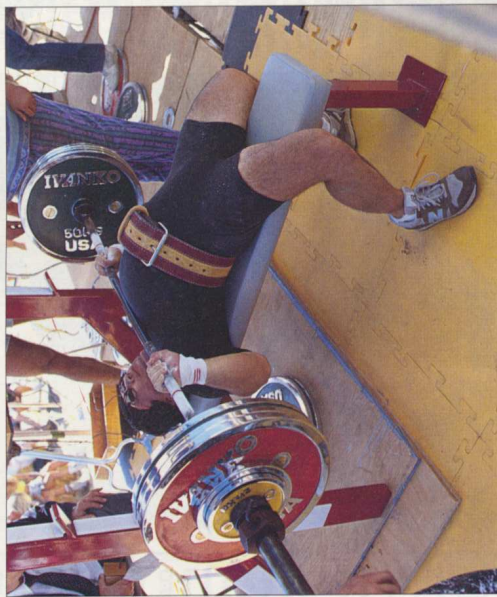


WORKOUT of the Month

The Oriental Wisdom of RON SAKAGUCHI



Ron Sakaguchi benching at the Malibu Classic. He has been at the world class level in benching for 20 years, because his unique philosophy of benching often, but not at limit level, and working the opposing and synergistic muscles heavily has prevented injury and maintained progress.

Everyone wants strength, muscular size in the chest and a big bench poundage. To do so, one must understand bench pressing philosophy. First, you must perform all movements correctly and strictly. There is no room for cheating or leeching movements in this routine. You must use plenty of dumbbell movements in this type of training because the additional stretch these movements provide to your muscles and joints promotes flexibility. This flexibility will enable a more forceful contraction and explosion during the performance of a lift. This also makes sure one does not neglect any muscle group in the entire chest.

In building bench pressing power, keep in mind that heavy flat dumbbell bench presses, side lateral raises, dips, triceps extensions, lat pulldowns and pressdowns incline and decline presses are the basic movements to help you on the bench. These movements can be done three days per week. I'm a big believer that flat dumbbell presses are one of the secrets to a big bench poundage. By doing the flat dumbbell presses you are doing yourself a big favor, making both arms an equal amount of work to balance out the press movement. As the weights get heavier your imbalance in the various muscle groups will be in evidence.

The sets can vary with how much endurance you have and poundages should begin light and over a number of sets work up to heavy weights. Sets should be between 8 and 10 repetitions. If you plan on going to bench press, emphasize the heavier poundages and reduce the secondary exercises as your goal approaches. Reduced usage helps to give your chest muscles, shoulders, and triceps a chance to recuperate with the end result being a higher bench press poundage for you.

Body placement on the bench is very important. You should lie flat with a medium arch in the back. You must make the movement a pure strength test involving the upper body muscles to a large degree with the lower body only acting as a stabilizer for balance. I concentrate on the middle of the 3 corners of a triangle, with the chin held against the chest as the main point. The top 2 points are the shoulders and the bottom point is the head and shoulder blades bench. The head and shoulder blades

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. Examine a different lift is analyzed. For example, if your lift is 400, and a starting lift for the program is 500, simply increase or decrease the training weights, and rep ranges, to 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).

shoulder injuries. With a medium grip (an inch to an inch and a half from the knurling) the delts, pectorals and triceps can work together to lift the most weight. I use the thumb over, not the thumb under grip. I've seen too many cases in contests or workouts where a bar onto has dropped the bar onto their chest after it has slipped out of their hands. It's just not worth the risk. You need that extra protection using the thumbs affords you. Using your thumbs stops the rolling action in your hand and your elbows rotate or wrists unlock and rotate under the bar. When lowering the weight to the chest, try to fully inflate the chest to reduce the pressing distance and increase muscular leverage. The bar should come to rest at the midpoint of the pectorals and not below. This increases your muscular leverage and allows the forearms to fold onto the arms deep when the arms drop into this position on the chest. This position produces more explosion off the chest and easier movement backward during the upward path of the bar. I use a lot of people arch and bounce the bar off their chest. They are not really forcing their chest muscles and triceps to do all the work. Consequently, they are only hurting their progress over the long run in improving their bench press. Also, this bouncing practice forces you to have to isolate even more with another exercise, rather than to touch up with an extra set somewhere. Plus, what you do in when pauses are in the room, especially when going for a PR, American or World record.

A UNIQUE PEAKING CYCLE

Ron trains 3 days a week: Monday (heavy), Wednesday (light), and Friday (medium). At 43, he's also a master lifter. In order to recuperate from one workout to another, he never goes over 405 as a max poundage in his training, and all the set and rep schemes are the same for each week's workout, throughout the cycle. For example, Ron has a max in the 430-445 range, and in a 12 week cycle, his heavy day training does not vary from the following weight training terms: 135x10, 185x10, 225x10, 275x10, 315x10, 365-375x8, 405x3-5, then down to 315x10, 225x10, 135x10. On his light day the poundages are limited to 315x10, but he does double sets on the way up: 2 sets of 135x10, etc. On his medium day, he works up no higher than 375. His goal in any workout is to hit 315x10. If he goes for heavy singles, it can take him weeks to fully recover. By limiting the poundage on the bench, he can train more often without overtraining. How does he peak for a contest you ask? Ron tries to increase the poundages on his assistance exercises 5 pounds a workout. He uses the assistance work to peak, NOT the poundage on his bench press, because he knows that if his accessory poundages are up, his bench is also up.

Words of Oriental Wisdom Gained Through a Lot of Self-Reflection over the Years

1. If you completely miss one workout it takes 2 to 3 workouts before every workout to 15 minutes before every workout to loosen your muscles and to prevent injuries. Don't go heavy! If you feel sore, do light reps. You can always come back the next workout and go heavy, rather than nurse an injury for a couple of weeks and then have your training put off a couple of additional weeks.

2. You are your own best workout partner. I have had partners who have worked out with me for 1 day, 1 week, 3 months, over a year, but never longer. It is up to you to do the workouts and push yourself to the max. If you are somewhere, there is someone your age, weight, and strength working out. He is in direct competition with you. If you don't work out, then he's one workout ahead of you. If you don't push yourself, he's doing 1 more rep, 1 more set than you. He's staying in his workout ten more minutes than you are. Don't let him beat you because he put out more effort than you. Make sure you're the one who has the quality workout, day in and day out. Be a champ in mind and in practice.

3. I don't believe in the short arms versus long arms theory on who's the better bender. I feel the more important things are chest size, tri's, type of effort in the workouts, and the proper workout exercises.

4. Cable flies. B. Cable flyes front and top part of the shoulder muscles and achieve a quicker push off the chest.

5. I believe in a fairly flat back with the shoulder blades and hips forming an inverted triangle. The legs and feet are just for minor balance. Always work on balance at the end of the workout. Do 'half and half's' and close grips for the extra pump. Work chest and triceps so that you

get them as tired as you can and actually holding it up as well as pressing it up. It forces the muscles to work and resist and tire that much faster.

9. Try to cycle every 12 to 16 weeks and then rest your muscles for a week. If you have a contest in that time span to rest and recover. 2 weeks before a contest I cut out everything but the bench, dumbbell bench presses, and the cable work for the shoulders, biceps and tris. With 3 workouts left I'm down to the bench and dumbbells and no higher than 405 on the bench. The next to the last workout only up to 315 on the bench and then work back down. The last workout, only up to 315. Now I'm ready for the contest.

10. On any cable accessory exercise use 3 to 5 sets in increasing increments. Use light weights and stress without letting the weights. It is a common mistake to use too much weight in doing cable work. Think in terms of isokinetics; the same slow speed during both contraction and extension of the muscles.

11. To work on the incline part of the Bench press movement and increase the size of the chest.

12. Lateral Pulls (with straight back at a 45 degree angle)

13. To mirror the movement when you have the bench shift on the bar down to your chest on the initial phase especially when those super tight shirts restrict your movement. You must do this exercise at least once a week to work on the pulling power, to mirror the action the shirt will give you.

14. E. Lateral Raises from 3 different directions or angles (cables)

15. To prevent recur-

power to help pull the triceps from the lower position as well as to prevent shoulder injuries.

16. To stress, stretch and pump up the chest muscles, to force even more blood and really stretch the big muscles.

17. C. Incline Press - Bar and Dumbbells

18. To work on the incline part of the Bench press movement and increase the size of the chest.

19. Dumbbells to work on both arms so the triceps are not unbalanced. There is no margin for error when you get in the higher max weights. The bar must go up straight or in your groove.

20. To work the shoulder and lat combination.

21. To mirror the movement when you have the bench shift on the bar down to your chest on the initial phase especially when those super tight shirts restrict your movement. You must do this exercise at least once a week to work on the pulling power, to mirror the action the shirt will give you.

22. E. Lateral Raises from 3 different directions or angles (cables)

23. To prevent recur-

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