, Dave, I'd like to but...” But what? Do what you gotta do! There are many people out there who live “but lives,” “I shoulda lives,” “I coulda lives,” or “if only lives.”

These people are very easy to find. They're the ones we call critics; those who've become masters of the “have not” and love to spend their time telling us what we can and can't do. They make up 90% of the people I've met. Avoid them! They love to pull you down. If you happen to be one, then fix it fast because it'll affect your training and your life.

Learn — The most successful people spend their time learning from their mistakes and other people. If strength is your game then read about it, talk about it, and do everything you can to make yourself better. Talk to anyone you feel can help you. Steal from the strong and use it in your training. You can never learn too much. Your success may depend on one very small thing you could never have figured out yourself.

Pass On — Many years ago, in a dark stairway in the back of a junior high gym that smelled like sweat stained wrestling mats, was a ninth grade wrestler who'd only won one match in the last two years. This same kid wasn't a very good athlete up to this point. He played many sports and always did okay but was never good enough to start or be a standout. As he waited for his mother to pick him up he decided to run the stairs instead of just sitting as he'd usually do. After about five minutes he was thinking he'd had enough and would call it a day and sit down to wait for his ride. About this time, the head wrestling coach walked by and asked him what he was doing. The kid replied that he was running

Live – Learn and Pass On

the stairs because he was sick of getting beat all the time. The coach then spoke one sentence that stuck in the kid's mind for the rest of his life: "If you work hard enough you can do whatever you want to do."

I ran the stairs for the next forty-five minutes and didn't lose a match during the entire season. I went on to have a very successful career in sports. That one sentence taught me how to run for what I wanted and I've been running ever since. One kid, one sentence and a totally changed life.

Why do I do this? Why do I write these articles? Why do I spend so much time helping people for free? Why do I care so much when I know most lifters and coaches will never listen? The answer is simple. Why did my coach care so much when he knew most of his athletes would never listen? Because I listened. What would I be today if he didn't care? I owe it to him to pass on the great gift he gave me. This is why I try so hard.

I'm sure you have the same type of story. Somewhere, some time, someone took the time to help shape your way. You owe it to them to pass on what you know. When we leave this earth, it's not what we take with us that matters, it's what we leave behind. There have been many people along my path and I can tell you today I'll never forget who they were and what they did. This is the greatest success in life one can have.

Vince Lombardi once said, *"I firmly believe that any man's finest hour – his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear – is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle, victorious."* Do you want to lie on the ground victorious or with your face in the dirt?

ESSENTIALS



ELITEFTS PRODUCTS

What sets elitefts apart from the competition is the Under the Bar mentality. We are not scientists or doctors. We are athletes, gym rats, and coaches. Our products are a testament to this. We're on the field and in the gym, just like you. We don't sell what we ourselves don't use, and we don't use anything unnecessary. One look at the Prowler, a Monolift, an EFS Competition Bench, or a Mastodon bar lets you know what we're all about. No matter what your game is, we've got the tools to make you better.

THE PROWLER

The Prowler 2 is not only the best conditioning implement on the market, it's also one of the best ways to develop strength in your legs, hips, and arms.

Special note to coaches:

The Prowler 2 is the perfect tool for use in team situations as well as training scenarios that require a competitive atmosphere.

The Prowler was originally designed to condition linemen. The low handles can be pushed from either direction- from the front or rear of the sled. When pushing from behind, the trainee is required to sink his or her hips extremely low to move the sled, or else the front ski will just sink into the ground. The Prowler 2 is the only push/pull sled on the market that is constructed to allow such variety of mobility.

elitefts.com/prowler

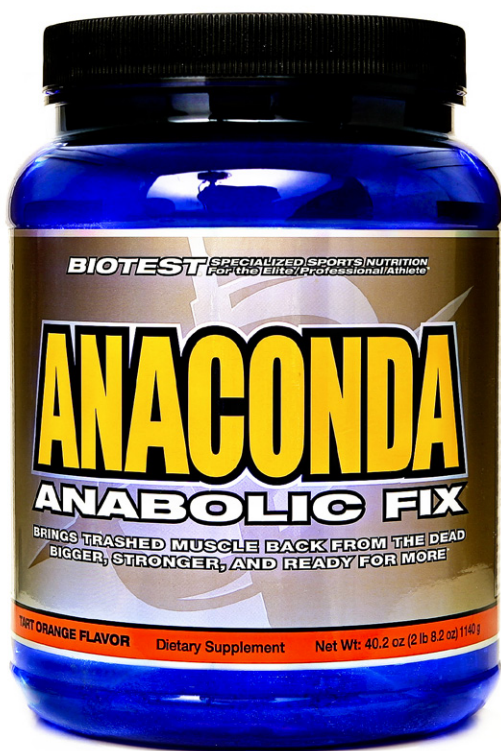


GLUTE HAM RAISE

the GHR is one of the most important movements of any training program. Very few movements train the hamstrings at both joint angles (hip and knee). This is critical because this is how your body works when it runs, jumps, squats and pulls. If you're gonna do the movement we believe you should get maximal results.

elitefts.com/ghr

ESSENTIALS



SUPPLEMENTS

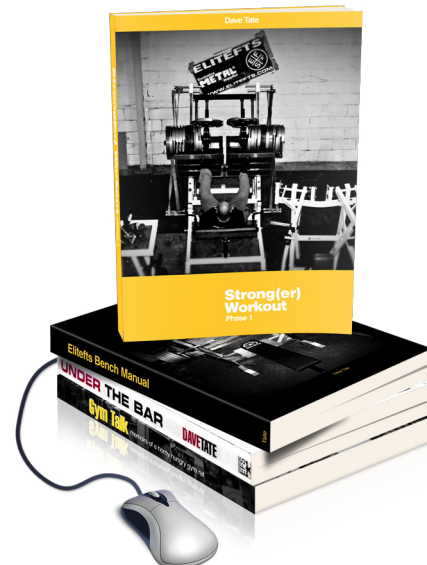
We pride ourselves on ONLY carrying those items that we have seen work for our friends, training partners and customers. If you do not see it here then it does not fit our standards. Our standards are very simple. The product has to work and has to be worth the investment.

elitefts.com/supplements

BOOKS & E-BOOKS

Looking for the best training information in the world? Looking for those hard to find titles? Look no further, the book you seek is waiting here for you. We pride ourselves on offering only the best books on the market. If you can't find the answers here, then you can't find them anywhere!

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MEDICINE BALLS

Stability to agility we have a ball for you. We offer the strongest highest quality stability and medicine balls on the market. Warning: These balls will make you a better athlete.

elitefts.com/medballs



STRAPS & WRAPS

We have gone out of our way to provide you with the best training products on the market. We have straps for wrist, knee, neck, tricep, and abdominal training as well as many of your other training needs.

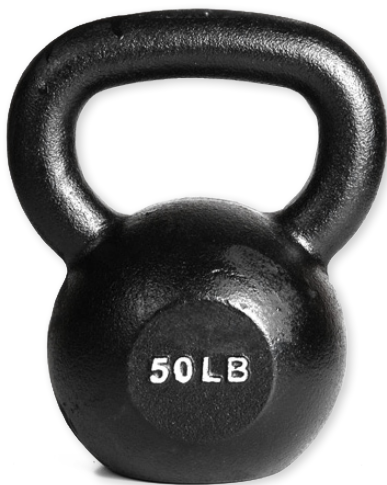
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METAL GEAR

EFS has gone out of it way to bring you the best powerlifting gear in the world! Extreme Results, Extreme Carryover.

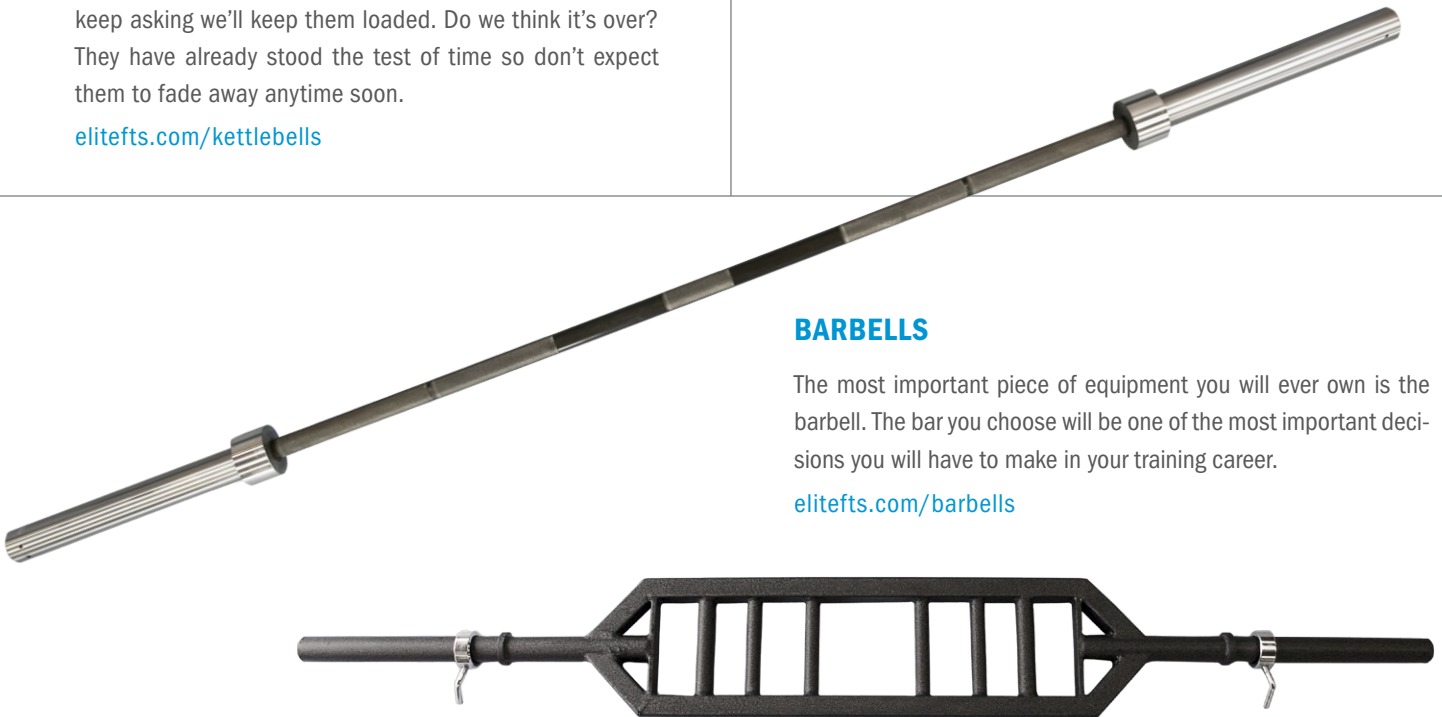
elitefts.com/metal



KETTLEBELLS

Is the Kettlebell craze over? Who knows but as long as you keep asking we'll keep them loaded. Do we think it's over? They have already stood the test of time so don't expect them to fade away anytime soon.

elitefts.com/kettlebells



BARBELLS

The most important piece of equipment you will ever own is the barbell. The bar you choose will be one of the most important decisions you will have to make in your training career.

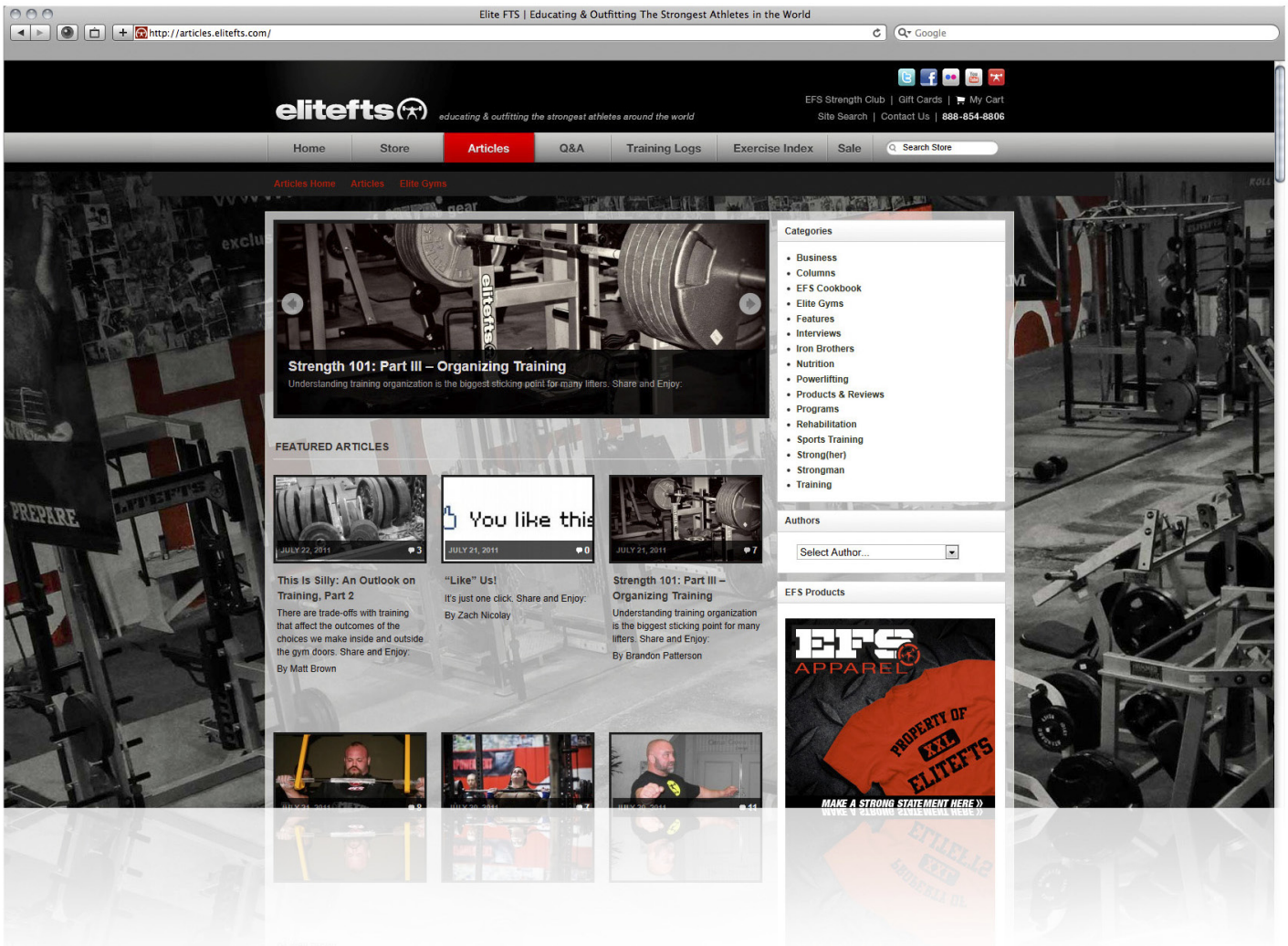
elitefts.com/barbells



ELITEFTS APPAREL

Check out our gear line. We have everything you need from T-shirts, hoodies, and tanks to shorts and hats. Our apparel designs have become world famous and can be seen on the street, in the gym, at lifting competitions and at the family dinner table.

elitefts.com/apparel



ELITEFTS ARTICLES

EliteFTS is proud to be a recognized leader in strength, conditioning, and nutrition-related knowledge. With over 2000 published articles for you to browse, you can be sure that you'll find the training knowledge you need.

articles.elitefts.com

The screenshot displays the EliteFTS Training website interface. At the top, a navigation bar includes links for Home, Store, Articles, Q&A, Training Logs, Exercise Index (highlighted), and Sale. A search bar is also present. The main content area features a large video player for 'Floor Flopping' with the subtitle 'A great finisher.' Below this, a 'TRAINING COMPILATIONS' section lists three videos: 'Prove the Impossible Compilation Video' (April 20, 2011), 'Dave Tate & John Meadows Mountain Dog Training' (April 1, 2011), and 'Strongman Andy Deck Competing at the Arnold' (March 13, 2011). A 'MOST RECENT' section shows a grid of smaller video thumbnails. On the right sidebar, there is an 'Exercise Index Categories' dropdown, a 'Search Movements' input field, and promotional banners for 'EFS Pro Bands' and 'EFS Products' featuring a 'PROWLER' device.

ELITEFTS EXERCISE INDEX

The EliteFTS Exercise Index is an ever-expanding encyclopedia of strength training, conditioning, rehab, and instructional exercise videos. These are real exercises performed by real athletes in the EliteFTS gym. Over 600 exercises are in this database, so watch and learn.

train.elitefts.com

EliteFTS - Superior Products and Knowledge for Lifters, Athletes, Coaches, and Trainers

http://asp.elitefts.com/qa/

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Home Store Articles **Q&A** Training Logs Exercise Index Sale Search Store

Elitefts Q&A

Iron Brothers

7/24/2011 Matt Rhodes

Good to see you training again! Looking forward to hooking up a squat session in the future! [Read More](#)

sean

7/24/2011 Jim Wendler

About "how to be really creepy" I usually visit Tmuscle and Bodybuilding.com during my normal web-rotation and that's definitely someone from BB.com trying to troll you. That verbiage always mak [Read More](#)

mike

7/24/2011 Harry Selkow

Harry, I am about to graduate school with a degree in a technology field. I don't really enjoy this work and I really want to get my CSCS or a degree from a school with a good exercise science/etc [Read More](#)

David

7/23/2011 Dave Kirschen

For the guy looking for gyms in Chicago. Lance's Gym Quads North or South B&W Gym All of these can be considered "powerlifting" gyms. [Read More](#)

Dominic

7/23/2011 Dave Kirschen

for the guy looking for a gym close to the schamburg area. Look at JAKKED HARDCORE gym its in montgomery IL about 30 min south west of Schamburg [Read More](#)

ant

7/23/2011 Jim Wendler

Hey Jim, do you ever use any white ink in your tattoos or just black and grey? Just got my first tattoo this week, and I already want to get more work done. Hope recovery is going smoothly. [Read More](#)

sam

Squat - Deadlift

sean

7/23/2011 Jim Wendler

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David

7/23/2011 Dave Kirschen

For the guy looking for gyms in Chicago. Lance's Gym Quads North or South B&W Gym All of these can be considered "powerlifting" gyms. [Read More](#)

Dominic

7/23/2011 Dave Kirschen

for the guy looking for a gym close to the schamburg area. Look at JAKKED HARDCORE gym its in montgomery IL about 30 min south west of Schamburg [Read More](#)

ant

7/23/2011 Jim Wendler

Hey Jim, do you ever use any white ink in your tattoos or just black and grey? Just got my first tattoo this week, and I already want to get more work done. Hope recovery is going smoothly. [Read More](#)

sam

Prowler

THE BEST CONDITIONING TOOL >

EFS STRAPS & WRAPS

Birth, Death, and Resurrection of the Elite

EFS

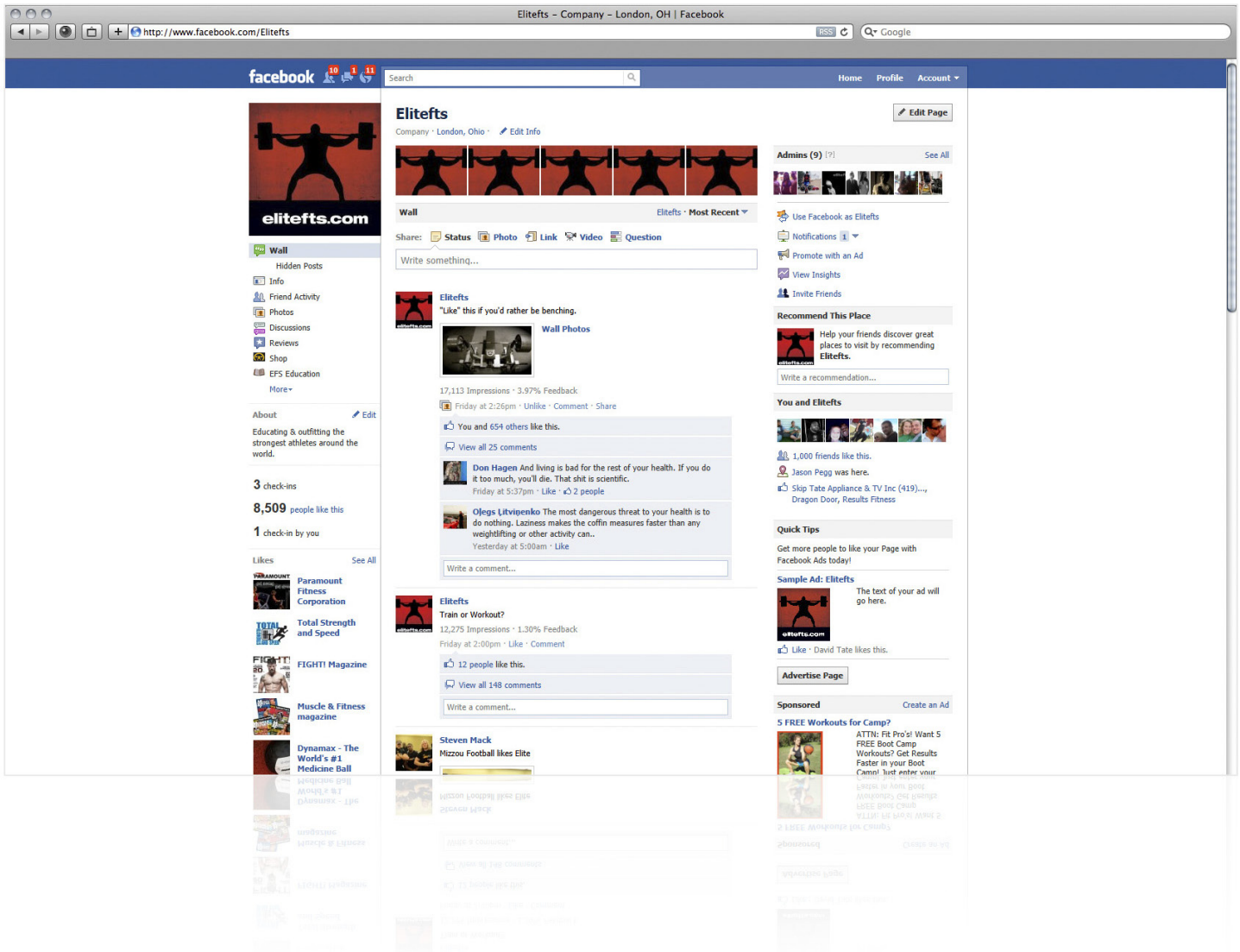
THE BEST CONDITIONING TOOL >

ELITEFTS Q&A

The Q&A represents everything EliteFTS. Here, you'll be able to ask EliteFTS athletes your training questions and get answers directly from them. We strive to live, learn, and pass on. The Q&A is an integral part of that philosophy.

elitefts.com/qa

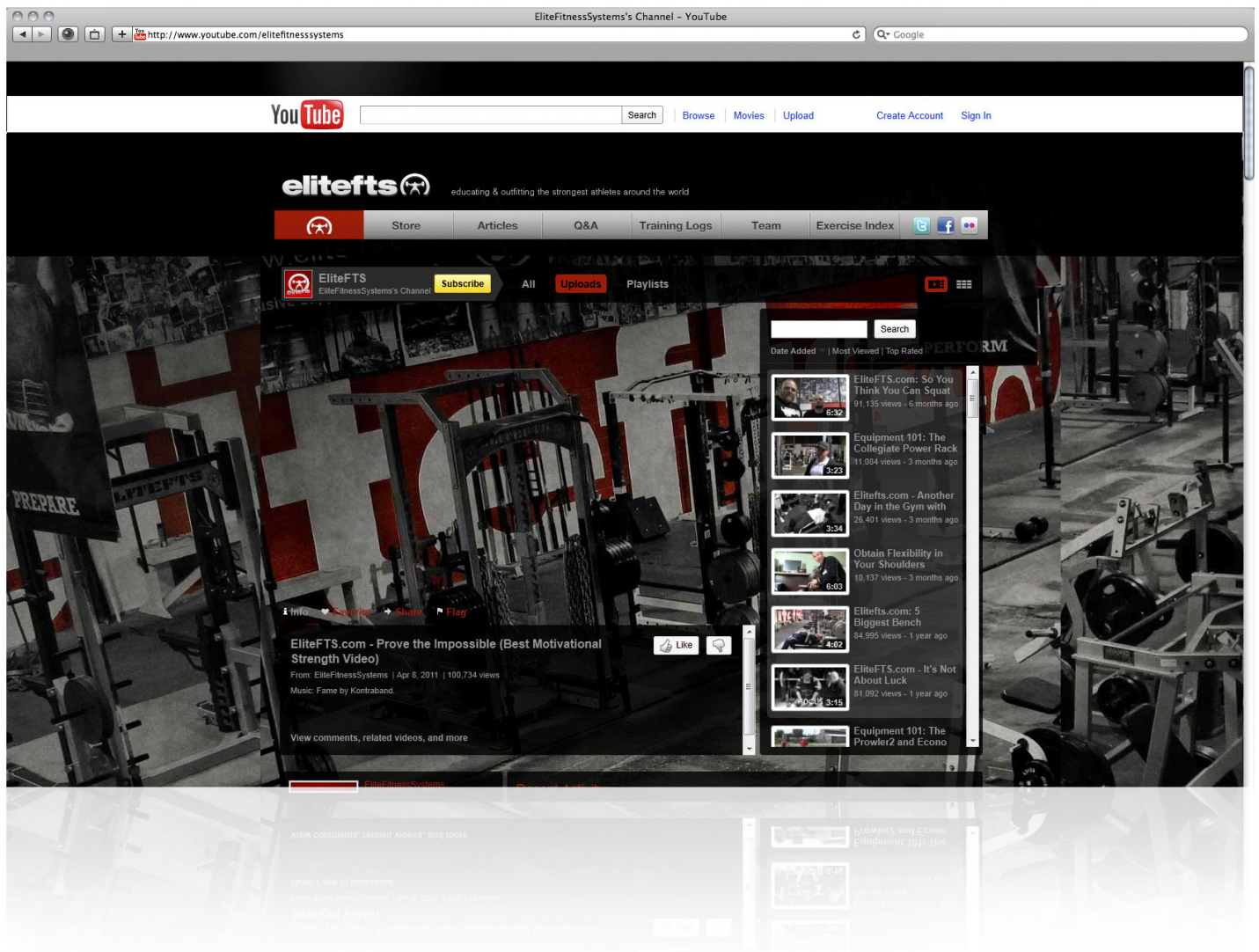
[illegible]



ELITEFTS FACEBOOK PAGE

Our Facebook page is where we interact with our customers on a daily basis. From casual conversation to full-blown contests, we're very active on Facebook. We give away a ton of free stuff via Facebook, with prizes ranging from t-shirts to Prowlers and more. If you want a chance to win, or if you just want to interact with EliteFTS, "like" us on Facebook and get involved.

facebook.com/elitefts



ELITEFTS YOUTUBE PAGE

Youtube is full of internet experts. We're trying to spread the truth. From seminar footage to Dave's own training to WendlerVision, the EliteFTS youtube page has the content you need. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll learn. Alright, you won't cry.

youtube.com/elitefitnesssystems



EliteFTS \ é-lite FTS \ n 1.

The best or most skilled members of a group providing an organized set of interrelated ideas, principles, services and products intended to help customers increase their state or condition of being fit. 2. A group of elite athletes put together for the purpose of making average athletes elite and elite athletes great.

EFS- Primary Aim:

“To lead, learn and pass on.”

Company Story

Dave Tate founded EliteFTS in January 1999 after logging on the internet for the first time. He could not believe the incredible amount of misinformation in regards to training for sports. Dave realized that there were thousands of coaches and athletes that were looking for training advice but most were coming up short. Dave set up a question and answer through a power lifting web site and began writing articles to help these athletes and coaches with their training programs. In his 20 years as a competitive strength athlete, Dave has used every type of training equipment and program on the market. After struggling through years of little progress he learned one very important thing; most companies do not care about the success of the training program. Dave wanted to make a difference and EliteFTS was born.

This became the driving force behind EliteFTS. EliteFTS places the success of the training program before everything else. This has made EliteFTS a leader in the strength and conditioning field.

EliteFTS has become a leader in the strength and conditioning field by specializing in making the best athletes elite and the novice athletes better. This is not accomplished with gimmicks and marketing tactics but by placing the training needs of our customers first and by providing solid training advice and equipment that actually works.

Placing the success of our customer's training program first is what keeps them coming back. Because of their success, the customers go out of their way to help promote EliteFTS to their family, friends and colleagues. Our customers are our greatest advertising source. The passion they have for our company is seen in the repeat business and the daily visits to our web site. Exceeding the expectations is what has made EliteFTS the fastest growing web site in the industry. Thousands of customers and prospects worldwide have found the information on the site to be the solution to problems they have spent years trying to overcome. In many cases, EliteFTS has provoked life changing experiences and hope for those who gave up long ago.

EliteFTS provides an evolving solution to an unfulfilled gap in the fitness industry. Not only does EliteFTS provide solutions, it looks for answers. These answers are found through our customer feedback in the form of surveys, calls, letters and our interactive sections of the web site. We provide the information and then they let us know what works. This information is then filtered back through the system in order to help others who may also have the same problems.

The amazing growth of EliteFTS is a testament to the mission the company was founded on. This mission will bring future success to even more customers with a special focus being placed on the University and High School strength training programs. This market will provide the opportunity for EliteFTS to raise the standard for strength and conditioning throughout the country and will secure EliteFTS as the #1 leader of the industry.

Mission Statement

EliteFTS strives to be a recognized leader in the strength training industry by providing the highest quality strength training products and services while providing the highest level of customer service in the industry.

Purpose

With continuous improvement we provide strength coaches, athletes and trainers the highest quality equipment, personalized service and knowledge they need to advance their training programs.

Vision

We have a passion for empowering success through personal achievement.

Motto

Prepare – Perform – Prevail

Credo

We will provide an unforgettable experience for our customers making us the greatest strength training resource in the world.

We will establish relationships and traditions that will create lasting value by living, learning, listening and being there for our customers.

We will create and foster an enjoyable environment for our staff and customers that will empower them to be the best they can.

We will choose to bring our best attitude to each day.

EFS Core Values

Career – The desire to advance within the company based on prior performance and potential achievement.

Courage – The strength to take chances, innovate and experiment to help build the company into a world leader.

Education – The willingness to continue personal and professional education to help build the company as well as the person.

Empowerment – The desire to achieve and pass on high level of self esteem and self actualization.

Teamwork – The ability to work together and create an atmosphere in which everyone has the chance to contribute and achieve success.

Integrity – Live and work with trust, honesty, caring, fairness, loyalty, and diversity. These values are essential for the growth of the individual and EFS.

Attitude – Approach life and work with passion, a smile and a positive state of mind.

Execution – The ability to put a plan into a successful action.

Quality – Expect nothing but the best from yourself, your co-workers and the company.

Legacy

Elitefts will help educate and outfit the strongest athletes in the world by becoming “partners” not “spotters”. Training partners work together toward the goal of making each person better. Spotters are there only when asked or added trust is needed. Together will can and will create a legacy in the name of strength and conditioning.





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