

THE BENCH

How Often Can or Should One Train the Bench Press?

as told to PL USA by the Great Jim Williams

A question that is old as Greek Mythology, and contemplated by every avid powerlifter since powerlifting was conceived! My quick answer would be five or six days a week, or 13 days straight for style and endurance. In this article I am going to attempt to explain my reasons why you should lift more than twice a week to develop a giant bench press!

The first time I contemplated bench pressing every day, I was told that it was a foolish, non-practical idea and that it "just won't work out!" A good friend said take it to bed and sleep on it, but I learned fast that nothing comes to a sleeper but a dream. The more I thought not to train my bench press every day, the more convinced I became to give it a try. I thought of professional people such as surgeons, carpenters, football players and lawyers, etc. What if they practiced their professions only several times a month or year. Could you imagine what would be taking place? No need to answer that, because we know that it requires concerted and concentrated effort by all who are involved in order to succeed. I know I would not want a football player playing for me that trained only twice or eight times a month.

One argument I find against benching every day is that follows: believe that a big arm is all they need, therefore more time is spent on arm routines than they spend

we use more weight to squat with and can do it two or three times a week, then why should anyone think that 5 to 6 times is too much to bench! Bench pressing is like anything else, you put in a little - and that just what you get out - "A LITTLE".

Believe me, your muscles can stand it; you have been uniquely constructed. If muscles would respond as easily as a lot of people would like to believe, just the mileage you've put on walking since birth would render you the biggest legs ever, but we know that is not true. It takes an awesome amount of work, and unless you're ready to take the chance, your chances for a big bench are nil.

I have at least five different bench routines that have worked for me, and with this variety, I am able to ward off staleness. I have found out for myself that twice a day benching will, most of the time, enhance the second workout. The first workout sets my muscles and leaves them well heated, and directs my style and all that is left in my psyching.

You will find out, if you have not done so already, that the only way to lift correctly is through practice; practice makes perfect and perfect practice makes practice. There is not too much you can do to your muscles, if you lift work correctly.

Injury comes mainly from doing what you have never practiced, and in a forced situation you sustain

below their desired dream. If this is true, it's only because they are weak in the bench from not doing them enough anyway.

The chest cavity is enhanced greatly by squatting, so then, again, you can see the frivolous argument against not bench pressing daily. Squats are definitely an asset to a stronger chest cavity, but if you don't do benches regularly, then it's like sound to a deaf ear. Also, many lifters have confused fatigue and nutrition, education and a good 5 to 6 day routine. Actually, one should get either in a quiet mood or with a close lifting partner and spend time each day thinking out his position of the bar overhead, and where it should land on the chest and his timing response.

Then you have that age old excuse used by most lifters that because they do heavy squats and deadlifts, it almost invariably affects the muscles in the shoulder girdle, thus rendering their bench press

Just think, we use more than 60 odd muscles to perform the bench press. One can imagine how much more comes into play just to do one squat, plus we squat with more weight than we bench press. So, if

injury. With this in mind, how could anyone think that a two day routine can accomplish anything. Of course, you always have the gifted lifter who does not have to train regularly, but he too needs his match against skilled lifters and forced situations. It is necessary, without a doubt, that to become a class lifter one needs countless hours of training to accomplish the desired results, or he is just fooling himself.

Bench pressing calls for a unique style and brute strength, and neither of these can be attained on a two day week program. Good bench pressers must be perfectionist about their work.

Before I go any further, I would like to emphasize a problem that has gone unobserved. I do not think the bench press is receiving its due, because of the fact that there are few mechanical devices or material masquerades that can be used to enhance the bench movement. Therefore, it is somewhat overlooked and under-trained by many. The squat and deadlift devices have in this case rendered the bench press almost to the point of being unpopular. Suits of every description, shoes, ballet slippers, light wraps, and a four inch belt are offered and they are very attractive. They may bring many pounds to the lifter's total, which means fewer training hours and weaker tendons (they may

they may be able to repeat a hard press, but they seldom make a big gain. They count more on their strength and do less techniques. This alone will make them bench less, therefore, robbing them of the big one.

I have taken 100 lbs. jumps with confidence because of my awareness of the bench press. I have also opened with 650-700 pounds and bombed, but my percentages from benching regularly are a lot better than a stronger benchman, who, if he is off that day, may blow it entirely.

Great bench pressers are the likes of Mel Hennessy, Ronnie Ray, Pat Casey, Doug Young, Mike MacDonald, Larry Pacifico, Joe Weinstein, T. Arcidi, John Kuc, Wayne Bouvier, Jon Cole and the Author. These men possessed both unique style and strength. Strong benchers are the like of Paul Anderson, Don Reinhardt, L. Iams, Bill Kazmaier, Lars Hedlund, T. Hardman, Hugh Casstidy, S. Samaniego, etc. I think you have received the picture; and if you do not agree, just try benching 5 or 6 times a week for a month with a concentrated effort. If nothing else you will learn the trick of the bench press. You may even acquire this delicate skill called finesse that will enable you to make gain, after gain, after gain.

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training the bench press. From my training method and the rapidly with which I performed them, I could look at a bench press and tell you whether it was done with style or just plain brute force strength. In closing, I would like to say this, there is a great difference between a great bench presser and a strong bench presser. Great bench pressers can use more drive line style and less power to complete a lift. This comes from countless hours of practice and meditation about what you are doing. Strong bench pressers can bench press naturally because they are strong, but they may even bench less than a drive line style benchman, because of being uncomfortable and not able to determine a style. Understand now,

I broke a bench press record every time out, whether local, state, national, American or world, only because I was thorough in

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Jim Williams came this close with 700 lbs. in the bench press at the 1972 Worlds, weighing 343 1/4 pounds. He had just made 675, which stood as the American Record, and exceeded the official IFF World Record for many years. The 700 looked easier going up than the 675, according to the man who took this historic photograph, George Coates, but then it stalled out at this position, just short of full lock out.