

BENCH PRESSING FOR ATHLETES

BY MATT VINCENT

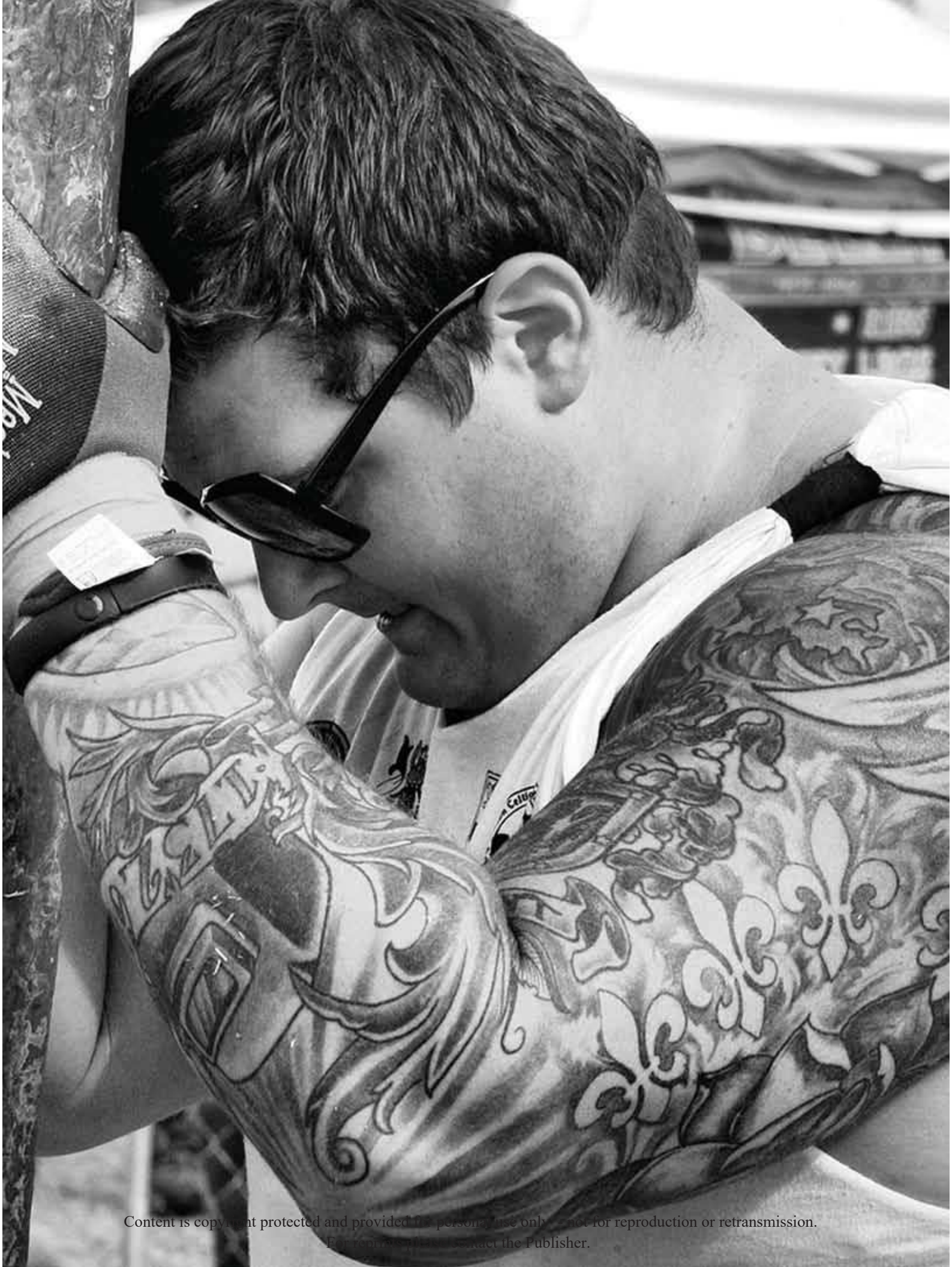
The bench press is arguably the most popular lift. It is a common ground we all share – whether we like it or not. I guarantee that no matter what male you are speaking to, from a pro athlete to a high school kid just getting a feel for the training, “How much ya bench?” is going to translate and bring us all together. The bench is not only popular, but it is also one of the most important lifts that an athlete can master. No matter the sport, benching can aid you in your performance.

The first thing I recommend for would-be benchers is learning how to properly bench. I am really thankful for the years that I spent pursuing powerlifting and learning how to perform the bench press properly. The bench, like the squat and the deadlift, is a very technical lift when done correctly. Doing it correctly also reduces the risk of injury.

The basic steps are pulling your shoulders together and driving your traps into the bench. Pull the bar apart to engage your lats. Drive the weight up while pushing through your heels to transfer your power into the bar. There are great videos online showing how to bench, and I recommend viewing them.

Matt setting up for the Caber Toss







56 lbs. weight, height of 17 feet.



Turning 125 lb. caber 20 feet

Benching for athletes is important for developing upper body strength. Athletes should make time spent in the gym as efficient as possible, since it is all general physical preparedness. What athletes do in the weight room is designed to transfer to the field. Benching helps develop strength in the upper back, chest, shoulders and triceps. When performed correctly, it is a full-body lift and teaches athletes how to use every-

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thing at the same time and in the order that they want it to. Building strength in these areas is going to benefit any athlete.

Accessories for the bench that help athletes the most are other big multi-joint movements. Dips, pull-ups, overhead pressing and Kroc rows are going to be the best bang for your buck. Programming these is also easy. Set training up in a four-day-per-week training split or break it down to two days a week for later season or older lifter training to make strength gains. Each training session is two to three main lifts and two accessory lifts. This is the best way to make strength gains for athletes and still have time to work on sport-specific training the other days.

One of the biggest things lifters can do to improve their bench is to get stronger pressing overhead. No matter if you're push-pressing — my favorite for athletes because it forces leg drive, timing and keeping the core tight and strong — strict pressing or performing jerks, this will translate into pressing power. Eventually, when you improve your bench form, it will mimic the push press in terms of staying tight and using leg drive to move the bar. All of the main lifts are full-body movements, and that is why athletes benefit from them.

By coupling main lifts like bench with overhead pressing, you are covering all of your bases. The accessory

Three days a week

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Main lift/accessory	Squat/good morning bench/Kroc rows, dips	Snatch/snatch pulls Clean/clean pulls	Deadlift/good morning Overhead press/pull-ups, dips
Week 1 main/acc	5x5 @ 85% / 3 x 10	5x3 @ 75% / 3x5@85	5x5 @ 85% / 3x 10
Week 2	5x5 @ 90% / 3 x 10	5x3 @ 80% / 3x5@90	5x5 @ 90% / 3 x 10
Week 3	5x3 @ 95% / 3 x 10	5x2 @ 85% / 3x5@95	5x3 @ 95% / 3 x 10
Week 4	5x1 @ 100% / 3 x 10	5x1 @ 90% / 3x5@100	5x1 @ 100% / 3 x 10
Week 5	3x10 @50% / 3 x 10	3x5 @50% / 3x5@50	3x10 @50% / 3 x 10

Two days a week

	Day 1	Day 2
Main lift/accessory	Squat/good morning Bench/Kroc rows, dips *Snatch or snatch pulls	Deadlift/good morning Overhead press/pull-ups, dips *Cleans or clean pulls
Week 1	5x5 @ 85% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 75% or 3x5 @ 85	5x5 @ 85% / 3x 10 *5x3 @ 75% or 3x5 @ 85
Week 2	5x5 @ 90% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 80% or 3x5 @ 90	5x5 @ 90% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 80% or 3x5 @ 90
Week 3	5x3 @ 95% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 85% or 3x5 @ 95	5x3 @ 95% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 85% or 3x5 @ 95
Week 4	5x1 @ 100% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 90% or 3x5 @ 100	5x1 @ 100% / 3 x 10 *5x3 @ 90% or 3x5 @ 100
Week 5	3x10 @50% / 3 x 10	3x10 @ 50% / 3 x 10

*I recommend using some type of Olympic lift for all strength athletes. However, clean/snatch pulls are going to be just as beneficial for making strength gains.



APEX

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Cleaning 401 lbs. at the So-rinex weightlifting meet.

movements will push the opposite of the lift. If you are benching, performing a horizontal push, then you will do rows and carry out a horizontal pull to complement it. This is the same for overhead pressing and pull-ups. Dips are great for both lifts and strengthening the

make the actual strength gains, this will be a weight you can handle whether you are healthy or tired. This also reduces the chance of missed lifts and injury. Injuries occurring while training due to poor programming are completely avoidable and unforgiveable. Use this

formula, check the ego and do the work. The gains will come and continue to grow steadily. Push your rep maxes at the prescribed weight on the last set to test yourself. De-load on last week by doing three light sets of 10 at 50 percent to keep active and promote recovery. **PM**

“WHEN YOU IMPROVE YOUR BENCH FORM, IT WILL MIMIC THE PUSH PRESS IN TERMS OF STAYING TIGHT AND USING LEG DRIVE TO MOVE THE BAR”

entire shoulder girdle all at once. Having this area bulletproof and strong is going to adapt to any sport.

Base your percentages off of your training max (90 percent of actual max). This will accomplish a few things for athletes. Since the multiple sets of five and three are where you are going to



Throwing 56 lbs. for a distance of 48 feet, 2”.