

WORKOUT of the Month

This article is written in gratitude to Louie Simmons for his unique training concepts and his commitment to our sport.

Before I begin, let me tell you how writing this article came about. I am a former three lift powerlifter who incurred a serious back injury nearly 1989, which has relegated me to bench press specialization. Considering the fact that my bench press had hovered between 290-320 from 1983 to 1990, this wasn't much of a specialty, what with the crop of excellent pressers hitting the one lift meets. Having reached the heights of frustration in October 1990 after benching 310 at a body-weight of 210, I figured I needed some program re-thinking. Enter Louie Simmons.

I'm sure many of you have read Louie's articles and have also read endorsements of his training theories by great lifters such as Ed Coan and Tony Kamand. Now, I'm nobody special, which makes the results I've gotten from some of his concepts worth mentioning. I made a promise to myself that if I ever hit 350 in the bench, I'd try to document the process. So here goes!

Two days a week are to be

Not So Basic Benching

as told to POWERLIFTING USA by Dave Caster

devoted to training the bench press related muscle groups. The bench press itself is trained once a week. Emphasis on the concept of compensatory acceleration is the key, Louie claims. A lot has been written about this concept, probably with a greater attention to fine detail than I can shed on the subject. Therefore, I'll keep it short and sweet. Take 72% of your current one-rep maximum in the bench (as achieved with the use of a bench shirt). Do 8 sets of 3 reps, using a controlled descent and a light touch and go style. Never pause. On the ascent, push that bar as fast as it'll go. The neat part about using 72% is that the weight is heavy enough to not fly out of your hands, yet light enough to move at great speed. Use minimum rest in between sets. Never use a bench shirt in training.

The crazy part of this scheme is that Louie says you should NEVER go above 72% of your current maximum! Quite honestly, I didn't know how you could increase bench press strength without a traditional peak-

A new concept in weight training instruction. A workout by workout, set by set, rep by rep workout plan, with exact training poundages specified over the entire span of a strength training cycle, laid out for you by a top Powerlifting authority. Each month, a different lift is analyzed. For those of different strength levels than the starting poundage specified, simply increase or decrease the training weights in direct proportion. For example, if your lift is 400, and a starting lift for the program is 500, multiply the training poundages by .8 (400 divided by 500); if your lift is 600 multiply the poundages specified by 1.2 (600 divided by 500).

ing scheme (increase weight, decrease sets and reps, etc.), and I was more than a little skeptical. So I asked him.

Louie believes in hitting triceps heavily with lying extensions to the chin with straight bar and using a modified close grip bench press in which the weight is touched down higher on the chest than is customary (or comfortable). Use 3-5 reps in this modified bench press. We use a 13 inch grip on this one. My training partner has put 50 lbs. on his best bench in 9 months by using this movement. Deltoids also get special treatment with side laterals and front plate raises. Try 2 sets of 20 reps with the front plate raises - they're quite a treat!

Combine this unique way of bench training with the focus on triceps and delts, and the picture is almost complete. I still wondered how absolute strength could be developed with such "light" training. Louie's answer to this was, "increase strength in your worst grip, and your best grip will get

stronger." What does he mean by that? In the midst of asking him about incline benches, the answer came out. He said to work up to a heavy single in the close grip incline bench press (using a 35-40 degree angle). We use an 18 inch grip and hit the bar very high on the chest. I thought this was one nutty piece of advice, until I tried it. We do this movement on our second workout, and cycle it in short 3 week cycles. We mix in heavy dumbbell presses and 24 inch cambered bar benches for variety on this day, aiming for 10 reps. After you peak in the close grip incline, you can do regular inclines for a short 3 week cycle and then come back to the close grips. Top this all off with some bent over rows with the upper body supported for about 6 sets of 5 reps, and you have the makings of an intriguing and result producing routine.

How well has this worked for me? As stated before, I benched 310 on October 1990 at a body-weight of 210. In January 1991, I benched 335 at 198 after introducing the modified close grip benches. In July, 1991 I benched 345 at 212 after introducing the front plate raises. And in December 1991, I benched 360 at 204 after training exclusively with 245 lbs. for 8 sets of 3 reps for a five week cycle, mixing in modified close grip benches for sets of 3, using the same weight. On the second day, the 18 inch grip incline benches were stressed, eventually working up to 270 for one.

Let me say this - that 360 moved quicker than I would have thought possible. The shocking part about this routine is that you don't need a ton of weight to boost the bench. If you move that 72% weight as fast as humanly possible, pound your triceps and don't be afraid of shimmering in your grip on inclines, you'll be mighty surprised once you shoe-horn yourself into your shirt and pile on the plates.

Once again, many thanks to Louie Simmons for both his excellent articles and his time, and a special thanks to my training partner, Dale Benton, who helps turn simple powerlifting into a "think tank" experience.

Best of luck to you all, and God Bless. DAVE CASTER, 123 Centennial Lane, Hilton, New York 14468, 716-392-3548



Lifters like Ed Coan do not always train "conventionally", yet still attain tremendous results, as indicated in this unique "Workout of the Month" by Dave Caster, which utilizes Louie Simmons' training principles.