

TRAINING

BENCH PRESS PYRAMID

Training Alternatives Revisited

as told to PL USA by Greg Reshel, Power Excel

There are three major components to the success of any strength training cycle. First, you must work hard by gradually increasing volume of work and decreasing the time needed to accomplish that work. This strength training allows you to successfully accomplish a cycle of steadily increasing loads (peaking cycle). Secondly, you must rest. You need physical, emotional, and mental rest to sufficiently recover from hard training. The hard training tears down the muscles while the rest process rebuilds them stronger than before. Thirdly, you must eat. You need adequate nutritional balance as well as sufficient calories to recover from training and to increase your metabolic functions to improve healing and growth functions of your body. Every athlete must pay close attention to each of these three factors if you will make steady progress toward your goals.

The questions that most athletes will ask, especially after reaching their first plateau, is "How do I maintain the level of progress I need to achieve my goals?" We at Power Excel believe the key lies in variety. Our bodies will eventually adapt to any program at some point. Once you adapt you will no longer make appreciable or satisfactory progress on that routine. You need to vary the routine to maintain the rate of progress. After a year or more of hard work you will be able to return to the program that had plateaued and again make progress on that routine. It is not necessary for every individual program to produce gains in absolute performance. Many programs will establish deeper foundation in muscular balance and enhancement of the recovery process so that subsequent programs or a previously successful program will be much more successful.

This month we will look at a pyramid training routine for the bench press. You will work for 10 weeks to peak your bench press. This cycle is especially good for an off-season peak in that there is a lot of work involved. I recommend that you bench press twice per week. On the light day you must concen-

trate on accessory work, i.e. inclines, declines, flyes, dumbbell presses, etc. On the heavy day just follow the chart that is listed. If you have a current personal best, a 1RM, between 200 lb. and 400 lb., you will be able to plug your current best into the 1 rep max (1RM) percentage column and follow the next lowest plate total. Example: 275 lb. x 70% = 192.5 lb., which is not a regular weight on a bar, so take the next lower number 190 lb. and work with that weight. If your max is less than 200 lb. you may have to increase the weight on the lighter rep sets. If your max is over 400 lb. you may need to drop the lighter sets somewhat. Follow the figures you get from plugging your 1RM into the chart. You will get 5-10% stronger over a 10 week period.

Remember the program this month is not designed to peak you for the top meet of the season but rather to deepen your strength and

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conditioning and prepare you for a peak performance cycle. You may not establish a personal best on this cycle, but we guarantee that you will be stronger and in better condition.

I am not including related accessory work because accessory work is specific to the individual athlete and this program will focus on the bench press exercise itself.

Week #	Set #1 % 1RM	Set #2 % 1RM	Set #3 % 1RM	Set #4 % 1RM
Week 1	10 reps @ 60%	7 reps @ 66%	5 reps @ 72%	3 reps @ 80%
Week 2	10 reps @ 50%	5 reps @ 65%	3 reps @ 78%	1 rep @ 85%
Week 3	3x8 reps @ 55%	6 reps @ 70%	4 reps @ 76%	2 reps @ 85%
Week 4	3x5 reps @ 55%	3x3 reps @ 75%	3x2 reps @ 82%	3x1 rep @ 90%
Week 5	10 reps @ 62%	7 reps @ 68%	5 reps @ 75%	3 reps @ 85%
Week 6	10 reps @ 53%	5 reps @ 68%	3 reps @ 81%	1 rep @ 88%
Week 7	3x8 reps @ 58%	6 reps @ 73%	4 reps @ 80%	2 reps @ 88%
Week 8	3x5 reps @ 60%	3x3 reps @ 78%	3x2 reps @ 85%	3x1 rep @ 93%
Week 9	Warm up to 85%	1 rep @ 90%	3 reps @ 85%	5 reps @ 80%
Week 10	Warmup to 85%	1 rep @ 94%	1 rep @ 101%	1 rep @ 108%