

There are significant differences between beginning and advanced lifters. Beginners seem to make gains relatively easily, and these gains are usually quite dramatic. The advanced lifter sees gains coming more slowly and at times struggles with plateaus. This difficulty in making steady gains can be quite frustrating to the advanced lifter, and these slower gains often lead the lifter to believe that she has reached her peak. We have found, however, that this is not necessarily the case.

A lifter must not only have strength, but she must also learn how to recruit her muscles in proper sequence in order to lift maximum poundages. We call this developing a proper nerve path. When a beginner learns the basic moves for the powerlifts, she is starting with limitations to her physique, for example, lack of muscular development or coordination. Her nerve path then will be dictated by her structure at that particular time. As she progresses, she will see better muscle development, improved coordination, and increases in strength. Along with changes that occur in the lifter's physique over time, changes must also be made in her timing and delivery - that is to the specific nerve paths for each of her performance lifts. If adjustments are not made to accommodate the recent changes in a lifter's physique and relative strength levels, as she progresses through years of training the athlete will reach a point where no further gains are made.

In order for the advanced lifter to continue making progress, she



Dawn Sharon is in off-season training, but is still capable of massive poundages. Dawn, along with husband Asher, and Greg Reshel comprise Power Excel, Inc.

THE BENCH

Advanced Women's Program as told to Powerlifting USA by Dawn Sharon

must be willing to take a few steps back in order to take the next step forward. This can be both a blessing and a curse. It is imperative to actually destroy the lifter's old nerve path in order to build a new one. Once we have established a nerve path, it is difficult to change it. Our brain is like a computer, storing in its memory the sequence of muscle firing for a particular lift. This is advantageous, for the lifter learns to go on automatic and can therefore lift a max attempt with confidence. When a plateau is reached, we need to scramble that memory and start over. This will severely test the lifter's confidence and patience but is well worth the effort. The athlete must remove all expectations and be willing to think of herself as a beginner again. She must accept the fact that for a period of time she will no longer be able to bench her best and any near max attempts made before the period of adjustment to the new technique has been completed will be frustrating at best. This failure is actually a blessing in disguise, for the lifter is establishing a new nerve path and is training her mind and body to execute the lift in a new and functionally stronger pathway. Over time, she will observe greater improvement in strength and also greater balance in her musculature.

The routine that follows will offer the advanced lifter a chance to break through peaks and continue making gains, while remaining free of injury. In order to utilize the following routine an advanced lifter must take the time to carefully analyze their technique for strength and weakness and make adjustments in grip, hand spacing, delivery, and/or foundation development. The initial seven weeks of training will afford the lifter the opportunity to rehearse their new technique and sort out the "bugs" in it. The second sequence will make use of the recovery overtraining of the first phase and will use the residual effect to increase the performance of the second phase. When utilized properly this routine is one of a number of routines that will allow an advanced lifter the opportunity to make changes to their technique and overcome plateaus. We are assuming that the athlete has been benching in the region of 230-250 lbs. for

more than 18 months. We are assuming that the athlete trains for 3-6 times per week, and has just completed an off season foundation cycle to adjust her performance technique.

Our program is designed for an athlete that competes at 165 and over, with a 12 week duration. The first seven weeks involve a rotation of 3 types of workouts that you repeat in order regardless of whether you train 3 days, 4 days, or more per week. Weeks 8-12 has the lifter training her bench twice per week and follows a chart.

Daily Workouts - pattern of 3 routines that will be rotated every workout day. Used for the first 7 weeks.

1. 95x6 reps x 3 sets, 115x3, 135x2 reps x 3 sets, 85x8
2. 75x5 reps x 3 sets, 115x1, 135x1, 155x1, 175x1, 95x8.
3. 95x5 reps x 3 sets, 135x2, 165x

3 reps x 6 sets. Note: The initial pattern overtrains the prime movers by its volume and frequency.

Peaking Pattern for weeks 8-12 workouts are twice per week.

Week 8: Workout 1- 65x10, 95x8, 115x5, 140x3, 115x10. Workout 2- 95x5x2 sets, 125x1, 150x1, 175x2x3 sets, 115x10.

Week 9: Workout 1- 65x10, 95x8, 115x5, 140x3, 115x10. Workout 2- 95x5x2 sets, 135x1, 150x1, 175x2x3 sets, 115x10.

Week 10: Workout 1- 65x10, 95x8, 115x6, 140x4, 115x10. Workout 2- 95x5x2 sets, 135x2, 150x2, 175x3x3 sets, 115x10.

Week 11: Workout 1- 65x10, 95x8, 115x6, 140x5, 115x10. Workout 2- 95x5x2 sets, 135x2, 150x2, 175x3x3 sets, 115x10.

Week 12: Workout 1- 65x10, 95x5, 115x2, 140x1x3 sets. **Meet:** 75x5x2 sets, 115x1, 145x1, 165x1, Open-215. 2nd-240. 3rd-265.

Please remember that in order to be your best, you must remain positive and keep a flexible attitude with regards to your training. Be willing to make changes that will not get you immediate results, but will keep you in the game for the long haul. Best of luck, and please contact me with any concerns you may have. Dawn Sharon

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Dawn Sharon - Asher Sharon - Greg Reshel