

BENCH PRESS

as told to Powerlifting USA by Louie Simmons » 614.801.2060 » www.westside-barbell.com

Westside has a method to its madness, and Travis Bell utilizes this perfectly. His raw bench has gone from 365 to 565, and his shirt bench has gone from 405 to 805 in two and a half years. How is this possible?

Let's start with dynamic bench day on Saturday. Nine sets of three reps are done within three-week waves using several different bars, band tensions, or chain combinations as a means of accommodating resistance. Now let's look below at the speed strength waves. Remember, their purpose is to build a fast rate of force development and to teach acceleration.

WEEK	WEIGHT	ACCOMODATING RESISTANCE TYPE	SETS	REPS	TOTAL # OF LIFTS
1	205	Mini Band adds 85 lb.	9	3	27
2	225	Mini Band adds 85 lb.	9	3	27
3	245	Mini Band adds 85 lb.	9	3	27

**NEW 3-WEEK WAVE BEGINS, CHANGING FROM MINI-BANDS TO MONSTER BANDS*

WEEK	WEIGHT	ACCOMODATING RESISTANCE TYPE	SETS	REPS	TOTAL # OF LIFTS
4	205	Monster adds 125 lb.	9	3	27
5	225	Monster adds 125 lb.	9	3	27
6	245	Monster adds 125 lb.	9	3	27

**NEW 3-WEEK WAVE BEGINS, SWITCHING TO AN ARCH BAR WITH MINI-BANDS*

WEEK	WEIGHT	ACCOMODATING RESISTANCE TYPE	SETS	REPS	TOTAL # OF LIFTS
7	205	Mini Band adds 85 lb.	9	3	27
8	225	Mini Band adds 85 lb.	9	3	27
9	245	Mini Band adds 85 lb.	9	3	27

**NEW 3-WEEK WAVE BEGINS, CHANGING FROM MINI-BANDS TO MONSTER BANDS*

WEEK	WEIGHT	ACCOMODATING RESISTANCE TYPE	SETS	REPS	TOTAL # OF LIFTS
10	205	Monster adds 125 lb.	9	3	27
11	225	Monster adds 125 lb.	9	3	27
12	245	Monster adds 125 lb.	9	3	27

The three-week waves as illustrated above continue all year round. Some waves are done with a thick squat bar or a bow bar that has a 2-inch camber.

After the nine sets of three reps of the dynamic bench, Travis will do two to three sets of dumbbell presses for twenty or more reps or a close grip bench. Different angles are used for each exercise: incline, decline, seated, or flat. This is for muscle building. After the high-rep pressing is completed, he will then move on to two heavy triceps exercises. These could be dumbbell roll-backs with elbows out to the sides, J.M. presses, or heavy kettlebell extensions. Many times Travis will rotate from heavy rep



extensions (6–8 reps) to light weight reps (15–20 reps) to push-downs, cable push-downs, or band push-downs.

Travis moves on to two back exercises such as heavy pull-downs, chest-supported rows, dumbbell rows, or a barbell row. Remember, only two exercises per workout, and rotate when necessary. High-rep deltoid exercises are next, and he concentrates on the rear and side delts because he does not want to overwork the front delts. Then it's on to hammer curls, which is something that should always be done.

We have had five different men hold world records in the bench, and they all agree that the speed day is the most important. Anyone who disputes that speed is not important please read a basic physics book.

When necessary, Travis will use no barbell exercises on max effort day but instead will use high-rep dumbbell presses at an angle he chooses. This is a hypertrophy workout, which also includes extensions, lat work of some type, and high-rep delt work. This style of workout is done when he feels somewhat worn out, but it allows him to resume his normal max effort workout the next week. The workout can also be done on a special day, as this workout is not by design but is based on instinct.

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Our max effort day is Wednesday, which is 72 hours after speed strength day. Travis uses several special exercises to max out on, and when we say "max out," that means a top single for the day. Heavy 2s or 3s will not build maximum strength, but instead strength endurance. On max effort day the volume must be as low as possible but the intensity high, that is, close to or more than your one-rep max (meaning an all-time record). It is recommended that three top weights are lifted per workout. This resembles a contest: one attempt at around 90-percent; the next attempt close to an all-time record; and then a lift slightly over the all-time record. If Travis's level of preparedness is somewhat low, the three attempts should be based on his strength level at that given time.

Below is a list of sample max effort exercise that Travis rotates on his max day.

1. Mini-bands plus weight: his setup band tension will be 85 pounds at lockout.
2. Monster bands plus weight: this will provide 125 pounds of tension at the top.
3. Light bands plus weight: the tension is 200 pounds at the top.

With the three band tensions given above two grips are used, wide and close, wide meaning little finger on the power ring and close meaning index finger on the smooth part of the bar. By doing this, Travis has six exercises to choose from. He will also add a bow bar that has a 2-inch camber or a cambered bar that has a 3 1/2-inch camber and a football bar to his list of exercises, so he has six more records to break. Incline and decline presses are rotated mostly without bands.

All the above mentioned max lift exercises are considered builder exercises for a bench press. Travis also has tester exercise such as a floor press with just bar weight or 120 pounds of chain. Again the two different grips are used, one wide and one narrow. Only one grip is used per workout. Other testers that he will use are 2- of 3-board presses with either a wide or close grip. These are mostly done with just bar weight. Travis will also use the lightened method at times. This exercise will reduce the load by 95 pounds at the top and by 150 pounds at the bottom.

About once a month he will wear a bench shirt. As a meet is coming close, the last time he will use his shirt is on a 1-board press. Because bench max effort day is on a Wednesday, the last workout with a bench shirt is 17 or 18 days out from the contest. The last max effort workout is the floor press with just bar weight.

In summary, speed bench is on Saturday, and max effort bench is on Wednesday. A shirt is used one out of four workouts far away from a meet and one out of three workouts close to contest time. Both workouts are followed by lots of triceps work, upper back, lats, and last but not least rear and side delts plus hammer curls. Travis does some front delt work, but he says it is very easy to overtrain the front delts and that the triceps and upper back including lats are the most important for benching.

In my opinion, Travis is just starting out and has limitless potential. I am very proud to be one of his training partners. «

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