

Every powerlifter wants to uncork the biggest and baddest meet lifts he or she is capable of producing. We spend hours of our lives in the gym working, preparing, and rehearsing our skills in an attempt to draw out a truly maximum lift. Many of us are so intent on producing the big single that we neglect to spend enough time laying the foundation. Like a professional singer spending hours on singing scales, a powerlifter must spend months and years strengthening weaknesses and creating the kind of physical conditioning that will be able to cope with the stress of a world class peaking cycle. All of the muscles in the human body are used to balance, stabilize, and propel the three powerlifts. In this article I will describe a simple and direct strength cycle for the bench press. This cycle is ideal for the master lifter or for a lifter that has some difficulties with their shoulders.

There are three principle phases of training in powerlifting. They include: 1. Foundation training which is high volume and light to moderate weight with great variety of exercises. 2. Strength training which is a period of focus on the ability to recruit and maintain strength and endurance, usually in the primary lifts. 3. Peaking training where all of your energy is applied to one or more of the three powerlifts in an attempt to create the biggest single rep attempts. This article is directed at strengthening the bench press by providing a significant amount of work with emphasis on expanding the correct bench press "groove." The groove is the line the bar takes from your chest to lockout in the bench press. A narrow groove provides very little opportunity to produce the biggest bench press single when it counts. A broader groove provides a better

TRAINING

Pre-Peak Strength Training & Conditioning - The Bench Press

as told to PL USA by Greg Reshel of Power Excel

Workout	Grip	Shirt	#Sets	#Reps	Weight(%)
1	competition	N	10	3	65
2	narrow	N	8	6	55
3	wide	N	6	8	55
4	competition	Y	6	3	75
5	competition	N	12	3	65
6	narrow	N	8	8	55
7	wide	N	6	10	55
8	competition	Y	4	4	80
9	competition	N	8	4	65
10	narrow	N	5	7	60
11	wide	N	5	6	60
12	competition	Y	3	5	75
13	competition	Y	6	5	70
14	narrow	N	4	8	60
15	wide	N	4	6	65
16	competition	Y	3	2	90

safety margin to balance a big attempt and drive it to lockout. If you have felt that one or more of your competition benches were light but that you were unable to "groove" the weight and lost the lift, you should try this routine at least once.

If you have had sore shoulders while peaking your bench press you may need to expand your training to include several strength cycles that emphasize a variety of grips and deliveries to take pressure off your shoulders. It is hard on your body to push always heavier in exactly the same pattern. Scar tissue forms and you will cause degradation of the nerve pathways from this chronic overuse. Stimulate new growth and scrape the rust off your

overused competition bench press bar path by using this routine and others that bring variety to your training.

In this routine you will train your bench press twice per week. One of these training sessions will include one upper back exercise performed heavy and four or five shoulder accessory exercises performed in strict form with relatively light weights. The second training session will include one shoulder exercise performed heavy and three or four upper back exercises performed with light weights and strict form.

Joints love volume and light weights in the 25 to 50% weight range. A high volume of work in the 25-50% weight range will increase

joint thickness, provide healing circulation, thicken tendons and ligaments, as well as remove any debris from heavy training. Mature and master lifters should include a large volume of light to moderate accessory work in their training cycles to stimulate and lubricate joints.

Your total volume of accessory work should include 20 to 30 sets of 6-15 repetitions on each of the bench press training sessions each week. The heavy exercise should be 5 to 6 sets of 6 repetitions. The light accessory work should be 4 to 6 sets of 8-15 repetitions. The following table lists the specific bench press work to be performed on each training session. Please remember that you will train twice per week. There are 16 sessions listed for a total of eight training weeks. Work on consistency, balance, and delivery. Use a bench shirt on the days noted in the table.

Follow this strength routine with a 6 week peaking routine in your bench press shirt and watch your bench press explode.

If you have any questions about this article call or write to: Power Excel, 2807 South Superior St., Milwaukee, WI 53207, (414)769-1211.

We are currently working on developing a series or library of training booklets. These booklets will include specific types of training routines: Off-Season, Strength, Conditioning, Peaking, and Rehabilitation. They can be used as training guides and notebooks for you to store your training diary information. Look for these training booklets to be available this fall. We still provide tailor-made training routines to give you all the exercises, sets, reps, and weights you need to make the gains you are looking for. Call us today!