



JUGGERNAUT

# BENCH MANUAL

TRAINING, PROGRAMMING, AND TIPS FROM  
THE STRONGEST TEAM IN THE WORLD



# JUGGERNAUT BENCH MANUAL

BECOME UNSTOPPABLE

*by* TEAM JUGGERNAUT

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## BENCH 101

BY BRANDON LILLY

Everyone that touches a barbell learns to bench press. The single most common question in any gym is “How much ya bench?” So with that in mind, we made a video covering the basics you will need to become a good bench presser. These tips are nothing earth shattering, but in my time as a lifter they are they are what have

allowed me to bench 573 lbs. in raw competition, and 832 lbs. in geared competition. They are:

## **SET UP**

When setting up, find a foot position that allows your knee joint to fall in line lower than your hip joint. This will maximize leg drive, and prevent your butt from elevating off the bench resulting in a disqualified lift.

Get as high on your “traps” as you can, and squeeze your shoulder blades together. This will push the sternum upward shortening the distance you will press.

When you grab the bar, grab where the bar is most comfortable for you, and really squeeze the bar. A wider grip will shorten your range of motion, but sometimes a narrower grip will give you more power, so be ready to experiment.

Lastly, just before the bar is handed to you, make sure you get a huge amount of air, and hold it. You want your belly to be as full as possible when trying to bench big.

## **THE MOVEMENT**

Once the bar is out over your face, you want to lower the bar in a straight line, in the hopes you will press the bar up in a straight line. To do this, slightly tuck the elbows, and really flare the lats. If you do not feel the barbell coming down on your lats, you are out of line.

As the bar nears your chest begin to drive down hard with your feet, and elevate your stomach as much as possible. A good command for this is “meet the bar”. Lots of guys drift away from the bar, but top benchers want to meet it.

Once the bar touches your chest and you get the “PRESS” command you want to push “back” with your feet so you are pushing your head off the bench as this will rotate your sternum up, engage the lats, and allow you to push straight up.

About midway up the lift the triceps will really kick in, so do not allow your elbows to rotate outward, or you will lose the maximum potential of your triceps.

Once the bar is locked out, wait for your “RACK” command and lower it into the racks.



If the bar slows down, squeeze the bar harder and start pulling the bar “apart” as if you were trying to stretch it, and that will keep your triceps engaged and pressing.

No one ever achieves “perfect” form, but if you follow these steps, and the steps outlined in the video you will sure save a lot of time on trial and error, and be able to focus on a bigger and better bench press immediately.

### **CLICK TO IMPROVE YOUR BENCH TECHNIQUE WITH ONE OF THE WORLD’S TOP BENCHERS**

Brandon Lilly is very well traveled, Elite powerlifter. He has trained at Guerrilla Squad Barbell, Westside Barbell, Lexen Xtreme, and is now home at Berea Barbell. In his strength journey he has competed in bodybuilding, strongman, and powerlifting. Brandon is one of only 19 men to ever total over 2200 raw, having 2204 which ties him for 16th all time (826.5 squat, 573 bench, 804.5 Deadlift). He also amassed a 2612 total in Multi-Ply, and has best lifts of 1008 squat, 832 bench press, and 771 Deadlift. Brandon is the author of The Cube Method and is aiming to create a paradigm shift in the Powerlifting world.

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## THE QUEST FOR 500

BY DAN GREEN

Last year on December 1st I was slated to turn 30. And like any reasonable gentleman of leisure, I was interested in moving on from a youth of sub-500 benching and into the ranks of respectable men who bench 500. And I was interested in doing so with an exemplary bloat to match what was to be a festive birthday.

Now I suppose that for many, 30 is viewed in a negative light—an opportunity to look back and wonder what you’ve done with yourself and why are you still living at home, but I have to say I was looking



forward to it. But 30 excited me. With the wisdom and experience I'd gained during my 20s, it became clear exactly what I was going to have to do to stop dicking around and hit that 500 bench. So here then is the process by which I brought my bench from 485 in September to 510 by my birthday.

Over the years, I'd spent countless sessions training touch and go for maxes or for high reps, board presses, band presses, DBs at all angles. These all had their place and with skull crushers and tricep work added on top they gave me the size and foundation to really set myself up for some exciting gains on bench later. But I'd developed a great deal of strength in my triceps and not as much with my chest. It was after I focused on training the chest and cut out all the fancy speed and lockout work that my bench started going crazy!

I'd started following the workout that my training partner had been given by his coach, and it really was working consistently. All it was, was a series of heavy paused reps on the bench followed by "speed training" or as I like to describe it "a lot of damn work". In the beginning I then went on to some wide grip reps which were also paused. These really helped with technique and building the chest and delts into the lift.

Then, what really gave me the confidence to know I'd be able to progress my bench was how I'd succeeded continually in the layout of my programming. For the most part it's anything BUT complicated —simple linear progression! Each week I'd just add 5 or sometimes

10 pounds to my top weight. I'd do as many reps as I could for the first set, making it a point not to fail on the bench. I'd then repeat the set and if I felt good repeat it again. So after I'd made a top bench of 485 paused I began again back down at 425. I was able to pause and press this weight for 5 reps and then repeat for two more sets of five. All I had to do was compare what I was hitting to what I'd done in the past and either beat the reps at a given weight, lift a heavier weight for the same rep count, or even just match the weight and reps but do it for more sets! If I just did any of these, I knew objectively I'd hit a PR and was steadily progressing on to a new 1RM!

And each week—to ensure the body was always ready for the following week's minor improvements—I'd work harder and harder on the touch and go benching! But instead of a light weight and focusing on bar speed, I was using a heavy weight and focusing on bar speed. It was always lighter than the paused reps done for the top sets but not by much. I tried to focus on lowering the weight rapidly, touching the same spot at the base of the sternum and then driving up and flaring the elbows to engage the chest and delts.

After this initial workout where I'd hit 430 for 3 sets of 5 paused reps I moved on to 410 for speed reps to the tune of 6 sets of 4 reps. But then the workout stopped! While the paused reps allowed me to work on the technique I'd need for a meet and getting a strong chest and leg drive, the touch and go reps allowed me to really build the brute strength needed to grind through weights as

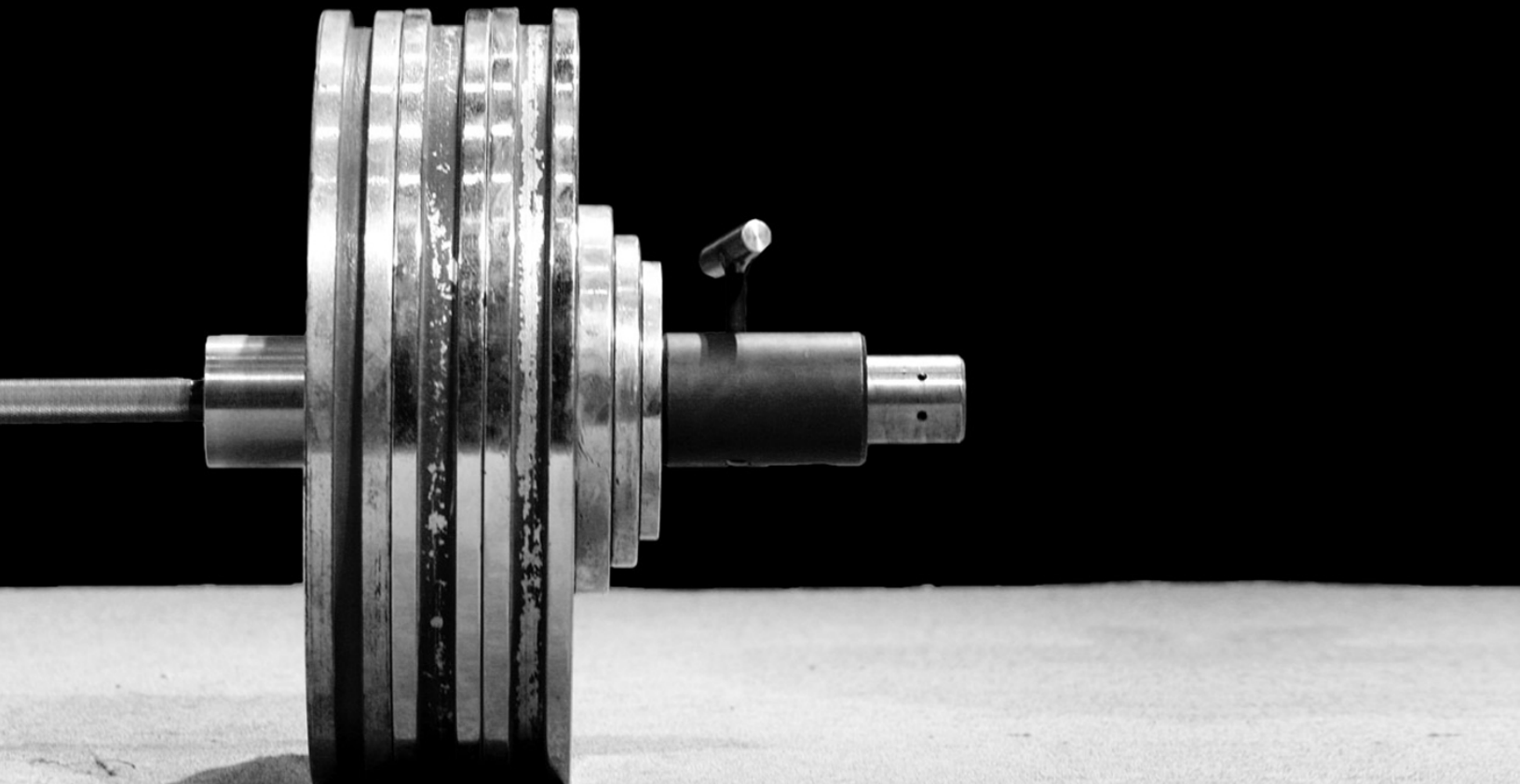
they get heavy in the middle of the range of motion—the sticking point.

The funny thing about this program is the fewer number of exercises I did, the better I felt. And the better the workouts felt, the more I wanted to do them. At this point my intuition was kicking in hard. I started benching more often—twice and even three times a week. Always trying to beat a rep max. I knew that that plus the volume was making me much stronger. By the end of the training I'd hit a best paused double of 490 and a touch and go triple of 465, which I'd done for three consecutive sets.

My bodyweight had been steadily rising, and as I approached that 30th birthday it happened: first I benched 500 and then two sessions later hit an easy 510! No longer would I be forced to sit and look on as others had all the 500 benching fun. No longer was I reluctant to enter my thirties, but instead saw the age simply as the beginning of my peak years!

So to summarize all that, I was able to approach my best bench ever by simply following a simple linear progression for several weeks, working hard to add as many heavy sets as I could for added volume, and even drastically increased the frequency to force my body to peak!

Dan Green is one of the top names in powerlifting today. The Raw Total World Record Holder with 2030 (belt and sleeves), Dan is the dominant force in the 220 weight class. Dan is the founder of Boss Barbell Club in Mountain View, CA where he trains team sport and strength athletes.



## MY BEST BENCH EVER

BY BRANDON LILLY

For “Bench Week” I was asked to detail the best training cycle I have ever done to achieve gains. I did this just prior to my meet last fall where I benched 573 lbs. raw at the Supertraining Meet. I always set my training up backwards, meaning I count from the meet back. I know during certain weeks I should hit certain numbers or percentages and how they should feel, so I make adjustments along the way as needed but this is exactly the program that I followed, and I think if you follow the percentages somewhat you can have tremendous gains as well.

I based my numbers off of a 540 bench that I achieved with a pause at my meet in May...

## **WEEK 1 REPS**

Regular bench: (70%) 375 x 5 x 3 sets

Close Grip Off 2 Board: (60%) 325 x 15 x 3

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 15

Tricep Pushdowns

100 reps with light band

Abs

Roman Chairs 4 x 25

## **WEEK 2 SPEED**

Regular Bench: (55%) 300 x 3 x 10 (30 secs rest between sets)

Pause Presses 2" Off Chest

(70%) 375 x 8 x 3

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 20

Tricep Extensions

100 reps light band

Lateral Raises

100 reps with 10 lbs plate in each hand

Shrugs

315 x 15 x 4

Abs

Planks 4 x 30 secs



Brandon Lilly earned the highest RAW powerlifting total in the world in 2012 — including a 573lb bench

## WEEK 3 MAX

(I DON'T ALWAYS MAX OUT, BUT THIS IS MY HEAVIEST WEEK IN THE ROTATION)

Regular Bench: (87.5%) 470  
x 5 x 2 sets

Incline DB Press  
120 x 20 x 2 sets

Lat Pull Downs  
4 x 15

Shrugs

315 x 10 x 3 with 2 second  
squeeze at top Tricep  
Extensions 100 reps  
with light band.

## WEEK 4 REPS

Regular Bench: (75%) 400 x 3 x 3 sets

Close Grip Off Board

(75%) 400 x 8 x 5 sets

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 20

Dips

50 reps

Abs

GHR Crunches to Failure

## **WEEK 5 SPEED**

Regular Bench: (60%) 315 x 2 x 8

Close Grip

(70%) 375 x 12 x 3

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 15

Front Raises

4 x 20

Shrugs

315 x 15 x 4

Abs

## **WEEK 6 MAX**

Regular Bench: (95%) 515 x 3, (97.5%) 530 x 2

Incline DB Hands Facing In

90 x 15 x 3

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 15

## **WEEK 7 REPS**

Regular Bench: (80%) 425 x 3 x 3

Close Grip Off 3 Board

(75%) 400 x 15 x 3

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 20

Skull Crushers

3 x 20

Abs

## **WEEK 8 SPEED**

Regular Bench: (70%) 365 x 3 x 5

Band Pull Aparts

100 reps

Shrugs

315 x 30 reps

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 15

(This week was super light on accessories knowing my next week was for a new PR attempt.)

## **WEEK 9 MAX**

Regular Bench: (95%) 515 x 1, (101%) 545 x 1 PR (Not a gym PR, but paused PR, 560 was my gym PR), (105%) 575 x 1

\*I only took 575 for 1 because 545 went PERFECTLY, and I had trained well and felt a new lifetime PR was in my sights.

High Rep Close Grip

275 x 20 x 2

(Shut down knowing next week is Rep PR attempt)

## **WEEK 10 REPS**

Regular Bench: (101%) 545 x 2

Close Grip off 2 Boards

315 x 15 x 3



Tricep Push Downs

100 reps

Lat Pull Downs

4 x 15

That is it for me. The main points you need to realize for any program to work, technique has to be paramount. I don't count sloppy reps, and I lock out every rep completely, no bodybuilder reps. Take ownership and pride in what you do in the gym, shortcuts in the gym lead to shortcomings on the platform. Do things the right way, and the hard way, and the results will speak for themselves.



## PR SMASHING BENCHING

BY ERIC LILLIEBRIDGE

My best bench cycle that I had was back when I was training for the big competition at Mark Bells meet on November 3rd 2012. My training for that competition went very well and my bench had made some really great gains that training cycle. All I did for the training cycle was on my heavy days do 3 sets of single pauses and increased the weight each heavy workout. I did a short 6 week training cycle for that competition so I only had 3 heavy bench workouts to do because I alternate heavy and light days every other week. On my light days I just did close grips and deloaded.

The start of my training cycle I did 3 single pauses, which were my working sets. I did 405, 455, 500 all paused, working on 3 singles just like you do in a meet. So my first set is to mimic an opener, 2nd set would be like a 2nd attempt, and 3rd set would be like a 3rd attempt, always practicing good form, technique and speed on each set. So that ended my first heavy workout.

2 weeks later I upped the weight on each set a little more to try and progressively peak for the meet. For this workout I did 440, 480, 520 for my 3 working sets. Again, making the first set like an opener, the 2nd set like a 2nd attempt, and the 3rd set like a 3rd attempt trying to practice just like it's a competition. At that point 4 weeks of training had gone by and I only had one heavier training day to do which was 2 weeks after my previous one. For my last one I decided that I wanted to try a big PR because my previous heavy days went very well and the last sets felt stronger and faster than normal.

My last heavy bench day I did 455, 500, 550 as my 3 working sets. The 550 was a grinder but I finished it strong but unfortunately strained my pec somehow during that lift but never felt it until I had got home after that workout. So that was the end of my heavy benching for a couple months. Had I not done a max lift in the gym before the meet, I'm sure I would have crushed that weight at the meet. Before that, my best raw bench with a pause was 525lbs in the gym and 529lbs in competition, so it was a big PR for me.

**[CLICK HERE TO WATCH ERIC PAUSE BENCH 550](#)**

For my weak points which have always been the lock out portion of my bench, I just did board work at the end of the workout after my 3 heavy paused singles, doing 2 sets of board work. First set usually being to a 2 board and the last set to a 3 board. I did the same with board work, I progressively added weight to both board work sets on each heavy day so that I was over loading heavier each heavy workout to peak and get stronger every week up until the meet.

The first workout I did doubles on the board work and the last two heavy workouts I just practiced singles on the board work to really focus on controlling and handling the heavier weight. This was my best bench cycle minus getting the injury at the end, but I had made a big gain on my paused bench by getting a 21 lb PR. I am currently doing the same bench training for my next competition coming up on April 21st, and hope to get at my meet what I got in training for my best bench cycle ever, last training cycle.

Eric Lilliebridge had a top #3 raw total ranking in world in the 275 weight class at just 19 years old. He had successfully totaled 2,065lbs raw in belt and knee wraps and deadlifted 800lbs raw in competition at only 19 years old. Now being the age of 22, he is currently ranked #2 in the world in the 275's with a 2,204lbs raw total w/ wraps. His best competition lifts up to date are an 881lbs raw squat w/ wraps (World Record at 275s), 529lbs raw bench and an 821lbs raw deadlift. He is currently chasing after the all time world record total in the 275's held by Jon Cole with a 2,259lbs raw total w/ wraps.

**Facebook, YouTube**



## HOW I BUILT MY BEST BENCH EVER: 3 BOARD PRESS

BY COREY HAYES

I break exercises into a few different groups, one of these groups is exercises that teach me how to lift rather than a straight up brute strength exercise. These exercises place emphasis on a correct groove, correct firing patterns, etc. My favorite from this group for bench is the 3 board with heavy bands. I personally use doubled light bands which provide me with about 200lbs of band tension but I've heard of big shirted benchers (big as in 8-900+) using doubled average bands which hurts me to think about.

I rig the bands up to be behind me so that I am forced to push towards my feet which makes the bar path more of a straight line from point A to point B. If you graduated middle school, you should know the shortest path from A to B is a straight line. Less range of

motion equals a higher potential max. Pressing in a straight line also engages the triceps more and takes a lot of pressure off of the pecs.

Another great thing about the movement is the fact that the lats and upper back are required to work overtime to stabilize and move the weight due to the extreme overload. This is how I learned to really engage my lats and how I teach a lot of guys to use them as well. If your back isn't tight the bar is going to be all over the place.

Normally I use this movement on an assistance type day after close grip bench. I often alternate the rep scheme every other week or every 2-3 weeks. The two options I use are 3-4 sets of 10-15 and working up to a given rep max which is normally in the 5-8 range. I never venture below 5 to save myself from neural fatigue from the overload.

If you have plenty of brute strength and want to start refining it, give this movement a shot. More efficiency will always bring more Pr's.

Corey Hayes is an up and comer to the strength and conditioning world. He is currently a student at Eastern Kentucky University and a Professional level powerlifter. His best meet lifts are 725/425/675 at 220 raw and 880/640/680 at 242 geared. He has future plans of taking over the world and making a living doing what he enjoys, the iron game.

**Facebook, YouTube**



## BENCHING FOR BIG THROWS

BY MATT VINCENT

Bench is one of the most common exercises used in every gym in the world. Top end athletes, to the lowly Johnny Bravo shaped Mutants asking “How much you bench, BRO?”, everyone benches. I pretty much expect that if you lift, you probably bench. It is a great lift and one of the big 6 (squat, deadlift, overhead pressing, bench, clean, and snatch.) that all athletes should be doing regularly. As a thrower it is an important lift for me in making the gains on the field that I want to see.

My first bit of advice is learning how to do it correctly. There is plenty of advice on this, Brandon Lilly has a great article covering it.

This is the one big thing I took from my time with Powerlifting was learning proper form and how to lift bigger weights safely. Now I do not think that a big bench alone is going to translate into monster throws. However it is not just perchance that most of the guys who can throw over 70' in the shotput in history also bench 500+lbs.

I feel the same about this as I do combine training. Do I think the numbers put up at the combine prove you are a good football player? No, however it seems that good football players can do really well at all of those tests. So in short if you are throwing and technically things are pretty sound. Then you need to get stronger and there is, no way to think that building a bigger bench is not going to improve your marks.

Benching is going to strengthen chest, upper back, triceps, delts, and the entire shoulder girdle. All of this is needed to throw far. Also when done correctly using leg drive, not throwing your ass in the air and bouncing the weight off your chest, you are performing full body lift. Doing this teaches your body to make connections from head to toe and will make you better and being able to apply that to your throws. The ability to transfer power from your feet, through the ground, and into your hands is the name of the game for throwing. The better and faster you can do this the better you will throw.

Training it properly for throwing is going to need to focus on both max effort and power. Power is the speed at which work is performed. So think about this as how fast you can move the bar.



This acceleration is the key for throwing. Sure having that hydraulic strength to move a ton of weight slow is great, but will not get the implement to go any farther. Training for speed is the key here and if throwing far or becoming more of an explosive athlete like a line man or weightlifter this is where you can separate yourself. Training speed and power is a bit different. Taking some lighter weights (nothing over 75%) and more sets of lower reps, and moving the bar as fast as possible is the Key to developing this.

### **BASIC BENCH SPEED BLOCK:**

<b>SETS/REPS</b>	<b>PERCENTAGES</b>
12 x 3	60%
10 x 3	65%
8 x 2	70%
6 x 1	75%
Deload 3 x 10	50%

I can't stress enough for this to work properly you need to **MOVE THE WEIGHT AS FAST AS POSSIBLE**. Keep pushing all the way through the end of the lift. As far as your accessories for this I use dips and Heavy single arm rows (Krock Rows). I use a plate loading dumbbell and load about 235 on it (80% of BW or heaviest you can do). 3 x 10 on all accessories still push speed. Also keep the rest in between these sets minimal 60-90 sec. This is going to build that

fast twitch fiber you need as an athlete. Also a great accessory is using something like the Sling Shot and doing some accommodating resistance work. To do that I use it after my last set and go for max reps at that days Rx'd weight.

Most people will have a hard time taking a step back from heavy lifting to work on this. Think about it like if you could move 225 at 1.5 ft/per second then now can mover 225 at 3.0 ft/per second then you are stronger and faster. This acceleration will transfer into your max lifting as well.

I rotate this training with heavy blocks throughout the course of my season. This gives me different loads and goals for training blocks. Also I have continued making steady gains and throwing PRs all year. Train for some speed and make some gains. Get Stronger, Throw Farther, and HVIII more!!!

Matt Vincent is a top Professional Highland Games World Champion. Matt has spent the last 15 years strength training with a focus on functional strength for athletics. Track and Field for LSU as a shotput, discus, and hammer thrower, two top 3 finishes in SEC and two top 5 Regional finishes in Discus. In the last 6 years he as traveled all over country and trained with many of the top coaches and athletes in various fields form Weightlifting, Strongman, Powerlifting (both Geared and Raw) and now focuses on Highland Games. Highland Games he won 3 AM World Championships and 1 Professional World Championship as my first year Pro. Matt is also the Author of Best Selling Highland Games Training Manual for Developing Max Strength and Power: Training LAB.

**Website, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter**

# HOW I BUILT MY BEST BENCH EVER: RACK LOCKOUTS

BY BLAINE SUMNER

When I first began lifting – in high school for football, like a lot of people, the bench press became my best lift. I wanted that big bench and big arms so I could push guys around and look good doing it. I had a good bench when I graduated high school in 2006 at 405 (raw) but saw that stagnate through college. Tearing both shoulder labrums during college football didn't help my bench progress either but when I met Dan Gaudreau at Rocky Mountain Lifting Club in Colorado things started changing. Dan is a multi-time IPF World Bench Press Champion and Record Holder and he began having me do rack lockouts once a week.

The rack lockouts were done in a power rack by setting the safety pins anywhere from 4" to 1" of lockout. You simply locked the weight out off the pins, set down, released the tension, and repeated. This was a fun exercise to do because you could really move some weight. Although the time under tension and range of motion is not great, the rack lockouts greatly improved my bench by forcing my body to adapt to handling heavier loads.

It's like the old-school trick of overloading some of us did back in high school or college. Before a max lift, throw an extra weight on each side, hold it for a few seconds, and immediately take off the extra plate and BAM it feels so much lighter and you throw it up. Except by doing rack lockouts you get a more permanent affect.

Doing this for the first year I met Dan took my bench from mid to low 400's to over 500. Sets and reps are not complicated because it is not a big deal if you fail, you probably just won't press it off the pins. Due to this likely being something new you haven't tried and working off a neurological gain than strength, you can expect to see its results quicker. Here is an 8-week cycle I have used and seen gains on – do this as your first accessory lift after your bench press.

### **WEEK – REPS LEFT IN THE TANK FOR EVERY SET – REPS**

1 – 3 – 8, 8, 8

2 – 3 – 6, 6, 6

3 – 3 – 8, 6, 4

4 – 5 – 5, 5, 5

5 – 2 – 5, 5, 5

6 – 2 – 5, 3, 1

7 – 1 – 1, 1, 1

8 – 0 – 1

Blaine Sumner is a drug-free powerlifter who competes in the IPF and USAPL both raw and single ply. He holds the IPF Raw World Record for Squat (881 no wraps) and Total (2,056) in addition to winning the 2012 IPF Raw World Championship. Sumner played Division II football at the Colorado School of Mines where he started at nose tackle for 4 years in addition to scoring 8 touchdowns as a short yardage fullback. He also set NFL testing records for 225 bench reps (52) and Kirwan Explosive Index (95). In addition to having a 33" Vertical Jump and 50" box jump at 350 lbs., Sumner was a 4 sport athlete in high school (Football, Wrestling, Lacrosse, Track). He is originally from Colorado and now lives in Oklahoma City where he trains at HATE Barbell and works as a Petroleum Engineer.

**Facebook, YouTube**



## BENCH PRESS FOR STRONGMAN

BY MIKE JENKINS

How much you bench bro? I always lie and say like 700 and the response I get is “That’s not too bad!” Are you kidding? Now I come up with the most ridiculous number I can imagine and few are phased, I guess it would be like me responding to someone telling me about their Medical School entrance tests, I don’t have a damn clue but I wouldn’t say “Not bad!”.

Now to the matter at hand! Many of you have heard, or read that I do not bench very often. That would be a true statement. However I

did for years and do have a real, actual respectable bench but I found other things help me in my quest to be the first man to press a 500 log in a contest. So, if you are just getting into the sport, bench away, bench your little ass of, do anything that gets you stronger as a whole.

For those of you looking to maybe bump your overhead up 25 or so pounds I am talking to you! When you look at any other athlete they use other forms of the same movement to get better at what they are elite at. Take a long jumper, he or she does not only go to practice and just jump, jump, jump! They do sprints and plyos to make them a more efficient jumper. Those movements are tools in their arsenal. Something you are familiar with and Brandon Lilly discusses this in the Cube, which I did read, probably five times and had this belief before and reassured my belief after.

Brandon benches in competitions, fact, he does not do military press, dumbbell shoulder press or incline in contests. Though he does not do them on the platform he does however use them as tools to get a big bench.

Now to my sport, I do not stand in the rack and only press logs or axles every workout. By doing certain movements in certain ways I can activate muscles that I would not be able to in a standing strict position. What do I do you ask? Though I do not flat bench I do however use incline, close grip floor press, floor press and variations of the same with dumbbells.

So, why do I use variations of bench for a huge overhead? After I do my strict work I will resort to something that focuses on either some form of shoulder recruitment, some chest and tons of triceps. All the lifts that I mentioned before I rotate, Cube shout out bro, different weeks and with different bars, axles, swiss bars and logs. I had been doing this for a while now, just never knew how similar I thought to Brandon, great minds think alike!

My main staple is floor press with either an axle or swiss bar, simulates a log but harder because the different range of motion, it's longer than a log. Well what the hell does lying on a floor pushing weight off your chest have to do with lifting something heavy as hell off your shoulders over your head? Well think about the last overhead, or even bench you missed. Where did you miss it? You probably didn't get stapled to the bench unless it was just too damn heavy, I bet you missed it the last two inches of the lift.

I know that's where I missed my 484 log at WSM, my left arm was less than an inch from being locked out, triceps weren't strong enough! The floor press smokes your triceps and you even get a chest workout too but the triceps the limiting factor in most failed lifts. By using the different bars it challenges you to adapt each week and will carry over to a log and axle.

Ok, makes sense right so why the incline? Once again you are lying down and taking weight out of a rack and stable, unlike standing with a log or axle on your chest. Take a look at anyone who close to a max effort log or axle at WSM, they have a serious arch in their back, in somewhat of a standing incline position. On the incline you

are able to overload your body by being in that position without compromising your back rep after rep, you are stable and flat against the bench.

Like the floor press does to the top of the press, I feel the incline does to the bottom of the overhead press. The beginning of the lift starts on your chest just as an overhead does once you clean it. Your triceps cannot do jack if they do not get a chance because it doesn't get by your fat chin. This is a lift I believe will get it going to where you need those triceps. To be good at this lift you need to be fast off your chest. How do I generate speed, I generally start with the axle or log already on pins, in my case I have them on my Rogue spotter straps so it can easily move and doesn't damage the bar.

Yes that's correct, shameless sponsor plug! By taking the weight off my chest, not out of the rack, I have zero rebound. Like anything else I but the lift together in pieces to come to a final product, an overhead that makes dudes feel bad about their benches! Like I mentioned before you can exchange these with dumbbells if you see fit, that also helps with stabilizing each hand not just a single bar. I know people are wondering about hand placement, again, I rotate them. I do hit close grip floor press and close grip incline, just another variation to the lift. Obviously that will hit the triceps a little more I think it's the actual movement that is more important.

So, like an overhead press can help a powerlifter's bench go up, a variation of a bench can help your overhead go up! If you are looking to boost your overall strength with no contest in site the big



thing is to rotate bars and types of pressing each week, only after you strict press though. If I am not getting ready for a specific show I will press with a log then floor press with an axle or vice versa, strict with axle and bench movement with swiss or log. If I am leading up to an event with a log in it I will hit only log for strict and incline or floor with swiss or log to simulate that same movement pattern. And for the love of baby Jesus or whoever it is you pray to please do not, do not, do not do your log or axle on event day. You need to work it in the gym and hit these accessories.

Mike Jenkins is one of the biggest and fastest rising names in the World of Strongman. The 2012 Arnold Strongman Classic Champion (and 2011 runner-up), Jenkins is also a 2x finalist at World's Strongest Man. Jenkins is based out of Harrisburg, PA, where he trains at 13 Stripes Crossfit. Mike offers online training for Strongman, Powerlifting and Crossfit athletes and can be reached at [JenkinsStrength@gmail.com](mailto:JenkinsStrength@gmail.com)

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# HOW I BUILT MY BEST BENCH EVER: FLOOR PRESS

BY GREG PANORA

I've always been a decent bencher. It came naturally to me and I've always enjoyed the attention it brings. I met a guy at the grocery store last week who used to have a 650 raw bench, but his biceps were getting to big, and he had to quit. Despite every asshole making crazy claims, benching has always been a huge part of why I love this sport. I benched 435 at 218 pounds at my first contest in 1999 and my training hasn't really changed much since.

The exercise that has been a constant in my training is the floor press. It is beautiful in its simplicity and its effectiveness. It taught me how to take the bench away from my pecs and put it in my triceps. I feel like it is much easier to load your triceps when lying on the floor. At Westside I would do these every fourth week as a max effort exercise and I felt like it had the most carryover to my shirted bench. I remember doing 525 four weeks before my first 800 bench and 545 four weeks before my first 820 bench. I very rarely had to put a shirt on to know what my shirted bench would be.

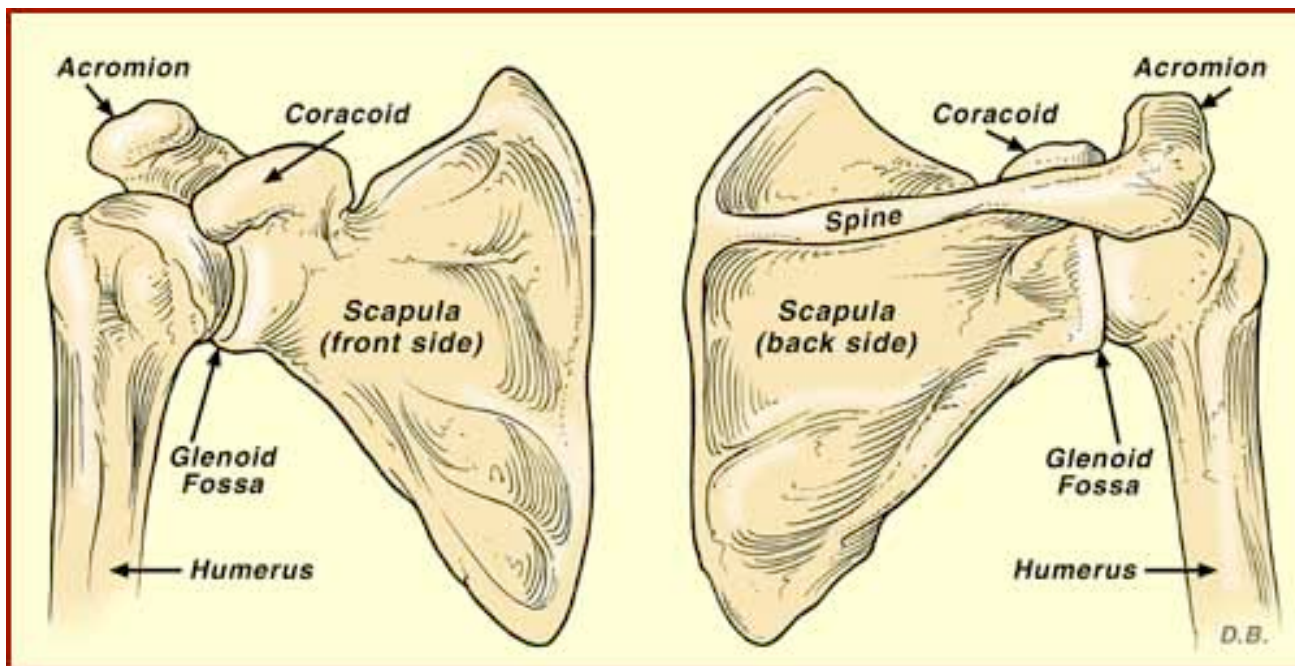
Today, my training is entirely raw, yet the floor press is still a mainstay. In fact, I'm finishing up a three week wave with it tomorrow. Week 1 did a triple with 450. This was done with pinkies an inch inside the rings, week 2 I did a double with 470, and tomorrow I will go over 500 for a single. So, during my raw training I

use these for reps as well as max singles and occasionally for speed work.

One big hint I will also give to lifters is to train like a bodybuilder on accessory work. Benching is done with little fragile muscles that aren't getting work without these semi pansy movements like skull crushers, lateral raises, dumbbell presses, pressdowns, and pulls to the face. These will up your bench, cut down injuries and make you look way better in shirtless Facebook mirror photos.

Greg Panora is a certified legend in the sport of Powerlifting. The former World Record Holder (and current American Record Holder) with a 2630 total (Multiply) in the 242 weight class, Panora now has his sights set on breaking the 242 raw total world record and is off to a strong start already having recorded a 500 raw bench and 750 raw deadlift. Greg coaches powerlifting at Crossfit Casco Bay in Portland, Maine.

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## SCAPULA: BEST FRIEND OR BIGGEST ENEMY OF THE BENCH PRESS

BY RYAN BROWN

The truth is that when we are talking about mobility for the bench press we shouldn't really be talking about anything any different than mobility of any other movement. A good bench press is a full body lift. Good mobility in a bench press isn't any different than mobility in a squat. The same rules apply. However, unless you are pretty good at spotting problems, you aren't going to identify the rotational issues in your hips, and how they are holding back your bench press.... and in fact, unless you are really really good at bench pressing, You probably aren't getting enough leg drive from your hips to matter that much anyway.

When most anyone talks about, or asks about “mobility” with their bench press, they are talking about shoulder mobility. As with anything else, before you start looking at where you need more mobility, you need to focus on making sure that the things that shouldn’t be moving aren’t. Creating stability where you need it, so the pieces that should be moving can.

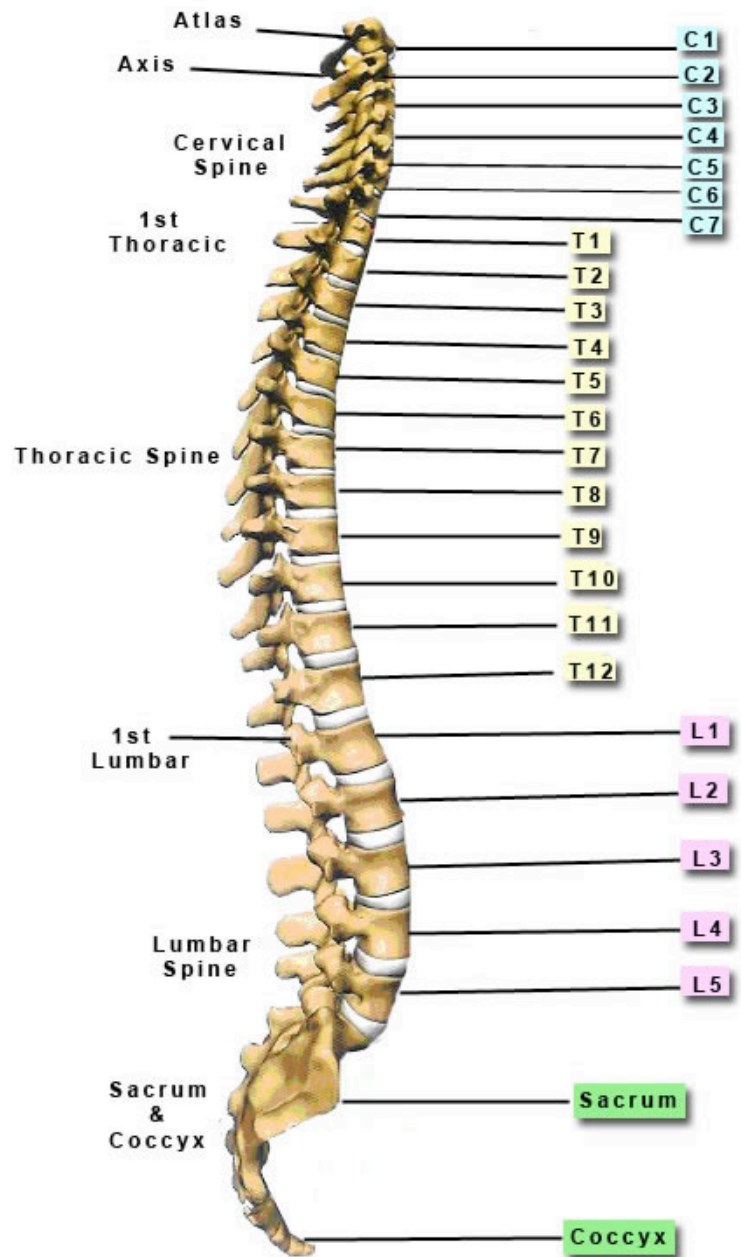
A stable, and properly positioned, scapula will create a solid platform that your humerus can move around. A scapula that is instable or poorly positioned will tear your shoulders up, and cause the perceived upper back weakness that causing your bench press to suck. Do you see those little things in the picture above labeled “acromion” and “coracoid” ??? Just look at them and imagine the havoc they could cause on your soft tissues if they weren’t in the right place.

The most common issue and cause of injury with the bench press is the lack of internal rotation in the shoulder. This is pretty easily traced back to your scapula. When we are trying to solve any mobility puzzle we always want to start proximal to distal. The first thing we have to consider in the position of the scapula, and ultimately in the mobility for the bench press, is the position of the thoracic spine.

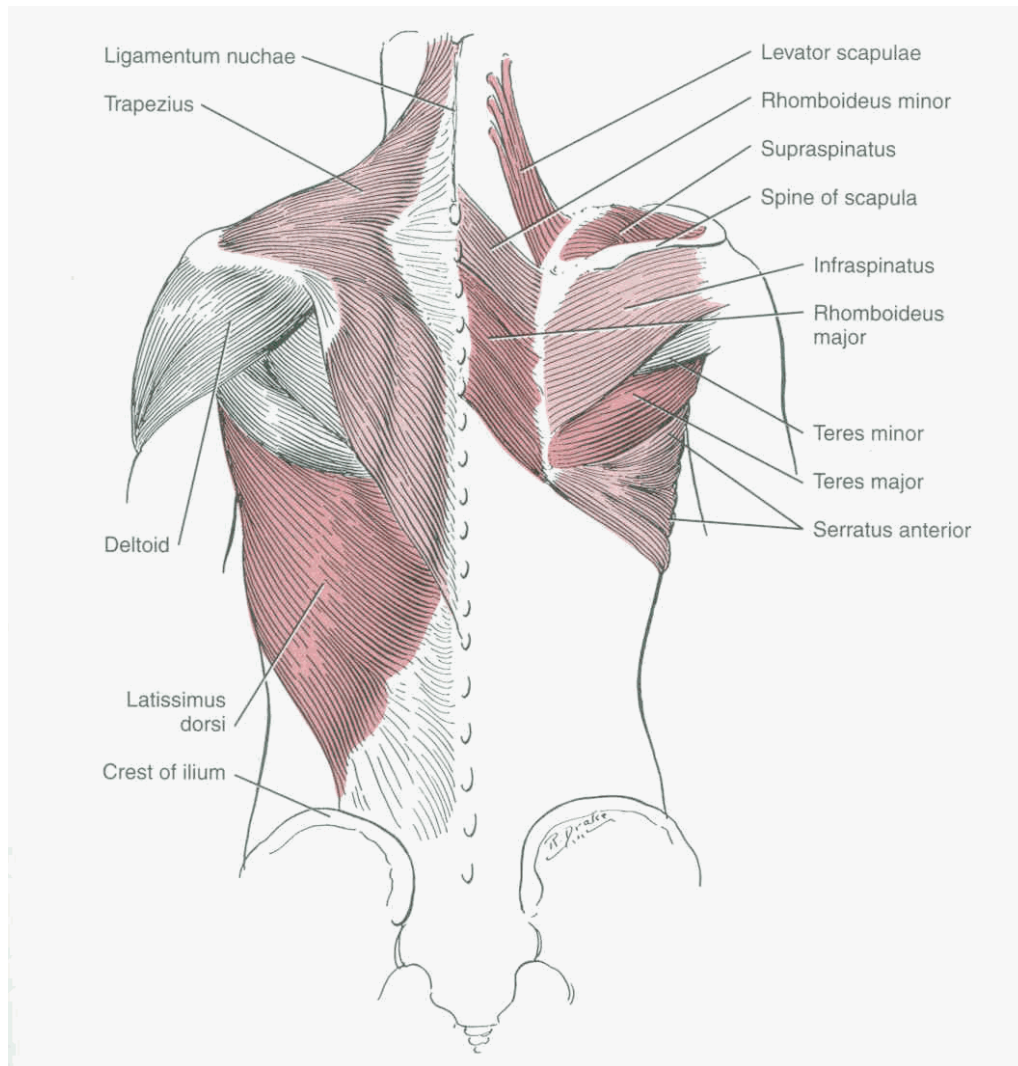
Pretty much only two ways that this can go wrong. Either you are excessively kyphotic (flexion) or you are too extended in your thoracic. I can tell you that both are bad, but a kyphotic posture is sure to ruin your bench. When you are excessively kyphotic your mid

and lower traps and your rhomboids are going to be stretched out long. This will make them weak and unable to maintain the position of your scapula flat on your back. This is going to cause your scapula to tilt forward and then your are gonna have little bones rubbing on things that they aren't supposed to rub on. It is going to be uncomfortable and it will destroy your progress.

If you are too extended the curvature of your scapula isn't going to match the curve of your spine, things aren't going to line up correctly and you are likely to run into some of the same problems as the lifter with the kyphotic posture. The other problem that this is going to cause is that is going to put your diaphragm in a poor position. You are likely going to need to use your shoulders to take in air, this is going to pull them forward off of the bench and make it difficult to use your lats..... and if you have ever listened to Brandon Lilly coach the



bench press (he is pretty good at it) then you should know that keeping your back tight and using your lats is one of the most important aspects of your bench press.



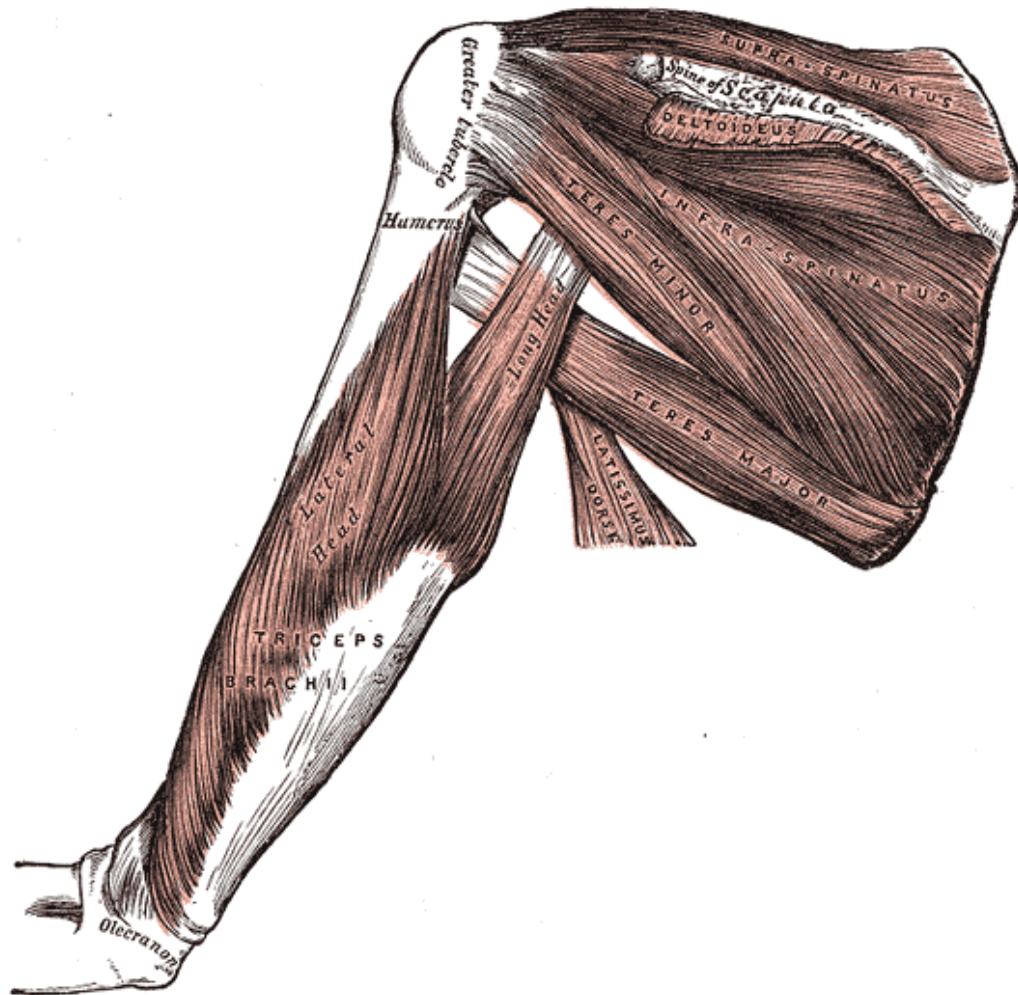
After the basic idea of keeping your thoracic spine in the proper position we can start to look at the muscles that connect to the medial edge of the scapula. You can have a friend just check you

out with no shirt on. Each scap should sit and equal distance away from the spine as the other one. I can tell you from the the many people I have assessed and worked with, this is not the case in many occasions, even for people who aren't having pain. For some of these people maybe they identify a weakness in one arms lockout vs the other. Maybe one arm fails before the other or they twist a little as they press the weight up.

You need to determine if you have weakness, or tightness. The Y's and T's are a great test for this. Lying face down on a bench, stretch your arms out to form a Y. This raise your hands as high as you can. You should be able to achieve 135 degrees of shoulder extension. It is important to make sure that you are not hinging in your thoracic spine and that you are getting true shoulder extension. You can do the T's thumbs up, to correlate with the middle trap, then thumbs down for the Rhomboids. You should be able to get 90 degrees with both. Again, it is important that the motion is occurring where you want it and you aren't cheating. This is why you have to have someone else do the assessment on you. It is to easy to cheat.

Next, we can start to look at the muscles on the lateral edge of the scapula. Often times, the problems that you are going to find here are going to strongly correlate, and probably be caused by, the problems that we found proximally. The number one thing that causes pain in the bench press is a lack of shoulder internal rotation. This is often times caused by tight, bunched up external rotators of the cuff. You can see in the picture what a big bunch of muscles all run in and around each other in this area. It is real easy





for that stuff to get funky. The same way that you can use a quick visual assessment to learn a little about your shoulder problems with the muscles on the medial edge of the scapula, you can usually see where your scap may be rotated more towards one of your shoulders. Soft tissue work is usually great for these muscles. If you have a chiro that does ART, or if you can just get in there with a lacrosse ball and dig around a little then you can make some progress with loosing them up. The problem is that tight muscles here usually go hand in hand with overstretched, weak muscles on

the medial edge. Treating this area with the soft tissue work to loosen it up without strengthening the weak muscles is going to result in a recurring problem.

## **PRE BENCH ROUTINE**

So, how do we fix all of these very common problems? You have got to make sure and get things moving properly before you get down on the bench in order to ensure an optimal performance.

### **STEP 1:**

Breathing your Thoracic spine into the proper position. The cool thing about your lungs is that when you fill them up completely and properly, they push everything back where it goes. Whether you are Kyphotic or over extended in your t-spine, your lungs can help you correct the issue more effectively than laying backwards on a foam roller ever can. What you have to do is determine which category that you fall into, and put yourself into a position to help your lungs be strong enough to push it back where it goes. If you are over extended, you should be on your elbows and knees, breathing with your diaphragm, and focusing on breathing air into your upper back to try and regain some of a curve. If you are overly kyphotic then you should be laying flat, focusing on breathing your shoulders flat to the ground while keeping your ribs down.... So that your lungs and straighten your spine back to where it goes. It sounds simple..... and the most brilliant shit usually is

## **STEP 2:**

Soft Tissue work. You need to identify the areas that are jammed up. When you are doing the visual assessment these are the spots that are a shorter distance than they should be. Maybe both of your scaps are rotated up a little towards your shoulders and you need to focus your soft tissue work on the muscles of the cuff. Possibly, one side is tight on the medial edge of the scap and the other is tight on the lateral edge. You are going to have to look at yourself and determine what is tight, and what is weak, then address it accordingly. Also, while we are at it, you probably need to hit the pec a little, especially if you are the kyphotic guy.

## **STEP 3:**

Motor Pattern. Now that things are back in the right place, and the tight muscles that are pulling us out of position are loosened up a little, we need to use some basic movements in order to restore the rhythm in the shoulder. It is so used to being out of position and things firing in the wrong order that we need to give it a chance to relearn the correct way to move. For the shoulders I love to use lat pull downs with a band, or band pull aparts.

These are going to be much different than the band pull aparts that Corey and Brandon talk about. This is meant to be a light movement that you can do absolutely perfect. With Lat pull downs I like to start people off in a quadruped position. This makes it easier for them to maintain the position of their thoracic spine, and on every single rep we ensure that we get a complete lung full of air... actually, two of

them. The band should be light. The only thing that matters is that you are moving perfectly, and that your scap isn't moving at all. I may progress from quadruped into a half kneeling, or tall kneeling position, depending on how bad it is.

#### **STEP 4:**

Muscle Activation / Strengthening. Once we have restored a good movement pattern we want to train the muscles that are weak or inhibited. This may be doing the Y's or T's with a light plate, or perhaps if you had weak/inhibited muscles on the lateral edge of the scap side lying external rotations. It is important to remember that if you are doing this in your warmup that these sets shouldn't be long, and you shouldn't do many of them. The goal isn't to fatigue the muscle. These could also be great exercises for you to throw in at the end of your workout to create hypertrophy in those areas, then, obviously you would want to do more sets and reps.

I don't know if you noticed, but I never mentioned anything about stretching. It isn't because I am against stretching, but it is nearly impossible to give advice about what should be stretched and what shouldn't be stretched via the internet. Not to mention, I am finding more and more that we can correct many of these issues without needing to actually stretch anything, and that prevents us from stretching something that doesn't need any stretching. Too much mobility, or mobility in the wrong place is a force bleed, and that sucks.

Shoulders, throughout history, have proven to be quite the pain in the ass. They have a huge range of motion, move at a high velocity, and in order to achieve that big range of motion and high velocity, don't have the big structures creating stability like the hip. Tons and tons of things can go wrong, but focusing on your scapula can be a simple way for you to stay ahead of your mobility game and add pounds to your bench press.

Ryan Brown is the head physical preparation coach and owner of Derby City CrossFit / DarkSide Strength in Louisville, Ky. Ryan's focus is on correcting and perfecting movement/motor patterns to get the most out of his athletes. He has competed in CrossFit, Powerlifting, strongman, and currently Olympic lifting. His clients include; elite level power lifters, national level Olympic lifters, pro MMA fighters, college football players, HS athletes, CrossFitters, old broke people, and pretty much anyone else who wants to do something better.

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## HOW I BUILT MY BEST BENCH EVER: DEAD BENCH

BY CHAD WESLEY SMITH

During my time as a shot putter, I considered myself a pretty decent bench presser, having pressed 500# when I was 23 years old, but when I made the transition to powerlifting, the pause that was required was a slap in the face. When shot putting I benched in a very ‘ballistic” manner (ie, bounced the hell out of it), which I think is very appropriate to the shot put and is a style utilized by top throwers across the world, so all the people who have commented about how I was gonna break my sternum, SAVE IT! Despite this style of benching helping me develop the speed and reactive qualities needed to throw the shot put far, it left people in an extreme lack of power off the chest when transitioning to a paused,

powerlifting bench press. I was losing 75-85 pounds when having to pause my bench compared to my previous style.

Knowing that I needed to correct this weakness, I sought out the advice of Josh Bryant, the youngest man to ever raw bench 600 pounds, which he did at only 22 years old. Josh has gone on from his competitive career to develop a TON of great lifters. Josh prescribed the Dead Bench to me to cure my bench ailments and it was definitely the right medicine. The dead bench, along with a lot of other great training Josh helped me with, helped me add 50 pounds to my bench in a 13 week training cycle.

To perform the Dead Bench, you will need to set the pins in a power rack so that the bar sits 1-1 1/2" off your chest and press up from that dead start position. To truly eliminate the stretch reflex you need this type of starting position because the eccentric phase of a lift will load the stretch reflex for up to 6 seconds. Eliminating any benefit of the stretch reflex will force your body to learn how to recruit more muscle fibers and turn them on more rapidly in its absence to overcome a heavy load and when you reintroduce the stretch reflex you will be that much more powerful. The dead bench needs to always be performed for singles because even with a significant pause, the stretch reflex will still remain. If you want to use the dead bench for higher volume work, you can just utilize shorter rest periods and multiple singles.

Make sure to use your competitive bench setup when using Dead Benches and press the bar as fast as possible. Dead benches

should be used as a supplement to your primary bench work, not in place of it. Work like dead benches should be thought of the same way that a drill is used at football practice. Offensive linemen need to work on their combo blocks but if that's all the team does then they will be great at combo blocks and suck at everything else, so don't focus on becoming great at special exercises and forget to practice what really matters.

Progressing in the Dead Bench requires manipulating rest periods, volume and intensity. Check out this progression on the Dead Bench and watch your power off the chest explode!!

Week 1-60%x8x1-30 sec rest

Week 2-60%x10x1-30 sec rest

Week 3-60%x12x1-30 sec rest

Week 4-Deload

Week 5-65%x9x1-45 sec rest

Week 6-70%x7x1-1 min rest

Week 7-75%x5x1-75 sec rest

Week 8-Deload

Week 9-80/82.5/85%x1-90 sec rest

Week 10-82.5/85/87.5%x1-2 min rest

Week 11-3x1 up to a 1rm-150 sec rest

Week 12-Deload



Chad Wesley Smith is the founder and head physical preparation coach at Juggernaut Training Systems. Chad has a diverse athletic background, winning two national championships in the shot put, setting the American Record in the squat (905 in the 308 class, raw w/ wraps) and most recently winning the 2012 North American Strongman championship, where he earned his pro card. In addition to his athletic exploits, Chad has helped over 50 athletes earn Division 1 athletic scholarships since 2009 and worked with many NFL Players and Olympians. Chad is the author of The Juggernaut Method and The Juggernaut Method 2.0.

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## BENCH MORE BY BENCHING MORE

BY DAN GREEN

Many people seem to enjoy over-complicating the bench. Searching for the super sexy secret exercise that will increase your competition bench. While hunting for the silver bullet of bench exercises is fun, what's more fun is actually benching more. And getting jacked. That is the fun part. Then everyone you will ever meet will have to ask you how much you bench and you won't have to lie. And every time you visit Mexico you will be challenged to arm wrestling matches because you're jacked and awarded big sombreros because having a big bench makes you important.

And while all of this is clearly WHY we bench, it leaves us with the question of HOW to bench more. A lot more. And unless your goal is just to claim a more massive bench—which I respect—you will need to use and train heavily the appropriate exercises and incorporate them in an effective program.

## **APPROACH TO PROGRAMMING**

My approach to benching is based on coupling technical mastery with brute strength and size. And what's convenient is that the best way to do this is to bench. A lot. So now let us discuss technique, how to get strong and how to get jacked.

Attaining technical mastery of the bench is what allows you to bench the most with your current strength level. This is obvious, but what's equally important and not necessarily obvious is that using sound technique minimizes the stress that the joints must tolerate during the training. And the more you keep your joints protected, the more volume you can tolerate and recover from and the more often you can train. If you are beat up you will have to take light days or deload weeks. That's fine if you have to in order to get back on track, but not as good as being able to stay healthy and progress every week.

Training for strength is determined by how heavy you train. Training for size tends to revolve around the overall work or volume performed. And training for technique requires that you repeatedly execute the correct technique. So this program tackles not only

strength, size and technique, but also allows for continual progression.

## **PAUSED BENCH**

Paused Benches are always first in my training. In a meet benches must be paused. The more often you bench with a pause, the better you get at it. Having to stay tight and pausing makes it that much tougher to get the weight moving. But if you practice this way you will conquer it. I've really grown to like paused benches. I've gotten my chest to do much more of the work than before and they've taught me how to generate considerable leg drive.

Every training session the weight on these goes up and the reps go down—good old linear periodization. This allows you to make predictable improvements and not overtrain by going up and down in intensities. Each week or twice each week the bench session prepares you for the next session. All the while you are improving your technique.

## **SPEED BENCH**

Speed Bench is basically just the standard, non-paused bench, performed explosively. It is not a light weight by any means, however. Light benching, to me, seems like a waste of time for building a big raw bench. These are done explosively and for low reps but continue to get heavier every workout. These build up volume as well, which allows you to build both strength and size.

Even though they are not paused they develop explosiveness which helps you after the pause in a competition bench. And the high workload heavily taxes the chest shoulders and triceps. To do these properly all the reps should be completed as quickly as possible without getting sloppy. Lower quickly, reverse forcefully off the chest and do not wait or pause at the top between reps. Use one weight only per workout and do these with your competition grip.

### **PAUSED WIDE GRIP BENCH**

The paused wide grips were my favorite for building the technique of lowering a weight onto your chest and then using your entire strength to drive it up to lockout. For these I'd recommend using a grip two finger widths out from your standard grip. So if you bench with your pinkies on the rings in contest, put your middle finger on the rings here. I generally do these for 5-6 reps per set. These serve two purposes. They build the strength and confidence to efficiently lower a weight and rest it on your chest.

This is huge, as it allows your triceps to relax slightly before the press instead of getting fatigued by holding all the weight while it's barely grazing your t-shirt. This loads the weight into your arch, in turn loading your legs. So the first benefit is technique, as it teaches you to use tightness and leg drive to pause and move the weight off your chest—not your triceps. The second benefit is the strength it builds in the bottom of the press. Because your grip is wide, you are forced to use the chest and delts much more throughout the lift and the triceps less. This is great for anyone—maximum drive off the chest means maximum poundage.

## **SLINGSHOT BENCH**

The Slingshot, then, is the answer for lockout strength. The key to locking out a big weight is triceps strength and back tightness. Strong triceps press through to the lockout, but if your back loses tightness you can lose momentum. When the weight stalls the triceps will be overmatched. They might strain and press through anyway, but without perfect technique it won't be your true max and you'll be leaving weight on the platform.

The slingshot allows you to overload by feeling some heavy, supramaximal weights. It challenges you to lockout bigger weights while keeping the motion smooth and natural in feel. This adds extra volume to your triceps training and really awakens the CNS. The slingshot gives you the leverage to press 50-100 pounds over your max and more. Staying tight under that much loading really strengthens the whole body for benching so you will be ready when you have a heavy raw max in your hands. I usually perform these for a few weeks right before the meet to overload before I take a rest week. These would be done after paused benches and before speed bench for sets of 1-5 reps.

## **INCLINE PRESSING AND OVERHEAD PRESSING**

Incline bench or dumbbell press and military presses or seated dumbbell presses are all fantastic exercises for building size and strength. The incline presses work well for higher reps after all the other benching is done. That could be anywhere from 8-15 reps.

Overhead pressing should be done on its own, separate day—yes developing the strength of the shoulders and upper pecs is that important. It doesn't have to be complicated. Volume is the key here. 3-5 work sets will suffice.

**[CLICK HERE TO WATCH DAN MILITARY PRESS 315LB AT 220 BODYWEIGHT](#)**

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

So for effective implementation it's also important to consider a longer timeline. Heavy paused presses, slingshot presses and heavy touch reps are all effective before a meet, when your only goal is peaking for a max. All the high rep incline and overhead pressing are great for building size and a training base, but do little for immediately improving a max. In the last few weeks before a meet they tend to create more fatigue than value. They should be dropped 3-4 weeks out and the main, heavy lifts should be done more frequently. A good approach for a 12 week training cycle would be 8 weeks of one bench day, one overhead pressing day followed by 3 weeks of two heavy bench days and finally a rest week.

## **THE FIRST 8 WEEKS WORKOUTS:**

Paused bench 2-3 top sets 3-6 reps heavier each week

Speed Bench 4-6 sets 3-4 reps heavier each week

Paused wide grip bench 2-4 sets 5-6 reps

Incline pressing

## LAST 3 WEEKS:

Paused bench 2-3 top sets 1-3 reps heavier each week

Slingshot Bench 3-4 sets 1-5 reps

Or

1. Speed Bench 3-4 sets 2-3 reps heavier each week





## TOP 5 BENCH ACCESSORY EXERCISES

BY ERIC LILLIEBRIDGE

For benching, I've always made sure to have a good amount of accessory exercises included in my training basically so that I can work on any weak points I think I need to work extra hard on to make my bench better.

### 1. PEC FLIES

Either with dumbbells or on a cable machine. I personally like the cable machine better for Pec Fly because I feel like I get a better stretch with them. For Pec Flies I will normally do 5 total sets, the first 2 sets I'll do for 15 reps then the 3rd I'll add weight and do it to failure. Then I will do 2 drop sets of 15 reps

## **2. TRICEP EXTENSIONS**

On a machine using different accessory pieces to attach to it and also switching by doing both arms at the same time together or one at a time individually. When I'm doing both arms together I'll do the same as my sets of Pec Flies for the first 3 sets and I will follow that by doing reverse grip single arm extensions for 2 sets of 15 reps for 5 total sets on triceps

## **3. LATERAL SHOULDER RAISES**

Either with Dumbells or on a machine, I feel like those work my shoulders really well. I don't like to go that heavy on these, I mainly just do them to work my shoulders extra and get a good pump in them. I will do 5 total sets of 15 reps each and add weight each set.

## **4. BOARD WORK**

Usually with a 2 or 3 boards. These have helped out my bench a lot, especially my lock outs. After benching heavy to my chest with pauses, I will do 2 sets of board work after. The first set is to a 2 board anywhere from a single to a triple, and the 2nd set will be to a 3 board, normally for a double or triple.

## **5. CLOSEGRIP BENCH**

I'm a better narrow grip bencher (hands inside the rings) so the close grips really help out my normal grip bench. After my warm ups I usually like to do 3 sets of 3 reps adding weight each set or I'll single up to a heavy single and do a drop set of max reps to failure.

# JUGGERNAUT JACKED

OVERWHELM YOUR COMPETITION AND GET THICK WITH ELITE POWERLIFTER CHAD SMITH'S JUGGERNAUT TRAINING METHOD

BY ROB FITZGERALD PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIC WILLIAMS

Smith trains with a ferocity you need to imitate.

## TRAINING THE 225 REP TEST

BY CHAD WESLEY SMITH

The 225 rep test is one of the most revered assessments used in the NFL pre-draft process. I don't feel the 225 test is a good indicator of the type of upper body strength required to be a good football player, a much better test would be something like 225/275/315 pounds, depending on position group, done for a triple with the power measured by a Tendo Unit. The merits of this test can be argued to no end by strength coaches and football scouts alike, but the fact of the matter is this test is here to stay, so if you have players you are helping try to make the jump from high school

to college or college to the pros, you need to help them improve this test.

Team Juggernaut's Blaine Sumner produced one of the greatest results ever in the 225 test during his 2011 Pro Day at Air Force where Blaine, who played his college football at the Colorado School of Mines (D2), did 52 reps of 225. Blaine actually performed 55 reps but wasn't credited with 3 reps. Either way, Blaine's 52 reps is 3 beyond the NFL Combine record of 49 reps set by Stephen Paea of Oregon St. Blaine had a very simple approach to his training, just following his usual heavy training (Blaine has a best raw meet bench of 473) and then performing one all out drop set with 185-265 pounds.

Blaine credits a lot of his success in the 225 test to improving his technique and rep strategy. Blaine did his 225 test by breaking it up into a number of mini sets. Blaine's specific strategy was to perform 10 rep clusters up to 40 reps, then two 5 rep clusters and then singles, each cluster of reps was done while holding in one breath. Success in the 225 rep test requires a combination of maximal strength and lactic capacity in the pressing muscles.

The simplest way to increase an athlete's abilities in the 225 test is to increase their maximal strength because of course an athlete who can bench 450 will handle 50% of their max (225 pounds) more easily than an athlete who is benching 350 and must press 64% of their max. While I certainly agree with this logic, the energy required to increase one's max strength in the bench may not be efficient

within the context of a complete combine prep program that also requires an athlete to improve a variety of other physical qualities. Of course this will vary from athlete to athlete based upon their individual strength levels but there is already tons of great information on this website about how to increase your max bench, so I'll let you read those for yourself about how to do that.

Technique is a critical aspect of success for all lifting and will pay great dividends in your 225 test improvements. Check out these tips to improve your rep skills...

- 1) Wear a shirt with a rough logo on the back or chalk your back or spray some spray tacky on it, you don't want to be sliding around on the bench.
- 2) Pull your shoulders blades together tight and get your chest as high as possible.
- 3) If you are a competitive powerlifter and bench with a wide grip, you will probably benefit from moving your grip in slightly for this test. 1 ½ to 2 thumb lengths from the center smooth is a good grip for most.
- 4) Don't try to create a big arch like you would during a max attempt, as holding this position for the time that this test will take may lead to back cramping. A small to moderate arch will suffice.
- 5) Plant your feet firmly on the ground, either with your whole foot down or up on the balls of your feet, you want your feet to be solidly

placed on the ground so you don't move around when getting good hip drive.

Another valuable component of success in this test is to strategize your rep scheme. You saw the rep scheme that helped Team Juggernaut's Blaine Sumner perform a record amount of reps with 225 earlier in this article. Here are some tips to help you maximize your reps that have been very successful for my athletes here at Juggernaut...

1) Only put the necessary force into each rep that is required. Though I normally advocate moving all reps as explosively as possible, doing that will waste energy in this test. Don't try to impart 400 pound pressing strength when only 225 is necessary. You want to move the bar quickly but not so explosively that it causes you to lose your setup position. Like John Wooden said, "Be quick but don't hurry".

2) Break your test up into several mini sets. Lactic threshold is as much a function of time as it is of work, so you want to get the reps done quickly but going through in one straight shot isn't what I have found to be most effective. For example, if your goal is to do 27 reps, try breaking it down into something like 16 reps, 5 reps, 2 reps, 1 rep, 1 rep, 1 rep, 1 rep; taking 2-3 seconds and a few deep breaths in between each mini set. Obviously this structure will vary from person to person but it is a template.

A proper warmup can also be the difference between 2-3 reps. Focus on more warmup sets at very low weights to loosen up without tiring yourself out. Try this warmup structure...

Bar x50 (10 reps at 5 different grips working from close to wide)

95x10

135x2x5, 1 set at a regular tempo and 1 set explosively

185x3

225x1

245-315x1, use a heavier weight the stronger you are but don't let it be over 75% of your max, if 225 is over 70-75% of your max, then you wont perform this over set

Developing great lactic capacity requires the athlete to be able to exceed their current abilities. This is best achieved through a combination of partial range work, reverse band presses and special set structure. Subscribe to Juggernaut to read the rest of this article and learn how to drive up your rep strength and open college coach's and scout's eyes with this 10 week training program...

Combine prep is a complex and endeavor that requires great planning. My preferred combine training schedule is as follows...

Monday-Max Speed Sprinting/Jumps/Lower Body Weights

Tuesday-MB Throws/Tempo Runs/225 Rep Training

Wednesday-Change of Direction Training/Jumps

Thursday-Recovery Work

Friday-Acceleration Sprinting/Jumps/Lower Body Weights

Saturday-MB Throws/Tempo Runs/Max Upper Body Strength

## WEEK 1

### REP DAY

- 1) Box Pushups-4x2
- 2) Reverse Band Press-3xAMAP at 70%. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 12-15 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Closegrip Pushups-3 sets to failure with 90 seconds rest between sets.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x8 rounds

### MAX DAY

- 1) Box Pushups-4x2
- 2) Bench Press-55/60/65/70/75%x5
- 3) 2 Board Press-2-3 sets of 1 at what is a 8-9 effort
- 4) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 12-15 reps
- 5) DB Incline Bench-2x12 reps



- 6) Biceps/Triceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart
- 7) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x8 rounds

## WEEK 2

### REP DAY

- 1) Box Pushups-5x2
- 2) Reverse Band Press-3xAMAP at 75%. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 10-12 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Closegrip Pushups-3 sets to failure with 90 seconds rest between sets.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x10 rounds

### MAX DAY

- 1) Box Pushups-5x2
- 2) Bench Press-60/65/70/75/80%x3
- 3) 2 Board Press-2-3 sets of 1 at what is a 8-9 effort
- 4) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 10-12 reps

- 5) DB Incline Bench-2x10 reps
- 6) Biceps/Triceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart
- 7) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x10 rounds

## **WEEK 3**

### **REP DAY**

- 1) Box Pushups-6x2
- 2) Reverse Band Press-3xAMAP at 80%. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 8-10 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Closegrip Pushups-3 sets to failure with 90 seconds rest between sets.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x12 rounds

### **MAX DAY**

- 1) Box Pushups-6x2
- 2) Bench Press-65%x5, 70%x4, 75%x3, 80%x2, 85%x1
- 3) 2 Board Press-2-3 sets of 1 at what is a 8-9 effort

- 4) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 8-10 reps
- 5) DB Incline Bench-2x8 reps
- 6) Biceps/Triceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart
- 7) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x12 rounds

## **WEEK 4**

### **REP DAY**

- 1) Drop Pushups-4x2
- 2) 2 Board Press-60%x3xAMAP. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 12-15 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Tricep Death Pushups-Starting a 1 board, perform closegrip pushups until 2-3 reps shy of failure touching your chest to the board, immediately switch a 2 board, then 3 board and finally 4 board.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## MAX DAY

- 1) Drop Pushups-4x2
- 2) Reverse Band Press-5x5, working up to a heavy top set
- 3) Row/Pullups-5 sets of 12-15 reps
- 4) DB Bench-2x12
- 5) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## WEEK 5

### REP DAY

- 1) Drop Pushups-5x2
- 2) 1 Board Press-60%x3xAMAP. Your goal is to match the reps that you did the previous week off the 2 board. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 10-12 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Tricep Death Pushups-Starting a 1 board, perform closegrip pushups until 2-3 reps shy of failure touching your chest to the board, immediately switch a 2 board, then 3 board and finally 4 board.

6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## **MAX DAY**

- 1) Drop Pushups-5x2
- 2) Reverse Band Press-4x4, working up to a heavy top set
- 3) Row/Pullups-5 sets of 10-12 reps
- 4) DB Bench-2x10
- 5) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## **WEEK 6**

### **REP DAY**

- 1) Drop Pushups-6x2
- 2) Bench Press-60%x3xAMAP. Your goal is to match the reps that you did the previous week off the 2 board. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 8-10 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.

- 5) Tricep Death Pushups-Starting a 1 board, perform closegrip pushups until 2-3 reps shy of failure touching your chest to the board, immediately switch a 2 board, then 3 board and finally 4 board.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## **MAX DAY**

- 1) Drop Pushups-6x2
- 2) Reverse Band Press-3x3, working up to a heavy top set
- 3) Row/Pullups-5 sets of 8-10 reps
- 4) DB Bench-2x8
- 5) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## **WEEK 7**

### **REP DAY**

- 1) Rebound Pushups-4x2
- 2) Rest Pause Bench Press-225x3xRest Pause Sets. Each rest pause set is comprised of 3 smaller sets, this is done to extend your rep capacity through the use of short rest periods. Begin by repping out 225 until you feel like you can only do 2 more reps, rack the weight and rest for 30 seconds, rep 225 until you can only do 1 more rep, rack the weight and rest for 30 seconds, rep 225 until you feel you will miss the next rep. Rack the weight and rest 7-10

minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.

3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 12-15 reps

4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.

5) Closegrip Pushup Mechanical Drop Set-Perform 3 mechanical drop sets, each comprised of 3 mini sets. Begin by performing pushups with your feet elevated on a 6-12" box until you can only do 2-3 more reps, continue to do pushups with your feet and hands on the ground until you can do 1-2 more reps, continue by doing pushups with your feet on the ground and your hands up on the box that your feet were previously on. Rest 2-3 minutes between sets.

6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## **MAX DAY**

1) Rebound Pushups-4x2

2) Bench Press-60/70/80%x5 reps, at this point the maximal strength gains you can make and their impact on your 225 test will be minimal, so you need to dial back your maximal strength work so you can better recover from your rep work.

3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 12-15 reps

4) DB Floor Press-2x12 reps

5) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.

6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## WEEK 8

### REP DAY

- 1) Rebound Pushups-5x2
- 2) Rest Pause Bench Press-225x2xRest Pause Sets. Each rest pause set is comprised of 3 smaller sets, this is done to extend your rep capacity through the use of short rest periods. Begin by repping out 225 until you feel like you can only do 2 more reps, rack the weight and rest for 30 seconds, rep 225 until you can only do 1 more rep, rack the weight and rest for 30 seconds, rep 225 until you feel you will miss the next rep. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 10-12 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Closegrip Pushup Mechanical Drop Set-Perform 2 mechanical drop sets, each comprised of 3 mini sets. Begin by performing pushups with your feet elevated on a 6-12" box until you can only do 2-3 more reps, continue to do pushups with your feet and hands on the ground until you can do 1-2 more reps, continue by doing



pushups with your feet on the ground and your hands up on the box that your feet were previously on. Rest 2-3 minutes between sets.

6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## MAX DAY

1) Rebound Pushups-5x2

2) Bench Press-65/75/85%x3 reps, at this point the maximal strength gains you can make and their impact on your 225 test will be minimal, so you need to dial back your maximal strength work so you can better recover from your rep work.

3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 10-12 reps

4) DB Floor Press-2x10 reps

5) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.

6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## WEEK 9

### REP DAY

1) Rebound Pushups-6x2

2) Rest Pause Bench Press-225x1xRest Pause Sets. Each rest pause set is comprised of 3 smaller sets, this is done to extend your rep capacity through the use of short rest periods. Begin by repping out 225 until you feel like you can only do 2 more reps, rack the weight and rest for 30 seconds, rep 225 until you can only do 1 more rep, rack the weight and rest for 30 seconds, rep 225 until you

feel you will miss the next rep. Rack the weight and rest 7-10 minutes. You should rest long enough so that you can replicate your efforts in the next 2 sets, so if you did 30 reps on your first set you should be around 30 reps, +/-2 reps, in the following sets. Shake out your pecs, shoulders, and triceps during your rest period to enhance recovery.

- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 8-10 reps
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 5) Closegrip Pushup Mechanical Drop Set-Perform 1 mechanical drop set, each comprised of 3 mini sets. Begin by performing pushups with your feet elevated on a 6-12" box until you can only do 2-3 more reps, continue to do pushups with your feet and hands on the ground until you can do 1-2 more reps, continue by doing pushups with your feet on the ground and your hands up on the box that your feet were previously on. Rest 2-3 minutes between sets.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## MAX DAY

- 1) Rebound Pushups-6x2
- 2) Bench Press-70%x5, 80%x3, 90%x1 rep, at this point the maximal strength gains you can make and their impact on your 225 test will be minimal, so you need to dial back your maximal strength work so you can better recover from your rep work.
- 3) Rows/Pullups-5 sets of 8-10 reps
- 4) DB Floor Press-2x8 reps

- 5) Biceps/Neck/Shoulders/Traps-2-3 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart.
- 6) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x14 rounds

## **WEEK 10 (WEEK OF COMBINE/PRO DAY)**

### **REP DAY (WEDNESDAY IF COMBINE IS ON SATURDAY)**

- 1) Box Pushups-3x2
- 2) 2 Board Press-225x3x3-5
- 3) Rows/Pullups-3x8-12, light
- 4) Biceps/Neck/Shoulder/Traps-2 sets of 8-15 reps of each bodypart, light.
- 5) Bodyweight/Medball Abdominal Circuit-30 seconds on/30 seconds off x8 rounds.

### **MAX DAY (DAY OF COMBINE)**

- 1) Utilize warmup listed above
- 2) Smash 225 Rep Test

Success on the 225 rep test requires a combination of maximal strength and great lactic capacity and this program is guaranteed to improve your abilities and get scouts noticing you.

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