

Everyone wants a big bench press! It's the most popular lift there is. The problem that most people have with their bench is that they either train it too much or they train it too little.

There are two secrets to developing a big bench press. The most important is that you remain fresh the entire bench cycle. You should never, ever miss a rep on any given set of bench or major assistance work. I've found that is what works best for me. Everyone trains at different intensity levels and recovers at different times. The best way to safeguard against overtraining is to be totally fresh each week by leaving a cushion of at least ten pounds in each of your top sets (max out at 300x5, when you could have done 310x5). This would be a good training philosophy to start out with. It would be much better to go the meet a bit undertrained and fresh rather than overtrained and stale.

The second most important factor in training the bench press is incorporating assistance work into your routine. I feel assistance work is critical. Even more critical is picking the right assistance work for you. Everyone responds differently to different movements.

The bench press involves three major muscle groups, the chest, shoulders and triceps. All three play an important role in the bench press. The chest is responsible for blasting the bar off the chest. The shoulders take over about six inches off the chest. The triceps are responsible for locking the bar out. The sticking point is defined as the area where a lift is usually missed. You want to make sure to pick an assistance exercise for the muscle group that is responsible for your sticking point. Make sure not to overtrain that sticking point!

What follows are groups of assistance exercises to aid your bench. Pick only a total of two from the three groups. After your bench cycle is over, evaluate your choices. Next time you may want to pick differently.

Group 1:

- a) Partial bench presses (from the chest up six inches then back down to the chest)
- b) Dumbbell bench presses
- c) Low incline bench presses

For the Most Powerful Amino Complex With Guaranteed Results, See Center Spread!

STARTIN' OUT

A special section dedicated to the beginning lifter

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).

Jeff Wright's Bench Press Routine



JEFF WRIGHT benching a new Pennsylvania State Record of 570 pounds, weighing 218, at the Pittsburgh Open on December 2nd, a lift that ties the No. 5 achievement of all time in that weight class. He also holds the Pennsylvania State record at 198, with a 523 effort. He has benched 600 in the gym, weighing 222, and has made 420x1 and 365x5 in the behind the neck press. (Photo courtesy Jeff)

safeguard against injury. All minor movements can be done until two weeks prior to a meet. All major movements must be stopped four weeks out from competition.

Here is a sample routine for a lifter whose current max is 400 pounds. Most lifters can expect 15-20 pounds gain on their bench press. Any bench routine that claims more than this is unrealistic.

Before you begin your twelve week program make sure you have had at least a three week break from a meet or a maximum attempt (a break meaning not more than 225x8).

1st Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 215x8, 245x8, 290x8x2 (warmups as needed). Two assistance exercises you picked (warmups as needed) for 2 top sets of 8; remember they have to be easy enough so you can jump every week for 7 more weeks without ever missing a rep! Easy day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8x2. Major assistance exercises use 75 percent of the weight you used on heavy day.

2nd Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 255x8, 280x8, 300x8x2. Major assistance exercises 2 top sets of 8 reps. Easy day - as in week 1.

3rd Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 255x8, 280x8, 310x8x2. Major assistance exercises 2 top sets of 8 reps each day. Easy day - as in week 1.

4th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 255x8, 280x5, 325x5x2. Major assistance exercises 1 top set of 5 reps. Easy day - same as week 1.

5th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 255x8, 280x5, 315x5, 335x5x2. Major assistance exercises 1 top set of 5 reps. Easy day - as in week 1.

6th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 315x5, 345x5x2. Major assistance exercise 1 top set of 5 reps. Easy day - same as week 1.

7th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 325x2, 360x3x2. Major assistance exercises 1 top set of 3 reps, last week for those exercises, easy day same as week 1.

8th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 325x2, 370x3x2. Easy day same as week 1. Major assistance exercises work 1 top set of 3.

9th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 325x2, 350x2, 380x3, 380x1 pause. Easy day - skip it. No major assistance work.

10th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 325x2, 350x2, 390x2, 390x1 pause. Easy day - skip it, no major assistance work.

11th Week: Hard day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 325x2, 350x1, 400x2, 405x1 pause. No easy day. No major assistance work.

12th week: Hard Day - Bench 135x8, 185x8, 225x8, 275x5, 325x2, 350x1, 380x1 pause. No easy day.

Meet: Attempts 380 - 405 - 420

- d) Weighted dips (leaning forward)
- e) Cambered bar benches
- Group 2:
- a) Front barbell presses
- b) Behind the neck presses
- c) Dumbbell presses
- d) High incline bench with bar
- e) High incline bench with dumbbells
- Group 3:
- a) Close grip bench
- b) Weighted dips (leaning back)
- c) Lockouts (in rack, off pins)

In addition to the two major assistance exercises chosen, you may also want to include the following minor movements: a) Incline flies, b) Lateral raises, c) Bent laterals, d) Pushdowns. All of these minor movements are to be done very lightly only 3 sets of 10 reps. They will help condition the pressing muscles and