

WORKOUT of the Month

At the gyms Rachel and I train, I am constantly asked advice on training or what I think about somebody's "Workout of the Month" and my answer is always the same: "Give it a try, it might work for you". I never discount anyone's training theory or advice if I haven't tried it for myself, keeping in mind that just because a method does not work for us does not mean it won't work for the next person.

At the Mountaineer Open, held on November 21, 1992, Rachel Mathias bench pressed 292 lbs. in the 132 lb. class, a new USPF American Record, making her the #2 women's bencher in any weight class, any organization, using the Malone formula. Our training technique that led up to this was a complete fluke. As a matter of fact, she entered this meet at the last minute and had not done any powerlifting-style training since the USPF

RACHEL MATHIAS BENCH WORKOUT

as told to Powerlifting USA by Greg Mathias

Nationals in July 1992.

After the USPF Nationals, Rachel took it easy for the entire month of August and then we started training for the October's Women's Extravaganza, a professional strength show in which as many repetitions are done with bodyweight or a percentage of bodyweight. There are five events total, but the one we are concerned with here is the bench. On the days we trained for the bench, we also trained for the dips event. Our workouts went approximately as follows, once a week: (Note Rachel's contest weight was 138 lbs.).

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).

beating her old record from last year by 3 reps.

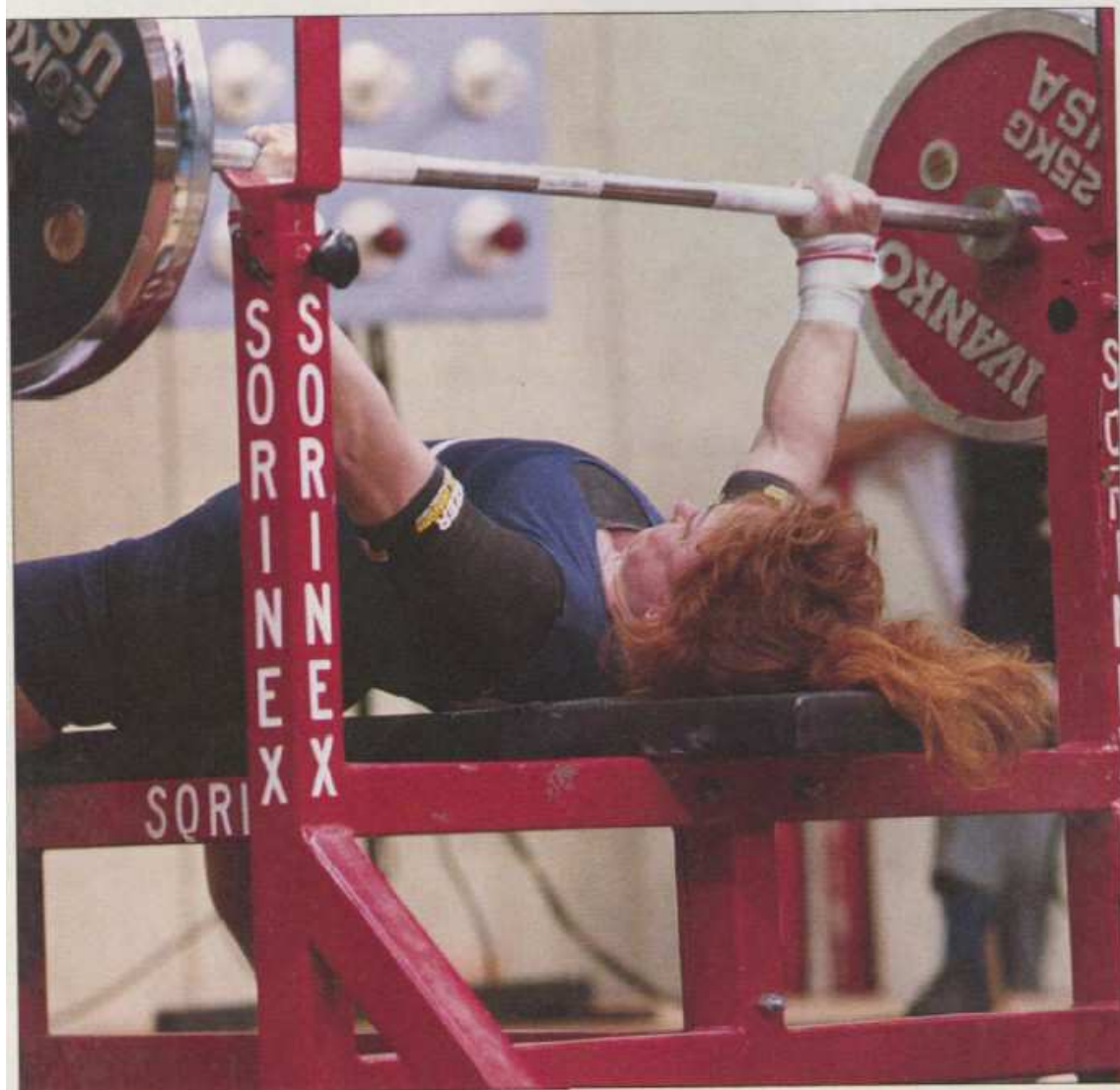
Now Rachel was happy and ready to rest for the remainder of the year until we got home and I pointed out to her somebody had just tied her American bench press record, which Rachel had just set at the Nationals at 259 lbs. Previously, Vicky Steenrod held this record in the 132 lb. class at 248 lbs. since 1984. All of the sudden, Rachel was ready to bench. I was to take my National Referee test in West Virginia at the USPF Mountaineer Open in November, so I, with very little prodding, convinced Rachel to enter this meet and reclaim her record.

Less than three days after we returned from the Extravaganza, Rachel slipped on a loose bench shirt and did a 3 second pause and blew up 275 lbs. At this point she wanted to put on more weight on the bar and do it again, but I talked her out of it since she had not benched heavy in over 4 months. We went home that night and I probably stayed up half the night trying to figure out how, after 10 weeks of high repetition-to-failure training, could she have gotten stronger for a 1 rep max. I still do not have the answer and convinced myself "why ask why?". If it works for you, do it! For the next 4 weeks, we did almost the identical work out as before, but we changed the bench workout as follows:

BENCH: bar weight for 10-12 reps, 135x10-12, 185x2-3, 225/shirtx2 reps, 275/shirtx1 (Week 1), 285/shirtx1 (Week 2), 295/shirtx1 (Week 3), 305/shirtx1 (Week 4), 185/no shirt to failure, 135/no shirt to failure.

At the end of the 4th and final week, she did a touch and go with 305 lbs. The number for the meet was set for 290-295, third attempt. At the meet, Rachel got 292 lbs. We are going to continue this type to training in preparation for the 1993 USPF Nationals in which, I believe, she will break the 300 lb. barrier, at a bodyweight of less than 132 lbs. and become the #1 Female bencher ever in the world.

Don't be afraid to try new training routines. Give them a chance and don't give up after 1 week because you are not lifting more. Remember, sometimes you must take a step backwards to take two steps forward.



Rachel Mathias bench pressing at the 1992 USPF Senior Nationals where she made a 259 at 132 lbs.