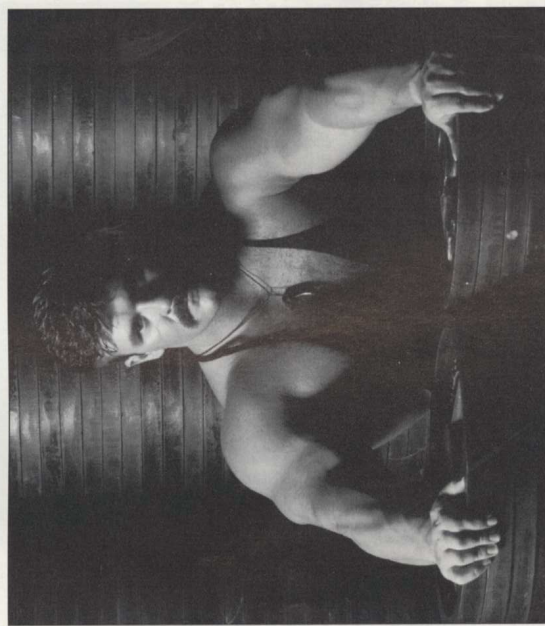


WORKOUT of the Month

Let's clear up one point right away: Bench Pressing is an attitude! The first step to a big bench is your mental perspective.

What is heavy? What isn't heavy? These are the wrong questions. *Nothing* is heavy! But rather you are or are not strong enough. Quit thinking about the weight and concentrate on your strength. No bench program will work for anyone who is locked into thinking about the belt or the load or the burden; you must think about and learn to trust your own power. My first point is this: I believe your attitude affects your success more profoundly than your training.

I use a training protocol that helps generate a positive attitude and forces one to build confidence in one's own power. But not without risk. To build faith in oneself, one must continually put oneself on the line! This leads to growth physically and psychologically and with each success and offers excellent (albeit harsh) lessons with each mistake. I believe you must ask of your body and mind in training what you expect from them in competition. The risk is, of course, over-training. But that is minimized by the simplicity of the program. However, I use as a rule joint soreness. Muscular soreness is trained through but pain around the joints is a marker for backing off. As an athlete matures, he or she learns to become very tuned into his or her body and aware of how far they can go. Pay attention to your body. With that in mind, my second point is to always ask the best from yourself and prove it by putting yourself on the line... frequently. As you succeed you will gain confidence and when you fail you will become aware of weak points you need to work on that you might only normally learn at a meet.



Focused Benching as told to PL USA by J.M. Blakley

A new concept in weight training instruction. A workout by workout, set by set, rep by rep workout plan, with exact training poundages specified over the entire span of a strength training cycle, laid out for you by a top Powerlifting authority. Each month, a different lift is analyzed. For those of different strength levels than the starting poundage specified, simply increase or decrease the training weights in direct proportion. For example, if your lift is 400, and a starting lift for the program is 500, multiply the training poundages by .8 (400 divided by 500); if your lift is 600, multiply the poundages specified by 1.2 (600 divided by 500)

after workout that is exhausting or causes great soreness or does whatever else one might think constitutes a great workout... and still show no progress. I've seen trainees get a whole year of "great" workouts and have nothing to show for it but frustration and their fond memories of how fatigued and sore they were. Don't let yourself believe for a minute that anyone cares how hard you worked or how great your workouts were. And neither should you. You should judge your workouts and program by the only ruler that matters... progress. If you are not improving, then there is no excuse for you to give me for your program. Only one thing matters - getting stronger and stronger each and every workout. I want to emphasize that you must expect progress each workout. If you show no progress from one workout to the next, then why should you expect any improvement after a two month string of such workouts? Or four months? Or six months? Keep accurate records and make no exceptions. Demand progress from yourself.

THE PROGRAM: This program is based on the above tenants. Following *simplicity*, there are just two exercises. One pressing movement that stresses the pectorals and anterior deltoids, and one tricep movement that concentrates on lockout strength. There should be no more than two exercises per body part. Following *intensity*, you must learn to pack all of your effort into those two movements. If you can do three exercises in one workout, you have not yet learned to completely extend yourself.

Following *specificity*, (which is the law that states that the body adapts to the exact demands placed upon it) the main pressing movement should always be the bench

press in exact competition form. The majority of your time and energy should be placed here. Master the skill of benching. Nothing is more specific to benching than the movement itself. Incline benching is a fine exercise and will strengthen the pressing group of muscles, but it is not 100 per cent transferable to flat bench. Within the flat bench there is no loss because there is no transfer, as you are practicing the exact skill and that is 100 per cent applicable. Simply stated, to get better at benching, you must bench!

A second exercise should accentuate the elbow joint but not completely isolate it. The goal is to learn to use the muscles together in concert to achieve an additive or even synergistic effect. Train them that way. I suggest a narrow grip press with elbows close to the sides, no wider than 45 degrees from the axis. Try to emphasize less shoulder involvement and focus on the lock gradually and pec drive also should be under emphasized. Peak power should occur from just below the sticking point through lockout.

In addition, I recommend NO shoulder work. Nor on this day or any other. It is too easy to overtrain this muscle group because of the intensity and because of the mechanics of pressing. If you need

shoulder work, do it in the off-season along with general conditioning and strengthening. But in season save your power for what will help you most.

The set and rep scheme is as follows: Warm-up as needed but don't fatigue yourself. The idea is to get prepared and not to get tired. Establish a warm up pattern. This pattern should be repeated every workout as well as in competition. It should be pyramidal. **Example: 135x10, 225x10, 315x6, 405x3, 455x1.** At this point you should take several near max singles

465x1, 480x1, and on occasion a max attempt, or if training is going well, a supra max attempt 505x1. DO take frequent near maxes; DON'T take lots of true maxes. Also one other note concerning the warm up that is especially true at meets. Use poundages that require only 45% and 25%. Don't waste time and energy rallying up odd bar loads and hunting for small denomination plates. You have enough to worry about and don't need the trouble. You should be able to go through your warm up on auto pilot. Keep it simple.

That is the actual skill practice portion of the workout. It is like practicing a meet each workout. You will feel totally prepared by the time the real meet rolls around. But

skills this will improve your benching. And for that, I can think of nothing better than pause reps. Pause reps build isometric strength at the bottom which adds to your control and stability. Pause reps also ensure that you are building power at the onset of the press by eliminating bounce, rebound, heave, and muscle stretch reflex. Thus, all the power must be muscle-generated. Finally, this is also what you are required to do under meet conditions and there is no better way to build central drive (motor cortex nerve recruitment in the brain).

Farther from the meet, say more than six to eight weeks, I suggest four sets of six reps with a one second pause. Closer to the meet, switch to triples with just a bit longer pause (1.5 seconds).

For the tricep exercise, only a brief warm up is needed (2 sets) and right to the work. Follow the same pattern (4x6 or 4x3) but without the pause. However this is not to say that the bar should bounce or behave uncontrolled at any time. My rule of thumb is simply that the bar should come down slower than it comes up. Down slow, up fast.

That is it! 4x6 pause out from the meet (for as many weeks as 6 or 8) and 4x3 at 6 weeks in. Off season should be about 8 weeks.

STAY AWAY from the bench. Use this period to develop weak areas. Do general body building movements and hit the rotator cuff muscles. Give the bench a break.

One final point: use your shirt on your near max attempts beginning no later than 6 weeks out. You must practice this skill. I will say it again: practice singles in your shirt well prior to meet day. I would say it again because so many make this mistake but that would be doubly redundant. To prepare properly this can not be overlooked.

This is the exact program I used to go from **400 to 500** and from **500 to 600**. It was also the mainstay from **600** to my attack on **700**. It has never failed to help others. If you try the program try it without alteration. Use it just as outlined. If you feel you need to modify it of course you can to suit your needs, but the program is so basic that it will only tolerate slight modification without becoming a totally foreign entity. Keep in mind that it may be you that needs the modification, not the program. Build your focus, intensity, and confidence in your power. Try it without aberrance. Then if you still feel it necessary, modify it to your taste, but try to keep it's context in fact. I realize there is more than one way to skin a cat. Good luck.

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