

Elitefts Bench Manual



Dave Tate



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ELITEFTS BENCH MANUAL

"Taking all benches to the next level."



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CONJUGATE TRAINING – BRIEF SUMMARY

When training for maximal strength, one must intelligently utilize the three established, proven methods of increasing muscle tension. These three methods are the maximal effort method, the dynamic effort method and the repetition method.

Maximal effort method – Training at or above 90% of your 1-rep max (RM).

Dynamic effort method – Lifting a submaximal weight at the highest speed possible.

Repetition method – Lifting a submaximal weight to the point of failure.

The Conjugate method brings together all aspects of training simultaneously. Most training programs consist of separate phases arranged consecutively to form a training cycle. With this sort of program, when you stop one phase and begin another, you invariably lose all the benefits you'd worked so hard to gain. Conjugate training combines every phase at once, enabling the athlete to better maximize his or her potential.

For a long time now, the Western periodization method – also called linear periodization – has been the most popular way for strength athletes to train in the United States. Western periodization involves a 12-16 week training “mesocycle” that begins with high repetition work and ends with maximal singles. In the hypertrophy phase, which occurs first, three sets of ten repetitions at 60% of your 1RM are performed. After two or three weeks – “microcycles” – these percentages increase, and the repetitions decrease. This will continue throughout the training cycle until you either reach or exceed 100% of your maximal capacity in any given lift.



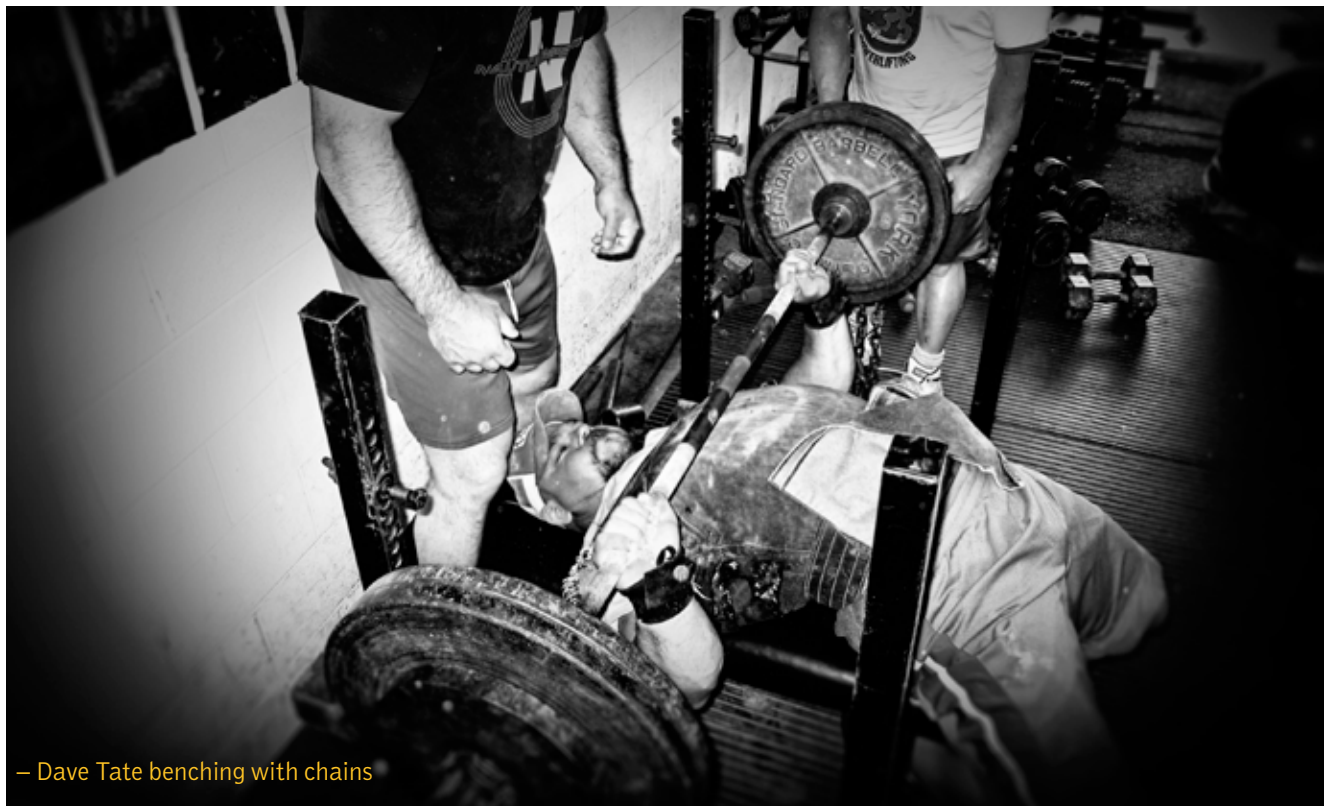
While this appears logical on paper, Western periodization has its share of drawbacks. First, the dynamic effort method is completely ignored. While the percentages used are correct, the repetitions are too numerous to produce adequate amounts of force. This is because the lifter will conserve his energy throughout longer sets in order to complete a given number of repetitions. Next, the max effort method is completely ignored until the last few weeks of any given mesocycle, making the repetition method the primary means by which the lifter is trained. Does it make any sense to leave out two of the three most effective ways to achieve maximal strength? This is what makes conjugate training so effective – the use of all three methods in concert, giving the athlete a much better chance of reaching his or her strength goals.





PROGRAM OVERVIEW

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	SUNDAY
Max Effort Squat/Deadlift	Max Effort Bench Press	Dynamic Effort Squat/Deadlift	Max Effort Squat/Deadlift
Max Effort Movement	Max Effort Movement	Box Squat	Bench Press
Supplemental	Supplemental	Supplemental	Supplemental
Accessory 1	Accessory 1	Accessory 1	Accessory 1
Accessory 2	Accessory 2	Accessory 2	Accessory 2



– Dave Tate benching with chains



BENCH PRESS TECHNIQUE

BENCH PRESS SETUP

Begin by placing your head slightly off the bench. Your neck should be under the bar. This position will vary from lifter to lifter, and will be developed more precisely over time and with practice. Set the width of your feet, and dig your toes into the ground. If you like to arch your lower back, tuck your feet underneath the bench. Take care to place your feet in the correct position from the beginning, because they will not move once you've set them. If you have problems with your butt coming off the bench, you may want to widen out your foot position when setting up.

Once your feet are set, place your hands on the bar and pull yourself up. At this point – you're still elevated – push yourself toward your feet (keeping them set), and pull your upper back and lats together. Maintain this upper back and lat position until the lift is completed. Holding these muscles this way will provide a very strong base from which to press, so this is a very important step that you can't overlook. This should not be a comfortable position. Next, push yourself toward your feet until your forehead is aligned with the barbell.

Once these positions have been achieved, place your head on the bench first. Then, in sequence, drop your upper back and lats. After this, place your hands on the bar and prepare yourself to lift. You should be squeezing the bar tightly with both hands. The tighter you grip the bar, the tighter your body will be.





As you can see, it's extremely important to know exactly where to place your head in the beginning of your setup. Of equal importance is an understanding of proper foot placement. This will depend on flexibility and the desired degree of arch in your lower back. The setup must be practiced on every single set – even sets done only with bar weight – because it can take months, and possibly years, to get it right. We recommend practicing your setup every single day, as well as practicing your technique and bar path with an empty bar.

PRIOR TO THE DESCENT

Before you lower the bar, make sure that it's neither directly over your face, nor so far out toward your feet that it could potentially drop on your stomach. The bar should be held strongly, with your arms locked out, somewhere between these two areas of your body. The best way to describe this position is to envision holding the bar over the middle to lower portion of your lats. Again, this is a position that must be practiced over a long period of time in order to be perfected.

Once your bar alignment is secured, try to drive your heels into the ground – they may not actually touch the ground if you're setting up high on your toes – and bring your belly up to the bar. As you raise your belly to the bar, try to pinch your shoulder blades and upper back together even more. By doing this, you will accomplish two things: 1) The distance between you and the bar will be decreased. 2) The bar will settle in your hands, and you won't be able to rush your lift. Remember, if you start poorly, you will, in all probability, end up with a bad lift. Give yourself a chance to succeed by taking advantage of these tips.

THE DESCENT

With your belly up, your heels down, and your upper back and lats pulled together, begin lowering the barbell with a normal elbow tuck. The elbow tuck does not have to be extreme. It should just be a natural tuck. Some lifters will read the words, "Tuck your elbows hard," and attempt to touch their elbows to the sides of the bench. This position lacks power and puts the bar in an improper position at the bottom part of the movement. The bar should come down in a controlled descent. Don't make the mistake of inching the bar down or letting it go too quickly. The former will tire you out too much, and the latter will most likely lead to the bar being out of position.

Continue to push yourself up to the bar as it comes down. Your wrists and the bar Hold your arms out in front of you in the classic "Superman" flying position. Make



a fist and bend your wrists back toward your head as far as possible. This is obviously not a very powerful position. Now, make a fist and try to point your knuckles to the floor. This, again, is a very awkward and weak position. The solution is to have your wrists positioned somewhere in between.

To complete the descent, bring the bar down until it touches your lower pectorals or upper abdomen. With a natural elbow tuck, the upper back and lats pulled together, and the bar starting over your lats, this bottom position is easily achieved by most lifters. If it's not, then one or more parts of the setup require correction.

THE ASCENT

Once the bar touches, you want to drive it up and back toward your head. When the bar is about three-quarters of the way back up, begin rotating the elbows out. This position will greatly improve your lockout. As you begin locking the weight out, continue to rotate your elbows out, searching for the perfect bar position. This position is generally right above your eyes. Again, this will vary from lifter to lifter, but use this as a guideline.

A good way to learn this perfect bar position is to take an empty bar and hold it at arms length on the bench. From this position, bring the bar toward your feet as though you were performing a lying front raise. This position will feel very awkward. Now, bring the bar toward your head, as you would when performing a pull-over. Again, you would not want to lock out a weight in this position. From this pull-over position, move the bar back slowly, and you'll reach a point where the bar feels weightless. This is the position you want!



– Decent



– Ascent



BENCH PRESS TECHNIQUE ARTICLE

Bench Press Tips from Dave Tate's Bench Press 600 Pounds article, which appeared at www.t-nation.com.

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 the bench press. The advice given was to make your bench go up by training your pecs with crossovers and flies. 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 pass before 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!



KEEP YOUR SHOULDER BLADES PULLED TOGETHER AND TIGHT.

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 blade area is off the bench. The bench is only so wide, which is something we can't change, but we can change how we position ourselves on it.

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.

KEEP THE PRESSURE ON YOUR UPPER BACK AND TRAPS.

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: lay 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.



– keeping pressure on the upper back and traps



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. 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, your 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 supposedly done to avoid excess shoulder rotation. All they have to do is teach their clients the proper way to bench in the first place!

KEEP THE ELBOWS TUCKED AND THE BAR DIRECTLY OVER THE WRISTS AND ELBOWS.

This is probably the most important aspect of great pressing technique. 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 into their opponent with their elbows tucked, then explode through. It’s 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 than you can in 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.



BRING THE BAR LOW ON YOUR CHEST OR UPPER ABDOMINALS.

This is the only way you can maintain the “barbell to elbow” position described above. You may have heard the advice, “Bring it low” at almost every powerlifting competition. This is the reason why. Once again, the barbell must travel in a straight line.

FILL YOUR BELLY WITH AIR AND HOLD IT.

For maximum attempts and sets under three reps, you must try to hold your air. You must learn to breathe from your belly and not your chest. 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, altering the groove in which the barbell is traveling.

TRAIN WITH COMPENSATORY ACCELERATION.

Push the bar with maximal force. Whatever weight you’re trying to push, be it 40% or 100% of your max, you must learn to apply 100% of your force to the barbell. If you can bench 500 pounds and are training with 300 pounds, you must then apply 500 pounds of force to the 300 pound barbell. This is known as compensatory acceleration, and it can help you break through sticking points.

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These sticking points are known as your “mini maxes,” or the points at which you miss the lift or the barbell begins to slip out of the groove. Many times I’m asked what to do if the barbell gets stuck four to five inches off the chest. Everybody wants to know what exercise will help them strengthen this area or what body part is holding them back. Many times it isn’t what you do to strengthen the area where it sticks, but what you can do to build more acceleration in the area before the mini max. If you can get the bar moving with more force, then there won’t be a sticking point. Instead, you’ll blast right through it. Compensatory acceleration will help you do this.



SQUEEZE THE BARBELL AND TRY TO 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.

DEVOTE ONE DAY PER WEEK TO DYNAMIC EFFORT TRAINING.

According to Vladimir Zatsiorsky 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 practiced in the United States today 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 submaximal 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 can 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 lifter might be able to recruit only 50%. Thus, the advanced lifter would need to work with lower percentages 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 your training on bar speed, then the percentages are no longer an issue. They then become merely 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 twenty more pounds with the same speed, then use the heavier weight.



Based on years of experience and Prilepin's charts for optimal percentage training, we've found the best range to be eight sets of three reps. Based on Prilepin'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 at three fingers from the smooth area of the bar and three sets at one finger from the smooth area.

DEVOTE ONE DAY PER WEEK TO MAXIMAL-EFFORT TRAINING.

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. This is one of the best methods to develop maximal strength. The key here is to strain. The main drawback is that 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 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 all specific to bench pressing and all have a very high carryover value.

TRAIN THE LATS ON THE SAME PLANE AS THE BENCH.

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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, you need to train the lats." I've heard both George Halbert and Kenny Patterson say this for years when asked about increasing the bench press. When you bench, you're on a horizontal plane. Would it make sense from a balance perspective to train the lats with pull-downs, which are on a vertical plane? Nope. Stick to the barbell row if you want a big bench.





THE DYNAMIC EFFORT METHOD

The dynamic effort method is used to train the bench press in this manual. This method is defined as lifting a non-maximal load with the greatest speed possible. The dynamic effort method should be coupled with compensatory acceleration. This means you must apply as much force as possible to the barbell, i.e. pushing as hard and as fast as you can in the concentric phase of the lift. If you bench press 300 pounds and are training with 200 pounds, then you should be applying 300 pounds of force to the barbell.

The weight used should be non-maximal, in the 50% to 75% range. In their text *Supertraining*, Siff and Verkhoshansky state that the best range for developing explosive strength in the barbell squat is two-thirds of your best 1-RM. Angel Spassov defines this as 50% to 70%. This method is used for an improved rate of force development and for explosive force – and not for the development of maximal strength. Let's assume an athlete can only get so strong for genetic reasons. If this lifter has reached his genetic strength potential, getting stuck for five years, is it possible for him to get stronger?

I was told at one point, by several university professors in the exercise science field, that I had reached this limit. What they neglected to tell me was that if I learned how to better synchronize my muscles to perform, I could get stronger by developing better neural activation. The result of doing so added 300 pounds to my total! At the time, I may have been activating only 50% of my absolute strength potential. Through dynamic effort training, I was able to activate 70% or 80%, although this was never tested. There's also a reason why the percentages should never be given greater priority than bar speed. Everyone has a different motor learning capacity, and the advanced strength athlete will always activate more than a novice athlete. The more advanced the lifter, the harder the work.

For example, if both athletes performed a set of ten reps in the barbell squat with 80%, the novice would walk away without having strained much, while the advanced athlete probably wouldn't be walking anywhere until he'd gotten off the floor. If you've followed Louie Simmons' articles on this topic over the years, you'll notice that his suggested percentages on dynamic effort days have been reduced. This is because Westside Barbell, as a whole, has gotten a lot stronger and more experienced. The percentage for the bench press used to be about 70%. Now it's closer to 45-50%. As stated above, Louie's athletes are now recruiting more motor units than before, so lesser percentages are required to produce the desired results.



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

These dynamic days must be done 48-72 hours after your max effort days in order to allow for proper recovery. The training scheme for dynamic days begins with plenty of warm-up sets, progressing into your work sets. For the bench press, 8 sets of 3 reps are used for most cycles. There are many reasons for this set and rep structure.

Prilepin's chart (see below) provides a rationale for setting it up this way. Prilepin studied weightlifters to see what the optimal number of reps in each intensity zone should be. Louie Simmons applied this research to the training of the power lifts. At the time, the bench press was thought to be ideally trained in the 70% range.

This would equate to an optimal number of 18 lifts for the bench press, in a range of 12-24 reps, and 15 lifts for the squat in a 10-20 rep range. Louie decided on two reps for the squat and three reps for the bench press because of the time specificity of the competitive lifts. In other words, the time to unrack the weight to the completion of the lift, in competition, was similar to the time required to complete two reps in the box squat, and three in the bench press.

OPTIMAL NUMBER OF LIFTS BY PERCENT (PRILEPIN 1974)

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



This set and rep structure has stood the test of time, and it has worked repeatedly for thousands of athletes without fail. The structure has created an evolving system where the optimal number of lifts has remained 24 for the bench press for loads under 80%.

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 triceps extension or pushdown movements. After the warm-up, move on to the actual bench press movement.

Begin with the bar for as many sets as it takes for you 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 the prescribed percentage for the day. You'll perform 8 sets of 3 reps in a dynamic fashion. These reps should be performed with compensatory acceleration. The rest between sets should be 45-60 seconds.

The goal of this structure 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 so that they'll adapt and become stronger over time. The more you fatigue, the more fibers will become activated with each set. A fatigued muscle fiber won't work as well as a fresh one, so the body will activate increasing numbers of muscle fibers in order to complete the workout. A one-minute rest constitutes about a 1:6 work to rest ratio, and anything over 1.5 minutes will negate the training effect.

When you finish the bench press movement, you'll move on to 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. 2-4 sets of 3-8 reps for this exercise is sufficient. 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 with rep schemes in the intermediate range, i.e., 3-5 sets of 8-15 reps. You should leave one or two reps in the tank at the end of every set. This means you won't go to failure, thus ensuring proper recovery for the next workout. Upon completion of these movements, you'll move on to prehabilitation work consisting of external rotation moments for the shoulders and light pushdowns and/or light sled work for the upper body.



DYNAMIC EFFORT BENCH CYCLES

WEAK POINT CYCLE SELECTION GUIDE FOR DYNAMIC EFFORT CYCLES:

This section is designed to match dynamic bench cycles with specific bench press weaknesses. To increase the maximal strength of the bench press, weak points need to be addressed for maximal performance. These cycles are designed for the specific weak areas listed below.





WEAK BOTTOM POSITION

Old School Westside with Weight Releasers

Beginner Straight Weight Cycle

Intermediate Straight Weight Cycle

Advanced Straight Weight Cycle

Ascending Load Cycle with Straight Weight

Double Split Cycle with Straight Weight

Floor Press Cycle with Straight Weight

Floor Press Cycle with Bands

Floor Press Cycle with Chains

One Board Cycle with Straight Weight

One Board Cycle with Bands

One Board Cycle with Chains

Fat Bar Straight Weight Cycle

Cambered Bar Cycle with Straight Weight

Cambered Bar Cycle with Bands

Cambered Bar Cycle with Chains

Pin Press Cycle

Beginner Band Cycle

Intermediate Band Cycle

Advanced Band Cycle



WEAK AT MIDPOINT

Floor Press Cycle with Straight Weight

Floor Press Cycle with Bands

Floor Press Cycle with Chains

One Board Cycle with Straight Weight

One Board Cycle with Bands

One Board Cycle with Chains

Pin Press Cycle

Beginner Band Cycle

Intermediate Band Cycle

Advanced Band Cycle



WEAK LOCKOUT

Old School Westside with Chains

Beginner Chain Cycle

Intermediate Chain Cycle

Advanced Chain Cycle

Beginner Band Cycle

Intermediate Band Cycle

Advanced Band Cycle

Band Speed Strength or Heavy Band Phase

Chain Speed Strength or Heavy Chain Phase

Circa – Maximal Band Phase

Circa – Maximal Chain Phase

Circa – Maximal Band and Chain Phase

Ascending Load Training Cycle with Bands

Ascending Load Training Cycle with Chains

Double Split Cycle with Bands

Double Spilt Cycle with Chains

Fat Bar Band Cycle

Fat Bar Chain Cycle



MEET PEAKING

Bench Shirt Cycle with Straight Weight

Bench Shirt Cycle with Bands

Bench Shirt Cycle with Chains

Super Speed Cycle with Bands

Super Speed Cycle with Chains

Circa – Maximal Band Phase

Circa – Maximal Chain Phase

Circa – Maximal Band and Chain Phase

Ascending Load Training Cycle with Bands

Ascending Load Training Cycle with Chains

REHAB AND RECOVERY

Restoration Phase

Post Injury Phase – Floor Press

Post Injury Phase – One Board Press

Post Injury Phase – Reverse Band



CAN'T TOUCH WEIGHTS WITH BENCH SHIRT

Bench Shirt Cycle with Straight Weight

Bench Shirt Cycle with Bands

Bench Shirt Cycle with Chains

ALL LISTED CYCLES

Rookie Cycle

Novice Cycle

Old School Westside

Old School Westside with Weight Releasers

Old School Westside with Chains

Beginner Straight Weight Cycle

Intermediate Straight Weight Cycle

Advanced Straight Weight Cycle

Beginner Chain Cycle

Intermediate Chain Cycle



ALL LISTED CYCLES

Advanced Chain Cycle

Beginner Band Cycle

Intermediate Band Cycle

Advanced Band Cycle

Band Speed Strength or Heavy Band Phase

Chain Speed Strength or Heavy Chain Phase

Circa – Maximal Band Phase

Circa – Maximal Chain Phase

Circa – Maximal Band and Chain Phase

Lactic Acid Tolerance Training Cycle

Lactic Acid Tolerance Training Cycle with Chains

Lactic Acid Tolerance Training Cycle with Bands

Ascending Load Cycle with Straight Weight

Ascending Load Training Cycle with Bands

Ascending Load Training Cycle with Chains

Double Split Cycle with Straight Weight

Double Split Cycle with Bands

Double Split Cycle with Chains

Floor Press Cycle with Straight Weight

Floor Press Cycle with Bands

Floor Press Cycle with Chains

One Board Cycle with Straight Weight



ALL LISTED CYCLES

One Board Cycle with Bands

One Board Cycle with Chains

Restoration Phase

Post Injury Phase – Floor Press

Post Injury Phase – One Board Press

Post Injury Phase – Reverse Band

Fat Bar Straight Weight Cycle

Fat Bar Band Cycle

Fat Bar Chain Cycle

Cambered Bar Cycle with Straight Weight

Cambered Bar Cycle with Bands

Cambered Bar Cycle with Chains

Pin Press Cycle

Bench Shirt Cycle with Straight Weight

Bench Shirt Cycle with Bands

Bench Shirt Cycle with Chains

Super Speed Cycle with Bands

Super Speed Cycle with Chains



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– 2 board press

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GENERAL NOTES:

- Training percentages are based on a one-rep max with a bench shirt. If you are not using a bench shirt, you'll need to add 5-10% to the listed percentage.
- These percents are used as guidelines. The more advanced the lifter, the lighter the percentage needed.
- All sets should be performed with 45-60 second rest periods in between them unless otherwise noted.
- All repetitions should be trained using compensatory acceleration (push the bar as fast as you can while maintaining control) with the exception of warm-up sets. Warm-up sets should be trained with a controlled tempo to ensure proper preparation for your workout.
- Begin your warm-up sets with the bar, then progress to heavier weights with multiple jumps until your training weight is reached. We've found the best way to do this is to warm up with sets of three and five repetitions.
- When (use three different grips: close, medium and wide) is noted, three grips will be used for a total of eight sets, not eight sets with each grip. Bear in mind that many lifters don't use three different grips for this purpose, choosing instead to stick with one grip for all eight sets.



DEFINITIONS FOR CYCLES:

Rookie: This lifter is new to training – less than six months of total training experience – and has not developed any type of strength training base.

Novice: The novice is a step ahead of the rookie with regard to “training age” – he or she has been training for more than six months – but still needs to add muscle mass and work on bench press technique.

Beginner: The beginner has more than one year of strength training and has begun to develop a good technical base, but still needs to work on developing more muscle mass and coordination.

Intermediate: The intermediate lifter has a good training base and very good bench press technique and coordination. He or she has also developed a good muscular base from past training experience, and is ready for more advanced training methods and techniques. If this trainee is a competitive powerlifter, his or her max bench press will be ranked in the Powerlifting USA Top 100 list (categorized by weight class).

Advanced: This lifter has been training for over two years, and has developed a great muscular base. He or she also has excellent bench press technique and coordination. If this trainee is a competitive powerlifter, his or her max bench press will be ranked in the top fifty of the Powerlifting USA Top 100 list (categorized by weight class).



1. ROOKIE CYCLE

Application: This training cycle is designed for lifters with a very limited training background (see rookie definition above). The goal of this cycle is to develop great bench press technique to help establish a technical base for further training. There are no percentages listed with this cycle because bar weight is not important. The trainee should select a moderate weight – one that he or she can perform ten repetitions with – and stay with this weight for the entire three week cycle. These sessions should be videotaped, or the trainee should have an experienced coach help analyze any technical breakdowns. If technique begins to falter during a session, either stop or use a lower weight.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 15 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 17 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 20 sets 3 reps

2. NOVICE CYCLE

Application: This cycle is designed for lifters with more than one year of training experience but insufficient muscle mass. It serves to harness the benefits of dynamic training while still developing the raw strength most novice lifters lack.

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Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps followed by 2 sets 5 reps with 60%

Week 2 – 55% for 8 sets 3 reps followed by 2 sets 5 reps with 65%

Week 3 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps followed by 2 sets 5 reps with 70%



3. OLD SCHOOL WESTSIDE

Application: This cycle was used fifteen years ago at Westside Barbell Club in Columbus, Ohio, and works best when applied to beginner and intermediate lifters. After discovering that lower percentages had a better effect on speed development, the percentages used in this cycle have been decreased over time. This cycle was utilized at Westside for close to seven years before being modified, and it produced numerous 500 pound bench pressers.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

4. OLD SCHOOL WESTSIDE WITH WEIGHT RELEASERS

Application: This cycle is designed to increase the eccentric tension of the bench press while building more explosive strength off the chest. Again, this cycle is based on percentages used at Westside over fifteen years ago, and is best suited for beginner to intermediate lifters looking to increase strength off the chest.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)



* All sets will use 15% added weight for each weight releaser (30% total for both combined). Weight releasers will only be used for the first rep, and are preset to drop off the bar when the barbell hits the chest.

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

5. OLD SCHOOL WESTSIDE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is based on percentages used fifteen years ago at Westside Barbell and is best used for beginner or intermediate lifters who need extra strength in the lockout position.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 70% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds

201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds

301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds

401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds

501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds

601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds

800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds

* Chains should be set up with the use of a support chain. The main chain weight runs through the support chain, with half the main chain weight resting on the floor when the barbell is in the racked position.





6. BEGINNER STRAIGHT WEIGHT CYCLE

Application: This cycle is based on more modern percentages, but it's still rooted in years of dynamic training research. This is best utilized with beginners who are still working on technical issues associated with the bench press.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

7. INTERMEDIATE STRAIGHT WEIGHT CYCLE

Application: This cycle is designed for lifters who've been training for over two years and have a good technical base. Refer to category definitions above to see if you fall into this classification.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

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8. ADVANCED STRAIGHT WEIGHT CYCLE

Application: This cycle is intended for lifters with a great technical base who've been training with the dynamic method for over two years. Refer to category definitions above to see if you fall into this classification.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

9. BEGINNER CHAIN CYCLE

Application: This cycle is intended for the beginner who's been through a few of the beginner straight weight cycles and is ready to add the use of chains into his or her training. Despite the fact that a beginner may still have some technical issues with the bench press, the addition of chains to a cycle offers something new to help move dynamic strength to new levels.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 60% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* If you feel good and the weight feels easy, add 2 sets of 5 reps at the end of the 8 dynamic speed sets, with a weight 10-20% higher than the weight used for your dynamic sets.



Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds

* Chains should be set up with the use of a support chain. The main chain weight runs through the support chain, with half the main chain weight resting on the floor when the barbell is in the racked position.

10. INTERMEDIATE CHAIN CYCLE

Application: Intended for those who've been training for over two years and have a good technical base. Refer to the category definitions above to see if you fall into this classification.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.



Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds

* Chains should be set up with the use of a support chain. The main chain weight runs through the support chain, with half the main chain weight resting on the floor when the barbell is in the racked position.

11. ADVANCED CHAIN CYCLE

Application: This cycle is intended for lifters with a great technical base who've been training with the dynamic method for over two years. Refer to category definitions above to see if you fall into this classification.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.



Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds

* Chains should be set up with the use of a support chain. The main chain weight runs through the support chain, with half the main chain weight resting on the floor when the barbell is in the racked position.

12. BEGINNER BAND CYCLE

Application: Bands are not recommended for beginners, because the beginner has not yet developed the muscular and technical base necessary for band training. If you do feel you have a good technical base, and that you're ready for bands, this cycle is for you. If you don't feel as though you're ready, it's best to stick with straight weight and chain cycles until the requisite development occurs.

Training Cycle:

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Week 1 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 50% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* If you feel good and the weight feels easy, add 2 sets of 5 reps at the end of the 8 dynamic speed sets, with a weight 10-20% higher than the weight used for your dynamic sets.



Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

* Bands should be configured so there is always tension at the bottom of the lift. The recommended band tension is based on the total band tension at the top of the bench press.

13. INTERMEDIATE BAND CYCLE

Application: Intended for those who've been training for over two years and have a good technical base. This lifter should also have completed several chain and straight weight cycles. Refer to the category definitions above to see if you fall into this classification.

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Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.



Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

* Bands should be configured so there is always tension at the bottom of the lift. The recommended band tension is based on the total band tension at the top of the bench press.

14. ADVANCED BAND CYCLE

Application: This cycle is intended for lifters with a great technical base who've been training with the dynamic method for over two years. This lifter should also have completed several chain and straight weight cycles. Refer to category definitions above to see if you fall into this classification.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.



Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

* Bands should be configured so there is always tension at the bottom of the lift. The recommended band tension is based on the total band tension at the top of the bench press.

15. BAND SPEED STRENGTH OR HEAVY BAND PHASE

Application: This cycle is designed for advanced lifters looking for a way to shock their dynamic bench training. This is a very heavy band cycle that will run for two weeks. The third week of the phase should be taken off, otherwise follow this cycle with a straight weight or chain cycle. This is very effective for bringing up the top end of the bench press very quickly.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 25% for 6 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 30% for 6 sets 3 reps

* These training reps should be very hard to do. If the weight does not seem hard, add more bands until it's very difficult to complete the set. Rest periods may need to be increased to 90-120 seconds.



Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

* Bands should be configured so there is always tension at the bottom of the lift. The recommended band tension is based on the total band tension at the top of the bench press.

16. CHAIN SPEED STRENGTH OR HEAVY CHAIN PHASE

Application: This cycle is designed for intermediate and advanced lifters looking for a way to shock their bench training. This is very effective for bringing up the top end of the bench press very quickly. We recommend following this cycle with a straight weight or chain cycle.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps

* If the weight does not feel heavy, add more chains. This workout should be very difficult to complete, and may require rest periods in the 90-120 second range.



Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 40 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 80 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 120 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 160 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 200 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 240 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 280 pounds

17. CIRCA – MAXIMAL BAND PHASE

Application: This cycle is designed for the advanced lifter to peak for a maximal bench attempt. A two week deload may be required after performing this cycle.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 30% 8 sets 3 reps with Regular band tension
Week 2 – 30% 8 sets 3 reps with Regular band tension
Week 3 – 20% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal band tension
Week 4 – 25% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal band tension
Week 5 – 30% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal band tension
Week 6 – deload week: 50% for 8 sets 3 reps with straight weight



Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

Regular Band Tension

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

Circa – Maximal Band Tension

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

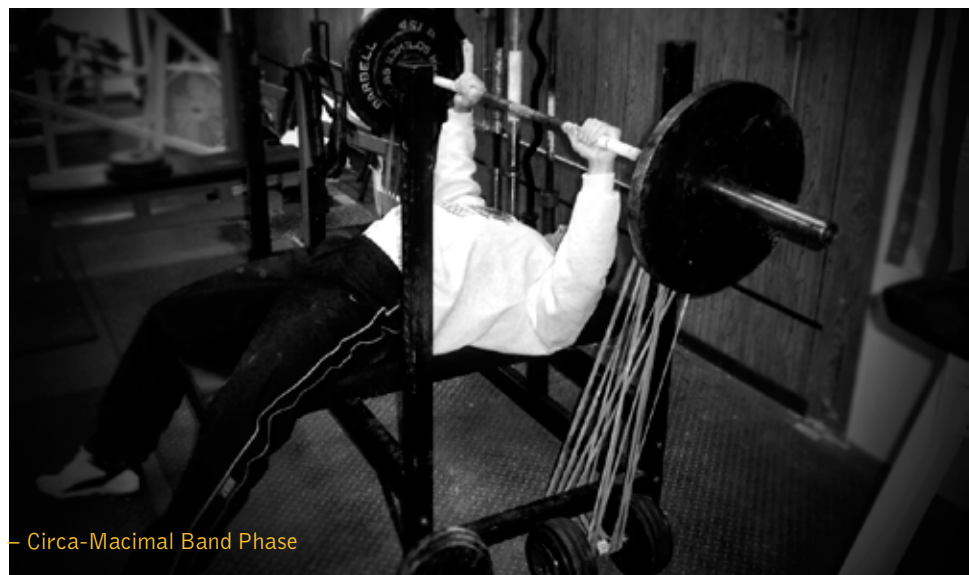
401-500 Pounds – 160-180 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

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

* Bands should be configured so there is always tension at the bottom of the lift. The recommended band tension is based on the total band tension at the top of the bench press. Rest periods during Circa – Maximal band tension weeks may have to be increased to 90-120 seconds.



– Circa-Maximal Band Phase



18. CIRCA – MAXIMAL CHAIN PHASE

Application: This cycle is designed for the advanced lifter to peak for a maximal bench attempt. A two week deload may be required after performing this cycle.

Training Cycle:

- Week 1** – 30% 8 sets 3 reps with Regular chain weight
- Week 2** – 30% 8 sets 3 reps with Regular chain weight
- Week 3** – 25% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal chain weight
- Week 4** – 30% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal chain weight
- Week 5** – 35% 6 sets 3 reps with Circa –Maximal chain weight
- Week 6** – deload week: 50% for 8 sets 3 reps with straight weight

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

Regular Chain Weight

- 100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
- 201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
- 301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
- 401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
- 501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
- 601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
- 800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds

Circa – Maximal Chain Weight

- 100-200 Pounds – 40 pounds
- 201-300 Pounds – 80 pounds
- 301-400 Pounds – 120 pounds
- 401-500 Pounds – 160 pounds
- 501-600 Pounds – 200 pounds
- 601-700 Pounds – 240 pounds
- 800 Plus Pounds – 280 pounds



19. CIRCA- MAXIMAL BAND AND CHAIN PHASE

Application: This cycle is designed for intermediate and advanced lifters who need added lockout strength. If heavy band tension tends to beat you up, but you're still in need of lockout help, this cycle will help you. It's intended for lifters who can bench press over 450 pounds, and it uses a mix of bands and chains to reach the desired top weight. If you bench under 450 pounds, adjust the chain weight so the top weight for the heaviest sets does not exceed 85% of your one-rep shirted max or 90-95% of your one-rep, non-shirted max.

Week 1: Use suggested band tension for all dynamic sets

- 25% for 2 sets 3 reps with 20 pounds of chain per side
- 25% for 2 sets 3 reps with 40 pounds of chain per side
- 25% for 2 sets 3 reps with 60 pounds of chain per side
- 25% for 2 sets 3 reps with 80 pounds of chain per side

Week 2: Use suggested band tension for all dynamic sets

- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps with 20 pounds of chain per side
- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps with 40 pounds of chain per side
- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps with 60 pounds of chain per side
- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps with 80 pounds of chain per side

Week 3: Use suggested band tension for all dynamic sets

- 35% for 2 sets 3 reps with 20 pounds of chain per side
- 35% for 2 sets 3 reps with 40 pounds of chain per side
- 35% for 2 sets 3 reps with 60 pounds of chain per side
- 35% for 2 sets 3 reps with 80 pounds of chain per side

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

- 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
- 800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



20. LACTIC ACID TOLERANCE TRAINING CYCLE

Application: Lactic acid tolerance cycles are appropriate for lifters who:

- **Need a break from heavy training.**
- **Need to develop a higher level of conditioning.**
- **Are coming back from injuries.**
- **Need more muscle hypertrophy.**

The following lactic acid tolerance training cycle is best suited for beginners:

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 12 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 14 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 16 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* Rest periods of 20-30 seconds should be used for all dynamic training sets





21. LACTIC ACID TOLERANCE TRAINING CYCLE W/ CHAINS

Application: Lactic acid tolerance cycles are appropriate for lifters who:

- **Need a break from heavy training.**
- **Need to develop a higher level of conditioning.**
- **Are coming back from injuries.**
- **Need more muscle hypertrophy.**

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 12 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 14 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 16 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* Rest periods of 20-30 seconds should be used for all dynamic training sets

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds

201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds

301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds

401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds

501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds

601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds

800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



22. LACTIC ACID TOLERANCE TRAINING CYCLE W/ BANDS

Application: Lactic acid tolerance cycles are appropriate for lifters who:

- **Need a break from heavy training.**
- **Need to develop a higher level of conditioning.**
- **Are coming back from injuries.**
- **Need more muscle hypertrophy.**

The following lactic acid tolerance training cycle is best suited for advanced lifters.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 35% for 12 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 35% for 14 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 35% for 16 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* Rest periods of 20-30 seconds should be used for all dynamic training sets

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



23. ASCENDING LOAD CYCLE WITH STRAIGHT WEIGHT

Application: This cycle is designed for intermediate and advanced lifters who are unsure of their current one-rep max. The way this cycle is configured allows the lifter to train with four given weights per training session. It also allows for the dynamic training effect to carry over from the lighter weights at the beginning of the session to the heavier weights at the end.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 34% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 2 –

- 34% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 43% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 3 –

- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 43% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 45% for 2 sets 3 reps



24. ASCENDING LOAD TRAINING CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This cycle is designed for intermediate and advanced lifters who are unsure of their current one-rep max but want to enhance their training through the use of bands. The way this cycle is configured allows the lifter to train with four given weights per training session. It also allows for the dynamic training effect to carry over from the lighter weights at the beginning of the session to the heavier weights at the end.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 34% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 2 –

- 34% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 43% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 3 –

- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 43% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 45% for 2 sets 3 reps

Suggested Band Tensions (based on max bench press)

- 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
- 800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



25. ASCENDING LOAD TRAINING CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is designed for intermediate and advanced lifters who are unsure of their current one-rep max but want to enhance their training through the use of chains. The way this cycle is configured allows the lifter to train with four given weights per training session. It also allows for the dynamic training effect to carry over from the lighter weights at the beginning of the session to the heavier weights at the end.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 34% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 2 –

- 34% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 43% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 3 –

- 37% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 43% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 45% for 2 sets 3 reps

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

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- 100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
- 201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
- 301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
- 401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
- 501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
- 601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
- 800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



26. DOUBLE SPLIT CYCLE WITH STRAIGHT WEIGHT

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate to advanced lifter. It's an excellent alternative for lifters who take more sets than usual to warm up.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 4 sets 3 reps, 45% for 4 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 4 sets 3 reps, 45% for 4 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 40% for 4 sets 3 reps, 45% for 4 sets 3 reps

27. DOUBLE SPLIT CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This is a banded cycle designed for the intermediate to advanced lifter. It's an excellent alternative for lifters who take more sets than usual to warm up.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 34% for 4 sets 3 reps, 38% for 4 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 34% for 4 sets 3 reps, 38% for 4 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 34% for 4 sets 3 reps, 38% for 4 sets 3 reps

Suggested Band Tensions (based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



28. DOUBLE SPILT CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate to advanced lifter. It's an excellent alternative for lifters who take more sets than usual to warm up, but still want to incorporate the use of chains into their program.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 4 sets 3 reps, 45% for 4 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 4 sets 3 reps, 45% for 4 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 40% for 4 sets 3 reps, 45% for 4 sets 3 reps

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds

201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds

301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds

401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds

501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds

601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds

800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



29. FLOOR PRESS CYCLE WITH STRAIGHT WEIGHT

Application: This cycle is intended for lifters who need to bring up their strength at the bottom point of the bench press. The floor press is performed by setting the barbell up in a power rack in such a way that a bench press is executed while lying on the floor. A slight pause at the bottom of the lift is recommended.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.



30. FLOOR PRESS CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This cycle is intended for lifters who need to bring up their strength at the bottom point of the bench press. The floor press is performed by setting the barbell up in a power rack in such a way that a bench press is executed while lying on the floor. A slight pause at the bottom of the lift is recommended. Bands should be set up to provide tension at the bottom of the lift.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



31. FLOOR PRESS CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is intended for lifters who need to bring up their strength at the bottom point of the bench press. The floor press is performed by setting the barbell up in a power rack in such a way that a bench press is executed while lying on the floor. A slight pause at the bottom of the lift is recommended. Set the chains up by draping them over the barbell such that half the chain falls to each side.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

* On days where the weight is moving very fast and easy, the trainee will work up in weight after the first eight sets to a heavy triple, double or single. The key is to not miss a lift.

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds

201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds

301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds

401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds

501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds

601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds

800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



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– Floor Press with Chains



32. ONE BOARD CYCLE WITH STRAIGHT WEIGHT

Application: This cycle is designed for lifters who would like to bring up their strength at the bottom point of the bench press. It's perfect for lifters who are dealing with shoulder problems and would prefer to take excessive shoulder rotation out of the bottom of the lift.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)



33. ONE BOARD CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This cycle is designed for lifters who would like to bring up their strength at the bottom point of the bench press. It's perfect for lifters who are dealing with shoulder problems and would prefer to take excessive shoulder rotation out of the bottom of the lift, while still enjoying the benefits of band training.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



34. ONE BOARD CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is designed for lifters who would like to bring up their strength at the bottom point of the bench press. It's perfect for lifters who are dealing with shoulder problems and would prefer to take excessive shoulder rotation out of the bottom of the lift, while still incorporating the use of chains.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)
Week 2 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)
Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps (use three different grips: close, medium and wide)

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



35. RESTORATION PHASE

Application: This cycle is intended to assist with recovery and post-injury training. The weights listed are simply a guideline. Your actual workout depends on how you feel. These weights should not cause pain, and they should be easy to press. Rest periods should be 30-45 seconds in duration.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 30% for 8 sets 5 reps

Week 2 – 35% for 8 sets 5 reps

Week 3 – 38% for 8 sets 5 reps



36. POST INJURY PHASE – FLOOR PRESS

Application: This cycle is intended to assist in recovery and post-injury training. The floor press is performed by setting the barbell up in a power rack in such a way that a bench press is executed while lying on the floor. A slight pause at the bottom of the lift is recommended. The weights listed are simply a guideline. Your actual workout depends on how you feel. These weights should not cause pain, and they should be easy to press. Rest periods should be 30-45 seconds in duration.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

- 20% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 25% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 30% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 35% for 2 sets 5 reps

Week 2 –

- 25% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 30% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 35% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps

Week 3 –

- 30% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 35% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 45% for 2 sets 3 reps



37. POST INJURY PHASE – ONE BOARD PRESS

Application: This cycle is intended to assist with recovery and post-injury training. The weights listed are simply a guideline. Your actual workout depends on how you feel. These weights should not cause pain, and they should be easy to press. Rest periods should be 30-45 seconds in duration.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

- 25% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 30% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 35% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 5 reps

Week 2 –

- 30% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 35% for 2 sets 5 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 45% for 2 sets 5 reps

Week 3 –

- 35% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 45% for 2 sets 3 reps
- 50% for 2 sets 3 rep



38. POST INJURY PHASE – REVERSE BAND

Application: This cycle is intended to assist in recovery and post-injury training. The reverse band press is performed by suspending the barbell inside bands that hang from the top of the power rack. The weight and bands should be configured in such a way that there is zero weight at the lifter's chest. Based on a seven-foot rack, the lifter has three options:

Light Band and 65 pounds

Average Band and 95 pounds

Strong Band and 135 pounds

This is one of the best post-injury cycles we've seen. The keys to its effectiveness are letting the bands do most of the work, and keeping muscle tension to a minimum. This cycle should be performed on every bench press day until the lifter's strength begins to return. It's also a terrific restoration workout that can be used during regular training phases at the end of a session.

Post-Injury Training

Weeks 1-3

2 – 4 times per week – 1 -2 sets 100 reps

* This is to replace regular bench training

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Restoration Training

1 set of 100 reps

* To be completed at the end of your workout on bench training days



39. FAT BAR STRAIGHT WEIGHT CYCLE

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate or beginner lifter who wants to incorporate the fat bar into his or her dynamic training. The fat bar is a great tool for lifters with shoulder, pec, forearm or elbow injuries, because it disperses tension over a greater area of muscle. This eases some of the strain on injured areas. Use a fat bar for a while, and a regular barbell will feel like a twig when you return to it.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps



40. FAT BAR BAND CYCLE

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate or beginner lifter who wants to incorporate the fat bar, along with bands, into his or her dynamic training. The fat bar is a great tool for lifters with shoulder, pec, forearm or elbow injuries, because it disperses tension over a greater area of muscle. This eases some of the strain on injured areas. Use a fat bar for a while, and a regular barbell will feel like a twig when you return to it.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



41. FAT BAR CHAIN CYCLE

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate or beginner lifter who wants to incorporate the fat bar, along with chains, into his or her dynamic training. The fat bar is a great tool for lifters with shoulder, pec, forearm or elbow injuries, because it disperses tension over a greater area of muscle. This eases some of the strain on injured areas. Use a fat bar for a while, and a regular barbell will feel like a twig when you return to it.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds

201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds

301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds

401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds

501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds

601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds

800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



42. CAMBERED BAR CYCLE WITH STRAIGHT WEIGHT

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate or beginner lifter who wants to incorporate the use of the cambered bar into his or her dynamic bench training. The cambered bar can be very hard on the pecs and shoulders, so caution should be exercised here. If you feel the bar causing excessive strain, we recommend using a 1 or 2-board for this cycle. The board you use should still allow the bar to descend to a lower point than it would with a regular barbell.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps



43. CAMBERED BAR CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate or beginner lifter who wants to incorporate the use of the cambered bar, along with bands, into his or her dynamic bench training. The cambered bar can be very hard on the pecs and shoulders, so caution should be exercised here. If you feel the bar causing excessive strain, we recommend using a 1 or 2-board for this cycle. The board you use should still allow the bar to descend to a lower point than it would with a regular barbell.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 30% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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

800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



44. CAMBERED BAR CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is designed for the intermediate or beginner lifter who wants to incorporate the use of the cambered bar, along with chains, into his or her dynamic bench training. The cambered bar can be very hard on the pecs and shoulders, so caution should be exercised here. If you feel the bar causing excessive strain, we recommend using a 1 or 2-board for this cycle. The board you use should still allow the bar to descend to a lower point than it would with a regular barbell.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps

Suggested Chain

(based on max bench press; chain weight is for both sides combined)

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds

201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds

301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds

401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds

501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds

601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds

800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



45. PIN PRESS CYCLE

Application: This cycle is designed for lifters seeking greater starting strength in the bench press. The pins should be set so the barbell is resting just above the chest (usually around a half-inch).

Training Cycle:

Week 1 – 35% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 2 – 40% for 8 sets 3 reps

Week 3 – 45% for 8 sets 3 reps



46. BENCH SHIRT CYCLE WITH STRAIGHT WEIGHT

Application: This cycle is designed to help lifters get accustomed to the use of a bench shirt with straight weight. Think of this as technical training instead of speed work.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

Warm up to 50% without the use of the bench shirt
60% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
65% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
70% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
75% for 3 reps (The second or third rep should touch with this weight)
80% for 3 reps (The second or third rep should touch with this weight)
80% for 3 reps (The second and third rep should touch)

Week 2 –

Warm up to 50% without the use of the bench shirt
60% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
65% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
70% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
75% for 3 reps (The second or third rep should touch with this weight)
80% for 3 reps (The second and third rep should touch with this weight)
85% for 3 reps (The second and third rep should touch with this weight)

Week 3 –

Warm up to 50% without the use of the bench shirt
60% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
65% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
70% for 3 reps (with a good shirt this weight will not touch chest)
75% for 3 reps (The second or third rep should touch with this weight)
80% for 3 reps (The second and third rep should touch with this weight)
85% for 3 reps (The second and third rep should touch with this weight)
90% for 3 reps (The second and third rep should touch with this weight)



47. BENCH SHIRT CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This cycle is intended to help the lifter get accustomed to the use of a bench shirt. Think of this as technical training instead of speed work. The bands will help with this cycle by increasing the rate at which the barbell descends to the bottom position. They also increase lockout strength.

Many lifters may not be strong enough to press out the weight needed to touch the chest when only using straight weight. When the weight is too heavy, it's difficult to concentrate on all the important technical issues involved in the bench press. 10-12 weeks out from a meet is NOT the time for most lifters to press out maximal weights with a bench shirt. With a very strong shirt, it sometimes takes maximal weight to get the bar to touch the chest, and lifters often lose focus on the technical aspects of benching in the process. Remember, this is an advanced cycle, and it's not recommended for beginners.

Week 1 – Phase One Band Tension

Start with bar and work up to max triple using 5% weight jumps for two sets.

Week 2 – Phase Two Band Tension

Start with bar and work up to max triple using 5% weight jumps for two sets.

Week 3 – Phase Three Band Tension

Start with bar and work up to max triple using 5% weight jumps for two sets.



Phase One Band Tension

100-200 Pounds – Bands not recommended
201-300 Pounds – 60-80 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
301-400 Pounds – 160 - 200 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
401-500 Pounds – 240 - 260 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
501-600 Pounds – 240 - 260 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
601-700 Pounds – 300 - 340 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
800 Plus Pounds – 380 - 420 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

Phase Two Band Tension

100-200 Pounds – Bands not recommended
201-300 Pounds – 60-80 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
301-400 Pounds – 80-100 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
401-500 Pounds – 140 -160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
501-600 Pounds – 140 - 160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
601-700 Pounds – 200-240 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift
800 Plus Pounds – 280-320 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift

Phase Three Band Tension

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
800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



48. BENCH SHIRT CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is intended to help the lifter get accustomed to the use of a bench shirt. Think of this as technical training instead of speed work. The chains will help with this cycle by increasing the rate at which the barbell descends to the bottom position. They also increase lockout strength.

Many lifters may not be strong enough to press out the weight needed to touch the chest when only using straight weight. When the weight is too heavy, it's difficult to concentrate on all the important technical issues involved in the bench press. 10-12 weeks out from a meet is NOT the time for most lifters to press out maximal weights with a bench shirt. With a very strong shirt, it sometimes takes maximal weight to get the bar to touch the chest, and lifters often lose focus on the technical aspects of benching in the process. Remember, this is an advanced cycle, and it's not recommended for beginners.

Week 1 – Phase One Chain Weight

Start with bar and work up to max triple using 5% weight jumps for two sets.

Week 2 – Phase Two Chain Weight

Start with bar and work up to max triple using 5% weight jumps for two sets.

Week 3 – Phase Three Chain Weight

Start with bar and work up to max triple using 5% weight jumps for two sets.



Phase One Chain Weight

100-200 Pounds – 80 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 120 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 160 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 200 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 240 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 280 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 320 pounds

Phase Two Chain Weight

100-200 Pounds – 40 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 80 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 120 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 160 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 200 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 240 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 280 pounds

Phase Three Chain Weight

100-200 Pounds – 20 pounds
201-300 Pounds – 40 pounds
301-400 Pounds – 60 pounds
401-500 Pounds – 80 pounds
501-600 Pounds – 100 pounds
601-700 Pounds – 120 pounds
800 Plus Pounds – 140 pounds



49. SUPER SPEED CYCLE WITH BANDS

Application: This cycle is intended for intermediate and advance lifters what want to increase bar speed. When using this method, you'll begin your sets with the suggested band tension listed below. After the first three sets, add a set of double mini bands to the band tension you already have on the bar for three sets of three reps. Then, remove the extra band for the last two sets. The last two sets will feel as though you're lifting an empty bar.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

30% for 3 sets 3 reps
30% for 3 sets 3 reps *add one double mini band on top of existing band
30% for 2 sets 3 reps *take extra double mini band off bar

Week 2 –

30% for 3 sets 3 reps
30% for 3 sets 3 reps *add one double mini band on top of existing band
30% for 2 sets 3 reps *take extra double mini band off bar

Week 3 –

30% for 3 sets 3 reps
30% for 3 sets 3 reps *add one double mini band on top of existing band
30% for 2 sets 3 reps *take extra double mini band off bar

Suggested Band Tensions

(based on max bench press)

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
800 Plus Pounds – 140-160 pounds of band tension at the top of the lift



50. SUPER SPEED CYCLE WITH CHAINS

Application: This cycle is designed for intermediate and advanced lifters who want to increase bar speed. When using this method, you'll begin your sets using the suggested chain weight listed below. After the first three sets, add 40 more pounds of chain per side to the existing chain weight for three sets of three reps. Then, remove the extra chain weight for the last two sets. The last two sets will feel as though you're lifting an empty bar.

Training Cycle:

Week 1 –

- 40% for 3 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 3 sets 3 reps * add 40 pounds of chain to each side of the bar
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps * take extra chain off bar

Week 2 –

- 40% for 3 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 3 sets 3 reps * add 40 pounds of chain to each side of the bar
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps * take extra chain off bar

Week 3 –

- 40% for 3 sets 3 reps
- 40% for 3 sets 3 reps * add 40 pounds of chain to each side of the bar
- 40% for 2 sets 3 reps * take extra chain off bar



ALTERNATIVE DYNAMIC EFFORT UPPER BODY CYCLES

These cycles are designed for athletes who compete in sports other than powerlifting.

51. MEDICINE BALL EXPLOSIVE CHEST PASSES

Application: Begin by selecting a medicine ball you can toss at least ten feet, and stick with that weight until you get stronger.

For this movement, perform 10 sets of 5 reps by chest-passing the ball, walking to it, picking it up, and tossing it again. After five tosses, rest 30-45 seconds.

52. PLYO PUSH-UPS

Application: Using aerobic steps, small boxes, rubber mats or 100-pound plates, start in a push-up position with your hands on your “platform.” Drop so your hands hit the floor, then explode back into the starting position.

Begin with your bodyweight on a small (2-4 inch) platform. From here, progress to using weighted vests and higher platforms. A suggested workout would involve a three week wave using 8 sets of 3 reps with 45-60 seconds rest.



53. BARBELL DROPS

Application: This is very similar to the plyo push-up, only you'll be using the pin setting in a power rack. Place a barbell in the rack at waist level, then push it as far forward as the rack will allow, wedging it between the rack post and the pins. From here, assume a push-up position on the barbell with your feet on the floor. Push yourself up and off the barbell. The action you're looking for here is a pushing of your body away from the bar. As you descend, catch the bar and repeat.

From here, progress to using weighted vests and higher platforms. A suggested workout would involve a three week wave using 8 sets of 3 reps with 45-60 seconds rest.

54. HEAVY BAG PUSHES

Application: This is a great exercise for upper body explosiveness, and it's very simple to perform. Standing alongside the bag, take one arm and push the bag as hard as you can. Catch the bag as it swings back, then toss your next rep.

For this movement, do 10 sets of 5 reps with 20 seconds rest between arms.

55. PROWLER SHOVES

Application: The weight used for this depends on what type of surface you are using. A general recommendation is to look for a weight you can shove 3-5 feet. Using the parallel grip handles, shove the Prowler as hard as you can. Walk to it and shove it again. Repeat.

For this movement, do 10 sets of 3 reps with 30-45 seconds between sets.



56. MED BALL CATCH AND RELEASE

Application: This will require either a partner or a medicine ball rebounder. Positioned on the ground on your back, have your partner drop the ball to your chest. Catch it as it falls, then toss it back to your partner. A general guideline on weight here would entail a toss that finishes 18-24 inches over your hands at full extension.

For this movement, do 10 sets of 3 reps with 30-45 seconds between sets.



Dynamic Effort Method using various angles

If your primary goal is overall upper body explosiveness at various joint angles, you can use any of the above cycles for incline, decline or overhead work. I would suggest avoiding the use of bands or chains if you do this, but if you do decide to use either, make sure you work them in slowly.

How to set up chains for the bench press

To use chains while bench pressing, we use a half-inch lead chain that's fully adjustable for any lifter. Using a carabiner, a 5/8 inch chain is attached to this lead chain. When the bar is in the rack, half of the chain should be resting on the floor. This will allow for a total deload at the bottom. Each 5/8 inch chain weighs twenty pounds, so this configuration will yield 10-15 pounds per side at lockout.

As a side note, if you were to attach the training chain to the bar sleeve without the support chain – some manufacturers actually do this – you will get a minimal deload because most of the chain will remain off the floor. This is a major reason why people who don't know anything about training should never try to manufacture and sell products of this nature.

How to set up bands for the bench press

In order to set up bands correctly for bench pressing place one end of the band around the sleeve of the barbell, loop it around a dumbbell, the bottom of the power rack or a band peg and place the other end back on the sleeve of the bar. This is called "doubling" a band. A mini band will add around 30-40 at the bottom and 80-90 at lockout. A monster mini will add 55 at the bottom and 105 at the top. A light band will add 75-90 at the bottom and 150-165 at the top. These are estimates and will vary from lifter to lifter.

The reverse band would be set up essentially the same way except from the top of a power rack with the barbell hanging inside the bands.



BAND SETUP



Elitefts.com

CHAIN SETUP







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 it stimulates the central nervous system. These demands force the body into greater adaptation, and this adaptation is primarily responsible for strength gains.

When training using the max effort method, central nervous system inhibition is reduced. Because of this, the maximal number of motor units is activated with optimal discharge frequency (Zatsiorsky). The one major drawback to using this method is the fact that you can't train with weights above 90% of your 1-RM for longer than three weeks before your nervous system begins to weaken. When this happens, your strength will begin to diminish.

This is why progressive overload cycles 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 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.

To use this method, you first have to decide which main exercise will be trained. After a proper warm-up, proceed to this exercise and begin doing reps with the bar. Taking small jumps in weight, begin to work up in poundage with sets of three reps. When triples begin to feel heavy, drop down to single reps. This is when you begin to max out on this exercise. Keep increasing the weight until you've reached your 1-RM. Make sure you keep track of your maxes, because these numbers are what you'll try to beat the following week. A max effort progression would look like this:



Floor Press

2 sets 5 with 45 pounds
2 sets 3 with 95
2 sets 3 with 135
1 set 3 with 185
1 set 3 with 225
1 set 3 with 275
1 set 3 with 315
1 set 3 with 365
1 set 3 with 385
1 set 1 with 405
1 set 1 with 425

In this example, 425 would represent the lifter's one rep max. This is the number that should be recorded, because it's the record 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 the bench press.

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. Notice that all of these are 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 example, the floor press – benching sans bench – takes your legs out of the pressing motion so greater emphasis is placed on the pecs, delts and triceps. The close grip incline press takes your lats out of the equation, placing greater emphasis on the delts and triceps. The board press also takes your lats out of the motion, providing you with the opportunity to train at specific points in your bench press path.

A basic max effort mesocycle should only last 1-3 weeks, with the far range of the scale (three weeks) being most appropriate 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 these athletes' advanced levels of neuro-muscular 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 other reasoning behind this involves neuromuscular and muscular coordination. The advanced lifter has already mastered the movement. His body knows what to do, and when. The novice athlete has not yet achieved this level of mastery, and is on a level that will allow him to progress and break records for up to three weeks on each max effort exercise. This is not the case for the advanced athlete.

Advanced athletes will typically have one good week where they'll break a record, but they'll be unable to break it for the next two weeks. The solution to this is simple: switch every week. This will allow you to break records on a weekly basis while avoiding overtraining. Max effort training is a process of learning how to better synchronize muscular involvement. This is due to the activation of the central nervous system, as well as other factors such as motivation and concentration.

Don't worry if you don't always break a record. The strain is more important than the record itself. In fact, if you have an easy time breaking a record – i.e., you don't strain – go for another record, and make sure 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

Weeks Per Exercise- 1-3



MAX EFFORT METHODS

The Methods

The max effort methods have been documented at length over the past ten years. The lifter has been presented with a wide variety of different weekly phases and training cycles, as well as different loading patterns. Louie Simmons has written numerous articles on how these methods have been used to create many of the strongest powerlifters in the world.

Many of Louie's articles contain information about certain "max effort movements" that have impacted the training of lifters at Westside Barbell. He's also gone into great detail on how these movements are performed. Working up to a 1-RM for a specific movement is not the only way to integrate max effort work into your training. There are many different maximal methods that can and should be used. Some of these, you've seen before. Others, you've forgotten. Still others are combined methods and movements that you've never thought of before. The following text will discuss some of the many ways to introduce maximal methods into your training.

Multiple Exertion Method

This method involves multiple sets of 1-2 reps with strict rest periods. Like the dynamic effort method, this method uses the same load for multiple sets. Jim Wendler has used this method for training his bench press and deadlift, working up to 70-80% and performing 10-15 singles with 2 minutes rest. This is a great idea when you feel you need to get away from weights in the 90% range. While the weights used are lighter, it's important to note that when the number of sets increases, the tension does as well. As you get tired, the lifts get much harder to complete.

You may already be using this method without knowing it, because it's often confused with the dynamic effort method. Some lifters think they're doing "speed work," – especially in the case of speed deadlifts – but come to find out they're actually training with loads between 80-90% for singles. When the tempo of your lifts becomes very slow and the strain becomes high, you're crossing over



an invisible boundary from the dynamic effort to the maximal effort method.

When you're using these high exertion methods for your so-called "speed work," you're no longer doing dynamic effort work. When this happens, you need to make significant alterations to the max effort work you're also doing during the training week.

Maximal Concentric Method

This method is exactly as it sounds: you lift the weight and you don't lower it. This is how the Olympic lifts are completed, and as powerlifters, we can use this method for various movements like pin presses and suspended bench presses. Your gym owner will hate you for doing this, but it has a purpose. The negative phase of any lift is what causes the greatest muscle soreness and damage, and it's where most injuries happen. By cycling in more maximal concentric movements, you're building in a way to allow more recovery. Let me explain.

Let's say you're having a hard time recovering from max effort training. You can do a four week phase of max effort work set up as follows:

Week 1 – Board Presses – work up to 1 RM

Week 2 – Close Grip Bench Press with maximal exertion method

Week 3 – Chain Suspended Lockouts (concentric only)

Week 4 – Rest

In using this schedule, you'll have one week of partial range eccentrics (board presses), one week of full range eccentric contraction (close grip bench presses), one deload eccentric week (chain suspended lockouts), and then one week off. In four weeks, you'll have stressed the eccentric phase maximally for only two, with one of these being a partial range movement. This will allow for great recovery while still allowing you to use the maximal effort method.

If you want, you could then add more eccentric loading into the next phase of training. Eccentric loading is very important, and should not be removed from your training for extended periods of time.



Maximal Isometric Method

Admittedly, isometrics suck and have limited value, but “limited” value is still value – in certain circumstances. Lifts are raised by bringing up the muscles that do the work of the lift. You can increase your bench press without benching, your squat without squatting, and your deadlift without deadlifting. I didn’t always believe this, but after spending so much time around Louie Simmons for so many years, I’ve come to believe that this is the overriding consideration behind all of his training. I’ve seen the results of this, and they’re nothing short of astounding. We can therefore analyze the isometric method and its effect on the addressing of sticking points:

Let’s say a lifter has a bench press of 465 pounds, but always gets stuck about five inches off his chest. This would be the halfway point in his bench press. It’s important to point out here that all sticking points are some combination of the mental, the physical and the technical. After analysis, it’s determined that this lifter has some technical problem at his sticking point. He is able to press into this position very powerfully, but then stalls. After a split second, he flares his elbows out and keeps pressing. The bar does not go up as his elbows flare out.

There are multiple solutions to this problem, but one would be to increase the strength of his rotator cuff muscles and lats. This would keep his body position tighter, allowing him to push through his sticking point. He should also increase his overall body strength. Finally, increasing his bar speed going into this sticking point will allow him to more easily break through this barrier.

One other thing we could have this lifter do involves the Maximal Isometric Method. We would set pins up in a power rack, with one set of pins 1 inch below his sticking point, and one set right off his chest. The lifter would press an empty bar into the top pin and hold it there as hard as he could for 3-5 seconds (or whatever amount of time his average max lift takes). This is a very demanding method, the stress of which can sneak up on you. You need to restrict this to just a few sets, performing it no more than 1-2 times per four week phase. I would also suggest no more than three pin positions per session.



Here are some other ways to use this method:

- 1.** 9 sets with an empty bar for 3-5 second holds with 30 seconds rest. All to the same pin.
- 2.** Same as #1, but use three pin settings for 3 sets each.
- 3.** Instead of an empty bar, use 50% of 1-RM. You will know the weight is too heavy when you feel you're holding the bar against the pins, not pressing it. It is important to press against the pins.

Using this method will accomplish multiple objectives. First, it will develop position specific strength within a 10-15% degree range. This may give the lifter the edge he needs to break through a sticking point. Next, it will allow a "check" for technical positioning during times of crisis. The lifter will be able to see what his body does during strain, and he'll be able to make the corrections needed to finish the lift.

Sticking points are largely mental. If you always fail at the same point, you'll begin to program yourself for this, and you won't be able to drive past it. You'll press into your sticking point knowing you'll miss. By doing this, you're subconsciously programming yourself to give up too soon. Instead of pressing for a split second longer, you'll find yourself saying, "Shit, there it is again." By doing these isometrics, you'll be able to reprogram yourself to strain for that extra split second past the point where you'd normally give up. One split second can be the difference between a missed lift and a lifetime PR.



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– Benching with chains



Maximal Eccentrics Method

I should call this the “*High School Method*,” because this is when we used it most.

Why?

We were all too stupid to know better.

Call them maximal eccentrics, negatives, droppers, or whatever you want, the results are still the same: pain, injuries and soreness. You load the bar to 130-140% of your 1-RM and then you lower it slowly. After the bar touches your chest, the spotter pulls the bar off you, and you either rack the bar or do another one (“It’s all you!!!”).

There are legitimate reasons to do this, but in its purest form, the risk/benefit ratio for this method is too high for the intermediate and advanced lifter. The same effect can be achieved with weight releasers and bands while not having to increase barbell weight to 140%. The more advanced lifter has a much harder time lowering 140% than the beginner.

I have seen this method work very well for lifters trying to break in bench shirts, and the sets these lifters are performing are doing more than they realize. Supported eccentric loading builds the muscles and tendons to handle heavy loads. The shirt helps protect the body from abuse. Many lifters complain about sore elbows and forearms resulting from heavy shirt work, while, at the same time, they don’t feel these effects in the muscles supported by the shirt (the chest, shoulders and lats).

I’ve also seen this method work very well with top-down deadlifts. To perform these, the lifter loads the bar in a rack at the top position. He then stands up with the weight and performs an eccentric deadlift to the floor.



Maximal Forced Repetitions

I'm sure everyone remembers forced reps from high school, but there are several ways to utilize this method for many different applications other than bodybuilding.

There is one way to use this method that I suggest avoiding, but I'll still include it because there are many who think it has great strength training properties. This method entails performing 1-2 assisted reps after failure has been reached. Since this is technically max effort work, you'll still need to keep your percentage over 90%, with 1-5 reps being performed.

Another method of using forced reps is called the lightened method, or reverse bands. To do this, you simply hang the barbell from bands and allow the bands to help lift the weight. This can be used for the squat, deadlift or bench press. Unlike forced reps after failure, this method provides help from the beginning of the set, and it's a much safer method that helps increase the mid to end-point of the lift.

The Maximal Restricted Range Method

This is another method that's been HOT for quite a while. Some examples of this method include:

- * Rack presses
- * Board presses
- * Overhead pin presses
- * Floor presses
- * Presses off foam

This method allows for maximal overload of very restricted ranges of motion. It's been very popular over the past thirty years for just one reason: it works very well. If you're looking to get strong, you need to include this method in your training.



Cheating

While I'm not a big proponent of cheating, I feel there are certain movements where cheating can help. With regard to the bench press, heaving the weights off boards can be helpful. While not the strictest of movements, heaving in this manner has been practiced by many of the best bench pressers in the world.

Circa-Maximal Method

This method has many crossover applications. It has been used, with great results, as a three week wave in place of straight dynamic method training. While this method can be viewed as either dynamic or max effort, the distinction depends on how you use it. Here are a few examples of the Max Effort Circa-Maximal Method:

- * Benching with multiple bands for a 1-3 rep max
- * Bench press with chains and bands for a 1 rep max

The key to understanding this method – regardless of application – is making sure the weight at the top of the movement exceeds 90% of your 1-RM. This percentage is what distinguishes a cycle as circa-maximal.

To accomplish this while avoiding both overtraining and acute training injuries, use chains and/or bands with your barbell weight. There is no magic combination of weight-to-bands or weight-to-chains with this method, so all you really need to do is load the bar to around 50-60% and add bands or chains. Here is an example, utilizing the weights that could be used for a 500 pound bench presser.

Close Grip Bench Press

- 45** pounds for 3 reps
- 45** pounds for 3 reps with double light band
- 95** for 3 with double light band
- 135** for 3 with double light band
- 185** for 3 with double light band
- 185** for 3 with double light band and add one chain per side



The lifter will now keep adding one chain per side and work up to a 1-RM.

The combinations that can be applied with this method are endless. Don't be afraid to experiment and see what works best for you.

Maximal Holding Method

I'm not a big fan of this one, but it's very popular with a number of lifters, and it's great for what I call strength stabilization. Strength stabilization is the ability to stabilize maximal loads. You can develop the ability to stand on a stability ball for hours on end, but this is meaningless if you can't stabilize maximal weights. If you've ever done handouts or lockouts for the bench press, you already know how to perform this method. Set the weight up and hold it for a certain count. I think it's best to hold the weight 1-2 seconds past the exact amount of time it would take you to finish a maximal lift in the movement you're working. For example, if it takes you six seconds to perform a 1-RM squat, you'll hold your walkout for 7-8 seconds. Remember to keep your body tight!

Here are a few other examples of the Maximal Holding Method:

- * Bench press holds
- * Very high board presses
- * High pin presses

If the exercise in question has more movement than the setup and hold (very high board presses, for example), you'll do one rep by holding for a couple of seconds at the top, lowering and pressing the bar, then holding for 2-3 seconds at the top again.

* I'm not trying to rename anything here. I'll leave that up to other writers, and to magazines. I'm just trying to use terms that will be easy for everyone to understand. You don't need to know the "exact" name of something to understand it, or to use it to make yourself strong. The primary thing required to make progress is the passing along of information from one to another in the most understandable way possible. We'll call this the "Maximal Understanding Method."



THE MAX EFFORT MATRIX

(SELECT ONE FROM EACH GROUP)

MOVEMENT	GRIP	BAR	RESISTANCE
Board Press (1,2,3,4,5 board)	Close	Texas Power Bar	Only Straight Weight
Foam Press	Moderate	Texas Squat Bar	Strong Band
Carpet Press	Wide	Arch Bar	Average Band
No Touch Press	Ultra Wide	Fat Bar	Light Band
Floor Press	Reverse Grip	Swiss Bar	Mini Band
Bench Press		Cambered Bar	Reverse Strong Band
Incline Press			Reverse Average Band
Decline Press			Reverse Light Band
Low Pin Press			Light Chain
Moderate Pin Press			Moderate Chain
High Pin Press			Heavy Chain
Suspended Low Press			Super Heavy Chain
Suspended Mid Press			Weight Releasers
Suspended High Press			Kettlebells & Bands
			*Combo of any of the above





Definitions for cycles:

Rookie: This lifter is new to training – less than six months of total training experience – and has not developed any type of strength training base.

Novice: The novice is a step ahead of the rookie with regard to “training age” – he or she has been training for more than six months – but still needs to add muscle mass and work on bench press technique.

Beginner: The beginner has more than one year of strength training and has begun to develop a good technical base, but still needs to work on developing more muscle mass and coordination.

Intermediate: The intermediate lifter has a good training base and very good bench press technique and coordination. He or she has also developed a good muscular base from past training experience, and is ready for more advanced training methods and techniques. If this trainee is a competitive powerlifter, his or her max bench press will be ranked in the Powerlifting USA Top 100 list (categorized by weight class).

Advanced: This lifter has been training for over two years, and has developed a great muscular base. He or she also has excellent bench press technique and coordination. If this trainee is a competitive powerlifter, his or her max bench press will be ranked in the top fifty of the Powerlifting USA Top 100 list (categorized by weight class).



Max Effort Cycles

Rookie Cycle and Novice Cycle:

Movement: Stick with the same movement for three weeks

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 5 reps

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 5 reps (beat week 1 numbers)

Week 3 – Work up to max set of 5 reps (beat week 2 numbers)

* This group should NOT use bands or chains.

Beginner Cycle:

Movement: Stick with the same movement for three weeks

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 5 reps

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Week 3 – Work up to max set of 1 rep

* This group should NOT use bands or chains.



Intermediate Cycles:

Movement: At this point in your development, there may be some movements you can do for three weeks, and others you can only do for one. If you've reached this level, you should already know what these movements are, and your cycles will last anywhere from 1-3 weeks. Here are some samples of what you can do:

Sample 1:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 5 reps

Sample 2:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Sample 3:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 1 rep

Sample 4:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 5 reps

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Week 3 – Work up to max set of 1 rep



Sample 5:

Warm-up: work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 1 rep

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 5 reps

Week 3 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Sample 6:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 1 rep

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Week 3 – Work up to max set of 5 reps

Sample 7:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 1 rep

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Sample 8:

Warm-up: Work up using small jumps (5-10% jumps)

Week 1 – Work up to max set of 3 reps

Week 2 – Work up to max set of 1 rep



Advanced Cycles:

It's highly unlikely that you'll be able to cycle any movement for more than a couple of weeks, so your best option is to change the movement every week. It's also important to note, at this level, that you REALLY need to go by how you feel. This is illustrated nicely in the following scenario:

It's max effort day, and your objective is to break a PR on a specific movement. Let's say it's the floor press. When you get to the gym and begin lifting, your shoulders don't feel like they're warming up properly, and you decide the floor press might not be your best choice because it's always hard on your shoulders. You figure the 2-board press is a more sensible option, so you change movements and start your warm-up sets. As you work up, dropping the reps to triples, you notice the weight seems "heavy" at only 50%. A few sets later, you realize that the dynamic work you did that week has you feeling really beaten up. There's no way you'll be able to set a 1-RM PR, so you decide to break a 3-RM PR instead.

This is what an advanced lifter SHOULD do. Go by how you feel and what you know you need to do – and not always what you want to do.



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– Incline Press

THE REPEATED EFFORT METHOD

The Repetition Method

The repetition method – or “bodybuilding” method – is best for the development of muscular hypertrophy. This is the method by which all supplemental and accessory exercises are trained, and it’s defined as “lifting a non-maximal load to failure.” During the fatigued state, muscles develop maximal force, and it’s only during these final lifts that, because of fatigue, the maximal number of motor units are recruited. This is how muscle mass is developed, and this method is extremely popular among bodybuilders.

Because the final lifts are performed in a fatigued state, however, this method is less effective than others for maximal strength development, and it’s why powerlifters are so much stronger than bodybuilders. Carrying each set to failure is a main disadvantage of this method, because failure makes it very difficult to increase 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 should be used sparingly. When you repeatedly extend a set to failure, the last few reps are performed with poor technique and can easily lead to injury.

Westside has tailored this principle for powerlifting with what I call the modified repetition method. With this modified version, all sets should stop 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. Their purpose is to compliment the overall program, not detract from it in any way. By training to failure on every set, you’d be defeating the purpose of the movements: to increase work capacity.

The parameters of this method vary depending on the individual. Some athletes develop muscle mass with high reps. Others develop it with low reps. You’d be crazy to assume that one specific rep range works for everyone. We’ve found that ranges of 5-8 sets of 6-15 repetitions work best for supplemental and accessory work. This is a rather vague range, but again, everyone is different. If you’ve been training for a long time, you no doubt have a much better idea of what works for you than I could ever prescribe.



The load or weight you'll be using should fall in the 60-80% range, and again, you should always leave a rep or two "in the tank" at the end of each set – at least in most cases. Try to switch the exercise every 1-5 workouts. If you don't want to switch the exercise, at least try to switch the way it's trained. For example, you can add an extra set for a few weeks, or you can work up for four weeks, then deload for four weeks. The point is to change things up as much as possible.

Examples of Methods

Straight Set Method:

Application: This method is very basic, and involves using the same weight for the desired number of sets and repetitions. This is usually written as 3 sets of 10 reps, 5 sets of 5 reps, and so on. Sets are usually taken one or two reps shy of failure.

Example: This method is often used for bench accessory movements like side delt raises and lat pulls. It's great for accessory work because it doesn't place a huge demand on recovery.

Super Set Method

Application: This involves doing one set of one movement, then moving directly to another movement for a set. After resting, both exercises would be done again in the same order. Doing three movements in this manner is called a triset, and doing more than three is called a giant set.

Example: I've seen this used a lot with warm-up movements like face pulls and bench press movements using just the bar. In this case, the lifter would be warming up with the barbell. Right after the bench set, he'd do a set of face pulls or some other light shoulder movement. This is also very effective at the end of a workout when you have a couple of movements left, but not much time.



Pre-Exhaust Method

Application: Like a super set, one movement is performed, followed by a second movement, but in this case, the first movement is designed to fatigue – or “pre-exhaust” – a targeted muscle in order to get a greater effect from the second movement. I have seen this method do great things for bench press strength when the right movements are selected.

Example: At Westside, it was quite common to see pre-exhaust sets used for supplemental triceps training. One example of this is doing dumbbell or barbell extensions, followed by tricep pushdowns. We would do 4-5 sets of 8 reps for each movement. This would usually be done for 2-4 weeks before transitioning to another tricep program.

Reps to Failure

Application: This method is just as it sounds. It’s a set with reps taken to the point where you can’t do one more with good form. For MOST strength training, this type of thing needs to be avoided – or at least controlled.

Example: This is usually used for supplemental movements for sets of between 5-10 reps, but it should be used in short cycles. It’s very easy to overtrain when taking sets to failure and beyond, especially when multiple sets are being used.



Rest Pause Method

Application: This involves taking short breaks within a set to push the muscle past normal failure. It's done by performing an exercise until you're one rep shy of failure, resting for a short period (usually 5-10 seconds), then doing as many more reps as you can. This can be repeated as many times as you like, but it's usually done with one or two breaks. If adding muscle size is a goal, this method is very effective.

Example: This is a great concept when max strength is not the primary goal of a movement. By using rest-pause, you can do all the work you need in one set instead of 3-5, saving you time and keeping your total training volume down.

Strip Set Method

Application: This method is not used very often with bench press training, but it serves its purpose for accessory training. Like rest-pause training, one set can replace a series of sets.

Example: I've seen this used often for shoulder movements like side, front and rear delt raises. The shoulders take a beating when training the bench press, and using strip sets can flush blood into affected muscles. This can potentially aid in recovery.



Segmental Method

Application: Most people would recognize this as “21’s,” which are done with barbell curls. With this method, a movement is broken down into different segments, with a set number of reps done for each.

Example: One of the best tricep workouts I’ve ever done was introduced to me by Glenn Buechlein. Begin with 50% of your best raw bench press and do 5 reps off your chest. From here, go straight to 5 reps off one board, 5 reps off two boards, and so on, until you’ve done 5 reps off 5 boards. This will quickly show you what type of triceps you have.

Cluster Method

Application: This method requires you to do one or more repetitions of an exercise, followed by a 10-20 second rest and either another repetition or cluster of repetitions.

Example: In earlier Westside Barbell videos, you’d see lifters performing 8 sets of 8 reps with dumbbell extensions, with 20 seconds of rest between sets. This method is the driving force behind many bench PR’s broken at Westside, and it’s best used in training phases of 3-4 weeks.

Pyramid Method

Application: This is the most common approach to accessory training. In this case, warm-up sets are performed, and the weights progress until a max set of desired reps is reached.

Example: Using chest-supported rows as an example, the first few sets would work up to a weight with which you could only perform 6-8 reps. Once this weight is reached, the movement is over. This method could be thought of as the “base” for sets and reps, with 5-8 being the desired rep range.



Timed Method

Application: This method can be utilized in several ways, but all are based on time rather than number of repetitions per set.

Example: At Westside, lifters would do timed dumbbell presses for 3-4 sessions a week. This was for those who were weak at the bottom position of the bench press. After all work for the day was complete, the lifter would take a dumbbell representing 70-80% of his ten-rep max. These sets would last 3-5 minutes. Note that for timed sets in the 3-5 minute range, continuous reps were normally NOT used. Lifters would do a few reps, then hold the dumbbells in the top or bottom position for 5-10 seconds, then do a few more reps. This would be continued for a set time, and the method itself would be cycled for short phases of 1-2 weeks.

Another example of this involves extended tension sets designed for muscular hypertrophy. In this example, sets of 30-45 seconds are used. The reps for this are continuous, but time is the most important aspect here. Do as many reps as you can with a normal tempo for whatever the time period. If the weight seems too light midway through, move it slower and flex harder to make the movement more difficult and reach failure by the set time. If the weight is too heavy, then partials and static isometric holds are used until the time is reached. This is normally cycled over four workouts – 2 sets each session. Begin with 30 seconds, then add 5 seconds each workout while keeping the weight the same.

There are many other examples and applications that can be utilized with this method, but these could span an entire manual. The two I've listed are the most popular for bringing up the bench press.

Diminishing Sets (Hundreds)

Application: With this method, the lifter does as many sets as he needs to reach a set number of repetitions.

Example: Do tricep pushdowns with bands 4-5 times per week as an extra workout performed at home at night – after the day's training has already been done. Toss a light band over the top of a door and perform 100 reps with no more than 60 seconds between sets. Each set is taken to failure, and you'll repeat until you reach 100 reps. I've seen this add 50 pounds to three lifters' bench presses from one meet to the next. They'd do these extra workouts for three weeks, then back off one week and start again.

A second example of this is a reverse band bench press where the barbell is suspended from bands attached to the top of a power rack. The weight and bands should be configured in such a way that there is zero weight at the lifter's chest. Based on a seven-foot rack, the lifter has three options:

Light Band and 65 pounds
Average Band and 95-115 pounds
Strong Band and 165 pounds

This is one of the best post-injury cycles we've seen, and it's terrific for coming back from pec and shoulder injuries. It's also great for prevention because of the amount of blood it flushes into the affected region. The keys to its effectiveness are letting the bands do most of the work, and keeping muscle tension to a minimum. If you let the bands do the work, you'll get to 100 continuous reps. If you're flexing too hard, you won't get past 50. Either way, you'll do 100 reps – but you should be able to get it all in one set. If you're injured, this would be your first movement of the day. For prevention, do it at the end.





REPETITION METHOD EXERCISE MATRIX- SUPPLEMENTAL & ACCESSORIES

Bench press training is easier to understand when it's explained in terms of max effort, dynamic effort, supplemental and accessory work (repetition method).

Supplemental Movements: These are the movements that will build your bench press. They're any program's most important bench builders, falling right beneath the max and dynamic effort movements in order of importance. With supplemental movements, you'll be training your weaknesses, which, in the case of most lifters, will involve a heavy focus on the triceps.

Accessory Movements: This is where all the other stuff fits in. Accessory movements, while important, will not make or break your bench press if missed on occasion. If you have a weak lockout, what will happen to your bench if you don't do any supplemental tricep work? That would be a recipe for disaster. By contrast, what do you think would happen if you skipped lat pulldowns and rear delt raises for a few weeks? It wouldn't be nearly as bad. Bear in mind, however, that if you do skip accessories on a long term basis, you're setting yourself up for muscular imbalances and potential injuries. Accessories generally include lat, shoulder and prehabilitation work.

With regard to lat training, many lifters prefer to do thickness movements (rows and deadlifts) on one day, and width movements (pulldowns and chins) on another. If you decide to set things up this way, do the thickness movements on your squat/DL days and width on your bench days. If everything is done on bench day, you can either do one movement for each, or break it down so you'll do your thickness movement on max effort day and your width movement on dynamic effort day.

When training the lats, anyone looking to increase their bench press should focus on pulling with the elbows. When using bench shirts, many lifters try to pull the bar down with their hands, when they should really be trying to drive their elbows down instead. By concentrating on this when training your lats, you'll be reinforcing proper technique.



SUPPLEMENTAL MATRIX

MOVEMENT	GRIP	BAR	RESISTANCE
Board Press (4, 5 board)	Close	Texas Power Bar	Only Straight Weight
Floor Press	Moderate	Fat Bar	Straight Weight & Chains
Bench Press	Reverse	Arch Bar	Straight Weight & Bands
Incline Press	Palms In	Swiss Bar	Straight Weight & Bands & Chains
Decline Press		Cambered Bar	Chain Only
High Pin Press		Curl Bar	Band Only
Suspended High Press			Bands and Chains
JM Presses			
JM Presses on Floor			
JM Presses on Carpet			
Barbell Extensions			
Dumbbell Extensions			
Rolling Dumbbell Extensions			
Any Extension on the Floor			

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* Pushdowns can be added, but as a pre-exhaust movement. This exercise is not a big strength builder.



Sample Supplemental Cycle

A sample eight week supplemental cycle may look something like this. This DOES NOT include max effort or accessory movements.

Week 1

ME Day – 4-board press for 2 sets of 5

DE Day – Rolling Dumbbell Extensions for 8 sets of 8 with 20 seconds rest

Week 2

ME Day – 4-board press for 2 sets of 3, and Rolling Dumbbells for 8 sets of 8 with 20 seconds rest

DE Day – JM Presses for 2 sets of 5, and Rolling Dumbbells for 8 sets of 8 with 20 seconds rest



– JM Press



Week 3

ME Day – No supplemental work, with the exception of light pushdowns.

DE Day – JM Presses for 2 sets of 3

Week 4

ME Day – Barbell Extensions on Floor with straight weight and chains

DE Day – Extensions super-set with Pushdowns for 4-5 sets of 10

Week 5

ME Day – Barbell Extensions on Floor with straight weight and chains

DE Day – Extensions super-set with Pushdowns for 4-5 sets of 10

Week 6

ME Day– Close Grip Inclines for 2 sets of 5 reps

DE Day– No supplemental work, with the exception of pushdowns.

Week 7

ME Day – Close Grip Inclines for 2 sets of 3 reps

DE Day – Rolling Floor Dumbbell Extensions for max set of 8 reps

Week 8

ME Day – High Pin Presses for 2 sets of 3 reps

DE Day – Rolling Floor Dumbbell Extensions for max set of 8 reps



ACCESSORY MATRIX

LAT WIDTH	LAT THICKNESS	DELTS	PREHAB
Pulldowns	Chest-Supported Rows	One Arm Dumbbell Presses	Reverse Band Presses
Chins	Barbell Rows	Overhead Pin Press	External Rotators
Reverse Grip Pulldowns	Dumbbell Rows	Swiss Bar Presses	Rear Delt Raises
	Reverse Band Rows	Cleans	Face Pulls
	Machine Rows	Plate Raises	Y,T,W,L
		Front Raises	Broomstick Raises
		Side Raises	
		Rear Delt Raises	



Sample Accessory Cycle

A sample eight week accessory cycle may look like this. This DOES NOT include max effort or supplemental work.

Week 1

ME Day – Chest-Supported Rows for 3 sets of 8, One Arm Dumbbell Presses for 3 sets of 8, and Face Pulls for 4 sets of 10

DE Day – Chins for 2 sets to failure, Side Dumbbell Raises for 3 sets of 10, and Y, T, W, L's for 2 sets of 12 reps.

Week 2

ME Day – Chest-Supported Rows for 3 sets of 8, One Arm Dumbbell Presses for 3 sets of 8, and Face Pulls for 4 sets of 10

DE Day – Chins for 2 sets to failure, Side Dumbbell Raises for 3 sets of 10, and Y, T, W, L's for 2 sets of 12 reps.

Week 3

ME Day – Chest-Supported Rows for 3 sets of 8, One Arm Dumbbell Presses for 3 sets of 8, and Face Pulls for 4 sets of 10

DE Day – Chins for 2 sets to failure, Side Dumbbell Raises for 3 sets of 10, and Y, T, W, L's for 2 sets of 12 reps.

Week 4

ME Day – Chest-Supported Rows for 3 sets of 8, One Arm Dumbbell Presses for 3 sets of 8, and Face Pulls for 4 sets of 10

DE Day – Chins for 2 sets to failure, Side Dumbbell Raises for 3 sets of 10, and Y, T, W, L's for 2 sets of 12 reps.



Week 5

ME Day – No accessory work

DE Day – No accessory work

Week 6

ME Day – Barbell Rows for 3 sets of 8, Front Plate Raises for 2 sets of 15, and external rotator work for 2 sets of 15.

DE Day – Pulldowns for 3 sets of 10, Dumbbell Cleans for 3 sets of 8, and Incline Rear Delt Raises for 2 sets of 12.

Week 7

ME Day – Barbell Rows for 3 sets of 8, Front Plate Raises for 2 sets of 15, and external rotator work for 2 sets of 15.

DE Day – Pulldowns for 3 sets of 10, Dumbbell Cleans for 3 sets of 8, and Incline Rear Delt Raises for 2 sets of 12.

Week 8

ME Day – Barbell Rows for 3 sets of 8, Front Plate Raises for 2 sets of 15, and external rotator work for 2 sets of 15.

DE Day – Pulldowns for 3 sets of 10, Dumbbell Cleans for 3 sets of 8, and Incline Rear Delt Raises for 2 sets of 12.



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– Overhead Pin Press



INJURY PREVENTION – ACCESSORY MOVEMENTS

REVERSE BAND PRESS

Post-Injury Phase — Reverse Band

Application: This cycle is intended to assist in recovery and post-injury training. The reverse band press is performed by suspending the barbell inside bands that hang from the top of the power rack. The weight and bands should be configured in such a way that there is zero weight at the lifter's chest. Based on a seven-foot rack, the lifter has three options:

Light Band and 65 pounds
Average Band and 95 pounds
Strong Band and 135 pounds

This is one of the best post-injury cycles we've seen. The keys to its effectiveness are letting the bands do most of the work, and keeping muscle tension to a minimum. This cycle should be performed on every bench press day until the lifter's strength begins to return. It's also a terrific restoration workout that can be used during regular training phases at the end of a session.



Post Injury Training

Weeks 1-3

2 – 4 times per week – 1 -2 sets 100 reps
* This is to replace regular bench training

Restoration Training

1 set 100 reps
* To be completed at the end of your workout on bench training days

Horizontal Shoulder Traction with Bands

For this movement, you'll loop two bands together – the average bands work best for this one – and place one end around the top of your power rack. If these pegs aren't available to you, you can just slip-knot the band around the top of your rack. We use the pegs to get more tension out of the bands.

Note: Make sure your rack is bolted down.

Once you have the bands set up, reach up under the band and grab the two ends together. This will place the band around the top of your wrist, so it will pull through the arm without your having to grip the band.

When the band is “attached,” step away from the rack until you feel as though your arm is being ripped off. Once you get in this position, move, move, and move some more. Pull in every angle and direction you can imagine – with your elbow in, out, or wherever.

There is no wrong way to move here, but you have to make sure to get a full, deep stretch at the end of each rep. Also, make sure to move your body. Do some movements facing the rack, then some at a half-turn, facing away from the rack, on your knees, and however else you can think of. Just keep moving.



Vertical Shoulder Traction with Bands

This works the same way as horizontal shoulder traction, except in a different plane. Toss a band over the top of a power rack – light bands work best for this one – so the band is even on each side. Reach up through the band so it wraps around the back of your wrist. Grab the two ends of the band together so it doesn't slip out of your hands. You may also want to kneel on the floor for a better pull. Once you're in position, start moving.

Pull your hands down both with your elbows out and your elbows in. There's no wrong way to move here – just keep moving and make sure to get a full stretch at the top.

YTWL

The YTWL Exercise: 3 sets of 8 reps of each letter, with a 2 second pause at the top of each rep. No rest.

YTWL's are a shoulder stability exercise I was first exposed to by Mark Verstegen of Athlete's Performance.

Lie facedown on a bench and perform each exercise for 8 reps non-stop, then proceed immediately to the next exercise:

Y: Raise the dumbbells up in front of you so they end up in a Y shape in front of the torso.

T: Raise the dumbbells out so they're perpendicular to the torso (creating a T-shape).

W: Bend the arms to 90 degrees and raise and lower the dumbbells in line with the torso.

L: Holding the top of the W contraction, rotate your forearms down so your fists point toward the floor. Keeping your elbows perfectly still, externally rotate the dumbbells back to the W position.

There should be no rest between exercises! Use light dumbbells so you can maintain form. Ten pounds would be "very heavy" for this series of exercises.

Broomstick Raises

This is a very old movement that's been resurrected with the popularity of DC Training. To perform it, hold a broomstick in front of you with a wide grip. Raise the broomstick over your head as you'd do when performing a front raise. Keep moving it behind your head as far as you can. For some, this will end up being a VERY limited range of motion (just over your head). Others will be able to go all the way around. Do NOT force it. Take the broomstick to where it stops, then return to the starting position. 10-20 reps would make up one set. One or two sets will be enough for this movement.



— Broomstick Raises

Foam Roller

With your upper back on the foam roller and your elbows high, roll up and down until you find tight spots, then stay on them until you feel the roller working them out. Take the time to work your cuff, traps and lower back. For more local and isolated penetration, try using a spiky ball, baseball or tennis ball. This is a very simple thing you can do at the end of every session. This CAN'T hurt you. It can only help.



Bridging

Bridging is a term I came up with to help explain the need for smart progressions in training. After years of giving seminars and answering questions, the one constant I found in everyone was overuse injuries. I would get hundreds of questions regarding elbow, shoulder and pec problems. While I've suffered my fair share of injuries, I've also picked up a few things along the way, and this has helped me notice more and more problems with the people I've spoken to.

One way to bring up a weak body part – or a weak section of an exercise, such as the lockout in the bench press – is to add more volume for that area. While this is just one way to overcome weak points, it works very well when done properly. Let's take the lockout as an example:

A lifter is already doing board presses, suspended chain presses and other max effort work in an attempt to improve his lockout. He's been using mainly dumbbell extensions for his triceps, but he's been mixing it up a little, as well. For the most part, one movement has been used. He's been told that adding in 5-board presses for a few sets of 5 could potentially solve his lockout problems.

Let's assume the weight he can use for these is 400 pounds. If he did 3 sets of 5, this would add 6000 pounds to his current workload.

Now let's say his normal max effort day looks like this:

2-Board Press: work up to 500x1 (total workload over 40% is around 3875 pounds)

Dumbbell Extensions: 65 for 3 sets of 10 reps (1950 pounds)

Side Raises: 35 for 3 sets of 10 (1050 pounds)

Chest Supported Rows: 135 for 3 sets of 8 (3240 pounds)

The total workload for the day is 10,115 pounds. Do you see how much more work another 6,000 pounds would add? This comes close to doubling the workload by adding one seemingly very simple thing. This is how overuse injuries happen. The added workload is not the issue. The issue is how FAST you add the work.



Instead, work into the movement with other tricep movements from which it's easier to recover. A sample progression may look like this:

Workout 1 – Pushdowns for 3 sets of 10 (very easy to recover from)

Workout 2 – Dumbbell Extensions for 4 sets of 8

Workout 3 – Barbell Extensions for 3 sets of 6

Workout 4 – JM Press for 3 sets of 5

Workout 5 – High Board Press for 2 sets of 3

Workout 6 – High Board Press for 3 sets of 3

Workout 7 – High Board Press for 3 sets of 5

Look at what you want to add, and look at how much workload it will add to your current training. If it's very high, you might want to progress into it more gradually, building a bridge from where you are to where you want to be.

Deloading

To conjugate means, "To couple." With strength training or powerlifting, you're trying to combine many methods of training for the development of many different abilities. Not all these methods need the same amount of recovery or change of movement. It would be great to just blast away all the time on everything. It would also be great to just take weeks off, but most people – with meets coming up – don't have the time or don't want to. Plus, for many lifters, taking time off doesn't work for them and they come back feeling worse.

Deloading entails either NOT doing a movement, or going VERY LIGHT.

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Dynamic Work

Because of powerlifting's SPP demands, it's best to keep the movements the same when you deload – in this case, bench pressing. Since the movement stays the same, it's the loading patterns that need to change. This is where all the different dynamic training cycles fit in. We have two manuals detailing these for the squat, deadlift and bench press. Using a variety of 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 (load) required for this method, the cycles are more limited. The GPP and experience levels of the lifter also limit the number of weeks he or she can use the same movement. The movement may need to change every 1-3 weeks. There are several articles addressing max effort work at EliteFTS.com.

- * Average Cycle Length: 1-3 weeks
- * Deload every 3-6 weeks

Supplemental Work “Main”

These are the main movements you use to drive your lifts. They're different for everyone, but can include 4-board presses, JM Presses, extensions, and so on. These will be movements that you feel have a direct relationship with your three main lifts. It's very important to train the hell out of these movements, so longer cycles with higher rep ranges can and should be used. These movements might cycle for 8-12 weeks. Remember, these are movements that directly influence your main lifts, so choose them wisely.



Most lifters will keep these main movements in their program for entire meet training phases. The key is the change the load, sets and reps to make these lifts as strong as you can.

- * Average Cycle Length: 3-8 weeks
- * Deload every 8-10 weeks

Accessory Work “Prehab”

This is the crap you have to do to avoid letting the sport beat you up. This could include external rotator work, lower back work, and so on. Usually, higher reps are used with lower intensities, so movements don’t have to be changed very often. This work should not be too taxing. Remember, these movements are for prehab. They’re not supplemental work.

- * Average Cycle Length: 8-12 weeks
- * Deload every 8-12 weeks

Accessory “Stretching”

If needed, these movements will not change, but you should always be learning new ways to do this. I highly recommend the Parisi Warm-Up Method DVD and Core Performance, by Mark Verstegen, to help you learn more.

- * Average Cycle Length: N/A
- * Deload: N/A



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– Reverse Band Press



SAMPLE WORKOUTS: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

BEGINNER PROGRAM

Week 1 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Floor Press – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a five-rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of eight reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Dumbbell Extensions for 2 sets of 8 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Chest-Supported Rows for 3 sets of 8 reps
Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press
* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close).

Supplemental Movement:

3-Board Press for 2 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Chins for three sets to failure
Chest-Supported Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

Week 2 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Floor Press – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a three rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of five reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Dumbbell Extensions for 3 sets of 8 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Chest-Supported Rows for 4 sets of 8 reps
Face Pulls for 4 sets of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press
* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close).

Supplemental Movement:

3-Board Presses for 2 sets of 3 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Chins for three sets to failure
Chest-Supported Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

Week 3 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Floor Press – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a one rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of three reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Dumbbell Extensions for 4 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Chest-Supported Rows for 4 sets of 8 reps
Face Pulls for 4 sets of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press

* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close).

After your dynamic bench sets, work up to the heaviest set of five you can do, using a close grip.

Supplemental Movement:

N/A

Accessory Movements:

Chins for three sets to failure

Chest-Supported Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

Week 4 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

2-Board Press – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a five-rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of eight reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Close Grip Incline Press for 3 sets of 8 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Barbell Rows for 2 sets of 15 reps

Rear Delt Raises for 2 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press

* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close).

After your dynamic bench sets, work up to the heaviest set of three you can do, using a close grip.

Supplemental Movement:

N/A

Accessory Movements:

Chins for three sets to failure

Chest-Supported Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

Week 5 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

2-Board Press – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a three rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of five reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Close Grip Incline Press for 3 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

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Accessory Movements:

Barbell Rows for 3 sets of 12 reps

Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 8 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press

* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

Dumbbell Extensions on Floor working up to 2 heavy sets of 8 reps

Accessory Movements:

Pulldowns for three sets to failure

Dumbbell Cleans for 2 sets of 10 reps

Week 6 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

2-Board Press – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a one-rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of three reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Close Grip Incline Press for 2 sets of 3 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Barbell Rows for 4 sets of 10 reps

Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 8 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press

* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

Dumbbell Extensions on Floor working up to 2 heavy sets of 8 reps

Accessory Movements:

Pulldowns for three sets to failure

Dumbbell Cleans for 2 sets of 10 reps

Week 7 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Pin Press with 5" Lockout – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a five-rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of eight reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions on Floor for 3 sets of 8 reps (one rep shy of failure)

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Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows for 2 sets of 10 reps

Front Plate Raises for 2 sets of 10 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press

* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

After your dynamic bench sets, work up to the heaviest set of three you can do, using a close grip.

Supplemental Movement:

N/A

Accessory Movements:

Pulldowns for three sets to failure

Dumbbell Cleans for 2 sets of 10 reps

Week 8 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Pin Press with 5" Lockout – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a three rep max. After this, drop 20% and do one set of five reps.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions on Floor for 3 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows for 3 sets of 10 reps

Front Plate Raises for 3 sets of 10

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 8 sets of 3 reps, using 60% of raw bench press

* Use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

After your dynamic bench sets, work up to the heaviest set of one you can do, using a close grip.

Supplemental Movement:

N/A

Accessory Movements:

Pulldowns for three sets to failure

Dumbbell cleans for 2 sets of 10 reps

Week 9 – Beginner Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Pin Press with 5" Lockout – Work up using 5-10% jumps, starting with the bar, until you reach a one rep max.

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Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions on Floor for 2 sets of 3 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows for 3 sets of 12 reps

Front Plate Raises for 3 sets of 10

Face Pulls for 4 sets of 10 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press for 3 sets of 3 reps using 60% of your raw bench press using your strongest grip. After this, work up and test your bench record.

Take the rest of the day off.

INTERMEDIATE PROGRAM

Week 1 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Close Grip Bench Press with Chains – Work up to 60% of your best raw bench, then begin adding one chain per side with each set. Work up to your best three rep max.

Supplemental Movement:

Rolling Dumbbell Extension on the Floor – Work up to your best set of 8 reps. Rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

Accessory Movements:

Chest-Supported Rows – Work up to your best set of 8 reps, rest 10 seconds, then do as many more reps as you can.

Seated Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 50% of your best raw max for 8 sets of 3 reps

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

3-Board Press - work up to a heavy triple

Accessory Movements:

One Arm Shoulder Presses for 2 sets of 8 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 2 sets of 8 reps

Week 2 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Close Grip Incline Press – Work up to your best one or three rep max, based on how you feel. If you feel good working up, go for a 1-rep record. If you're not feeling it, go for a 3-rep record.

Supplemental Movement:

Rolling Dumbbell Extensions on the Floor – Work up to your best set of 8 reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

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Accessory Movements:

Chest-Supported Rows – Work up to your best set of 8 reps, rest 10 seconds, then do as many more reps as you can.

Seated Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 50% of your best raw max for 8 sets of 3 reps

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

3-Board Press - Work up to a heavy triple (beat last week)

Accessory Movements:

One Arm Shoulder Presses for 2 sets of 8 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets 12 reps

Pull Downs for 2 sets 8 reps

Week 3 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Two Board Press – Work up to your best one or three rep max, based on how you feel. If you feel good working up, go for a 1-rep record. If you're not feeling it, go for a 3-rep record.

Supplemental Movement:

Rolling Dumbbell Extensions on the Floor – Work up to your best set of 8 reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

Accessory Movements:

Chest-Supported Rows – Work up to your best set of 8 reps, rest 10 seconds, then do as many more reps as you can.

Seated Rear Delt Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps

Dynamic Effort Movement

Dynamic Effort Movement:



Bench Press – 40% of your best raw max – plus one doubled mini-band for 8 sets of 3 reps

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

JM Press for 3 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

One Arm Shoulder Presses for 2 sets of 8 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 2 sets of 8 reps

Week 4 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Chain Press – Work up to 60% of your best raw bench, then add one chain per side with each set. Work up to your best three rep max.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions with Chains – Work up to your best set of five reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows – Work up to your best set of 12-15 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 40% of your best raw max – plus one doubled mini-band – for 8 sets of 3 reps

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

JM Press for 3 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

One Arm Shoulder Presses for 2 sets of 8 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 2 sets of 8 reps

Week 5 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Close Grip Incline Press – Work up to your best one or three rep max, based on how you feel. If you feel good working up, go for a 1-rep record. If you're not feeling it, go for a 3-rep record.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions with Chains – Work up to your best set of five reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows – Work up to your best set of 12-15 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 40% of your best raw max – plus one doubled mini-band – for 8 sets of 3 reps

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

JM Press for 3 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

One Arm Shoulder Presses for 2 sets of 8 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 2 sets of 8 reps

Week 6 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Two Board Press – Work up to your best one or three rep max, based on how you feel. If you feel good working up, go for a 1-rep record. If you're not feeling it, go for a 3-rep record.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions with Chains – Work up to your best set of five reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

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Super-set this with Pushdowns for 10 reps. ALL sets will be super-set, including warm-ups.

Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows – Work up to your best set of 12-15 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 50% of your best raw max – plus 40 pounds of chain per side – for 8 sets of 3 reps.

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

JM Press for 3 sets of 5 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

One Arm Shoulder Presses for 2 sets of 8 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 2 sets of 8 reps

Week 7 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Close Grip Chain Press – Work up to your best one rep max.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions with Chains – Work up to your best set of five reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

Super-set this with Pushdowns for 10 reps. ALL sets will be super-set, including warm-ups.

Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows – Work up to your best set of 12-15 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWL's for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 50% of your best raw max – plus 40 pounds of chain per side – for 8 sets of 3 reps.

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

Carpet Press for 3 sets of 3 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Side Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 3 sets of 8 reps

Week 8 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

Close Grip Incline Press – Work up to your best one rep max.

Supplemental Movement:

Barbell Extensions with Chains – Work up to your best set of five reps, rest a few minutes, then try to match it.

Super-set this with Pushdowns for 10 reps. ALL sets will be super-set, including warm-ups.

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Accessory Movements:

Dumbbell Rows – Work up to your best set of 12-15 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 10 reps

YTWLs for one set of 12 reps



Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 50% of your best raw max – plus 40 pounds of chain per side – for 8 sets of 3 reps.

* use three different grips (2 sets wide, 3 medium and 3 close)

Supplemental Movement:

Carpet Press for 3 sets of 3 reps (one rep shy of failure)

Accessory Movements:

Side Raises for 3 sets of 10 reps

Face Pulls for 3 sets of 12 reps

Pulldowns for 3 sets of 8 reps

Week 9 – Intermediate Program

Max Effort Day

Max Effort Movement:

4-Board Press – Work up to your best one rep max.

Supplemental Movement:

Pushdowns for 3 sets of 15 reps

Dynamic Effort Day

Dynamic Effort Movement:

Bench Press – 50% of your best raw max for 4 sets of 3 reps, then work up to test your one rep max

Take the rest of the day off.





THE RECHARGE TEMPLATE

I've used this with many lifters who've had difficulty with recovery, are overtrained, or are dealing with injuries. It uses the same principles outlined in the templates above, but moves most of the repetition work to a new day. Instead of a two day per week program consisting of max effort and dynamic effort days, this template consists of three workouts rotated over the same days. It looks something like this:

Instead of this:

Wednesday – Max Effort Bench Day

Saturday – Dynamic Effort Bench Day

With the Recharge Template, you will rotate like this:

Wednesday – Max Effort Day

Saturday – Dynamic Effort Day

Wednesday – Repeated Effort Day

Saturday – Repeat rotation.

The actual templates for these days look like this:

Max Effort Day (Think of this as HEAVY day)

- Max Effort Movement
- One Supplemental Movement

Dynamic Effort Day (Think of this as SPEED day)

- Dynamic Effort Movement (Bench Press)
- Accessory Movements

Repeated Effort Movement (Think of this as BODYBUILDING day)

Repeated Effort Movement – This would be a movement that you train with higher reps (10-15), and take to failure. This can be whichever pressing-type movement you prefer.

- Two Supplemental Movements – I.e., shoulder presses and tricep extensions
- Two Accessory Movements – I.e., pulldowns and rows



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– Bench Shirt Training



BENCH SHIRT TRAINING BY TEAM ELITEFTS





MATT RHODES

I'll begin by stating that I'm not a bench specialist – or even a guru, for that matter. The purpose of this article is to put together the ideas we've used at Southside Gym – ideas that have produced two 800 pound benchers: Vincent Dizenzo (800 lbs in the 308 class) and Rob "T.T." McCray (830 lbs at SHW). We train with a group of ten or twelve guys every Friday night. Our group varies from twenty year-old kids who just want to get bigger and stronger, to world class benchers like Vincent and T.T., to everyone in between. The training outlined here represents the basics we use when getting ready for a contest.

The most basic, time-tested shirt bench training cycle is this one:

3 weeks of triples

1 week out of shirt

3 weeks of doubles

1 week out of shirt

3 weeks of singles

1 week out of shirt

From here, there are a few options:

If you're a beginner getting ready for a meet, it's a good idea to take your opener the week before the meet.

If you want to repeat the cycle, put a very realistic goal in your head, reset your numbers, and start again.



Here are some other random thoughts, in no particular order, that are very important:

Hold your breath for the entire set, or do it again, no matter how great the set was.

DO NOT rack the weight before you attempt the prescribed number of reps for that set. At Southside, you won't be allowed to put the bar back in the rack. Because you're holding your breath, you'll either pass out or have to take a breath – which means you'll have to do the set over again. Nut up and do the reps even if you know you're going to miss. This kind of strain teaches you many things about yourself and about the bench shirt.

The triples in this cycle will teach you to touch weights that you “can't” touch. After you've touched these “impossible” weights, you'll never have a problem touching again.

My first experience with triples/doubles/singles was at Southside. My best competition bench was 465 pounds. That day, I did 405x3, 455x2 and 470x1. We set up my training cycle like this:

Week 1: 395 X 3

Week 2: 410 X 3

Week 3: 425 X 3

Week 4: full range, work to a single

Week 5: 440 X 2

Week 6: 455 X 2

Week 7: 470 X 2

Week 8: full range, work to a single

Week 9: 485 X 1

Week 10: 500 X 1

Week 11: 515 X 1



Beginner Template

1. Max effort work to a heavy single
2. Shirt work – Follow triples/doubles/singles plan
3. Lockout work – high boards for 1-5 reps
4. Upper back
5. Light shoulders – by feel

Beginner's Notes:

Max Effort Work

- Come to the gym with numbers in your head, and try to set PR's every time
- Choose four exercises and rotate them each week
- 2-board, 3-board, 4-board, then full range for out-of-shirt week
- Try not to miss, but don't worry if you do. Just don't miss every week. This will build bad habits and the expectation that your final lift of each week will probably be a miss.

Board Work (Lockout)

- Push it hard
- Use the two highest boards you can – for me, this will be 5 and 6-boards

Intermediate Template

Follow the same plan. You may find that you can't set PR's every week, but this is fine.

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Intermediate Notes:

You may only try for a new PR when you're feeling really good or really bad. You will learn how to "shut it down" and move on to the next exercise. When you're feeling bad, trying a record will build confidence in your ability to hit big lifts despite adverse conditions.



Advanced Template

Things may have to change after your first run-through with this program. As an advanced lifter, you have a pretty solid grasp on what works for you and what doesn't. This template can be a tool you can use to overcome a plateau or to just try something different for a while.

Matt Rhodes is a tremendous resource for our readers, bringing to EFS a hard-to-find mix of both real-world coaching and athletic experience. From 1996-98, Matt played football at the University of Arizona. After the conclusion of his football career, Matt interned under Buddy Morris at the University of Pittsburgh, then worked as a strength coach at the University of Richmond.

Currently, Matt lives in Greenwich, CT and works as a personal trainer. Since entering the sport of powerlifting in 2001, Matt has squatted 880 lbs, benched 550 lbs and deadlifted 750 lbs, earning Best Lifter designation in the 308 lbs weight class at the APF Imperium in May 2006.



TODD BROCK

I've been training with Todd Brock for over twelve years now. I first met Todd during my two-hour road trips to Westside Barbell. Todd trained with us in the morning crew for many years. After a few years, Todd had problems making it to the gym because of a heavy work schedule. Then, he was hit with a job change that placed even more demands on his time.

He couldn't find any way to squeeze in his training while working twelve hour shifts, and as a result, he decided to walk away from the sport. He tried his best, but with his schedule – and living forty-five minutes from the gym – he couldn't get things done the way he wanted to. This was about the same time I was moving Elite Fitness Systems from my home to the location we're in now.

Part of my relocation involved moving some of the equipment I had in my garage to a sectioned-off area of our facility. Because of the demands on my time, the only way I was able to get my training in was to do my speed bench sessions early Sunday mornings in my facility. This lasted about four weeks before I had to ask Todd – we live in the same neighborhood – to come in and spot for me. At the time, Todd had lost about forty pounds and had no desire to come back to the sport.

It didn't take long before he began to feel the competitive spirit and decided to enter a bench meet. Before leaving the sport, Todd had posted a 545 lbs bench press in the 275 pound weight class. His work schedule was still very heavy, and the only time he could train was on Sunday morning. Within a year of training, he was back to a 550 lbs bench.

Not long ago, Todd decided he needed to come up with a new plan to achieve his goal of a 600 lbs bench. Because of the demands of his job, he'd still only be able to train once a week. The following will detail what Todd did over ten weeks to achieve a 70 pound PR bench press of 620 lbs. All the percentages listed are based on his max weight FOR THAT EXERCISE.



Week 1

Raw Board Press – 3-board 3x3 at 85%, 5-board 3x3 at 92%

Overhead Press – 90% of max for 4 sets of 5 reps

Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps

Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps

Week 2

Raw Board Press – 2-board 3x3 at 80%, 4-board 3x3 at 87%

Overhead Press – 90% of max for 4 sets of 5 reps

Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps

Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps

Week 3

Raw Ultra Wide Bench Press – 75% for 3 sets of 5 reps

Raw Pin Press at 5 inch lockout – 3 reps with 4 work sets, adding weight each set

Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps

Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps

Week 4

Raw Ultra Wide Bench Press – 80% for 3 sets of 5 reps

Raw Pin Press at 5 inch lockout – 3 reps with 4 work sets, adding weight each set

Week 5

Speed Bench Press – 43% for 8 sets of 3 reps (This was a deload week)

Week 6 (add 5% to all training weights from Week 1 to movements 2-5)

Raw Board Press – 3-board 3x3 at 90%, 5-board 3x3 at 97%

Bench Work with shirt – 3x3 to chest (work up to weight that will touch)

Overhead Press – 95% of max for 4 sets of 5 reps

Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps

Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps

Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps



Week 7 (add 5% to all training weights from Week 2 to movements 2-5)

Raw Board Press – 2-board 3x3 at 85%, 4-board 3x3 at 92%
Bench Work with shirt – 3x3 to chest (work up to weight that will touch)
Overhead Press – 95% of max for 4 sets of 5 reps
Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps
Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps
Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps

Week 8 (add 5% to all training weights from Week 1 to movements 2-5)

Raw Board Press – 3-board 3x3 at 90%, 5-board 3x3 at 97%
Bench Work with shirt off low pin (at chest level) – 3x3 to chest (work up to weight that will touch)
Overhead Press – 95% of max for 4 sets of 5 reps
Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps
Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps
Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps

Week 9 (add 5% to all training weights from Week 2 to movements 2-5)

Raw Board Press – 2-board 3x3 at 85%, 4-board 3x3 at 92%
Bench Work with shirt off low pin (at chest level) – 3x3 to chest (work up to weight that will touch)
Overhead Press – 95% of max for 4 sets of 5 reps
Dips – 5 sets of 8-10 reps
Bent Over Rear Delt Raises – 3 sets of 10-12 reps
Barbell Rows – 5 sets of 6-10 reps

Week 10

Speed Bench Press – 43% for 8 sets of 3 reps (This was a deload week)

Week 11

Meet Day



Here are a few notes from Todd regarding what he felt worked with this program, and what he thinks could help make it work better:

Low Pin Press with shirt – Todd really thought this helped him with touching weights. He would set the pin so the bar was right on his chest while he was in the flat backed (not arched) position. Setting himself up on the bench made it harder to touch the pins than his chest. He felt this taught him how to manipulate his body position – tucking his elbows and working on his bar placement – when the weights got stuck right off his chest.

Deload Weeks – This was a way for him to keep in some speed training while giving his body a rest from the heavy loading. Todd believes in speed training, and commented that the program would have worked better if he had the chance to train speed work once a week.

Raw Board Work – Todd felt the higher intensity and increased work on the boards helped to improve his lockout. This was also beneficial for his tricep strength.

Shirt Work – Over the past year, Todd has spent a great deal of time doing shirt work off boards. While this helped with his lockout, it didn't improve his competitive max. During this particular cycle, more time was spent on raw strength development and full-range shirt work.

One Day Per Week Training – This didn't negatively effect Todd's strength development, but the only reason he had it scheduled this way was his 60-plus hour work week. Todd has a forty-five minute commute, and often works from 7 AM to 10 PM. He also has a very heavy travel schedule, spending several weeks each year in Japan. The only time he can count on to train is Sunday morning. As stated, Todd would love to be able to train more then one day per week – Wednesday, ideally – if he could. This day would be devoted to speed bench and accessory training.

This may not be the most optimal program around, but it worked for Todd. He was given a set of circumstances, used it to his advantage, and found a way to make it work.



JO JORDAN

This is how I normally structure my shirted bench training. It's based on some ideas from Brian Schwab.

Week 1

3-board for a max single. I continue to add weight until I'm unable to complete the lift.

Week 2

2-board for a max single.

Week 3

1-board for a max single.

Week 4

I'll normally touch on this week to get an idea of where my strength is, plus it helps to practice touching.



CHRIS CLARK

I train in my shirt for all but the initial 3-4 weeks of a training cycle, then train shirted for six out of the next eight weeks. After that, it's shirted training every week for the last four weeks prior to a meet. I also use "crazy bands" often as my second exercise in the beginning and the middle of a cycle. Here's a sample 16 week max effort cycle:

Week 1 – Floor Press

Week 2 – Cambered 2-Board Press

Week 3 – Illegal Wide Bench Press

Week 4 – Cambered 2-Board Press

Week 5 – Shirted triples

Week 6 – Shirted 3-Board followed by shirted triples

Week 7 – Shirted 2-Board followed by shirted triples

Week 8 – Flat bench, pinky on rings

Week 9 – Shirted triples followed by shirted 4-Board

Week 10 – Shirted triples followed by shirted 3-Board

Week 11 – Shirted triples followed by shirted 2-Board

Week 12 – Floor Press

Week 13 – Shirted 3-Board followed by shirted triples

Week 14 – Shirted 2-Board followed by shirted triples

Week 15 – Crazy Bands, shirted, to 4-Board

Week 16 – Opener - 10 percent

Meet.

Chris Clark is a SHW powerlifter from North Carolina. He has recorded a 970 squat, 675 bench press and a 733 deadlift. He won the 2006 WPC SHW open class in New York. He currently trains at Granite City Barbell with Travis Mash and Chris "Ox" Mason.



JEREMY FREY

For shirt work leading up to a meet, start focusing eight weeks out. The block periodization layout would look like this:

Week 8 – 3-Board/2-Board work for doubles and singles. 4-6 sets, as heavy as you can hold, performed to failure.

Week 7 – Same as Week 8

Week 6 – Mostly 2-Board work for 4-5 sets of doubles and singles. Always try to improve on the week before.

Week 5 – Same as Week 6.

Week 4 – 2-Board/1-Board, mostly singles (maybe two doubles) for 3-5 sets

Week 3 – Same as Week 4

Week 2 – Last heavy week. 2-Board/1-Board, singles only, for 3-4 sets.

Week 1 – Opener on Sunday before competition, around 85-90%.

Here's another, starting twelve weeks out:

Weeks 12-8 – No shirt work.

Week 7 – 1-Board at 80% for 5x3

Week 6 – 1-Board at 85% for 5x2.

Week 5 – Recovery week, 70%, no shirt work.

Week 4 – 1-Board at 90% for 5x2.

Week 3 – 1-Board or ½-board at 95% for 4x1

Week 2 – 90%, find opener.

Week 1 – Recovery, no shirt.



Here's one I did for the IPA Pro-Am, starting six weeks out, right after the UPA Pro-Am.

Week 6 – No shirt work

Week 5 – 75%, 4x3 2board; 80%, 3x3 3board w/pause

Week 4 – 82%, 3x3 1board; 87%, 2x2 3board w/pause

Week 3 – 92-95%, 2x1 1board; 95-97% 3board w/pause

Week 2 – Opener Sunday before meet

Week 1 – Recovery, no shirt

For the first periodization block before the UPA Pro-Am, I wanted to focus on more full range motion work to perfect my form and ability to touch in a shirt. Doing a lot of high board work doesn't really prepare you to drive from a position close to touching, and that's where your form has to be perfect. In doing more full range shirt work, I feel I've lost a little bit of high end lockout strength. The block I'm doing now is still focusing on the start, but also on some high end work as well.

I only perform shirt work once a week, but I do bench up to three times a week – either raw, reverse band or dumbbell work. All work is programmed to accommodate the other work done during the week. The above is simply the shirt work I perform before a meet. As you can see, before I started thinking about what I was doing, I just went as heavy as I could and tried to better that every week. The focus was on high end work early in the training, bringing the range closer to full as I got closer to the meet. If I was beaten up, I would shut it down, but that rarely ever happened. This style worked for a while, but it didn't give me the control and low end work that I needed at the time.

Trying to touch only one week out from a meet doesn't set you up for comfort and/or performance at the bottom end of the bench press. Even if you work to a 1-Board often, that extra inch and a half you still have to travel to touch becomes a mile.

Jeremy Frey comes to EFS with a world of hands-on experience. He began pursuing powerlifting on the side while playing football in high school and rugby in college. Jeremy is both the head strength and conditioning coach at Cornell College and a serious competitive powerlifter. In 2005, he won both the Junior Division APF Senior Nationals and the WPC Junior Division. In the November 2005 WPC World Championship in Helsinki, Jeremy turned in the following performance in the 220 lb. junior division: squat, 788 lbs.; bench, 501 lbs.; deadlift, 661 lbs.

Jeremy has a passion for helping and teaching others, and an innate ability to motivate and inspire those around him. His philosophy cuts directly to the chase: "Success comes from learning from those who have been there, by doing it yourself, and from having an understanding that you can always learn something new."



JOEY SMITH

Max effort days from six weeks out:

Week 1

- ½-Board and to chest for max singles
- Floor Press
- Accessory tricep work
- Traps

Week 2

- 1-Board and ½-Board for max singles
- Close Grip Bench Press
- Accessory tricep work
- Traps and forearms

Week 3

- Reverse Band Bench Press (Blues)
- 2-Board, 1-Board and to chest for max singles
- Raw 4-Board and 5-Board with close grip
- Accessory tricep work

Week 4

- 2-Board, 1-Board to touch for max doubles or triples
- Rep work (raw)
- Accessory work

Week 5

- Work to opener and second attempt off 1-Board
- Accessory work

Week Six – MEET

Joey Smith is currently one of the top 275 lbs class bench pressers in the world. In 2007, he posted both a 500 lb. raw bench press and a 735 lb. shirted press in competition. When it comes to enthusiasm and excitement, as well as a desire to help others, Joey is among the most ambitious lifters in the world today. With eight first place and five second place competition finishes under his belt, Joey's ten years of training has paid off. In business, he's the circulation district manager for a North Carolina newspaper and also serves as a fitness trainer for his local YMCA. At present, Joey is ranked 21st in the United States and 24th in the world for the 275 lbs. All-Time Bench Records list (June 2007).



BRIAN SCHWAB

We bench twice per week – one day for raw or speed work, and the next for shirted board work. As we get closer to a meet, we gradually work our way down the boards. Here's an example:

Max Effort shirt work leading up to a meet:

- Week 9** – 4-Board doubles
- Week 8** – 3-Board doubles
- Week 7** – 2-Board doubles
- Week 6** – 4-Board singles
- Week 5** – 3-Board singles
- Week 4** – 2-Board singles
- Week 3** – Touch opener, 2nd attempt off 1-Board, 3rd off 2-Board
- Week 2** – 1-Board opener, 2nd attempt off 2-Board, 3rd off 3-Board
- Week 1** – 3-Board deload
- Week 0** – Meet

If a lifter has trouble touching, we'll either have them switch from 4, 3, 2 boards to 3, 2, touch, or just have them work on touching more often by incorporating it into their warm-up sets before board work. I have specific percentages that I usually base our training weights on, but I'd like to leave some of this information for my DVD. The shirted board work is always our primary max effort exercise. My assistance work always includes lock-outs/pin presses and some form of full range pressing movement such as decline or floor presses.

Brian is the number one ranked powerlifter in the world in the 148 lb class, and a WPO champion in the lightweight division. He also won the 148 lb class at the first Bench America contest, and is known as one of the most consistent powerlifters in the world. His best lifts in the 148 lb class include a 765 squat (five times bodyweight), 565 bench (highest 148 lb class full meet bench of all time), a 606 deadlift, and a 1930 total, a world record in the 148 lb class.

Brian holds an Exercise and Sport Sciences degree from the University of Florida. He owns and operates Orlando Barbell (www.orlandobarbell.com), a 24-hour access gym focused on hardcore training.

****** Brian also has a bench DVD that FULLY covers shirt work and all the training methods he uses for himself and the members of Orlando Barbell Club

Brian Schwab's Products



JUSTIN HARRIS

I rotate two forms of bench days. I have a “speed day” which often becomes a hypertrophy day, and a “heavy” day. Throughout the year, I typically put the shirt on every other heavy day. Here are some points of emphasis for my heavy days, which are probably going to run counter to what you’re “supposed” to do:

Work up to a fairly heavy raw weight using lower boards.

Use the warm-ups as warm-ups. Shirt day is intended to improve your work in the shirt, and not to see what you can do in a shirt after twenty sets to failure.

Work in low rep ranges, and work near your max. I train to get stronger. I put gear on to become more efficient in the gear. My gear days are aimed at improving form and assessing strength.

Example:

Bench:

135x15
135x10
225x5

Add two board:

315x5
405x2

Add three board:

455x1

Add shirt:

495x1

Back to two board:

585x1
675x1
725x1



I often bench with a group of guys, which takes the entire workout to complete what's listed above. Depending on how much time I have, I may do some light assistance work.

Fat Bar Military Presses: 2x15

Lateral Raises: 2x15

Tate Presses: 2x15

Tricep Pushdowns: 2x15

Dips: 1 to failure

Justin is the owner of Troponin Nutrition, and a former Jr. USA Super Heavyweight bodybuilding champion. He's helped hundreds of athletes with individualized sport-specific diet and nutrition planning. His writings on nutrition and performance have been featured in publications including Muscular Development and Ironman, and he has appeared on the covers of numerous others.

Justin holds a bachelor's degree in exercise science from Alma College, and was a two-time Division III All-American in football. He was also the 2000 Division III Player of the Year, and was featured as a preseason Small College MVP in Street and Smith's.

He recently achieved an elite total classification in the 275 lb weight class in his very first powerlifting contest. He squatted 876 pounds, bench pressed 573 pounds and deadlifted 700 pounds for a combined total of 2149 pounds.



MARC BARTLEY

Shirt work starts about 8-10 weeks out from a meet, in 2-3 week waves.

2-Board cycles the first round for triples, followed by 1-1/2 Board cycles for doubles and triples.

Openers 1-2 weeks out, only 1-2 reps each session. If I have a bad cycle, I will do openers one week out, otherwise I do it two weeks out. If all goes well, that's it.

I tweak my shirts like you see in the Metal Bash video clip. When the shirt is on and seated, I have the arms twisted even more to the inside. This creates more tightness from the arm to the chest plate. I then have the handler grab under the armpit, near the back, and pull the arm up even more.

You can add two more layers to the upper arms by pulling the material down and folding it on itself. This makes the shirt into a four layer and instead of a two in the arm support, making it like an open back denim pulled way low with extra layers and support.

Marc, a WPO competitor, is one of the premier 275 lb lifters in the world. At the 2005 Arnold Classic, he squatted a huge 1058. Marc has been competing in powerlifting for six years, showcasing his strength in the IPA, APF, USAPL and WPO.

The owner of Total Gym in South Carolina, Marc is a very well educated man who holds two degrees from the University of South Carolina in finance and economics. His best lifts include a 1058 squat, 700 bench and a 722 deadlift. His best total to date is 2463.



MATT KROCZALESKI

I prefer to do shirt work every other week to prevent the heavy work from beating up my joints. This allows me to maintain a good percentage of my raw strength. I normally work up to singles, but I'll occasionally do doubles or triples if touching is an issue. I incorporate shirted board work, but no higher than three boards, and usually two or one.

Sample template for eight weeks leading up to a meet:

Week 8 – Shirt work up to 3-Board max single

Week 7 – Raw bench working up to 405 x 6-8

Week 6 – Shirt work up to 2-Board max single

Week 5 – Dumbbell Bench: 170 x 8

Week 4 – Shirt work up to 1-Board max single

Week 3 – Raw bench working up to 405 x 6-8

Week 2 – Full range shirt working up to at least planned opener

Week 1 – Dumbbell Bench: 150 x 10-12

Matt made quite a statement at the 2006 Arnold Classic. Lifting in the 220 lb class, he squatted 926, bench pressed 660 and deadlifted 755, coming away with the win. A cancer survivor, Matt has overcome many obstacles on his way to becoming one of the most dominant lifters in powerlifting today. He currently trains in Michigan and has competed in the USAPL, WPO and the APF.



SCOTT YARD

If you're a novice, I think you should do full range reps in your competition shirt. I know many guys have had success with various shirted board lifts, but they're experienced lifters. For the novice who's just bought his new double ply gangster shirt, I recommend a very simple and effective cycle. It's a six week mini-cycle that I've repeated over and over again. This took me from 705 to 840 in a little over fifteen months, at the same bodyweight.

Week 1 – Establish max. Work up to a solid single that's 95-100% effort. You must touch on this. If you can't touch, your shirt is too tight.

Week 2 – 90% x 4 x 2. This will teach you to touch. You can't just do three hard reps in your shirt off a 3-Board and call it a day. Four doubles to the chest will make you learn.

Week 3 – 3-2-1. A good triple at 85%, a double at 90% and a single at 95%. Three total sets done, but six total reps. All should touch.

Week 4 – 95% x 1 x 2. This primes you for the sixth week.

Week 5 – 90% x 4 x 2.

You can repeat this as many times as you want. I would plan this cycle three months out from a competition and hit three of these phases going into a meet. After the seventh week, I'd do a mini-cycle of 3-4 weeks out of the shirt to get my CNS back into shape with various max effort lifts before doing a shirt phase again. Every workout is started with raw low board work as a warm-up, and finished with raw 5-Boards for max triples.

Simple and effective. Just work in the shirt and play loud music.

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Scott, a native of Baltimore, MD, is a 2004 graduate of Western Maryland College, and works as an insurance producer in Pennsylvania. After training for six years as a bench specialist, Scott decided to try full meets. In just his second full meet, at the age of 23, Scott broke the world record for the 275 lb class. His 2605 total consisted of a 1050 squat, 840 bench, and a 715 deadlift. Scott's 840 Bench is the heaviest recorded bench to date in a full meet across all weight classes. He trains out of Club Natural Gym in Hanover, PA and hopes to compete for many years to come.



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– Scott Yard

elitefts.com



FAQ

How can I get more reps with 225 in the Bench Press?

I'm asked several times each year how to improve performance in the 225 lb bench press rep test. This has to be the dumbest test of all time, but I've found a few things to be very effective in performing and training for this test.

Get Stronger

The first and most simple way to do this is to get stronger. You'd think this would be obvious, but just about every time I look at the programming leading into this test, there's never any max effort work, so make sure you're doing it. Some of the most effective ME movements are one-board presses, floor presses, and close grip inclines. Change this movement every week. The reason for this is simple. If you're asking this question in the first place, you probably don't have much time before you're tested. This forces you to hit these movements more frequently because you don't have the time to figure out which one works best.

Push out or Pull in

Push out on the bar or pull in? Check and see where you fail and how you fail. If the problem seems to be the pecs (bottom of the movement) or triceps (the top), change the focus. If you're a pec guy, just press until you feel "burning." At this point, begin pulling the bar apart. This will give you a few extra reps. If the problem is your triceps, then pull in.

Time Game

This is often a time game. You may find you always fail around the same time. You can change this with training, but solving the problem will take time. Usually when I'm asked this question, time is very limited. The trick then becomes how to get more reps in the same amount of time. You can either shorten the stroke – using the classic Westside technique – or do overspeed work. Use reverse bands to help move the bar with more velocity. By doing this, you'll learn to press faster.



Bands

Do speed work with bands using the same concepts described above, but working more on a faster eccentric phase.

Get Bigger

If you can gain weight and maintain speed, gain weight.

Wrist Position

Make sure your wrists stay straight and locked. If the bar falls too far behind your wrists, your triceps will fail way too fast. This is a huge mistake that I see with everyone. When this happens, the triceps will fail faster because of the location of the weight's center of gravity.

Bouncing

Don't bounce the weights! I shouldn't have to write this, but I've seen far too many people make the same mistake over and over again. Aside from the injury potential from bouncing weights, the bar gets tossed all over the place. The best path is the same path for each rep. More fluid motion equals greater output.

Bar Path

Wear a black shirt and chalk the bar all over the center knurling. Do a few reps and check to see if you have one or three chalk lines. If you're interested in doing more bench reps or increasing your max bench, there had better be only one line. If there's more than one line, your technique is off and you're expending too much energy.

No Arching

I've seen very few lifters who can train and perform the test in a high arched position. The tension is held for too long and the reps are too high to maintain this position without cramping in the lower back and/or hamstrings.



Count Down

Count the reps down, not up. Instead of counting 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, start at what you would like to do and count backward: 43, 42, 41, and so on. Better yet, count in groups of ten: 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, then 10, 9, 8, 7, and so on. It's even better if you can get someone to count for you. This is a mind game just as much as it is a physical game.

Stick-Um

Stick-Um on the bottoms of your shoes will help big time. Barring this, make sure there's no way your feet will slip when you use leg drive.

Leg Drive

Use your leg drive like gears. Start with enough drive to stay stable, then increase the tension and drive at about five reps before you would normally die out. This should happen a few reps before you begin pulling in or out on the bar.

Fat Bars

If your technique is great, do all your endurance bench work with a fat bar. This will make the regular bar feel like a twig when you go back to it. There are physical reasons for this, but the mental ones far outweigh them.

Don't Hold

Never hold the bar at the top for more than one or two seconds except after a series of ten or more reps.

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Pressing

Learn to press only with the required amount of force per rep. You wouldn't sprint for a mile, would you? The same holds true with the rep test. Don't expend more energy than you require. You'll need it later.



Head Down

Try to keep yourself down, not crunched up with your chin in your chest. This test requires oxygen to get the maximal number of reps. This technique may help with a one rep max, but we're talking about 20-plus reps here, not singles.

Grip

Don't use a super-tight grip on the bar. Grasp the bar with enough force to control it, and keep it there until the last few reps. Then squeeze the crap out of the bar.

Time

When you discover where you fail, add in some extra work for that specific area at a twenty percent higher time range than your bench failure time. For example, if your bench failure time is 42 seconds and your triceps are the cause, add in one set per session of three-board presses done for 50 seconds. If you can't do all the reps for the given time, do what you can, then statically hold the weight at midpoint for the remainder of the time.

Eyes

Focus your eyes on one main point on the ceiling and don't deviate from it. Why? Next time you're in the gym with beginner or intermediate lifters, watch what they do when the reps get hard. They always look to one arm or the other. One arm invariably begins to give out. This may happen before they look at it, or it may happen after. It doesn't matter. What matters is that they acknowledged it and let it defeat them. Remember, this is a MENTAL game and every rep counts.

Make them count

Make every rep count. It's your own fault and a waste of your effort to do a rep that isn't legal and doesn't count. Do them ALL correctly.



I'm weak off my chest in the bench press. What can I do?

This answer is reprinted from...

"I'm weak off my chest in the bench press. What can I do?"
From "Pressing Power" by Dave Tate
www.T-Nation.com

This is a question I'm asked more than any other, and it seems to be a very common sticking point for beginners and non-powerlifters. Many people are quick to point this out as being due to a weakness of the chest muscles, but I disagree with that for several reasons.

First, most powerlifters do very little chest work, while bodybuilders do a ton of it. If bench press poundage equated to chest strength, then powerlifters would be weak off their chests and bodybuilders would be weak at the top.

What happens when you throw bench shirts into the equation? While the shirts do help, they really only change the sticking point by a couple of inches. If powerlifters are weak right off the chest, the shirt will only get them the first couple of inches. In reality, they're still weak off the chest.

Now, let's dig in and solve this problem once and for all. There are five main reasons why you may get stuck at the bottom of a bench press:

You're too slow

If you really think about this, you'll see why it's the number one cause of bottomed out bench presses. I like to use the example of pressing through a thin board. If I were to take a board – like the ones used in the martial arts – and hold it three inches off your chest while you pressed into it in a slow manner, it would become a matter of who was stronger: the person holding the board or the lifter pressing the bar.

If the holder is stronger, the bar will go into the board and stop. If the same board was used and the lifter exploded into the bar with maximum force or speed, the bar would crash through the board. Think of this board as being your sticking point. Taking this one step further, what if we used a bigger board, one that would be impossible to crash through? Once again, if you pushed slowly, the bar would get stuck. If you pushed fast, the board wouldn't break, but it would be moved up higher. This would put your sticking point at or above the halfway point of the lift.



Lesson: Push with force if you want to press the full course!

You're not keeping a tight position

This is another very common problem. If you're not holding your body tight, you're not pressing with a firm, stable base. How can you build on a weak foundation? To get tight, pull your shoulder blades together and shrug into your traps, fill your body with air, and drive your heels into the floor. You want to visualize pushing your body away from the bar as you press up.

If you don't have your body expanded with as much air as possible, your chest and belly will be lower than what's needed for a big bench. The bigger you are, the shorter the path the bar has to travel and the higher the elbows remain.

Lesson: You have to stay tight to bench right!

Your lats are weak

You need to have strong lats if you want a big bench, and there's no way around this. To illustrate the point, try this: In a standing position, hold your arms in the bottom bench position and 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. Once this is in place, you want to tuck your elbows and pull the bar out of the rack. You do not press the bar 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 damned deep. You have no choice but to press it out. In this case you have two options. First, find another bench. Most 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 liftoff from a training partner. I personally don't like the liftoff option because it's still hard to keep the lats tight, but if there's no other choice, use it. This is actually one of the reasons why a liftoff helps you lift more weight.

If you're pressing the bar in a straight line from the lower chest, there should be no way you'll 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 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 at which you're weakest. You should be training your lats two to four times a week, but you don't need a full blown lat workout like the ones bodybuilders perform. One movement for four to five sets should do the trick, but you need to do them several times a week in order to maintain some type of balance.

The bar is too heavy

If I see a lifter take a bar out of the rack, lower it to his chest and barely move it, I wouldn't call this a sticking point. It would be more appropriately be termed "getting stapled to the bench." If the weight is too heavy, you'll get crushed! Be honest with yourself on this one.

You just don't know how to press!

We all like to think we know how to bench press, but the fact is we don't. We may all know what to do, but getting it done is a whole different story. This concept is covered in detail in the Bench Press 600 Pounds article. For a quick review, you need to stay tight, keep your elbows tucked, drive your heels into the floor and shove your body away from the bar as you press. Too many times, one or more technical points are off for a number of different reasons.

Just remember that proper technique will make a huge difference in your ability to press record weights.



What To Do About It

Now that we know why you get stuck, let's move on to describing some of the movements that can help correct this.

1) Dumbbell Work — Dumbbells are great for teaching you how to press, and they're also great for building stability in the shoulder and lat muscles. There are several ways you can use dumbbells to strengthen your bench press:

High-Rep Dumbbell Press

This movement is done with the use of a bench or stability ball. You want to do a standard dumbbell press while keeping your palms facing each other. This will keep your elbows in the correct benching position. I've found the repetition range of 12 to 20 to work best with this movement.

Do three sets, trying to fail at around 20 reps for the first set. You'll then rest for about four to five minutes and try to hit 20 again for your second set. This probably won't happen, but it gives you something to aim for. Rest another four to five minutes and knock off the last set. This method of dumbbell usage works best in place of the max effort movement.

Dumbbell Floor Presses

The floor press is another great way to teach you how to stay tight in the upper body when pressing. When your legs are out straight, more of the load is transferred to the pressing muscles.

To perform this movement, lay on the floor and have your training partners hand you the dumbbells. Keep your palms in. Lower the bells until your triceps hit the floor, pause for a split second, then press back up. This fits in nicely as the first movement you'd do after doing dynamic bench or max effort bench work. Play around with the sets and reps to see which work best for you, but always try to break your record each time.



Timed Dumbbell Presses

Louie Simmons has found that pressing dumbbells for time is a great strength and restoration builder for the bench press. He's been using a three-day split where heavy dumbbells, on the first day, would be used continuously from two to four minutes. I've used up to 80 pound bells for three minutes.

These reps aren't done in a non-stop action. Had you scared there for a second, didn't I? You do a couple of reps, then hold them on your chest or at the top for five to ten seconds, then do a few more reps. You keep the set going until you can't do any more. Perform only one set at the end of the regular workout.

On the second day, use 60% of the weight used on day one, but move the time up to three to five minutes. I use 45 pound dumbbells for this day. On day three, drop another 60% and bump the time up to five to eight minutes. On this day, I use 25-30 pound dumbbells.

This helps my shoulders recover at a faster rate than when I'm not including it in my cycles. Louie likes to keep the rotation going without a break, but I like to use this method only one time per week.

2) Max Effort Work — The next three movements would be used as max effort movements concentrating on building power off your chest. I'd still cycle in other max effort movements like board presses and lockouts every other week for the top part of the bench. This will keep building on the top-end strength you already have.

As a quick review of the max effort movements outlined in the Periodization Bible, Part Two article, the max effort method is used to build max strength in the bench press by teaching the body to strain with maximal training loads. This is done one time per week, with one movement. You warm up using multiple sets of three to five reps in an ascending pattern until you get to a one or three rep max on the movement you're using.

Barbell Floor Presses

This is one of the classic max effort movements that's been used for many years. The floor press is performed by setting the hooks or supports up in a power rack so you can bench press while lying on the floor. Get under the bar with your shoulder blades together and shrugged into your traps. Tuck your elbows and unrack the weight. Lower the weight until your triceps hit the floor. Pause for a split second, then press the weight back up in a straight line.



This movement can be done in several ways. The first is with straight weight. Just warm up using three to five reps in an ascending pattern until you reach your one rep max. The second way would be to work up to 60% of your best bench press. When you reach this weight, you'll begin adding one 20 pound chain on each side of the bar with each additional set until you max out.

For developing strength off your chest, using straight weight is the most effective option, because it'll teach you to press out of the bottom with maximal weights.

Cambered Bench Bars

This is a bar with a four inch camber in the middle of it to allow for greater range of motion. There are right and wrong ways to use it, and the style you choose depends on your level of flexibility and your ability to use the bar.

The first way is to take the bar down to your chest, which works dynamic flexibility but is only beneficial with very light weight. I don't believe that heavy weight should be taken all the way down to the chest because of the excess shoulder rotation involved.

The best way to use this bar is to bring it down to a point where it's only about a half inch lower than where a regular bar would be. This way, you won't be getting any type of reflex off the chest. The most effective way to do this is with the use of boards to control how low the bar will go. Use two to three inches of boards so you can control how deep the bar will travel.

Ultra Wide Bench Presses

This is simply a wide-grip bench press outside your widest grip. For most people, this would place your forefingers on the rings. This isn't a good movement to use for a one-rep max because of the stress it puts on the shoulders. It's best done working up to two heavy sets of five or six reps.

3) Dynamic Work — This is key to the development of barbell speed. I've explained this method in great detail in many of my other articles, so I won't go into great depth here.

In a nutshell, spend one day per week training your bench for speed. This is best done using weights in the 45-55% range (based on your bench shirt max) or the 55-65% range (with your non-shirted max). Once you reach your percentage, eight to ten sets of three reps is all that's needed. Make sure to push the bar as fast as you can. It should take you no longer than 3.5 seconds to complete the set.



Conclusion

The key to training greatness is finding your weak points and attacking them. Building and getting strong at what you're already good at will only take you so far. Time must be spent on the things you really suck at doing, so find these movements and their weak points and start bringing them up. If all goes well, you'll be back on track to that big bench you've always wanted.

How do I keep my butt on the bench?

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 Mickey 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 why most powerlifters will miss a lift at a meet. They train on a bench that's somewhat higher than the one they use in competition. 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, 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 happening at every meet you go to, 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, 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, a lot of the force you're generating will be lost in the hips when you press. This is why your ass comes up.



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

Bill attaches a five or ten pound plate to a rope. He then has the lifter position himself on the bench and 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's worked very well for many athletes. Give it a shot!

Strained Pecs

I've recently been "tweaking" my pec with some regularity. This had never happened before, but within the last five months – after a ten month layoff due to a back injury – I've tweaked it three or four times. All were mild and went away within a day. This last one hurt the next day – a pulling sensation from under my bicep to the upper middle of my pec.

How can I avoid an actual pec tear in the future while still getting strong and remaining functional? I don't compete, but I still want to increase my numbers.

Since you don't compete, I'm going to give you the advice I never took:

Take it easy for a while, and don't train the movements on which you tweak it heavily. I assume this is the bench. If you do speed work for the bench, pull it out for now. It can be added back in later.

Here are some other ideas to help you out:

Get some deep tissue massage therapy, but DON'T do any bench press movements until two days afterward – unless it's very light high rep work

Stay away from heavy 5's and 3's for a while. In my experience, singles are safer.

The things you think will help won't. By this I mean flies and sets of 10 in the bench press



Add in some ULTRA high-rep reverse band presses. To do this, use 115 and a green band or 155 with a strong band. You want the weight to be zero on your chest. Do 100 reps with this. The key here is to NOT flex hard at all, and to try to let the bands do most of the work. This sounds stupid but it's BY FAR the best thing I ever did. One set at the end of every workout – assuming 3-4 sessions per week – is all you need. If you can't do 100 reps, you're flexing too hard. If you can't get all the reps, then the set is over after you are. Don't rest and finish the set.

Make sure the range of motion in the affected arm is the same as the other arm. If it isn't, begin stretching the pec and shoulder as much as you can.

This should be enough to get you rolling. If you're not competing, there's no reason to try and rush this. Let it heal 100%. As George Halbert once told me, "It would've been better to rest it for four to six weeks than to tear it off and take eight months to get back, and a year to break a PR."

I went on to tear the other one off, and never learned my lesson.





Training The Raw Bench Press

Most of the information I read about benching these days pertains to how to train with a shirt. If I'm not planning on wearing a shirt, what should I change with the Westside template?

This seems to have become a very popular question lately. This is ironic, because I was just discussing this same question with Kenny Patterson – former world record holder in three different classes – recently, and with Louie Simmons as well.

The topic came up with Kenny as we were discussing how the bench shirt has brought a huge skill aspect to the competitive form of the lift. This can be seen as both good and bad. The strongest benchers can now be beaten by those who are better prepared and more highly skilled. This has leveled the playing field significantly.

As Kenny and I spoke, I remembered one of his best non-shirted benches of all time. I can't remember the year, but Kenny was lifting in the Arnold Classic Bench Bash. I'm pretty sure he bombed out of the meet after three attempts at 640. This number may be wrong, but it was in the mid 600's, and he failed on three attempts. Needless to say, he was pissed off about it.

Kenny is one of the strongest raw bench pressers I've ever seen. If you have any of the old Westside Barbell videos, you'll see what I mean. He was featured in many of the filmed max effort and dynamic bench sessions.

The day after the Arnold Classic, at Westside in a gym full of witnesses, Kenny did his speed work and then decided to work up. At the end of his sets, he ended up bench pressing 650 without a shirt. I know it was the same or slightly more than he bombed with the day before, using a triple ply denim shirt.

After rehashing this story and a few others, Kenny and I began to speak about his training at the time. This was not a hard conversation to have because he trained with the Westside AM group for years, and we all did close to the same core stuff. We agreed that more shirt work would have made a huge difference at the aforementioned meet, but I was more interested in seeing what had changed in his training since then. In other words, I wanted to be reminded, from his perspective, of what helped him develop the non-shirted 650.

We came up with a list of a few things. Before I get into this, I want to emphasize that if you're a competitive lifter, you need to learn your shirt, but this shouldn't be done at the expense of your non-shirted max. Having your non-shirted max drop should be avoided at all costs. Most big benchers would agree that novice lifters are using their shirts far too much and should save most of their shirt work



for before the meet.

Kenny and I came up with a list of things we used to do. This was also around the same time that my non-shirted bench press was the highest it has ever been.

Shirt Work

For many years, the only time we wore our shirts was at meets. We never used them in training at all. Hell, there were times I wasn't even sure if my shirt would fit at the meet. It once took me two hours to find the thing in my house the night before a competition. I remember flying to Chicago for one meet when one of our best benchers boarded the plane with no bags – just a toothbrush in his back pocket. When asked where his shirt was, he said he'd lost it and would buy one at the meet. He ended up borrowing one in the warm-up room from another lifter and benched very close to a world record.

If you tried to use it in the gym you were ridiculed. The word "pussy" comes to mind. In time, we opened up some, trying shirts on a few weeks out and working up to see if they "felt right," but it was never much more than that. We saw shirt work as an interruption to the training process. I'm not sure what they do at Westside today, but a few years ago, wearing a shirt once every four or five weeks was about all that was being done. They may be doing more shirt work today, but I can't comment on that. The point here is that we didn't use them. Shirts today are different, however, and training has changed accordingly.

Max Effort Work

The max effort work was also for singles, and it changed every week. With the exception of every four or five weeks where we did high-rep dumbbell work, singles were performed. The movements were simple, and they didn't change much. We used 2-Board presses, 3-Board presses, floor presses, chain presses, reverse band presses, close grip incline and top end pin presses. The warm-up sets were always extensive. For a top weight of around 550 – regardless of the movement used – the warm-ups would look something like this:

45 x 4-5 x 4-6. We would keep doing the bar until everyone arrived.

95 x 2-3 x 3. We would sometimes do more depending on how we felt.

135 x 2 x 3

185x3, 225x3, 275x3, 315x3, 365x3, 405x3, 455x3. We would push triples until they became difficult, but not too hard – maybe to two reps shy of failure.

495 x 1

525 x 1

555 x 1. Always shot for a new record.



That was it for this movement. No drop sets – just work up and get out. If we missed the last weight, we may try it again, but this would depend on the lifter and whether the weight was missed for technical reasons. This was pretty much always a group decision. We ALWAYS wanted to try the weight again, but we also knew to listen to Louie and the other guys with whom we trained. If we saw that there was nothing to gain by trying it again – directly before a meet, for example – we would step in and tell the lifter to back down. If we noticed that the lifter had “given up,” broken technique or lost confidence, we would have them get their head right, make adjustments and try it again.

Most of the time it would be the lifter himself who’d be looking for this sort of input after a missed lift. If there was still gas in the tank, we’d help each other figure out what the last jump should be. Since this is PR country, you have to be smart and make intelligent decisions. You don’t want to hold back, and you need to be aggressive. These are the most important lifts – the ones that will do the most good for the lifter – but they can also do the most damage. If they’re made, the strength bar is raised, confidence goes way up, and lifters become MUCH better from one session – from one rep, even. If they’re missed, injuries can happen and confidence can be destroyed.

This is the “edge” that has to be mastered by all lifters. You’ll miss some and you’ll make some, but what happens with these sets WILL determine your future strength. Be aggressive and be smart. This is one aspect where training with elite lifters will help you more than anything. This is something that HAS to be learned under the bar, because it sure as hell won’t happen from a video, book or the internet.

Dynamic Effort Work

We all did speed bench workouts using the dynamic effort method. During this time, we used 9 sets of 3 reps using three different grips. The grip would be changed each set with 66% of the sets being done with our hands inside the ring marks on a Texas Power Bar. The last sets would be done with our competition grip. I kept my training weight the same – after warm-ups – at 50% for all my sets. Kenny would do the first three sets at 48%, the next three at 50% and the final three at 52%.

This number represents a percentage of our best shirted max. This number would be 10% lower with the better shirts being manufactured today. If you don’t have a shirted max, the percentages would be 5-10% higher.

The dynamic work was trained in groups of four to six lifters. We always had one lifter behind and one on each side of the bar, and one or two getting ready to be



the next up. Your position rotated, and if you weren't pressing, you were spotting and coaching. You watched the lifter closely and used verbal cues to keep his technique solid. Each set was a team effort, and not just one man pressing a bar. If you were just spotting and not coaching, you would either have to change your habits or get the hell out. We didn't want spotters. We wanted benchers.

The reps were done as fast as we could, but under control. We never bounced the bar, but we did lower it quickly. We used what we called a "soft touch." We hit the chest, but we didn't slam it. The bar was then pressed with as much force as we could generate. We used many different cycles, and bands and chains were a large part of this. Each would be used for three weeks and then we'd switch. There were other phases where we'd use a "no touch," where the bar would stop one inch shy of touching the lifter's chest. Everything depended on what weakness was being addressed. All of this can also be seen in Louie's DVD's.

Supplemental Work

This is the "other" stuff that's trained very heavy and very hard. Six to eight weeks before a meet, Kenny would do overhead pin presses right after his max effort bench work. This was done just like flat bench pin pressing, but overhead. He would change the pin height each week, and work up to a heavy triple or single. The rest of us moved on to heavy tricep work in the five rep range, consisting of one of the following; JM presses, carpet presses, dumbbell extensions on a ball, the floor or a bench, 4-5 board presses with bands, or suspended top-end close grip presses. There were others we'd rotate in from time to time, but the main point here is that this work was done as HEAVY as we could go for no less than 4-5 sets of 5 reps.

Accessories

This was all the other stuff that happened after the first two movements. This was trained hard, but the weight used was not a huge issue. It was just the "crap" we needed to do. For most of us this entailed lat work, delt work and some extra tricep work. The reps here were pretty much always between 8-12 reps for a few sets. On average, this work would add up to a total of 6-9 sets, which includes all movements.



Extra Sessions

Kenny did a few things differently than many of the other guys in the gym. At the time, his only focus was the bench press, so he'd use Monday and Thursday to do some extra work to help build it. On these days, he would add in extra lat work using a couple of different pulldown movements for 3-4 sets in the 8-12 rep range, and one row movement – usually dumbbell or machine rows – with the same set and rep range. Kenny would usually finish up with dumbbell hammer curls and ab work, then call it a day.

This doesn't seem very complicated, but the work was hard and intense. Every session counted, and while we did joke around a lot, our time in the gym was serious. Not much really needs to change from the basic scheme in order to get your raw bench to move. It's using the methods in the most efficient way that counts the most.

Most of the time, the problem I see with lifters who ask this question is that their volume is too high and their effort too low. Have you ever puked from a set of bench pressing? I've seen this more times than I can count. When you're truly training at your max, you're putting everything you have into it. I'm NOT telling you to train until you puke, but are you really giving the high priority stuff enough effort and focus?

Westside DVD's

These videos have been best sellers at EliteFTS since 1999. Titles have been added, and new editions have replaced older ones, but they have always sold exceptionally well. The reason for this is simple. These videos change training programs forever. The information contained in these videos has been used by world record powerlifters, top strongman competitors, Super Bowl champions, tennis pros and NBA stars, all the way down to the average guy looking to get stronger. If you're serious about getting strong, there's no excuse in the world why you haven't seen them.



Can DE work replace ME work for a beginner?

Can dynamic effort work be used to replace max effort work? I have very limited access to weights, so I'm considering a DE/RE approach in order to get faster. Will this work for a beginner?

As a beginner – I will discuss this later – I assume you've had less than a few years training, and that you're under a 275 bench and a 400 squat. The last thing you really need to be asking is in relation to ME and DE work.

You need general basic training. Master the basic movements (Squat, Bench, Rows, Presses, etc) with great form, and learn how to do these lifts at different speeds. Learn the body control to be able to push a bench fast, moderate or slow, maintaining the exact same technique with each speed. This does not need to be done within the same set or workout. It doesn't matter.

You need to be able to "master" and control movements so the weight does not control you. You also need to focus on how your body works with each movement. When you bench, are you using your pecs or triceps the most? How do you know? When you pay attention, you'll feel this. As you mature, you'll better understand what I'm saying. For now, mastering body control is vital. This is one of the biggest mistakes I see with trainers and coaches today. They don't know how to teach someone to "feel" the movement. This extends far beyond basic bodybuilding. If an elite lifter is squatting and his chest is falling. I need him to understand what I'm saying when I tell him to flex his upper back.

At the beginner level, getting stronger will make you faster. Let's say you bench press 185 right now. How fast can you move 155? If your bench moved to 275, you'd be able to move 155 far faster than you do now.

This is assuming you're a beginner.

But what is a beginner, really? I was a "beginner" when I trained in my neighbor's garage when I was twelve. By the time I was thirteen, I was the strongest in the group and the most "advanced" guy on the block. Then I was thrust into Findlay Barbell Club, where I went right back to being a "beginner." After a few years, I was one of the best at the club and was "advanced" again. Then I went to college, where I was around better lifters, and guess what? Yep, I was back to being a moron, and once again I was a "beginner." Several years later, I was the best of the group again and finally back to being "advanced." I stayed at this spot for several years, and my lifts didn't go up, so I made a decision to move to Columbus and train at Westside Barbell Club. Now, even with an elite total, I was right back to being a "beginner" again. This time I had bitten off more than I could chew and I never became the best at Westside. In this regard, I still haven't become advanced, and feel like an intermediate at best.



The point I'm trying to make is that your status is 100% dependent on your environment and to whom you're being compared. Make sure you ALWAYS stay a beginner. When you feel you've become "advanced," move on and find a way to become a beginner again. All "advanced" really means is that you still need to find another way to take the next step.

Grip Differences

What do you mean by close, medium and wide grips with the bench press?

With a Texas Power Bar, a close grip is when your index finger is on the textured part of the bar as close to the center smooth part as you can get. A medium grip would be pinkies on the rings and a wide grip would be forefingers on the rings. An ultra wide or illegal wide grip is anything outside the rings. If you don't have a Texas Power Bar, the grip width is 17" between index fingers for a close grip, 24" for a medium grip and 32" for a wide grip.



Bench Press Rules

What are the actual rules for the bench press?

I would check with the federation in which you're thinking of competing for their specific rules, but here is a section taken from the UPA rulebook on the bench press:

UPA Rules for The Bench Press

1. The front of the bench must be placed on the platform facing the spectators.



- 2.** The lifter must lie backward with shoulders and buttocks in contact with the flat bench surface. The elected position of the buttocks shall be maintained throughout the attempt. The lifter's shoes or toes must be in solid contact with the platform or surface. The position of the head is optional.
- 3.** To achieve firm footing, a lifter of any height may use discs or blocks to build up the surface of the platform. Whichever method is chosen, the shoes must be in a solid contact with the surface. If blocks are used, they shall not exceed 45cm x 45cm.
- 4.** Not more than five and not less than two loaders/spotters shall be in attendance. The lifter may enlist the help of one or more of the designated spotters or enlist a personal spotter or spotters in removing the bar from the racks. Only designated spotters may remain on the platform during the lift, unless a 3-man head off is used. The lift off must be to arms length and not down to the chest. A designated spotter, having provided a center lift off, must immediately clear the area in front of the head referee and move to either side of the bar. If the personal spotter does not immediately leave the platform area and/or in any way distracts or impedes the head referee's responsibilities, the referees may determine that the lift is unacceptable, and be declared "no lift" by the referees and given three red lights.
- 5.** The spacing of the hands shall not exceed 81 cm, measured between the fore-fingers. The bar shall have circumferential machine markings or tape indicating this maximum grip allowance. If the lifter should use an offset or unequal grip on the bar, whereby one hand is placed outside the marking or tape, it is the lifter's responsibility to explain this to the head referee, and allow inspection of the intended grip prior to making an attempt. If this is not done until the lifter is on the platform for an official attempt, any necessary explanation and/or measurements will be done on the lifter's time for that attempt. The reverse or underhand grip is permitted.
- 6.** After receiving the bar at arms length, the lifter shall lower the bar to the chest and await the head referee's signal.
- 7.** The signal shall be an audible command of "Press," given as soon as the bar is motionless on the chest. As long as the bar is not so low that it touches the lifter's belt, it is acceptable.
- 8.** The lifter will be allowed only one commencement signal per attempt.
- 9.** After the signal to commence the lift has been given, the bar is pressed upward. The bar shall not be allowed to sink into the chest or move downward prior to the lifter's attempt to press upward. The lifter will press the bar to straight arm's length and hold motionless until the audible command "Rack" is given. Bar may move horizontally and may stop during the ascent, but may not move downward towards the chest.



Causes for Disqualification of a Bench Press

- 1.** Failure to observe the referee's signals at the commencement or completion of the lift.
- 2.** Any change in the elected lifting position or the raising of the buttocks, or lateral movement of the hands, during the lift proper (between the referee's signals). Any excessive movement or change of contact of the feet during the lift proper.
- 3.** Bouncing the bar off the chest.
- 4.** Allowing the bar to sink into the chest after receiving the referee's signal.
- 5.** Pronounced uneven extension of the arms during or at the completion of the lift. By the judgment of the referees.
- 6.** Any downward motion of the bar during the course of being pressed out.
- 7.** Contact with the bar by the spotters between the referee's signals.
- 8.** Any contact of the lifter's shoes with the bench or its supports.
- 9.** Deliberate contact between the bar and the bar rest uprights during the lift to assist the completion of the press.
- 10.** It is the responsibility of the lifter to inform any personally enlisted spotters to leave the platform as soon as the bar is secured at arms length. Such spotters shall not return to the platform upon completion or failure of the attempt. It is especially important for a spotter providing a centre lift off to leave the platform quickly so as not to impair the head referee's view. Failure of any personal spotters to leave the platform may cause disqualification of the lift.



TEAM ELITEFTS BENCH ARTICLES

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Top Ten World Record Bench Tips

By Brian Schwab

My enjoyment of the bench press began in 1988, when I was 14 years old and a freshman in high school. The low ceilings, dampness, stench of body odor and lack of windows were intimidating to most, but I felt at home in the school gym. On my first visit to this cramped, musty space, I was able to bench 135. You may laugh and think that's nothing, but when you're only 5'3" and 98 lbs, it's everything. From my strength I gained respect, and I knew that I had found my place.

The next few years I focused on wrestling, lifting only in the offseason while the football team was on the field. I competed on the high school weightlifting team, but lacked the strength I needed to be successful after dropping significant bodyweight for wrestling. I dropped from 120 all the way to 103, even into my senior year. I never stopped lifting, but it wasn't until years later that I returned to my love for competition with the iron. While attending the University of Florida, I began competing in local bench press meets and eventually moved to full meets, which led me to the AAU. In June of 1998, I competed at the Disney Wide World of Sports in my hometown of Orlando, Florida, and was successful in breaking the AAU Junior American record with a bench of 362 in the 165 class.

Soon after, I heard of Kieran Kidder's plans to create a professional powerlifting organization, beginning with a first meet in nearby Daytona Beach. I happened to be in the right place at the right time. The first WPO meet only had the super open classes, but the following year had it broken down into ten, including 148 lb. After my wrestling days I vowed to never cut weight again, but realized it would be difficult for me to excel in the 165 lb class since my normal weight stayed around 160. Dropping to 148, however, would be a different story.



A few of my bench press records are as follows:

1st Bench America 148 lb. Champion – 445 @ 148 on 7/3/03

3 Consecutive 148 lb. WPO Bench World Records:

501.5 on 3/5/04

503.8 on 10/8/04

507 on 10/29/05

APA Florida State Record – 475 @ 165 on 5/28/05

APF Florida State Record – 473.7 @ 165 on 6/18/05

APF American Record – 512.5 @ 165 on 8/5/05

Here are my top ten bench tips to help you set new records of your own:

1. Perform a gradual cardio, shoulder and triceps warm-up.

As I age, my body takes longer and longer to warm up. By increasing body temperature with a minimum of a 5-10 minute cardio warm-up, the nervous system becomes more prepared for the task ahead. By performing more isolated warm-ups with shoulder rotation, which I will detail next – as well as mini-band pushdowns – the joints are more prepared to help prevent injury during bench training.

2. Strengthen your rotator cuffs to prevent injury.

Like most powerlifters, I often have at least one nagging pain somewhere. My right shoulder has bothered me for years. I know that the pain is coming from my rotator cuff, specifically from my infraspinatus. In order to prevent further damage, I perform internal and external shoulder rotation – either with elastic tubing or dumbbells, for 2 sets of 12-15 reps during every bench workout. I usually do these between my bench warm-up sets.

3. Work on proper technique every time you bench.

The process I follow every time I set up on the bench is this:

- Grab the bar with an underhand grip.
- Pull your eyes to the bar and force your shoulders back toward your feet as you lie down. I stay on my toes.



- Squeeze your shoulder blades together, and grab the bar at legal competition width.
- I choose to take a breath when the bar is lifted off and again before I lower it.
- Fill your belly with air and tuck your elbows all the way into your sides.
- Lift your head and watch the bar as you take it to the natural angle that your arms follow, with your elbows tucked.
- After touching, focus on pressing the bar straight up.
- Flare your elbows about halfway up, and push at a slight angle toward your head.

4. Focus on speed and lockout strength on DE day

I follow the basic Westside template on speed day, but I opt to only perform six sets, adding accommodating resistance only on the last three. I have also chosen to only use chains, since bands seemed to place too much stress on my shoulder joint.

5. Never perform a non-shirted bench max through a full range of motion.

In 1996, when I first began powerlifting, I was performing a heavy full ROM set with around 300 lbs. On the eccentric portion of my third rep, I heard and felt an indescribable sensation of ripping and discomfort on my left side. This was my pec tearing. Luckily, it was only a partial tear which took about six months from which to recover. I still have a chunk of scar tissue there, and I have no desire to put myself in a position for this to happen again. So, who are you kidding? If you compete with a shirt, you need to train with it, too. Prove yourself in a meet, not to your buddies in the gym. I don't know how much I max raw, and I don't care. Those aren't the conditions under which I compete.

6. Train through the entire bench range of motion on ME day

I realize this doesn't follow the traditional Westside template, and I'm not recommending for you to bench heavy all the way to your chest in any workout. That would obviously run counter to my last tip. I recommend performing an exercise for the midrange, lock-out, and lower portion of the bench during every max workout. I opt for board presses as the primary movement, followed by lock-outs/pin-presses, with either decline or floor presses being done last – in that order. I alternate between dumbbells and the bar on the floor press to maintain balance between each side.



7. Perform at least one raw set of your primary exercise on ME day

Although I perform one to two sets of shirted board work each week, the vast majority of my bench training is done without the use of a shirt. In order to bench more, you need to become stronger and not just rely on your shirt. The first max effort board set is done without a shirt, followed by two shirted, with the rest of the work done raw.

8. Only perform 1-Board and full reps right before a meet

The only time I go through a full ROM in my bench shirt is three weeks before a meet. I know how much it takes to touch in each shirt, depending on how much I weigh and the position of the collar. After you figure this out, it's unnecessary to touch in your shirt on a regular basis. Three weeks before a meet, I'll perform singles through a full ROM, followed by 1-Board, then 2-Board. Two weeks out, I perform singles onto one, two and then three boards. This way, I can work with my first, second and third attempts and feel more confident with the weight.

9. Strengthen your upper posterior chain

Having a strong upper back and triceps is essential for stronger benching. Your back and triceps are the muscles involved in supporting the weight throughout the entire motion. Although the function of the latissimus dorsi is primarily to adduct (bring in) the arms at the shoulder joint, they are also necessary for supporting the triceps. I recommend at least two exercises for 2-3 heavy sets of 5-8 reps per week to strengthen your lats. I prefer a variation of a pulldown or pull-up, and a rowing motion performed on DE squat day. The lockout strength of the triceps is trained on DE bench day through 4-Board presses, reverse band presses, dumbbell and cable extensions, as well as on ME day through board presses and lockouts.

10. Train with your shirt weekly

It literally took me an entire year to get used to the groove of a denim shirt. Each shirt you use will have a different groove, which will vary depending on how low you adjust the collar. At Orlando Barbell, we train with our shirts for at least two sets with boards each week. We start with 4-Board and reduce by one board each week down to two – until three weeks out from the meet, as previously mentioned. By training with the shirt each week, you will both be able to handle heavier weights and learn the groove of your shirt.

I hope my tips will help to take your bench to new levels. Check my training logs for more insight into my training methods. Good luck, and never give up!

Brian Schwab, BS, CSCS



Raw Bench Pressing - 10 Things You Need To Know

By Jim Wendler
For www.EliteFTS.com

Hot chick with no shirt = good.

Fat man at County Fair (special guest appearance by Bad Company) with no shirt = bad.

Bench pressing without a shirt = your opinion.

I'm not going to debate the shirt/no shirt conundrum that has seemed to enrage the strength community. Debating this topic is about as productive as HMB. So while some people are busy taking a hard and fast stance, I'm going to do something to help people.

Now the next obvious (and fair) question is, "What the hell does Jim know about benching raw?" I've used a shirt for all of my competitions, and this has spanned almost five years. I've been lifting for over seventeen years, however, so I'm going to make a very bold statement and say that I've done a lot more raw benching than shirted benching.

What you'll notice is that there are a few differences in benching raw, but not a lot. People seem to think there have to be radical changes when shirt benching, but last time I checked, you still lay on a bench and press.

Technique/Setup/Bar Path

I did an entire video on the correct setup and bar path for the bench press. Do yourself a favor and buy the DVD. I put a lot of work and thought into that video. Plus, you need to see the form/setup to really grasp it. Something I think people need to do with regard to technique is practice it more. This doesn't mean more bench sessions. It means you'll perform reps with the bar everyday. Try to perfect your setup and bar path. Do at least 50 good reps a day. This will pay off more than you'll ever know. Also, every set and every rep must be perfect. Don't do your warm-up sets by pressing the bar like an unhinged piston. Do them correctly. Develop a habit.

Bar Speed/Eccentric Control

This is huge, and it's one reason why a bench shirt helps quite a bit. When benching for a max, whether it be raw or with a shirt, the bar must come down quickly but under control. This does not give you license to drop the bar or inch it down Poliquin-style. Both of these things will result in a poor attempt. A bench shirt



allows you to have a fast eccentric phase while maintaining your tightness. Since a raw bencher is using his best 50/50 shirt, he does not have this advantage. Here are some tips that will help you in this area:

Squeeze the bar – You must squeeze the bar as tight as possible when benching. This should be done on every attempt. Repetition breeds habit. Now, how do you get a better bench grip? I've found that the best way is to train your finger strength. Do this by using hex head dumbbell holds, using the IronMind telegraph with your thumb and one finger, and also by putting a thick rubber band around your fingers and opening your hand. This exercise was introduced to me by CJ Murphy, and it has also done a lot for people with elbow problems. There are a host of great grip exercises you can do, and most of them will help your bench press. Just don't overdo your grip training.

Strong Lats – Having strong lats will give you the ability to lower the bar correctly and quickly without disrupting the proper bar path. Developing this takes time, so be patient.

Practice – This is obvious, but you have to put in some time to learn how to lower a bar quickly in the correct manner. This is not easy to do. Most people get scared doing this with heavy weights, so at some point you're going to have put your fears aside and just do it. A good way to do this is to make it a point every max effort day to concentrate on eccentric bar speed. But please don't be sloppy.

Setup – By having a tight setup (again, refer to the EFS Bench Press Index DVD), you will be able to confidently lower weights. I have done numerous seminars, and when I show people what "tight" really is, they're amazed. I've had several people approach me and tell me they've never been so tired after benching. So, if you think you're tight, get tighter.

Stabilization

Stabilization essentially entails being able to hold your setup position in the bench press without faltering. You have to be able to stay high on your upper back and have total control of the bar. This is easy to do, but it takes a lot of time. Stabilization in the bench press requires several things.

Strong AND thick lats – Do you want to know the trick of getting this area stronger? Do a lot of work. It's not that hard to figure out. Do a ton of chest-supported rows and pull-ups. These two exercises are phenomenal for strengthening your lats. These should be done twice per week, for a minimum of 5 sets of 5-15 reps per workout. You also need static strength in your lats. When you bench press, your lats are held statically. The best way to improve this is to statically hold a chest-supported row in the same position as you bench press. This doesn't have to be done all the time, but realize its importance in training.



Strong AND thick upper back – This can be accomplished by doing rows and chins (see above), seated dumbbell cleans, face pulls, rear laterals and band pull-aparts. Like the lats, the upper back is held statically, so this component must be trained.

Shoulders – Few people would argue that you need very strong front delts to be a good raw bench, but strong delts also help in controlling and stabilizing the weight.

Shoulder Strength

I mentioned shoulders before, but strengthening this area is going to be huge. This is the single best thing I've ever done for my raw strength. Here's a list of exercises that need to be done. Pick one of these exercises and perform it once a week. Usually, 5 sets of 8-15 reps are done. This should be done as a second exercise on either dynamic or max effort day. This is a huge priority, so don't slack.

DB Bench Press

DB Incline Press

DB Military

Military Press

Chain-suspended push-ups. Place a band around your back or chains across your back for resistance. You can also have a person sit on your back. This has been done before, I swear. Buy a set of Blast Straps and use them for this movement.

Bradford Presses

All of these exercises are covered in our Bench Index DVD, so I won't waste time on descriptions. I should point out that when you're doing the dumbbell work, you should lower the bells under control, pause for a second then drive them up. I never thought to "push" or "press," but instead to drive them up. I think this made a big difference in my bottom end strength.

Max Effort Exercises

Max effort work is crucial for increasing strength. By lifting in the 90-100% range, you are going to get stronger. The trick is doing enough work in this range without overtraining. According to Prilipin, 3-10 lifts at or above 90% is optimal. This is based on his findings with Olympic lifters, so you may have to tweak things a little, but use this as a guideline. Start with the minimum (3 total reps) and work from there. The bottom line is that you have to lift heavy weights in order to get stronger. Here is a list of great max effort exercises for the raw bench:



Floor Press
2-Board Press
Incline Press
Bench Press
1-Board Press

Stick with these five exercises during your max effort cycles. Again, these exercises are covered in detail in the Bench Index DVD.

Lockout Training

Notice I didn't mention anything about the triceps. Locking out a weight is completely different. For a raw bench, lockout strength is important, but not as important as it is for an equipped lifter. This is because most people can lock out whatever they can move off their chests. I should point out that lockout is about 3" to the top. This doesn't mean halfway up. Still, if this is a weak point of yours, you have to hammer it. If your technique is good, you should be able to manipulate the bar path and put it in the correct position to lock out whatever you can get off your chest. I would stick with three, four and five board presses with a competition grip or slightly narrower. Do one of these exercises ONE time per week as a second exercise.

Prehabilitation

Because you're not wearing a bench shirt, you don't have much protection for your shoulders. I recommend being proactive in this department. By doing a lot of lat and upper back exercises, you're already on the correct path. The Shoulder Horn is another great tool and should be used once or twice a week. 2 sets of 20 reps is a smaller price to pay than surgery or losing the ability to bench press

Speed Work

The evil speed bench. A lot has been said about speed pressing, but it still has its merits. It will teach you how to press from your chest to lockout with force. If you are toeing the line on this one, go ahead and take the step. Most people struggle with speed, and this can do wonders for learning how to press with force. If you're still unconvinced, try doing one workout every three weeks for speed. This should do enough to maintain your speed. Also, be sure to do some reps with your competition grip. This is a good way to practice your bench form, because your form with a closer grip is usually different than it is with a wide grip.



Bench Press

This may seem odd, but how many times have you read about how tricky it is to learn a bench shirt? I can't count the number of hours I've spent trying to figure out what to do with a shirt. Raw benching is no different. If you invest the same time in figuring out how to maximize your technique raw as you would with a shirt, you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Maximize your training (prioritize)

The one good thing about raw benching is that you don't have to spend training time on learning a shirt. With that in mind, your training needs to have these priorities.

Technique – Once you get the bar almost to lockout position, your strength should be enough to lock anything out. This is manipulation of the bar path, and once you get the hang of it, you'll be ready to go. This is a huge priority.

Off the Bottom – Strength off your chest is a huge necessity and should be #2 on your priority list. This is part technique and part shoulder strength.

Stabilization – Get your lats and upper back up to par.

Max Effort Work – Lift heavy and get strong. If you want to increase your volume and your strength, do it by increasing the number of reps at 90% and above. Again, be careful, as this can lead to overtraining. Refer to Prilipin's chart for optimal rep ranges (3-10). When doing more total reps at or above 90% (five, for example), your assistance work needs to be cut down.

Example Workout

Here is an example workout of mine from when I was training for a raw bench max several years ago. This is taken from my training diary. At the time, I had a raw bench of 405.

Day I

Speed Bench – 8 sets of 3 reps @ 225

DB Bench – 60x10, 80x10, 100x10, 100x10, 100x6

Chain-suspended push-ups – 5 sets of 10 reps with an average band around my back

Pull-ups – 5 sets of 5-8 reps

Day II

Floor Press – 45x5, 95x5, 135x5, 185x5, 225x3, 275x2, 315x1, 365x1, 365x1

Chest-Supported Rows – 5 sets of 10 reps

Rear Laterals – 5x15





Bigger and Better Benching

By Marc Bartley
For www.EliteFTS.com

A lot of my tips are just repeats from everyone else, but I think much of this gets overlooked while everyone is looking for the next gear craze or shortcut. Some of these are gear related, and some involve raw work.

Simple things for a better bench:

1. Speed Day – Work your speed day religiously for the first three or four years of your powerlifting career. You must improve technical skill and force production by all muscle groups involved, including the weaker ones. Timing really is everything.

2. Raw work – For the first three or four years, we followed a Westside/EFS template for max effort work. You must do raw max effort work to raise your capacity and base strength. This will help you avoid injuries like pec tears, and it will enable you to see weaker muscle groups more easily as you rotate from exercise to exercise. For example, inclines are mainly a shoulder movement. If you suck at these, but have a decent bench, then you've discovered a weaker muscle group to work on. Raw work is good work.

3. Hold the weight – This is an easy way to develop more strength, stability and confidence with the big weights. You simply hold the bar for 2-3 extra seconds at the beginning of a press, then hold it for 2-3 seconds at the end before you rack the weight. This also cured our issues with racking the bar too quickly at meets and missing attempts. Holding the bar shows control, which makes the judges happy. Happy judges mean white lights.

4. Leg Drive – This one is missed by most novices, and even by some big benchers. Scot Mendelson told me – and I didn't realize it until he said it – that leg drive can give you 200-400 pounds on your bench. You must get your legs in the game. An easy way we found to do this is by pushing into the front of your shoes. In other words, keep your feet flat, and when you press, shove your toes into the front of your shoes. Push your body along the bench. This will maximize leg drive and keep your tail on the bench. Remember, judges happy...

5. Do your board work – Whatever weight you can 2-Board in a shirt, you should be able to do the same in a meet. Do 5 sets of 3 reps for several weeks before a meet. Keep going up until you can't get triples anymore, then back down. This will make the weight seem very light when you max out. Remember, time under tension and confidence are the keys. You can also do raw 2-Boards the same way



in the same week. This worked well for us.

6. Fat Bars – Use fat bars as much as possible in training. These are easy tools that improve your grip and the interaction between muscle groups. You're forced to squeeze the bar harder in order to control it, which stimulates more muscle recruitment from all groups involved. The bar path is a little different as well, which makes it harder to use. The best part is that fat bars make regular bench bars feel like toothpicks in your hands, and you feel like you can press anything.

7. Learn your shirt – Each shirt is different. Some denims require you to start the bar over your chest and touch on the belly or upper abdominals, while a lot of polyester shirts start the bar in the upper chest region and throw it back toward the rack when pressing. Whichever one you buy, find out the shirt's requirements for the best results. Use the shirt for at least eight weeks prior to a meet to break it in and find your groove.

8. Lockout – We all know to tuck the elbows on the descent of the bar, but what about the lockout? I think of this from two angles. One is only squeezing from the elbow when the lockout has slowed down too much. The other involves trying to separate the lower bicep from the forearm as quickly as possible. Another way to look at this is to imagine straightening your arm out while pressing. Sometimes this takes my mind off the weight just long enough to get the lift finished.

9. Use bands – Use lots of band tension on speed days and heavy days. I like them doubled-up, which provides a maximum overspeed eccentric load/stretch reflex and lots of lockout work on both upper body days. This is also a form of trickery for your CNS and brain, where the load is deceiving and is often much higher than you realize. This builds confidence and allows your body to utilize its full capacity – which we never totally tap into. We can add a whole lot of pounds to the bench by doing so

10. Don't forget the small stuff – Kettlebells, GPP and auxiliary work – don't skip it. This is just as important as benching itself. I made this error over the past two years and paid for it. I lowered this work to almost nothing, and my weights shot up for a while, but then they stopped. I was stuck. You need GPP for your wind and health. You have to have the ability to do volume or you won't improve. This is GPP. You need auxiliary work to continue to raise and maintain all muscle groups involved in the bench. Finally, get some kettlebells. For the average man, I would suggest getting sets of 25, 36, 53 and 72 pounds. Kettlebell snatches, swings, presses, arm bars, etc, will thicken and develop your upper body. They will also improve your bench and GPP in the process. I think kettlebells by themselves will add 50 pounds to anyone's bench. At the same time, they'll make the bodybuilders in your gym jealous of your giant traps, upper back and shoulders.



The Specialist

By Kenny Patterson

As a bench press specialist, I train somewhat differently than most of the other members of the Westside Barbell Club. The following is a sampling of how my training is broken down:

SUNDAY – SPEED BENCH

I do nine sets of triples using three different grips. The last three sets are done with my competition grip. 66% of my sets are done with my hands inside the rings. This emphasizes my triceps more. I use three different weights with my speed sets on this day. The first three sets are done with 48% of my shirted competition max. The next three are done with 50% of this weight, and the last three sets are done with 52%. Leading up to the Daytona meet where I benched 701 weighing 238, I used 335, 350 and 365 for my speed sets.

Immediately after my speed sets, I go into a heavy triceps movement – usually a triceps extension using dumbbells, or JM presses. Whatever I do is performed with heavy weights. With the JM press, I'll work up to a set of five. With dumbbell extensions, I'll do 3-4 sets of 8-12 reps, depending on what weight I'm using. My weights on extensions vary from 85-125 pounds, depending on how far out I am from a meet.

After tricep work, I like to do some type of shoulder movement – usually side lateral or front delt work. This is all done by feel, depending on how my shoulders feel from the bench workout I just did. I finish my Sunday workout with abdominal work.

MONDAY

Mondays, while all my training partners are doing work to increase their deadlift, I return to work on my upper back and lats. I like to do several different types of pulldowns on the lat machine. I usually start with the straight bar for three or four sets, then change to the "V" handle for another three or four sets. Sometimes I like to do some with a reverse grip, using the straight bar. This seems to work my lower lats a little more. I also like to do heavy one armed rows with a dumbbell.



After I finish my lat work, I like to do bicep curls. When I bench, I feel as though this work helps me lower the bar. My bicep work is done mostly with dumbbells, because I find it hard to turn my hands over to grab a straight bar. I use alternate curls, concentration curls, reverse curls and several other curl variations. I finish my Monday workout with abdominal work.

WEDNESDAY – MAX EFFORT BENCH

On max effort day, I choose one of Westside’s “special exercises.” These include floor presses, board presses, reverse band presses, rack presses, wide grip benching, and others. All of these special exercises can be done with just bar weight, or you can incorporate the use of chains or bands to work on certain points of the bench. I work up to a single with this, hopefully setting a new record. On this day you should only do one special exercise. Don’t try to do two or more of these in one day.

After my main exercise, I like to do triceps work, unless I’m getting close to a meet. If this is the case, I like to work into a heavy overhead press in the power rack. These are done just like a bench press pin lockout, but overhead. After this, I’d do tricep work, which is done the same way I do it on Sundays.

THURSDAY

On this day, I like to work my upper back and lats again. The next training day for most Westside members would be Friday, but I like to train my back on Thursday because it gives me an extra day to rest before my speed benches. On Thursday, I like to use the assisted pull-up machine, because I’m weak in this exercise and I think it can help my bench if I improve it. I then move to the Hammer Strength back machine. This is one of my favorites, because each side moves independently, and it allows you to get a greater range of motion and contraction of your lats. I also like to do low rows on this day – once again working the lower part of my lats. I use a wide variety of lat movements on both Monday and Thursday. The ones I’ve listed here are some of the favorites I like to rely on.

After back work is done, I do bicep work again, trying to do different movements than the ones I use on Mondays. I like to do a lot of reverse curl movements to strengthen my forearms. This helps when using heavy weights. Once again, I finish with abdominal work and call it a day.

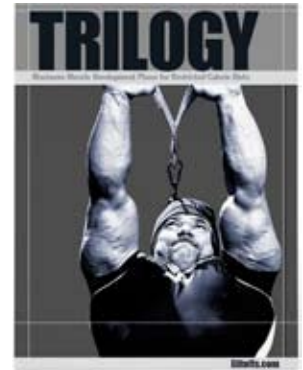


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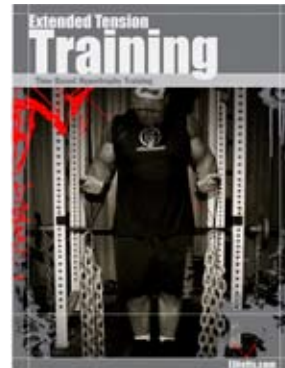
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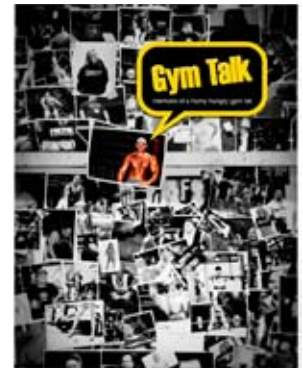
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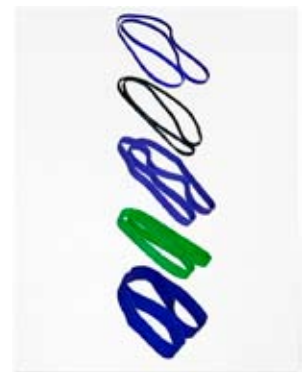
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