

TRAINING

How Many Workouts? as told by Louie Simmons, Westside Barbell

How many times a week should you work out? Some lifters train 3 times a week, but complain about slow progress. The Bulgarians train up to 28 times a week, and the Russians 12-16 times a week. How do they do this?

The Bulgarians have a supersystem that requires up to 28 workouts a week, and they max out in most of them. Bulgaria is a relatively small country, and their lifters will eventually go through the national team facility, where there is one main coach.

They follow one program. More fall to make the team than succeed. Most are built similarly. All this accounts for their success. Their training system is very controlled. They are built to squat and pull, so as to handle the large loads required of them by the coach. Their major exercises number 6-8. Of course, that is all that are needed if you are built to lift. Can you imagine how many are turned away because they need special exercises to fortify their competitive lifts?

The former Soviet countries use a quite different approach. Because they have several training facilities and many coaches with different training philosophies. Thus, the number of exercises is much greater. One coach chooses a list of exercises for his group, while a different coach has a different set of exercises. Eventually the lifters will mix and match until each finds a series or several series of special exercises to use throughout the year to enhance the classical lifts. Unlike the Bulgarians, the Soviets may do as many as 50 exercises to increase their lifts. This is known as the conjugate method.

At Westside we follow the Russian system to help the powerlifters. Our base program is 4 workouts with barbells a week. Two are for explosive and accelerating work, one workout each for the squat and bench. Two are for absolute strength, one for the bench and one that is a companion workout for the squat and deadlift.

For many of us, special workouts for the squat and deadlift account for 4-5 additional workouts. These workouts also include ab

other 4 days, the weight will range from bodyweight to 45 pounds. The total reps are 40-60.

A type of special work is partial arched deadlifts. With a shoulder width stance and hands spaced slightly wider, lift the bar to an upright position. Now drop the bar to just below the knees and catch it, then return to starting position. Always push the glutes rearward and keep the shins vertical. On off days, do 2 sets of 20 reps with roughly 30-40% of your 1 rep max deadlift. Only do this for 1-2 weeks and then switch.

It is quite common to see some of our lifters come back to the gym and do belt squats. We now use a special belt squat machine to do these. There is no stress on the spine, and if you eccentrically, you will not experience much soreness. The workload should be approximately 60% of the special work that was done in the major workout in the morning. This is a version of the 60% rule.

After only 2-3 months, your work capacity has risen considerably. The workouts have just talked about, walking, reverse hoppers, calf/ham/glute raises, for the most part do not place any pressure on the spine and are essential for those who wish to raise their general physical preparedness. If you expect to become stronger, you must do more work. It's that simple. No, you will not become overtrained, instead you will adapt to a gradual increase in your workload.

Pick your exercises carefully and rotate them as often as possible to keep from getting bored. This is the conjugate method.

At first if 600 feet of walking is killing you, just stay there for a workout or two, but then raise your work slightly. You will adapt rapidly and so will your total.

What about raising work capacity for the bench press? Even Joe Weider knew that if you have a lagging body part, working it 2 days in a row would cause an increase in size. It is also true that if you are in a strength slump, coming back the next day after bench pressing and doing more lat or triceps work can



Joe Amato went from a 500 to an 865 squat by adding special workouts for his lower back. (Louie)

attached to a chain to your belt; (2) walking backward; (3) squatting down facing the weight and with the arms stretched, stand up and pull the weight toward yourself simultaneously; (4) standing straight up with outstretched arms, pull the weight toward you; this method is all back, while method 3 is a combination of back and legs; (5) bending down facing away from the weight with the rope or chain held behind your legs at knee level or lower, walk forward. This is all hamstring and glute.

How can we do so much work walking? It is all concentric, not eccentric (which causes most soreness). It also works as restoration. This type of work will only raise your work capacity, not destroy it. In place of walking you can do calf/ham/glute raises. On squat and deadlift day do heavy sets of 5 reps. It is common for many here to do 100-125 pounds for 5 sets of 5 reps, after warming up. On the

make your bench come alive. Geno Cardl was stuck at a 402 bench forever. We decided to have him come in a day after his regular workout day and do 2 sets of medium grip benches for 20 reps with 185. He would do this for 2 weeks and then do his normal routine for 2 weeks. His bench press took off in 7 month period, hitting at two separate meets a 435 and a 462, a 57 pound increase.

If you have a similar problem, first decide which muscle group is failing you. Then work that group and only that group on the day after your regular workout. For example, if your delts are lagging, do delt raises only, not pressing. Pressing of any kind requires other muscle groups, such as the triceps and pecs, to be worked, and these may be receiving too much work already.

Do the special work for your lagging muscle group the day after you bench (or squat for lower body muscle groups) and do only about 60% of the work on that particular muscle that was done on your regular bench (squat) day. This will not overtrain you. Rather, it will bring up the weak link in line with the other muscle groups.

It is common for wrestlers to work their neck before every workout, and their necks only get stron-

ger. Also, have you ever watched a pay-for-view fight? They often show the main event fighters warming up 20 minutes before the first fight. If I did that, I would have to be carried into the ring and, shortly after the bell, carried out again. Why? I'm not in shape to box, they are. The same holds true for powerlifters. You must be in shape. If a little extra workout affects your next workout, then you are out of shape. Most lifters don't do the type of workouts that get you in shape and keep you that way all year long. It's common for today's pro ball players to stay in condition all year long. Times are a changin', so keep up.

Let's review. Your extra workouts should consist of special exercises, not the competitive lifts. They should be about 60% of the volume of the special work done in your major squat, bench, or deadlift workout. In this way, you can work on what's weak, for example, hamstrings, glutes, delts, or triceps. It is best to do a small workout the day after a high volume day. It is easy to add 4 low volume workouts to your 4 major workout days by using special exercises at 60% of the special work done on the major workout day.

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