

TRAINING

The training system for the bench press is the same as the squat which I explained in part 2 of this series. Do you want to bench big? This is no problem, all you have to do is bench press. Since the bench press is the most effective way to train the muscles you need for a big bench it will be the only exercise you use in your training. It incorporates the pectorals muscles, the deltoids, triceps and even the lats. Remember only the bench press works these



James Henderson at the USPF Nationals in '86 in Philadelphia, with 310 kgs. on the bar. (Korte)

press. Use only the minimal amount of energy or effort you need to complete each rep and set. With the percentages between 58 and 64 percent of your projected maximum bench press, there is no need to press the weight through the ceiling. Concentrate on perfect bench press technique. The ESM method will allow you to save enough energy for the last exercise of your workout (the deadlift) and it will also build your confidence for the heavier weights. By using only half of your energy and power for a set with 64 percent of your maximum you will be building a "mental reserve". This "mental reserve" will lead to developing higher confidence for the

Phase I: Week 1-4

High Volume Phase
The intent of phase I is to develop a foundation of strength by using a high training volume. The multiple sets approach is an excellent way of achieving this. The use of so many reps will also improve your neuromuscular coordination and therefore your bench press technique. During this phase you will only use wrist wraps and a powerlifting belt. Always pause your bench reps in a competition fashion.

As with the rest of the 3x3 system you will train three times per week. Make sure to rest one day between the training sessions and two days after the completion of each training week. That extra day off will aid in your recovery. In the bench press you will train a higher volume than for the squat and deadlift. Each workout consists of six to eight sets of six reps. The percentages for phase I are:
Week 1 - 58%
Week 2 - 60%
Week 3 - 62%
Week 4 - 64%

You will stay with each percentage for three workouts and increase it week by week. I recommend that you use the "energy saving method" (ESM-method) (see part 2 of this series for detailed information) for the bench

grips helps you to train the triceps more intensely. I suggest the use of three different grips during the high volume phase: wide (1-2" wider than your normal bench grip), shoulder wide, and close (1-2" closer than your shoulder width bench grip). You will alternate these grips during the eight training sets. You can start with any grip but make sure to use your weakest grip most often. Here is an example for an athlete whose weakest grip is the shoulder wide grip:

1. set: wide grip
2. set: shoulder wide grip
3. set: close grip
4. set: shoulder wide grip
5. set: wide grip
6. set: shoulder wide grip
7. set: close grip
8. set: shoulder wide grip

Phase I: Week 1-4

High Volume Phase: current maximum: 400 lbs., projected maximum: 410 lbs.

Week 1:
Day 1 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 58% of 410 lbs. = 235 lbs.

Day 2 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 58% of 410 lbs. = 235 lbs.
Day 3 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 58% of 410 lbs. = 235 lbs.

Week 2:

Day 1 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Day 3 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 4 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 3:

Day 1 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 62% of 410 lbs. = 255 lbs.
Day 2 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 62% of 410 lbs. = 255 lbs.
Day 3 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 62% of 410 lbs. = 255 lbs.

Week 4:

Day 1 - bench press 6-8 sets of

6 reps with 64% of 410 lbs. = 265 lbs.

Day 2 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 64% of 410 lbs. = 265 lbs.
Day 3 - bench press 6-8 sets of 6 reps with 64% of 410 lbs. = 265 lbs.

Phase II: Week 5-8

The competition Phases:
It will lead to a increased intensity and a decreased volume. You will consequently increase your maximum strength and power week by week and you will also improve your technique. You will get used to the heavy weights slowly but steadily. Use your bench shirt for every heavy lift (1-2 reps) but not for the power training. I recommend a loose shirt for week 1 and 2 and your tight competition shirt for week 3 and 4.

The number of workouts and the off days are the same as in Phase I. The sets and reps for phase II are as follows:
1. The technique and power training is done twice each week. You do five sets of four reps with 60 percent of your projected maximum. The percentage and therefore the weight for the power and technique training will be constant during the whole phase.

Week 1:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 2:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1-2 sets of 1 rep with 80% of 410 lbs. = 330 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 3:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 4:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

2. The maximum strength workout is done once per week. In the first two weeks you do one or two sets of one rep using 80 percent of your projected maximum in week one and 85 percent in week two. In the last two weeks you do only one set of one rep - 90 percent of your projected maximum in week three and 95 percent in week four. I used to bench heavy on my second workout (Wednesday) of each training week, but you can also do it on any other day.
Make sure to use the "energy saving method" (ESM method) in every workout. Put in as much power and strength as you need to complete each rep and concentrate on the perfect technique. Never go higher than 95 percent in training. The "real 100 percent attempts" should be saved for competition.

Phase II: Week 5-8
Competition Phase: Current maximum: 400 lbs., projected max: 410 lbs.

Week 1:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1-2 sets of 1 rep with 80% of 410 lbs. = 330 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 2:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 3:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

Week 4:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 246 lbs.

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Week 2:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1-2 sets of 1 rep with 85% of 410 lbs. = 350 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.

Week 3:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.

Week 4:
Day 1 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.
Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 90% of 410 lbs. = 370 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.

Day 2 - bench 1 set of 1 rep with 95% of 410 lbs. = 390 lbs.
Day 3 - bench 5 sets of 4 reps with 60% of 410 lbs. = 245 lbs.
This series will be continued in the next issue of *Powerlifting USA*. Look for Part 4 - The deadlift: High volume and competition phase. Until then: Train smart and get strong!

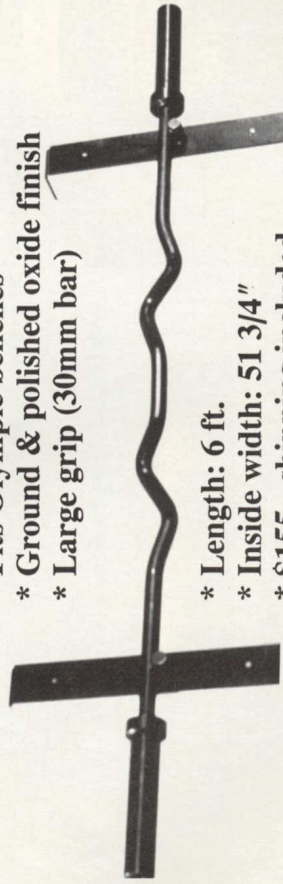
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