

Every lifter is in search of the best assistance exercises to help keep those gains coming on the 3 powerlifts. I've found that a great assistance move for the bench is the feet off the floor variation. Very simply described, this variation is just like the regular bench except your back is flat on the bench with your feet off the ground above the bench with the ankles crossed.

This variation accomplishes several things. One, it isolates the upper body by taking away any assistance your legs can provide. In the regular bench, the legs provide extra stability and pushing power to the lift. With this style, your upper body must stabilize and lift the entire weight of the bar. Obviously, you will not be able to use as much weight as you do in the regular bench. This forces your upper body to develop the stabilizing muscles used in the lift to a higher degree. When you return to the regular bench, less energy and power will be used control the weight from start to completion, leaving more power for the descent and the press up. Control of the weight in any of the powerlifts is half the battle.

Next, this style does not stress the spine like the competitive bench does. Many lifters arch, as they should, to get maximum leverage

# THE BENCH

## THE "FEET OFF THE FLOOR" BENCH PRESS by Doug Daniels



*Feet Off Floor Bench Press illustrated by Bob Hillegonds (Daniels)*

and reduce the distance the bar must be pressed. Over a period of time, this can really add up on the

spine and lumbar discs. Giving your back a break from arching can mean a longer lifter career with less pain

and injuries. That should be a goal of every lifter. Also, if you're suffering through a back problem, this variation may enable you to get some productive bench work in the mean time. Check with a health professional first though.

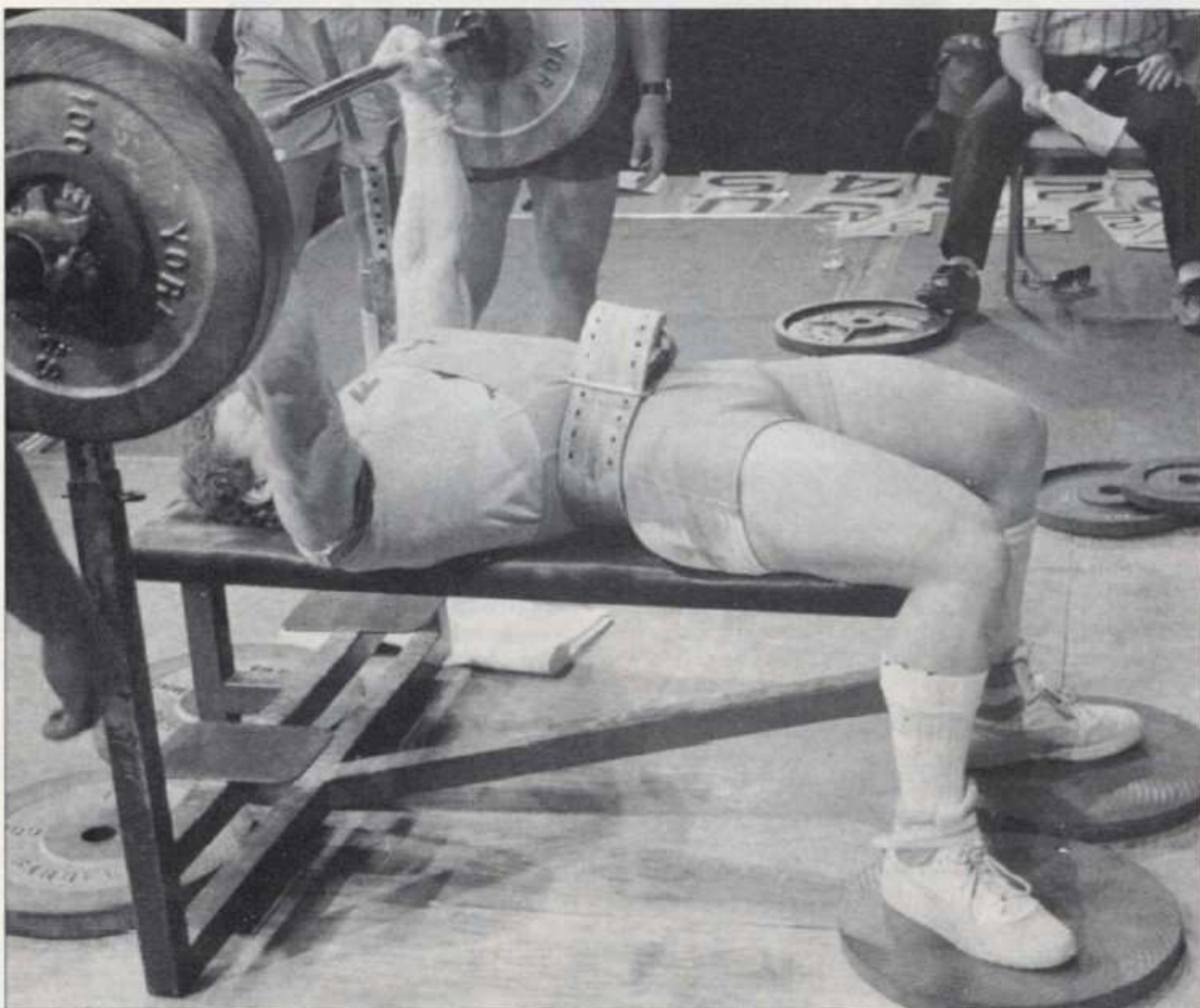
This variation also injects some variety into your routine. This is a great move to use as a substitute for the bench in your off season. You can sub this variation for the bench in your training up to about 6 weeks prior to a meet. Some lifters who may need more or less time to adjust back to competitive style may have to alter this time frame to fit their needs.

It can also be used along with regular benches as a down set or finisher. I don't advise going below 3 reps with this move because of the decreased stability. Use about 30% less weight at first to break into the feel of this variation. The balance will be different and going too hard too fast may cause an injury. Have your spotter be alert and have him inform you if you are pushing crooked or out of the groove. If you bench with your butt off the bench so high you can drive a VW Bug under it, you will notice a big difference in the weight you can use safely. Keeping your back flat and your feet off the floor allow for maximum strictness.

Don't swing your legs to gain extra leverage or you'll just defeat the purpose of the move. This will also give you a better indication of your true benching power, especially if you cheat a lot.

This bench variation allows the same variations that the regular bench does like close grips, wide grips, benches to the neck, etc., so extra variety is available here too. Of course, don't go hog wild and do every type of variation you can think of, remember it's quality, not quantity, that really counts.

Give the feet off the floor bench a try in the off season. You'll have to use less weight, but the benefits will be worth it. In future articles I will be examining other effective assistance exercises and the best ways to get the most out of them, so keep reading PL USA.



*Stabilizers, like the legs, are important when you're pushing 2 1/2 times your bodyweight overhead, like Ed Coan.*