

I'm Joe Mazza, I currently live in Succasunna, NJ. I am a police officer in Saddlebrook, NJ, and I'm married with 3 children.

I've been ranked #1 in the 165-pound weight class in the U.S. for the past several years. I recently competed at the Olympia, lifting in the raw bench exhibition, benching 420. Two weeks later I competed in an IPA meet and benched 625, just missing 660 for the all-time 165 record. My current goal is to bench 4 x body weight. I feel strongest weighing 175 and would therefore have to bench 700. I recently benched 705 in the gym and just missed 725.

I'm sponsored by MHP sports nutrition. I have used MHP supplements my entire career. They have helped me reach every one of my powerlifting goals this far in my career and they will continue to fuel me to break world records. My favorite MHP products right now are Up Your MASS - the most powerful weight gainer ever developed, and T-BOMB II - the ultimate pro test-osterone formula.

I train at Nazareth Barbell in Nazareth, PA, owned by Mike Miller. I train with and am coached by Jim Parrish. I have been training with Jim off and on since 1998. Five to six years ago, Jim developed the Joe Average (JA) strength system, we primarily train with heavy band tensions and this is where I have made my strongest gains.

The JA strength system was founded on Westside, Nazbar and Metal Militia principles. As Jim developed the system, he discovered that by focusing on the basic core exercises we were able to make our biggest gains. Rather than rotating through numerous exercises, we stick to basic benching and rotate our band tensions. Similar to WSB, we alternate between a dynamic bench and a max effort bench.

The JA system consists of 6 cycles, each cycle lasting 2 weeks. The first week of each cycle is the dynamic week and the second week is the ME week or max effort week.

The dynamic week consists of a free weight set to failure, a touch set, followed by speed work. We follow a strict rep scheme when doing our free weight work and this allows us to cycle ourselves to a peak on meet day. Our free weight work does not build strength, it just indicates to us how strong we are at that given time. Let us know how strong we have become from doing the heavy band work on our ME workout. We then do a touch set. A touch set is similar

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WORKOUT OF THE MONTH

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Joe Mazza's Bench Routine

to doing a negative, but we focus on handling max plus weight and bringing the weight down fast. Handling 150 pounds over your max gives you the confidence to handle max weight on meet day and touch sets must be done in a properly altered bench shirt. We bring the bar down

in its proper groove, letting it drop, touch, then give it a push and the spotters take the bar. If you train raw, then skip the touch set.

Our speed work then supplements our free weight set to failure. We use minimal tension with some bar weight and focus on doing fast

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explosive reps. JA style speed work is not the main focus of our benching, our max effort work is.

The second week of each cycle is our max effort week. When doing a max effort bench workout we bench, we do not rotate through various exercises. In order to prevent regressing or plateauing we set up a band rotation. We rotate through 3 different band rotations. Each max effort workout we change our band rotation which then changes the amount of bar being used. This keeps your CNS guessing. We are then able to focus on the core exercise every ME workout. The first exercise that is done is a reverse bench with bands. Rather than hanging the bands from the top of the power rack, Jim had a metal ladder made. We slide the pins into the third hole from the top and lay the ladder across the pins. We then hang the bands from the ladder. When hanging the bands from the top of the rack, the bands help to lift the weight through



A MASTER OF MASSIVE WEIGHTS ... Joe awaits the press signal from Head Referee Gordon Santee, at this year's Arnold Classic Bench Bash

the entire lift. By using a ladder we are able to lower the bands closer to the lifter and this allows the lifter to lock out most if not all the weight at the top of the lift. When doing our reverse band bench, we focus on lowering the weight quickly and then throwing the weight back up. This helps to develop speed when maxing with free weight -- the faster you move the weight, the more weight you can lift. Again, each max effort week we change the band that is used thus changing the bar weight that is used. After 1 max effort set we then set up for a ME bench with the bands doubled from the bottom of the rack. It's this max effort set that

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truly builds the most strength. The secret to building strength is not focusing on the muscle, but rather focusing on your ligament and tendon strength. I basically train at the same body weight today that I did years ago and yet my bench has improved from a 400 pound gym bench to a 705 pound gym bench. Training with heavy band tension has greatly increased the strength of my tendons and ligaments, which has then allowed my muscle to lift more weight. Basically, the JA system will allow a lifter to take what he has and make it stronger without the need for gaining unnecessary weight.

The second workout we do each week is a board workout. Again, we establish a 3 band rotation at the beginning of each training cycle. Each week when doing our board work we change the band tension and this then changes the bar weight. Each lifter uses three boards. For example, I'm 5'6" with a short stroke

so I use a 2 board, 3 board and a 4 board. Jim at 6'1" uses a 4 board, 5 board and a 6 board. We do one max effort set at each board and we're done. The purpose of the board work is to focus on the upper half of the bench movement. We are able to use max weight, which allows us to build lock out strength.

I currently use an Inzer open back double denim grid stitched scooped neck bench shirt. I'm getting about 275 pounds out of my shirt right now. The reason for this is because we ensure that the shirt is properly altered. I realize that there is a lot of debate concerning when to wear a shirt. If you compete in a shirt you should then train in a shirt. Wearing a shirt in training allows the lifter to train with more weight, which then allows the lifter to lift more on meet day. I use my shirt for every exercise except for speed work. In addition, when using the bands we double the bands, never choke. When doubling the bands, this allows for greater

tension throughout the entire range of motion and thus builds greater strength.

Videos, additional information and my training log can be found on Jim's website at www.joeaveragestrength.com. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my sponsor MHP, ironwoodyfitness.com for supplying us with bands and to Jim for taking the time to train with me and his coaching advice. Jim is a corporate jet mechanic-he works for FlexJet. On his off days he is available for questions and answers on his website. We are available on a limited basis for demos and seminars.

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Joe Mazza has competed at highest levels in several contest formats .. here he is at the 2003 Bench America

