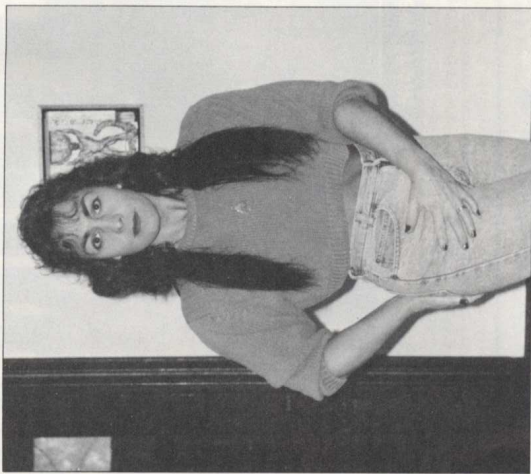


# THE BENCH

## Barrier Breaking Bench Routines as told to PL USA by Greg Reshel, POWER EXCEL



Dawn Sharon has trimmed way down for the 1993 lifting campaign

As we all know there are many, many ways to skin a cat. I will use this article to convey four different bench press training routines. Please understand that what I am doing is very much like taking the time to give you directions to four different cities: Atlanta, Chicago, Las Vegas, and Seattle without telling you the starting point of your journey. A sound training program not only takes into account your genetic gifts and weaknesses but uses the training program you are currently using as well as recent routines to assess the starting point for a new program. For our purposes here, I will tell you that we have four different bench athletes that are seeking to break through their respective bench press barriers of 300 lbs., 400 lbs., 500 lbs., as well as 600 lbs. I will briefly highlight the athlete's characteristics and then give a routine that will carry them over the top. I cannot write in the confidence, positive attitude, and aggressive determination needed to break down what seems to be milestone barriers. Barriers are what we make of them. If anyone reading this article finds themselves in similar circumstances to the fictional athletes I will outline here, please feel free to dive into the program listed for you. You will succeed. You must remain consistently aggressive and have reasonable sound techniques but, make no mistake, if you follow the program as outlined, you will succeed.

Our first athlete is a novice athlete that is no longer young. The athlete's current PR bench press is about 275 lbs. and we will carry this athlete through the 300 lb. marker. Anyone with a mid to high 200 lbs. bench press and average or better recovery will have no problem adapting to this program. We will have our athlete train the bench press twice per week with the light workout following two days after the heavy workout. Our athlete will not be completely recovered before the light day but rather the movements involved in the light workout will help to speed recovery as well as rest various muscle groups and prepare our athlete for the next heavy workout.

**Heavy Workout:** Front Presses from the chin-4 sets of 7 reps at 60, 105 lbs. (drop after Week 8).  
**Bench Press (Warmup briefly where necessary):** Week 1: 135x5x2, 175x1, 205x1, 225x1, 235x1, 205x5, 175x12. **Week 2:** 6 sets of 3 reps at 205 lbs. **Week 3:** 135x5x2, 185x1, 215x1, 235x1, 215x4, 185x12. **Week 4:** 8 sets of 2 reps at 225 lbs. **Week 5:** 135x5x2, 175x1, 205x1, 225x1, 245x1, 215x5, 175x15. **Week 6:** 6 sets of 3 reps at 215 lbs. **Week 7:** 135x5x2, 195x1, 225x1, 255x1,

12-135x3, 205x2, 265x1, 315x1, 335x1, 265x8. **Workout 13-6** sets of 4 reps from 235-260 lbs. **Workout 14-135x3, 215x2, 275x1, 325x1, 345x1, 275x8. Workout 15-6** sets of 2 reps at 245 lbs. **Workout 16-135x3, 225x2, 285x1, 335x1, 370x1, 400x1.** \* Wide Grip Front Lat Pulldown-4 sets of 9 reps at 15-20 lbs. \* Seated Press Behind Neck-6 sets of 5 reps at 75-135 lbs. \* Overhead Single Arm Dumbbell Tricep Extensions-4 sets of 9 reps at 15-20 lbs. \* 30 Degree Forward Lean Wide Grip Upright Row-4 sets of 7 reps at 45-85 lbs.

Our third athlete is a large experienced lifter with good genetic talents in the bench press, but has a physically demanding job or stressful job that does not allow him to train, eat, or sleep properly. This athlete has plateaued in the bench press in the upper fours. This athlete also has trained heavy in accessory movements as well as the bench press but is still unable to peak over the 500 lb. marker. We are going to have our advanced athlete train the bench press two times per week, with the light workout following three days after the heavy workout. We are going to give this lifter a 10 week workout with the heavy training day broken into two phases. The first phase of heavy workouts is 6 weeks long and will pre-exhaust the bench press. Our athlete has to be patient and allow all the heavy training foundation to be coordinated into an honest peak strength experience.

**Heavy Bench Press Routine**  
Phase 1-Pre-exhaust-Perform for 6 weeks. \* Incline Modified Fly-4 sets of 9 reps at 40-75 lbs. \* Dips-5 sets of 8 reps. \* Rotation Shrugs-3 sets of 8 reps at 135-185 lbs. \* Bench Press (minimal warmup) **Week 1-6** sets of 8 reps at 135-185 lbs. **Week 2-8** sets of 3 reps from 285-320 lbs. **Week 3-385x1, 315x4, 395x1, 315x4, 405x1, 315x4. Week 4-6** sets of 3 reps from 325-375 lbs. **Week 5-365x1, 315x5, 395x1, 315x5, 425x1, 315x5. Week 6-5** sets of 2 reps at 385 lbs. \* Decline Bench Press- vertical motion from the first row of abs-3 sets of 6 reps to 385 lbs. \* Parallel Grip Lat Pulldown with 40 Degree Rearward Lean-4 sets of 6 reps at 90-130 lbs.- paused on chest with chest high/head back.

**Heavy Bench Press Routine**  
Phase 2- Peaking for Four Weeks \* Bench Press: **Week 1-1** Single up to 405x2x2, 315x8. **Week 2-1** Single up to 435x12, 315x8. **Week 3-1** Single up to 435x12, 315x8. **Week 4-1** Single up to 435x12, 315x8. **Week 5-5** sets of 6 reps at 285 lbs. **Workout 11-6** sets of 3 reps at 285 lbs. **Workout**

Light Bench Press Workout for all Ten weeks: \* Incline Bench Press-6 sets of 4 reps at 135-255 lbs. \* Narrow Grip Upright Row-4 sets of 9 reps at 65-105 lbs. \* Alternate Dumbbell Press-4 sets of 10 reps at 25-40 lbs. \* Seated Low Pulley Row-4 sets of 6 reps at 90-130 lbs. \* Medium Grip Low Pulley Row to Sternum (elbows out)-3 sets of 6 reps at 40-70 lbs. \* Wide Grip 60 Degree Rearward Lean High Pulley Row to Sternum-4 sets of 10 reps at 150-200 lbs.

Our last athlete is a large, advanced, genetically gifted lifter. This athlete is fast at recovery and is very aggressive. Contrary to popular belief, pharmaceutical ergogenic supplementation is not necessary. This athlete can bench press mid to upper 500's at a peak and is looking to advance over the 600 mark. We will have our athlete train for his personal record for 10 weeks and then work on the 11th week. The first training period will have our athlete training hard every 5 days for 5 weeks. I must say that we are just peaking the bench and the workout gets more complicated if we are peaking the other two lifts. The second training period will have our lifter training two times per week for 5 more weeks. One training day will have our athlete training the bench relatively heavy as he drives for his peak. The second training day falls two or three days later and is used to reset his muscles, clear the nerve paths of debris, and to promote healing so that he will be recovered and fresh for the next peaking period.

**Training Period 1:** Training the Bench Press every 5 Days. \* Sleep Incline Dumbbell Front Raise-3 sets of 8 reps at 15-25 lbs. \* Standing Lateral Raises-Thumb up with 10 Degrees of Forward Lean-3 sets of 8 15-25 lbs. \* Decline Barbell Pullovers-Bent Elbow with a Wide Grip-4 sets of 5 reps at 45-75 lbs. \* Bench Press (warmup-135x6, 25x5, 315x3). **Workout 1-365x5x5 sets, 315x12. Workout 2-385x5x5 sets, 405x3x2 sets, 365x5x5 sets. Workout 3-435x1, 425x3x2 sets, 365x5x5 sets. Workout 4-365x1, 365x5x5 sets. Workout 5-385x1, 455x3x2 sets, 455x3x2 sets, 365x5x5 sets. Workout 7-405x1, 475x3x2 sets, 365x5x5 sets. \* Flat Bench Fly-3 sets of 8 reps at 15-25 lbs. \* Plate Raises-3 sets of 6 reps at 25-45 lbs. \* Overhead Tricep Extensions-3 sets of 12 reps at 55-85 lbs.**

**Training Period 2:** Training the Bench Press Two Times per Week for 5 weeks. Heavy Bench Press Workout. \* Bench Press (brief warmup)

Light Bench Press Workout for all Ten weeks: \* Incline Bench Press-6 sets of 4 reps at 135-255 lbs. \* Narrow Grip Upright Row-4 sets of 9 reps at 65-105 lbs. \* Alternate Dumbbell Press-4 sets of 10 reps at 25-40 lbs. \* Seated Low Pulley Row-4 sets of 6 reps at 90-130 lbs. \* Medium Grip Low Pulley Row to Sternum (elbows out)-3 sets of 6 reps at 40-70 lbs. \* Wide Grip 60 Degree Rearward Lean High Pulley Row to Sternum-4 sets of 10 reps at 150-200 lbs.

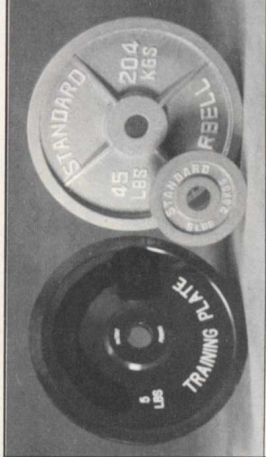
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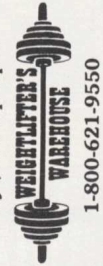


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