

Extra Workouts

By: Louie Simmons

I recall reading about a great Chinese fighter named Chen Fake (Fay-kee). When he was a child, he was very small and weak and lagged behind the other students. He asked the Master how he would ever be able to catch the better students when they were progressing at the same rate. The Master thought for a while and said, "While the others take their afternoon nap, you train. And at night while they sleep, you train." After taking the master's advice and doing extra workouts for some years, Chen Fake surpassed the top students and eventually became Grand Master of the Chen style Tai It Juan. This is a true story, and what I am about to describe is also true.

Like Chen Fake, if you are to become better, you must do more work. But how? We know that a workout should last 45 minutes, 60 minutes at the most. Your energy and testosterone levels will fall off greatly after that. So common sense tells us that longer workouts are not the answer. But we must spend more time in the gym. This can be done by adding more workouts.

At Westside, we hold 3 of the 12 all-time bench press records. How? We do a dynamic method workout using 60% of a 1-rep max for the development of force. It also is intended to build starting and reversing strength and, with the help of bands, to almost eliminate the deceleration phase of the bench press. After the bench press, triceps, lats, and delts are trained maximally for the development of absolute strength in each of the individual muscle groups. This is done on Sunday.

On Wednesday we do max effort exercises with a barbell. Many core exercises are done, but only one per workout, e.g., floor press, steep incline, chain press. Remember, just one per workout. This is followed by pushing the triceps, lats, and delts to the max. All workouts should last no more than an hour.

As of October 1999, we have 8 men with a 600 or more bench, the biggest triple body weight bench (683 at 227), a 657 world record at 220, a 701 world record at 238, and a 728 world record at 275. How do we do this? By adding special workouts. These workouts last 20-30 minutes. They are intended to raise work capacity; this is called general physical preparedness (GPP).

For example, George and Kenny do two special workouts per week. They are done on Monday and Friday. Each workout will begin with the triceps. They use several exercises such as barbell or dumbbell extensions, cable pushdowns for high reps or heavy weight (al-ways changing the bar attachments or the angle of the exercise), pushups, or super-high-rep medicine ball throws. The same approach is used for the delts and lats. Upper back exercises are rotated in the

same way. These workouts are done for restoration, as well as raising work capacity. Why is this so important?

The more special workouts George and Kenny do, the harder the two main workouts can be without them experiencing ill effects. If you want to do more, your workout must be continually harder. This means higher intensity and greater volume.

One must also be able to recover from the workouts. There are three main methods of restoration.

Anabolic. This is, of course, out of the question for the truly drug-free lifter.

Therapeutic: massage, sauna, whirlpool, ice, electric stimulation, and so forth.

Small workouts that last 20-30 minutes, 24 hours after major workouts. These workouts have the advantage that work can be done on a particular muscle group, one that needs attention for either strength building or restoration.

Let's say at first glance a lifter appears to have very large arms, but on closer inspection his delts and lats look underdeveloped. Although he may have a good bench, can you imagine if his delts and lats matched the development of his arms? His bench would certainly be much greater. That is what special workouts are for. If this lifter continues to neglect his lagging muscle groups, his bench will never increase. Also, he may be risking injury by not attending to his weaknesses. Even anabolics or massage and such cannot cure a weak muscle group.

In the old Soviet system, 10-16 workouts per week were prescribed. In football, 3-a-days are quite common; that's 15 a week, but no one seems to think that's unreasonable.

Here is an example of our major and extra workouts. The squat and deadlift use the same muscle groups, so we use a speed day for squatting with 50-60% of a 1 rep max for multiple sets and perhaps do 4-8 singles in the deadlift with 50-70% (using only one percentage per workout). Both the squat and deadlift must be emphasized for speed. After the percent training, we move to special exercises for the glutes, hams, torso, and hips. We pick exercises that work at least two muscle groups concurrently: for example, glute/ham raise, reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, pull-throughs, sled work. This will save time and is very productive. Train the abs standing up.

On max effort day, we max out on good mornings, super-low box squats with different bars, heavy sled pulling, bent-over rows, rack pulls, etc. In addition to

regular weights, add chains and bands and adjust the resistance. Do the special exercises after maxing out on the core exercises. On max effort day, use only one core lift, followed by two to four special exercises.

The extra workouts may consist of sled pulling. Here's are some typical workouts: Pull the sled for 10 min, glute/ham raises for 5 min, abs for 5 min (20-min workout). Reverse hypers for 10 min, lats for 10 min, abs for 5 min (25-min workout). Pull-throughs for 10 min, abs for 10 min, dumbbell shrugs for 5 min (25 min workout). Any combination will work.

Johnny Parker, the long-time strength coach of the Patriots, told us a story about an old Soviet coach. Johnny asked him what to do on Monday after a game on Sunday. The coach said to work the player's legs. "What about Tuesday?" Johnny asked. The coach replied, "Work their legs." Johnny asked, "What about Wednesday?" The coach said, "Work their legs." Johnny said, "Wait a minute." The coach laughed and explained that you can work the legs everyday, as long as you switch exercises. That is what we do. We constantly change exercises so the body won't adapt to the stimulus.

One can mix and match two or three special exercises in a short, intense workout lasting no more than 30 minutes. The lower or upper body can be trained like this. Start with two additional workouts a week, and slowly increase to three or four. The more advanced you become, the more special work is required. Powerlifting is like any other sport; to become better, you must do more work.

Remember; use exercises that build the muscles. The muscles can be trained very hard and often, large muscle groups every 72 hours and smaller muscle groups every 24 hours or less. If baseball pitching coaches understood this, perhaps they would use a 3-day rotation, working half the staff every 3 days for a month, then the other half for a month, while the resting half would go through a series of restorations. It is almost impossible to win 30 games with a 5-day rotation. Yet there used to be 30-game winners. It's all about GPP (general physical preparedness) and SPP (special physical preparedness). If I may go where I don't belong again, let's look at the home run race. Ken Griffey Jr. started out like fire in the home run race, doing quite well until the All-Star break. Then a meltdown occurred. His physique shows that he does little GPP work. As a result, he fades badly near the end of the season, mostly from small injuries. On the other hand, it is obvious that Sosa and Mac do extra workouts outside of baseball. Doing so enables them to hit home runs right into October.

Let's review. Extra workouts work for great fighters and baseball players, and - of course - they will work for you. They may help you make that third attempt in the squat, bench, or deadlift. Remember, for benching only; add two workouts per week. They must consist of special exercises for the pressing muscles: triceps, delts, lats, upper back, abs. Do only two or three per workout, which

should last less than 30 minutes. Rotate the exercises as often as necessary. The extra workouts for the squat and deadlift should be no longer than 30 minutes, paying special attention to the abs, entire back, hams, and glutes, again doing two or three exercises per workout. Always work the abs in each workout, plus one or two other exercises.

The main purpose is restoration and raising the weakest muscle groups up to or surpassing the stronger ones. We must learn to train scientifically. The man whose mind won't change will also have a total that won't change.