

Casey at the Bench

Part Two as told to Jeff Everson

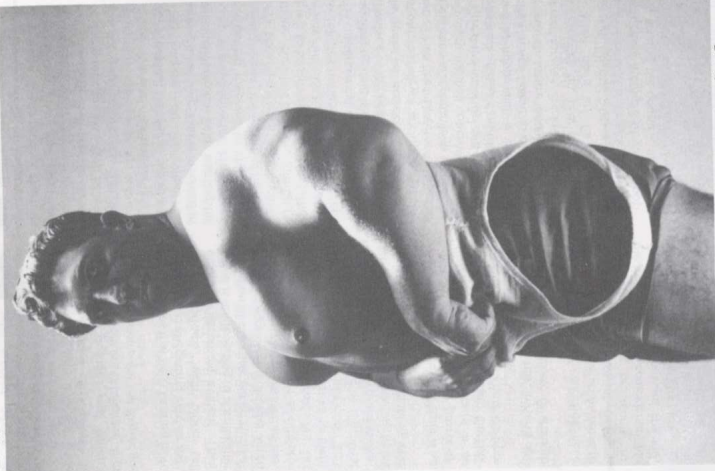


Photo courtesy: Leo Stern/Pat Casey.

No one makes it to the top of their profession without an abundance of intelligence and truckloads of discipline. Pat Casey has both. He is also probably the hardest working bench with uprights growing out of his back. Consequently, like E.F. Hutton, when Pat Casey talks about bench pressing, you listen!

As Pat grew into manhood, he did a lot of the same exercises both you and I have done trying to get his bench press up. As every weight trainer knows, it's easier to make gains at first. Somehow Casey was able to push his lift in a non-pleasing fashion naturally. Sure, he increased his bodyweight steadily, but plenty of lifters have tried that, and he failed miserably. As Casey got higher and higher, he needed to gook deeper and deeper for sound reasoning to make his bench move. I asked about his training theories and this is what I found out:

"After reaching 500 pounds, I found it much more difficult not only to gain bodyweight, but to make my bar move. At the peak of my push, this is the program I think I had, and the most result producing gains I had. On my first day I'd start with bench press lockouts. I'd do low and high lockouts. My theory was that if I serried by attachments and tendon strength, I could do more volume work in other exercises without breakdown or injury. I was after the mental effect of handling real big weights, low and was hoping for a muscle learning effect to help me to fall leverage-wise and my traps failed endurance-wise. I had something set up on my bench like a miniature power rack. I'd do a variety of repetitions off the pins 3-4, about the same chest and then a bunch. I'd do lots of warmups, but then get down to brass tacks quick. I'd always do around 5-6 singles from each of these positions. I've always liked singles and believe they do much more than test strength. After all, your level of muscle fiber nerve recruitment is highest on a single attempt. Once a week is all I'd do this mroe. Following the singles and 325 pounds for a full muscle pump. Remember, the bigger your chest, the shorter the distance you have to press the weight.

My second exercise at a 35-45 degree angle. Usually, I'd do about 5-6 sets of 10-15 reps. I'd use between 180-220 pound dumbbells. I'd be setting a style for cleaning them by sitting them high on my thighs and at 325 pounds for 20-25 repetitions the same time I had my legs up and pulled on them suckers. I got damn good at it. My best was 300. Later one day with 210 pounds. Later I switched to barbell inclines where I hit 335 pounds for a 45 degree single back about 1966-67. I'd do the same thing, sets of 3-5. My third exercise was bar dips.

ped the poor guy's steering wheel off its frame so he couldn't drive anymore. The guy just sat there stupefied as Chuck drove around him and away. Chuck drank milk and ate more bananas than any Gorilla ever. He'd throw everything in the back seat of his car. It was full of milk cartons and peels.

Steve Manjarian - "I'll say this about Steve. He's like this guy Karmaizer. Naturally strong at everything he did. A real athlete. Great, just explosive football player and big, big. A super nice guy, working today as an extra in the Hollywood studios. Still works out. I understand, at World Gym in Santa Monica. He's an auto mechanic too (probably doesn't use his hoist). He regularly went over 500 lbs. in the incline press. It was his specialty. If he trained as hard as I did, he would have been better than me. I know it. One time, we were walking down the street engaged in a lively conversation. Steve just ambled along and never moved for anyone. One time he picked this 150 lb. guy up like doing a straight arm-

ed from lateral raise and set him off to the side like a paperback without breaking stride. He didn't want to move so I tried the same thing with a 150 lb. man. I tried for awhile, but I felt like all the muscles in my body would blow any second. My strength muscles were strained for weeks after that. I never looked at it again and I wasn't even close to his feat. Perhaps Karmaizer, with his deft strength, could do this. I don't know. You can see the bodybuilding influence in my training, that came from Park. A big, naturally strong man who behind the neck pressed strictly 325 pounds and benched 500. I loved his physique over the years. I used the same way to build Pearl, another strong bodybuilder."

Chuck Ahrens - "Oh Boy! There's so much to say about this guy. Steve seemed to train very hard. A strange, but friendly guy. I'll tell you what! I actually saw him do 1500 lbs. clean press strictly for two reps with one arm. I saw him sit at the end of a bench and do two repetitions of a cheating alternate curl with 200 lb. dumbbells. I saw him do chest presses, raises with 200 lb. dumbbells. He did these exercises plus heavy rows. That's theoretical, so let's get back to the real. On Wednesday and Thursday the big man rested, and on Friday it was back to his real love. I'd consider this my medium day. Starting with regular benches, I'd do 135, 225, 315, 405, 495 for reps for a warmup. Then I'd jump to anything where from 545-570 pounds and 5-6 singles. Each fortnight I'd try to move up five pounds on these singles. Then I'd do 3 down sets of 5-10 second pause reps with 405 pounds, usually around 5-6 repetitions (shades of Ronnie Royal). Finally, I'd get 2 sets of 20 reps at 315. "I'd skip the lockout and the dips, but the rest of the program was exactly the same as my first day. My volume and intensity were both lower on this day. I'd also throw in some strict curls and I liked to do chins too." (actually, Pat held the

been able to stay with it longer. I still think he could come back and clean house on just about everybody.

Paul Anderson - "It's a shame. Poor today. Just don't or can't appreciate this man's strength. People depreciate his squatting as not too enough. Even if that were a 450 (which it's not) how about a 450 clean and slow press, his 340 snatch, and 620 pound bench, his 390 squat. Listen, I have no doubt Paul was the strongest man, or at least powerlifter, who ever lived. I saw him, at Muscle Beach in 1956, squat to parallel and used a 20" grip man! So explosive. I saw him press two 190 pound dumbbells for two reps to gether in strict style. A real strong guy, he was. I think he's a dentist somewhere now. (Long won the 1964 Olympic gold in the shot put). I don't know where those big benches came from, as he has such small bones. I guess he's what you call a top pec-bencher. Based on lifting record weights in a variety of weight classes, he was the best."

Ted Arcidi - "A newcomer who I haven't seen much of. He looks to me to be the most logical candidate to hit 700 lbs. first. At 5'10" and 280 lb. or whatever he is, he must have tremendous leverage for the bench. From his pictures he looks like he is much heavier through the pectorals than I ever was. The best bench in the world now. I wish him much luck. God, though, there are so many good benchers now, how about that 220 lb. man who just did 610 lb.?"

John Cole - "I think he was without a doubt the best athlete to be in powerlifting. He Olympic pressed 430 lbs. and threw the discus 210'. Once, he threw a softball 425'. This guy was something. Jeff. What about his 905 squat and 885 deadlift? Cole's taken a lot of stuff over the years concerning backyard meets. Well, I saw him lift 1500 lbs. do an easy 870 lb. squat and he wore nothing but standard equipment. He had bulked up to 300 pounds. I shudder to think what he'd have done. He's in the same class as Kuc, a real immortal."

Bruce Wilhelm - "Old Bruce! I'll tell you, we go a long way back. Bruce was another great athlete. He had used to come over to my pool and do backflips off my board when he weighed 310 pounds. He won the World's Strongest Man contest twice. George Frenn used to practice running with the refrigerator and tried to get Bruce to also, but Bruce used to say a strongman like himself is strong naturally at everything and doesn't need to practice. I think he threw the shot 67-68 or so, which I believe is still the left-handed record. A great olympic lifter too."

Don Reinholdt - "Well, what can I say. The man held the total record at 2420 for so many years with nobody even pushing him. I never met him, but anyone who did says he's the nicest, finest man in all of powerlifting. I honestly don't think Don ever knew his real strength. What he really could've done had he had the functional, natural, raw strength

it up easily. There, my friends, was a real world's strongest man candidate. He could've been another Anderson, had he stayed earlier, and concentrated on lifting incidentally. I never saw Anderson max in his short arms and deep chest and shoulders (which he couldn't have done well over 600 pounds), as was claimed for him.

Big John Studd - "John, who? Never heard of him. Pat Casey is a man who looks back at his career with proud reflection. He says, 'I was never a natural. I had to work for everything I got.' So what today? Well, people that use them. People tell me though that I would have lifted 700 pounds, maybe 750 pounds, if I did what they do today. I don't know, it's not really important. I couldn't go back today, because I'd want to be the best and I think it would be impossible unless I used steroids, which I won't do! I wouldn't want to feel the effects later. I know some guys who have been on them since the early Seventies and it's starting to hit them - problems with arteries, blood pressure, kidneys and other things. Some guy told me a couple of years ago that he used 100 Dianabol a day! My God, that's sure hard! Nonetheless, I was a cop for 16 hard years. I saw it all - suicide, violent robberies, terrible accidents, rapes. Sometimes I have dreams that I'm back there again and I can't sleep at nights, and I know from these experiences that you could put a million narcotics on the street and people are going to use drugs like cocaine. I'm going to drug-free lifting, but it may be impossible to accomplish today."

And what of my own thoughts and opinions, dear reader? I think Pat Casey is such a nice guy, he'd never admit he's the best bench presser of all time. I don't care what other reasons anyone out there cares to offer to fall over him. He did have a real bench that he lived. When you take the measure of man's accomplishments, you must compare him to his contemporaries. Joe Louis was a great champion, unbeaten for 13 years, yet in all likelihood, Al in his prime would have boxed him silly. George Mikan revolutionized professional basketball and dominated the center position for years, but Chamberlain and Jabbar would've only a handful of men actively benching in excess of 600 pounds (Moran, Arcidi, Dicks, Hardman, etc.). Kaz Williams and MacDonald were a- head of their time. How much has the record gone up in the bench in the last 20 years? What has transpired during that time? Super-shirts, elbow wraps, tight suits, the potential of super-steroid use. Twenty years ago, Pat Casey took a dock-working stevedore for his held it for a full two seconds and trammed it home. He was so far ahead of everyone then, that so far there was no idea of what could and couldn't be done. Casey was, the best bench presser who ever lived.

Bill Kasmazer - "I hope he is making a bundle for his efforts. He keeps his weight up all the time. I don't understand how he's able to do that, except he carries that weight better than any man I ever saw. He looks like solid muscle and bone. Surely, he's the most versatile strongman I've ever lived. I put him in the class of whoever could do anything he tried who could do anything he tried. Evidently, he also is a great athlete. Yes, I think he is the strongest man in the world today. He destroyed everyone in the contests, no doubt. I think he's amazing too to come back from the recent injury he suffered in his pec-squatted area. I don't know though, if I had been Bill, with his talent, I think I would have gone for football. I know I would if I had to do fall over again. He did have a real tall stature to get 700 first, up until that injury."

Karl Norberg - "Jeff, how many guys know who Karl is? Let me put this man in perspective for all the readers. I lifted in an exhibition with Karl many years ago. I benched 560 pounds with a miss at 580 pounds. I was a young buck, approaching 300 pounds bodyweight. Karl was 72! That's right people, 72. Anyway, when he layed on the bench, his feet and legs popped right up in the air and he pulled over to my pool and weighed 310 pounds. He won the World's Strongest Man contest twice. George Frenn used to practice running with the refrigerator and tried to get Bruce to also, but Bruce used to say a strongman like himself is strong naturally at everything and doesn't need to practice. I think he threw the shot 67-68 or so, which I believe is still the left-handed record. A great olympic lifter too."

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