

TRAINING

What exactly is a J.M. Press?

The term was coined by George Halbert and Louis Simmons shortly after I began working out at the Westside. I had arrived there upon Lou's invitation hoping to improve my explosive power that all Westsiders are known for. I began a steady diet of chain work (and subsequently band work) there that has helped me tremendously. I found myself struggling to keep up with many of the boys on the exercises that required what I call super-human chest explosiveness, but found that I was very comfortable with exercises that relied on triceps strength. I realized then that my triceps strength was my forte. By comparing my modest efforts in the "chest drive" exercises with my exceptional performance in the "triceps" exercises with those of truly the world's best benchers, I knew just where my training had been lacking, and also where my training had been dead-on.

In truth, I had only done one exercise with stoic regularity and eventually I omitted all other movements for the triceps altogether. That movement was what is now called the J.M. Press and that movement alone I have to thank for my triceps strength. I full well know that the only reason I have been able to keep competing with these marvels of pectoral development and prowess is that my triceps strength has been able to compensate for my chest's shortcoming so much as to keep me in the hunt. My point: I believe in my triceps exercise so fervently that I credit much of my success to it. It's got me where I am today. I plan to put major amounts of work into developing chest power like Kenny Patterson and George have, and hope to balance my attack better, but I realize this will take years and lots of sweat.

I now do a few other exercises for triceps, but still rely on my mainstay. Those with a keen eye for self improvement at Westside also noticed my exaggerated triceps strength. I was happy to contribute to the Westside repertoire by sharing the source of my one

down past the chest or God forbid even the level of the shoulders! They must remain up to the ceiling and angled out at 45 degrees. If the elbows are allowed to fall then the shoulder begins to see more and more involvement and stress is taken off the triceps especially at the initiation of the drive from the bottom.

This is a triceps exercise, not a shoulder exercise. If you let your elbows drop you may as well just do close grip benches. You will be generating all the beginning drive with the deltoids and only finishing with triceps. But by holding proper form you will feel the forearm muscle "fold" onto the biceps and the result is a fully stretched triceps tendon. If your elbows drop you will not feel this "folding" and compression of the forearm and biceps together nor the extreme tension along the triceps tendon over the elbow joint. If you don't feel it, your elbows are probably sagging.

This tension and compression of the soft tissue of the arm flexors is what determines how deep the motion will travel. The fact is that the bar actually stops several inches above the throat and is suspended there by keeping the elbows up and mashing the forearm on the biceps. This position exhausts the slack in the triceps tendon and the bar can not descend further toward the body. If you can bring the bar lower to touch the chin or throat then you have either dropped the elbows or flared them out to the sides past 45 degrees. In any event you should with practice, eventually find yourself in the proper position at the bottom with your elbows up and fixed at 45 degrees from the body, the triceps tendon fully stretched with the barbell hovering several inches above your chin, throat or the very tip-top of the breast bone (manubrium). You should find that it takes surprisingly little effort to hold the bar motionless here. That is because the weight is now supported by the triceps tendon (NOT the triceps muscle) and the compression of the arm flexors. It looks like it would be tough to suspend a weighted bar several inches above the body, but in truth, if you are in the right position, the support comes from leverage.

The rest is easy! Just extend the arms to full lockout with a couple hundred pounds! Well, maybe not exactly easy. But certainly simple. From a solid bottom position just drive the bar up to lockout concentrating on LIMITING the shoulder involvement and maximizing the punch from the triceps. ESPECIALLY at the onset of the drive from the bottom. Don't allow any force to be generated on the bar at

As the bar descends toward the chin or throat, the elbows follow a line out at 45 degrees from the body and what is critical to remember is to keep the elbows up above the rib cage. The elbows must not drop

the bottom from the delts - keep the motion in the elbows. That is the big secret of this exercise! Focusing the power in the elbows and triceps and keeping the shoulders out of it (most importantly at the beginning of the drive). You will feel the tendency to want to drop the elbows and generate power from the delts right at the beginning of the movement. The quality of your results in this exercise will depend on your ability to discipline that tendency. As I said earlier, if you're going to use shoulders, you may as well do regular close grip benches! Keep focused on triceps and use a short explosive punch!

Don't be discouraged by the technicality of this exercise. Of course the better you perform it, the better results you can expect from it. But it doesn't have to be perfect to be effective! This exercise is so beneficial that even a modest approximation of it will work wonders! And you'll get better at it. Keep the loads very, very light for the first four weeks to allow for learning as well as time for the tendon in the back of your arm to adjust to the full stretch. If you rush this arm you will get sore elbows - and I mean real sore. Take your time and build a good form and connective tissue base before you load the bar up. Believe me your strength in this exercise grows quickly when you perform it right. Kenny Patterson uses well over 500 lbs. for triples in this exercise and has achieved that level in under 2 years of training with it! Your strength will come - don't be in a hurry! If you move too fast your muscular strength can out strip your tendon strength.

Also I would advise limiting your other triceps work somewhat as your loads increase. I am a big proponent of simplicity and I avoid overtraining by following the maxim: More is not better, only better is better.

To summarize, the movement is performed by taking a narrow grip on the bar, lowering it

toward the neck with elbows up and fixed at 45 degrees from the body, folding the forearms on the biceps and fully stretching the triceps tendon. The bar should stop several inches above the chin. Not by holding it there with muscular force, but by the tension of the tendon and compression of the arm. It may be helpful to "cock" the wrists up toward the ceiling for stability here. Most people do this naturally but it serves to mention it any way. The motion is completed by punching the bar back up to arms length in the EXACT same path that it descended in a short sharp, clean stroke. Keep it light at first or you will suffer joint pain like fire on hot. (Believe that.) Amazing strength can accrue in a relatively short time so don't worry about a slow and light start. Suggested work is 5x10 for 4 weeks then normal training of 3-4x6 off season and 3-4x3 in peaking for a meet. Good luck and good lifting!

J.M. Blakley

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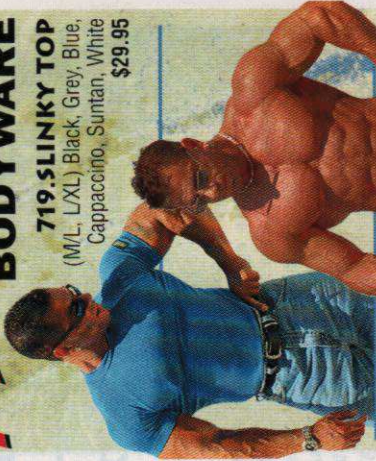
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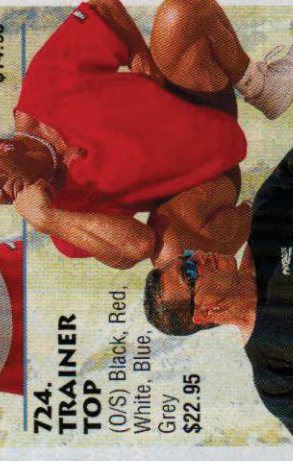
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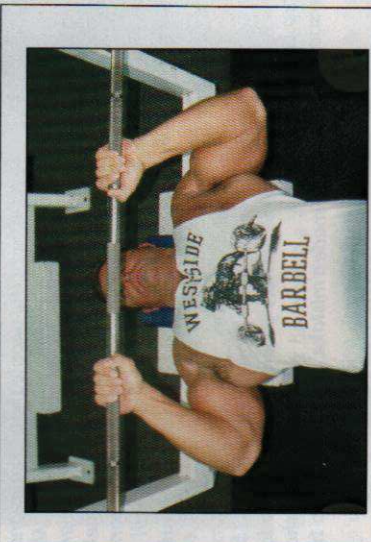


Photo #1: Elbows up and out at 45 degrees, narrow grip, bar descends toward chin or neck.



Photo #2: Note the elbows stay up, forearms "fold" onto biceps. Photo #3: (below) Wrong! Elbows have fallen & shoulder will be involved!

