

I had been competing on a regular basis, mostly in the single lift Bench Press meets, for about ten years, when a few days after winning the 1991 ADFPA National Police/Fire Bench Press Championships (181 lb. class), at the age of 33, I suffered a heart attack. One week later I went under for a triple bypass. The cause was hereditary factors.

One year later I started training again, hopefully to compete, but this time I had to use all my knowledge and experience in order to hit my max, and not just brute strength. With this approach, I ended my competition in 1992 with a 400 lb. bench press and 1993 with a 450 lb. bench, weighing in the 198 lb. class. In fact, I have become stronger since the heart attack. Why? I have taken the time to sit back, watch and listen to my competitors, and I've tried some of their techniques and some new ones of my own.

In this short article I wish to share the knowledge I have gained, so it may reach another bencher and help him/her in their max on competition day.

#### COMPETITION BENCH:

**PREP:** Bench shirts - make sure you get them on in time to give

# The BENCH

## IRON MASTERS GYM Bench Press Training

as told to POWERLIFTING USA by Dan C. Harvie

yourself a good five minute rest before your attempt. Anyone who has a tight shirt knows it takes a lot of energy just putting one on. Suit straps also should be in place. Belts and wrist wraps should be on loose until your name is called. This way when it's your time to lift everything is in place and you can take your (minute) to concentrate on your body position on the bench and the weight you know you can lift.

**APPROACH:** When approaching the bench all you should be doing is visualizing your lift over and over. **CONTAIN** your energy for the lift, don't be yelling, screaming, getting slapped, banging your head against the wall, this is a waste of good energy/power. Contain



**DAN HARVIE** in his Iron Masters Gym. Dan has further recovered to a 475 bench in the 220 lb. class at the 1994 New England States Bench Press. Dan was the #7 ADFPA Bencher from July 1993 to June 1994.

this energy in your gut and when it's time to press let it explode through your chest and arms into the bar straight up to the ceiling. It works!

**SET UP:** To me this is the most important part, to be practiced over and over during training. Take your time - you probably have 45 seconds to set up. First - hand position; second - bring your body towards your lift off person, plant your feet, and then swing back onto the bench into an arch, move your feet a little to get comfortable and stick your shoulders into the bench. Arch, arch, arch. I can not say this enough, a good arch is worth 25-50 lbs. on your max. It allows a natural groove, and shorter distance, I don't care who it is - an arch will make a difference. Everyone can do it with practice. Last - (my experiment), when the bar is handed to you and you hold it there for a fraction of a second try the "Harv Tuck" which is - bringing the shoulder blades in towards each other. This will lower the bar an inch, bring the chest up an inch, and tighten up the upper body. Try it - IT WORKS.

**THE LIFT:** You now have the bar, use a slow to medium, con-

trolled decent. **THINK LIGHT, STAY TIGHT, HOLD BREATH.** Listen for the command to press, **EXPLODE TOWARDS CEILING**, maintain control, keep in the back of your mind - feet and butt in stable positions. Then wait for **RACK. NO PROBLEM.**

**MISCELLANEOUS TRAINING TIPS:** Even though we all have different ways of training which works for each one of us, here are a few things to keep in mind while training for a bench meet. Use different bars, benches, lift off persons, pause counts. I have never

been to a meet where they are the same and if you are not used to this type of change it can throw you way off. The biggest problem I have seen in lifters is **TRAIN WITH THE ONE HUNDRED POUND PLATES.** Many train with the 45 lb. plates and wonder why they are twenty pounds under their max on competition day. I know a pound is a pound, but lifting with the hundreds makes a difference. My belief is that the hundreds bring the weight in closer so triceps are used more instead of the larger muscle groups - thus making it more difficult. Whatever the reason, try it.

**LAST:** have fun, relax. Only one out of million, like any sport, are going to make money from lifting. I enjoy meeting new people, seeing new places, and exchanging training ideas. Compete against the weight. When you beat it, that's the real high. Good Luck.

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