

# STARTIN' OUT

A special section  
dedicated to the  
beginning lifter

## Bench Press Primer, Part I as told to Powerlifting USA by DOUG DANIELS

days:

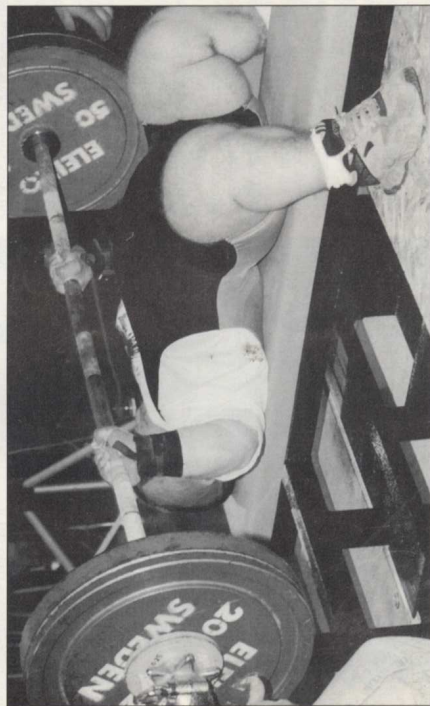
**Week 1:** 135 x 8, 155 x 6, 185 to failure, 175 to failure, 165 to failure. **Week 2:** 135 x 8, 165 x 6, 190 to failure, 180 to failure, 170 to failure. **Week 3:** 135 x 8, 175 to failure, 185 to failure, 185 to failure, 180 x 6, 200 to failure, 190 to failure, 180 to failure. **Week 4:** 135 x 8, 180 x 6, 200 to failure, 190 to failure, 180 to failure. **Week 5:** 135 x 8, 185 x 6, 205 to failure, 195 to failure, 185 to failure. **Week 6:** 135 x 8, 185 x 6, 210 to failure, 200 to failure, 190 to failure. **Week 7:** 135 x 8, 185 x 8, 215 to failure, 205 to failure, 195 to failure. **Week 8:** 135 x 8, 185 x 8, 220 to failure, 210 to failure, 200 to failure.

On the 'light' days use 20 pounds less on each of the last 3 sets of the 'heavy' day. Go only to about 80% of failure. For example, if you fail on your 'light' day you can get 10 reps with 190, do only 8 reps. Remember, you may not be able to recover for the next heavy workout if you go all out on two days. Recovery is key. We don't want to over-train.

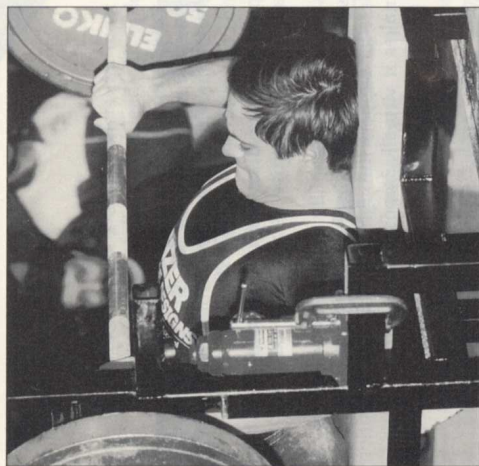
Week 1 light day would be: 135

To progress in any endeavor, the basics of the discipline are an invaluable base to build from. For many lifters, however, their knowledge of the basics may be a little weak. Some start with good intentions and then their practices degenerate. Others start off on the wrong foot. This adds up to less than desired results and frustration. Many articles on powerlifting assume a certain degree of knowledge of the sport. This represents a large percentage of our readership, but many readers are novices, looking for basic information they can use to get up to speed. Ask a large group of lifters which lift they would most like to excel in and the answer would be the bench press, by far. Many lifters specialize in the bench press and don't even train the other 2 lifts hard at all. In this article I'll discuss the basics of the bench press and hopefully provide sound, basic information that novices can use as well as more experienced lifters who feel they can benefit from a little regrouping.

The prime muscle groups used in the bench are the chest, anterior or frontal shoulder and triceps. The lats and biceps are involved to a lesser extent as they act as stabilizers during the movement. Also heavily involved in proper benching are the legs and hips. Yes, the bench press, performed at optimal technique, is really a whole body movement. I'll explore that later, so don't think lifting your butt one foot off the bench is okay. That's the type of lifting that is good only for red lights at a meet. You can assume that lifters guilty of this act means train like that in the gym. The opposite also applies; your training style carries over to your competi-



1997 IPF World Bench Press Champion Andrzej Stanaszek of Poland uses blocks to stabilize his feet.



Alexei Sivokon won both the '97 IPF Bench Press and PL World titles

done in a heavy/light fashion and your bench will flourish like never before. No need for flies, dips, laterals, inclines, French presses, kickbacks and the like. I know that many of you out there who do a heck of a lot more, but you will gain with less actual work provided you work hard and regularly. Keep it simple and remember it's quality that counts, not quantity.

Earlier I mentioned the legs and hips were involved in the bench press. They are the foundation of your pushing power. Try this as an example. Bench with your feet off the floor and you'll see what I mean. You have no stability and it's hard to control the weight and controlling

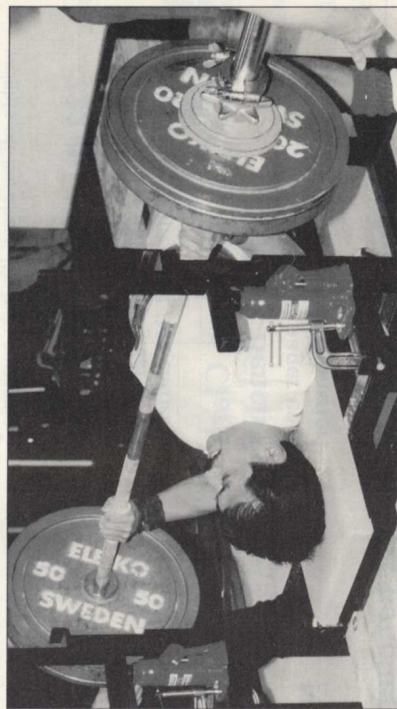
the weight is half the battle. Positioning is the key here. Many novice lifters lay flat on the bench with their feet out in line with the bench. On little, if any, weight on them. On hard reps you can see their feet sliding away as they think this will help get the weight up. Far from it, this creates position of poor leverage and increases potential for injury.

Assuming some degree of arch on the bench is important to getting a bigger bench. If you have a back problem, consult your doctor. Arching will get your chest higher off the bench and will not only reduce the distance the bar will travel but will add the back, hip and leg muscles to the press. To arch, get your chin into your chest and your hips into your chest from the other direction. This will result in getting the small of your back off the bench. Flexibility is the limiting factor here, but try for some degree of arching. In addition, get your feet more nearly "under" your body. This adds a great degree of stability to the lift. Keep your feet flat. Flexibility again helps here. With your feet under you and a good solid arch, your butt will not come off the bench when you put weight on your feet and drive the weight off your chest. There should be no actual movement of your butt, as it is illegal in official competition. The bar should come in contact at the chest at nipple level. Most newer lifters hit their chest too close to the neck. By hitting the chest at nipple level and arching the bar is at its highest point and travels the least distance to lock out. You can lift more a shorter distance than a longer. Sounds like common sense, it is. Re-read that sentence and put it into action.

There's a lot more to the bench press. Next time we will look at the

other techniques you can use to get better results. We'll also examine lifting gear that can improve results. Lastly, we'll examine more specific training routines to increase your bench press. We'll then get into some competitive rules and, as usual, everything will be with the novice lifter in mind. Until then, train hard, train smart.

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Hiro Isagawa (who is responsible for these line photographs) is literally a "master" of the classically efficient wide grip bench pressing style, which brought him another IPF World title in Lecluc, Canada.

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