

THE ARMOR BUILDING FORMULA

**BODYBUILDING
FOR REAL PEOPLE**

DAN JOHN

THE ARMOR BUILDING FORMULA

Dan John

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Also by Dan John

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Dedication

To Kelly and Lindsay. You both managed some difficult years with dignity and courage. You make me proud every day.

To Paint, Lexie, and Sirius Black. You were always more than just pets to me. You taught me the true meaning of companionship and the beauty of judgment-free love and acceptance.

To my friends who lost their lives that terrible August day. I will never forget you. I will continue to maintain, as you asked me, to continue.

Introduction

What to Expect from this Book and Program(s)

What started this project was simple: I was asked to write about hypertrophy (body building or increasing muscle size) for people who didn't want to do my other programs. I love Mass Made Simple. I wrote it years ago based on my insights on building mass quickly for American football players. The combination of complexes, key strength movements, and high rep squats, plus gorging food at every opportunity, has become a standard for many coaches preaching mass gains.

So why another book? MMS was hard! I mean, really hard. It was far too much for the bulk of my readers who wanted, to quote Tim Anderson, to:

Look good
Feel good
Move good

Most people don't want to stagger up a flight of stairs with sore buns and thighs. Most people don't want to eat so much that they start to sweat. Most people have little interest in squatting until they *wish* they could puke.

So, I went on a long journey through the history of weightlifting. I read up on the traditional mass building programs. I put together a plan for both kettlebells and barbells that works.

Well, it works if you DO the plan.

You might find the first workouts to be interesting. I emphasize the clean, the press, and the squat. This is how many of us trained half a century ago and it is still the best way to go. However, I also put them into combinations that will challenge your ability to keep going.

From the early feedback, just doing the workouts as written seems to make people look better in their clothes and on the beach. I do give you options to do more than what I tell you to do and, in fact, I encourage your own experiments. Like we discovered in Easy Strength for Fat Loss, anything extra you do after you lift tends to help eliminate body fat. Doing extra on a body building program might help but, for some, it might not.

You have to join me as the architect of your dream body. With the kettlebell program, simply doing the bare minimum (the military press days and the Armor Building Complex (ABC)) days is going to do marvels for how you look. In addition, the barbell programs will please you with your progress.

Adding more? Sure...within reason.

And there you go: that “reason” word. If there is something missing in today’s fitness industry, it is reason. I pride myself in programs that are doable, repeatable, and reasonable.

So, I offer these ideas to you as one reasonable person to another.

Bodybuilding by Michelangelo

In a letter from 1549, Michelangelo defined sculpture as the art of "taking away." Underneath all of that marble, Michelangelo saw a beautiful statue that would inspire generations. I might upset some people, but if we carve away a fair amount of fat, many people would have a beautiful body that would inspire generations.

Body composition changes are probably the most difficult thing for most people to do. I have argued my whole career that the two most difficult things to achieve are:

Lose body fat

Gain muscle mass

Yet, that is what almost everyone wants. Usually, most people want to do both at once. My book, *Easy Strength for Fat Loss*, is my best answer to the first issue ("lose body fat"). It works. It is certainly not sexy. A short lifting workout followed by a walk doesn't inspire like the images of fitness models gobbling down sport drinks to keep ahead of the sweat

But, fat loss should be first. Actually, if you could go back in time, the BEST answer is don't layer on those fat deposits in the first place. I can't go back in time; maybe you can.

So: get the body fat levels down, generally, before attempting to gain muscle mass. You are doing what Michelangelo recommended: stripping the excess away. Again, it's easier to not put on the body fat in the first place

Making gains in muscle mass has a simple formula: *Lift weights-Eat protein*. The devil is in the details, but I think most people really over do the working out side of equation.

For most people the answer is "Enough."

Enough is enough when it comes to training to build muscle mass. You need to do what needs to be done...and that's enough. Adding extra garbage to your training is just extra garbage. Keep the workouts short and focused.

This is an important question to ask on any fitness or performance journey: what's enough for you?

Enough!

I'm amazed when I talk to some people. I deal with parents worrying that their 13 year old boy will look like Mr. Universe after signing up for a weightlifting class. He has yet to pick up a single bell and we are worrying about him edging to the peak of his genetics. It's not just waving a few weights. To lean down to single digit fat levels and maintain elite muscle mass takes years of work and focus.

I'm not sure most people need to worry about looking like a prize winning bodybuilder or a professional model. DNA is a fairly important factor and the 24/7 commitment might be an issue for many, too.

Honestly, this is something YOU need to decide:

What is "enough" for you?

If you want to look like a high-level fitness competitor, I know there are far better resources than what I offer. I would caution that there will be a day of reckoning when your decisions will have to be paid in full. In the words of Rocky: "If you want to dance, you gotta pay the piper."

Each week, I attend a meeting, an Intentional Community, where we discuss finances. It's modeled on my training philosophy of gathering like-minded people together to share resources, talents, and energy. Every time we add a new member to our group, the first question we ask is: "What's enough for you?" You can save (or invest) 50% of your income, only use the public library for entertainment, switch off the heat and air conditioner, walk everywhere, and divest yourself of everything material from your life. You can. I can't.

For your finances, cutting back on everything may be an amazing idea. I couldn't do it, no, but it is a great idea for somebody else.

Sometimes this is how I answer questions on my podcast: "For somebody else,

not me, that is a great idea / experiment to try.” Me? No, not so much.

When it comes to your body composition goals, what’s “enough” for you? Increasing lean body mass and keeping body fat at reasonable levels has wonderful long-term benefits. That LBM (Lean Body Mass) plays a crucial role in your longevity, one’s Health Span. The idea of a long term approach to strength and health has always guided me in my fitness decisions.

I can’t thank my younger self enough for lifting, walking, and staying away from being too stupid. Well, most of the time anyway. Keeping your body fat at reasonable levels helps hold back the rages of diabetes, cardiovascular issues, and a host of related problems.

My programs are always, first and foremost, systems that allow for excellent health, improved performance, fitness across a wider range, and support a longer, happier life.

And, that’s enough for me.

The TRUTH about Training (For Anything)

If there is an issue in body composition today, it is an oddly simple point...that you might not believe. Many readers may have to prep themselves for this TRUTH:

The amount of exercise that you need to support longevity (living a long, healthy life) is shockingly little...perhaps only 100 minutes a week! That's five twenty minutes walks a week or three short visits to your gym of choice. To begin to change your body composition, either to increase lean muscle mass or decrease fat (and some want both at once), your training sessions can be relatively short. I train three days a week in the weight room, do a full mobility day, and spend one day rucking (walking with a load on the back). The total time for this is around five hours.

Of those five hours, almost two and a half hours are spent walking. One hour with the ruck and three half-hour post lifting walks. Certainly, I also take the dogs for walks and I dance on Thursday nights and I do a little of this and that...including shoveling snow and mowing the lawn.

I lost 35 pounds of bodyweight, mostly fat from the measurements, training about five hours a week. If I decide to compete in a local Olympic lifting meet, I still just train five hours a week.

And now, the TRUTH!

Adding a few more hours of walking and adding a few more hours of lifting won't move the dial on the bathroom scale nor the amount on the bar at the weightlifting meet. So, for me to really improve, like competing in a contest as a bodybuilder or in one of those "Before and After" challenges, I need to increase my training time perhaps five-fold.

My five hours a week that I currently train, by the way, might be overkill. Once I get my bodyweight and/or lifts to the levels I want, I transition to one of my maintenance programs. These tend to be fast whole body workouts that keep me where I need to be physically. These workouts can take less than fifteen minutes a session plus whatever else I want to do (usually walking and mobility).

So, here is the point:

My Maintenance programs: 90 minutes a week

Elite Contest Preparation: 70 hours a week of lifting, sunning, posing, cardiovascular work, taking supplements and meal prep, and naps and meditation

As an example for contest preparation, let's review the training of one of history's greatest bodybuilders, Frank Zane. This workout week comes from Mr. America magazine from 1967 and it reports his training for his contest prep.

Monday / Thursday: Calves, Chest, Abs, Biceps

Sequence #1

Calf Machine, 4 x 12

Incline Barbell Bench Press, 4 x 6

Half Situp, 4 x 20

Incline Dumbbell Curl, 4 x 6.

Sequence #2

Donkey Calf Raise, 4 x 12

Bench Press, 4 x 6

Leg Raise, 4 x 20

Lying Pulley Curl, 4 x 6.

Sequence #3

Hack Machine Calf Raise, 4 x 12

Incline DB Press, 4 x 6

Oblique Situp, 4 x 20

Scott DB Curl, 4 x 6.

Sequence #4

Leg Press Calf Raise, 4 x 12

Decline Fly, 4 x 6

Hyperextension, 4 x 15

Alt. DB Curl, 4 x 6

Tuesday / Friday: Calves, Lats, Abs, Triceps

Sequence #1

Calf Machine, 4 x 12

Front Pulldown, 4 x 6

Half Situp, 4 x 20

Triceps Pressdown, 4 x 6-8.

Sequence #2

Donkey Calf Raise, 4 x 12

Low Pulley Row, 4 x 6

Leg Raise, 4 x 20

Lying DB Extension, 4 x 6.

Sequence #3

Hack Machine Calf Raise, 4 x 12

Triangle Chin, 4 x 8

Oblique Situp, 4 x 20

Long Pulley Extension, 4 x 6-8.

Sequence #4

Leg Press Calf Raise, 4 x 12

Chin Behind Neck, 4 x 8

Hyperextension, 4 x 15

Triceps Bench Dip, 4 x 10.

Wednesday / Saturday: Delts, Forearms, Abs, Thighs

Sequence #1

Side Laterals, 4 x 6-8

Reverse Curl, 4 x 6-8

Half Situp, 4 x 20

One Leg Extension, 4 x 15 each leg.

Sequence #2

Press Behind Neck, 4 x 6-8

Wrist Curl, 4 x 12

Leg Raise, 4 x 20

Leg Curl, 4 x 10.

Sequence #3

Rear Laterals, 4 x 6-8

Wrist Roller, 4 sets

Oblique Situp, 4 x 20

Leg Press, 4 x 10-15.

Sequence #4

Dumbbell Press, 4 x 6-8

Reverse Wrist Curl, 4 x 12

Hyperextension, 4 x 10

Hack Squat, 4 x 8.

(From <https://ditillo2.blogspot.com/2015/04/frank-zane-on-training-1967-and-1979.html>)

Now, gentle reader, we haven't discussed the rest and recovery (sleep, naps, and meditation in Zane's case), diet, supplements (of all kinds), the cardiovascular work, and attention to detail. This is just the weightlifting part.

In contrast, let's just say that an hour a day will bring most people to solid physical goals. When I think about my typical week with the extra walking and everything I do (and I am being transparent here), I exercise about an hour a day. I feel good, I move good, and, I am told, I look good.

And I blush good.

Ten hours a day would bring me to my heights of my genetics and physique. And for the record, to quote a good friend of mine, “I’m not going to do that.” “I’m not going to do that” is such a great way to get to the point about any and all transformations.

Ten hours a day working on my body is not something that fits my values and vision of my life. Now, here is the TRUTH I promised you:

It’s EITHER an hour a day OR ten hours a day. Sliding up to two hours a day isn’t going to double my body composition efforts. Yes, it’s “more.” But not enough “more” to impact my fat loss or muscle building. Yes, it will trend me towards my goals a bit. Read that scientific insight closely...”a bit.” It’s not double the benefits for double the time. It’s a trace better for double the time.

Throughout my career, I have tended to hate “either/or” but, in this case, it works very well. Either you train the appropriately for your goals or you eliminate EVERYTHING in your life for ONE goal. I don’t judge you either way on these approaches.

For me, I have always strived to maintain a balance in my life. I like to read, I like movies. I play with babies and puppies. I need those extra nine hours a day to live.

For most of us, the most efficient path to life successes is exercising up to an hour a day...every day. And, hopefully, we will do this the rest of our lives.

My Key Demographic: The Age+ Lifter

I get all kinds of analytics from all of my social media. One thing I find VERY helpful is to see the gender and age of my “followers.” For the record, I wish we had a better term than “followers.” You can have full faith in me that I will strive not to lead any of you into some kind of war, witchery, or chasm but I am not sure this point is true with all influencers.

The bulk of my audience fits in this age group: 36-55. I think I have slowly begun to speak more and more to this audience. My favorite emails come from people who are juggling fitness and health with careers, family, and communal pressures. I have also noticed that there is little support for this age group.

The fitness icons from Hollywood tend to have great bodies BEFORE age 35. I’m certainly a big fan of Arnold but his best condition was in his mid to late twenties. Jane Fonda who literally made the VHS tape recorder a MUST for the American household with her exercise tapes was just over 30 when she did Barbarella.

It’s certainly possible to still look good in clothes and even on the beach as an icon after the mid-30s, but youth has advantages.

I didn’t make this rule, but it is true: youth has advantages.

But...so does aging. We tend to have more resources when we have a “real” job. We can afford a home gym and/or a personal trainer (which can be good or bad). We can control, at least we should be able to control, what we eat. Often, we have experiences of sports, games, and exercises so we can just reach into the back of the brain and pull this information back out again. Generally, we also know a dentist and a doctor and we can monitor our ongoing progress in health and fitness.

But...

I can't train like a teenager or college freshman. I can't live on beer, pizza, and four hours of sleeping and stay fairly lean. Now, at one time, you MAY have done this but that was that "one time."

For many women, a few sessions of week of resistance training followed by a short walk can be the answer to all questions. And, and this shouldn't surprise anyone, men can follow the exact same rules and do just fine.

In case you were wondering: yes, a little weightlifting AFTER walking is fine, too. Or, lift or walk early in the morning and do the other in the evening. And, yes, just about ANYthing you do is going to be fine, too.

It's the doing. Memorize this: Do It! Maybe we could add one more word, somehow "just" comes to mind, but the doing is more important than the talking, fretting, discussing, and not-doing.

But...I get it. I understand the issues. This book will offer solutions.

For Most of My Readers...

For most of my readers, training for peak muscularity and popping veins is not part of their plans. My readers tend to want a workable plan that gets them looking and feeling good. My readers want to look good in formal wear and on the beach.

If you are one of my athletes, we may have increase your body mass to engage with other people on the field of play. As we often note in American football: “Everybody gets slower as the game goes on, but nobody gets smaller.” So, if you are a lineman in American football, pick up Mass Made Simple.

If you are interested in simply looking better and generally being a more helpful human person, I have found that some of my basic training concepts can be the answer to your interest. The insights of the program come from my long career as a coach and athlete.

But, there is always more to learn. A simple problem led to one of the most important training concepts I have ever shared: The Armor Building Complex (ABC). We were having issues with our final workouts at kettlebell certs and I was asked to come up with something that “solved” some issues.

Later, we (my gym mates and countless brave souls online) began discovering the value of the ABC for overall training success and improvements in body composition. Each week, I started receiving more and more emails and messages about the ABC and the “secret sauce” of this simple training idea.

The positive feedback from our ABC training slowly edge me towards considering it nearly a stand alone program. The volume of squats from multiple rounds led me to reconsider doing it more than twice a week and, oddly quickly, a plan came together for improving body composition and basic strength.

Let’s get started. First, let me review the roots of the program from the invention of the ABC and where the term “armor” showed up in my coaching.

Section One: The Armor Bodybuilding Formula

The Armor Bodybuilding Formula

This program is going to be very simple. It's only two workouts that alternate one after another; it's a simple program.

But, it works. There are basically three exercises:

The double kettlebell clean (to get the weights in position)

The double kettlebell press

The double kettlebell front squat

Combining these three movements is a workout I named the Armor Building Complex, the ABC. You will see a lot of this "ABC."

There will be some press variations (both for double and single bell work) and some ideas for barbell, machine training, and ab work.

With these three key exercises, I will outline two basic, alternating training days. If you choose to take these workouts seriously, your body composition, strength, endurance, and power will all improve.

You certainly can add more exercises, if you like, but, as some say, "the juice isn't worth the squeeze." The focus is on getting those reps laid down, one upon the other. These are high volume programs with a hint of density training ("more work in the same amount of time"). Kettlebell enthusiasts will ask for get ups, snatches, and a host of other things. Add them to the program as you would add spices to a meal. A little is fine.

But, focus on the REAL work.

The Roots of the ABC

One of the key workouts in the Armor Bodybuilding Formula is a workout, and it will certainly work you out, that I came up with years ago to solve a problem.

The Armor Building Complex, the ABC, was originally called the “Grad Workout.” I came up with this workout after it became obvious that KB cert weekends needed to finish with a training session that didn’t hurt people. There had been some issues and I spent some time working on the answer. Here were the issues:

1. We have an exhausted cadre.
2. Putting bells up overhead with exhausted people breaks all the safety rules.
3. Some people have little skin on their hands by the last day.
4. Any idiot can get people tired. Getting people to test themselves under stress and exhaustion takes some thinking to keep things safe.

With these problems/opportunities, I reached into my grab bag of training and came up with this simple workout:

Double Kettlebell Clean for two reps

Double Kettlebell Press for one rep

Double Kettlebell Front Squat for three reps.

Put the bell down like a professional. Step away.

Now, your partner takes the bells while you do “Fast-Loose” Drills and support the community as you can.

Repeat. A lot.

The press is always the issue in these workouts. This 2:1:3 ratio protects the hands (two cleans are easier on ripped skin rather than swings and snatches), challenges the press without worrying about endurance, and, well, you can

always get another double front squat. By simply moving to one rep in the press, you still move from safest ballistic I know (the double clean), to the ultimate in full body tension and grinding, the press. The Front Squats? Good question: You can always do Front Squats!

Quickly, a football coach told me that this workout reminded him about my concept of “armor building” for my athletes. I laughed out loud and instantly named this The Armor Building Complex.

(I will include an additional piece on Armor Building as a bonus at the end of this section.)

Kettlebells and Muscle Building



(Illustration of Bosco, who built his body the olde fashioned way. Harry Paschall's drawings (he invented Bosco) always inspired me and thanks to Bill Hinbern, for allowing me to use this, and Nick Clark's generous ability clean up pictures.)

Before we move into the actual program, I have to discuss an idea that shows up a lot online.

I receive great questions on my podcast. My podcast is a question and answer format and the people ask honest questions. Sometimes, *for me*, the answers are self-evident.

This is why I need community. Something that is self-evident to me might not be for a few billion other people. So, I answer the same questions (often over and over and over and over) quite a bit. There is one question I just can't seem to wrap my brain around:

"Can I build muscles with kettlebells?"

Yes. Sure. Of course. Absolutely. Why not? Very much so. Affirmative. Right on. I am running out of ways to say "yes" here. One can build "muscle" with practically any tool.

Progressive overload forces adaptations by the body. The kettlebell is a marvelous

tool for muscle building. Are machines and barbells better? Well, with one 24 kilo kettlebell, and that's not a lot of money and space, I can train my body into a fairly good physical condition. I once snatched the 24k for 200 reps in ten minutes.

I was in good shape. And I am still trying to catch my breath from this effort.

If you have room, certainly purchase all the machines you need to train in your home facility. I have a large house and I don't have the space nor the money to purchase that many machines. I will later discuss the glorious barbell and there is no question that machines and barbells are great for muscle building and strength gains.

It's also easier to drive across the country with a KB. I put mine in the back seat, loop it in a seat belt, and train for up to two months with just one bell. My little car would struggle carrying my full gym.

Every tool in your training toolbox has a value. Some iron objects keep doors open during the hot months and other bells are the answer to all your questions.

So, yes. The kettlebell is a marvelous body building tool. Let's now use it.

The Armor Building Complex (ABC)...Once Again

Let's review the ABC with just a bit more detail. It's a good training tool either as a finisher to a workout or even a training program.

I've come up with a lot of training programs. Most people in the KB community know the 10,000 Swing Challenge, but there are many, many others. The ABC training idea seems to have grown a life of its own.

Remember, I was asked to come up with a final Challenge Workout for the kettlebell certs. As of this writing, most of the certification groups use this workout still, so if you hated it at the cert, well, you are welcome.

The issue with KB certs is that the overhead work is fairly constant. We are challenged in the get up, snatch, press, and waiter walks. The pressing unit should include a chance for you to chase a new personal record. It's a lot of pressing. For many participants, they have pressed more in the past few days overhead than they typically do in months.

Other instructors come up with complexes that are impossible to remember. The participants are always tired, but often sunburned, dehydrated, and, to quote my mom, "standing on their last nerve." The ABC was/is easy to remember and logically keeps the presses down. Here you go:

With Double KBs (24s for men, 16s for women, or whatever appropriate):

Double KB Clean for a double
Double Press for a single
Double Front Squat for a triple.
Put the weight down like a professional

This workout's popularity seemed to "blow up" over night. I posted it in several

places and quickly the ABC became the rage of the KB community. And, then came the flood of questions.

Rest periods? It should be basically I go/You go as we do these in pairs at the certs. Every Minute on the Minute (EMOM) is fine, too.

How many rounds of the full ABC? At first, I thought the squat would dictate the reps. If you do 30 rounds that's 90 squats (!!!!) and that is a lot. I always liked 15-20.

15 Rounds: 30 Cleans, 15 Presses, 45 Squats

This is a good workout. It's reasonable. The presses hit the low end of DeLorme's (more on DeLorme later) hypertrophy numbers and you are finished before most people figure out what show to watch on streaming services.

20 Rounds: 40 Cleans, 20 Presses, 60 Squats

That last five rounds adds up in the squats, but, again, this is doable.

30 Rounds: 60 Cleans, 30 Presses, 90 Squats

Ouch. That's a lot. Take a moment to look at the numbers before you do your first attempt. I often do just five rounds of ABC as an extra warm up on my Olympic lifting days.

Just after publishing the challenge for the first time, people wanted to run with it. Several wanted me to make it into a program. My very first answer online was this:

Use it first (the 2-1-3) as part of a workout...a few rounds. Then, try tossing it twice a week for a bit. When you get past the early issues with technical stuff...foot position seems to be a common questions (move them!)...you can easily add them.

I would suggest two times a week one week, then once the next. Rotate that a few times, then move along. Occasionally, make this the whole training session go for a while. I

can't imagine more than 15-20 minutes, but online I have seen people do it longer.

The key, I have always thought, is driving that press up. So, even if using double 36s and making the ONE press and THEN having those front squats seems to be more like what I was thinking originally.

Of course, same person, the next workout you use 16s and go for a long time...there is a logic (to me) there, too.

Don't make it crazy: stick with 2-1-3 (Proven to Work!)

Have some long, light sessions. Have some I go/you go sessions. Do some sessions "On the Minute," my all-time favorite large group training method. Over time, try this:

Week One: Two sessions

Week Two: One session

Week Three: Two sessions

Week Four: One session

It is a "one stop shop" for KB work, not unlike the O lifts, but oddly harder for some (the bells are harder to control).

People ask me about adding swings, get ups, and all the rest. My knock on that, as always, is the issue of "more."

"More" is the enemy of "enough."

That's a pretty good forum post. If you did this when I wrote it (I think Abraham Lincoln was president), you would be doing well today.

Of course, the next question arises: what about the other workout days?

Hint: it's overhead presses.

The GREATEST Kettlebell Bodybuilding Exercise

If you want to look good, I suggest something I heard from an outstanding female bikini contestant. You need to focus on two things:

- Deltoids (Shoulders)
- Glutes (Butt)

If you want to look good in the tux, on the beach, in the hallways, or mowing the lawn, broad shoulders and a (fill in the adjective) butt are the key(s). Certainly, there are a host of (600!) other muscle and muscle groups but there is something special, for all people, about wide shoulders and (fill in the adjective) buns.

And, the BEST, the GREATEST, exercise for attaining these attributes are the overhead, or military press family. Yes, the glutes will need more than just doing their work squeezing here, but the king of bodybuilding exercises is the overhead press.

I would also argue that the hip thrust, any member of the squat family, and appropriate deadlifts are the BEST and GREATEST exercises in just a moment or two. But for now, just pay attention.

Go ahead and disagree, but to look good in every situation, the military press family is your best friend.

With barbells, the list is short: Military press. For our purposes now, I won't add anything else. With kettlebells, I have four variations and one workout. Not surprisingly, this is the foundation of my KB hypertrophy training program. Here is that list:

- Double KB press
- Alternating KB press

- See saw KB press
- Touch down KB press
- And, of course: the ABC (the Armor Building Complex)

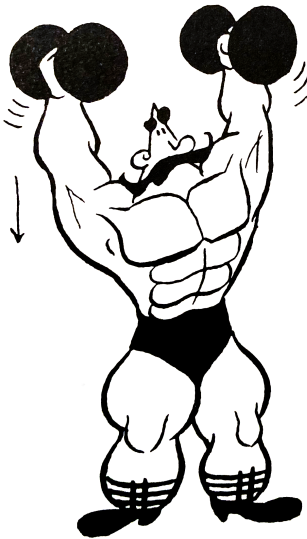
When I was young, most lifters pressed every single time they came into the gym. The physiques of the 1960s weight lifters (of all types: bodybuilders, O lifters, or whatever) all looked pretty good. They looked like most people want to look. The V shape. The barnyard wide shoulders. The trim waist. If you are shopping for the answer to the question, "If you could only do one exercise, what would it be?," you found my answer.

I admit, I used a bit of hyperbole here, but I love these lifts.

The Four Double KB Press Variations

I recommend that you learn, and strive to master, the four basic double KB variations:

- Double KB press
- Alternating KB press
- See saw KB press
- Touch down KB press



(Harry Paschall's Bosco demonstrating the "Touchdown" Position. Bosch's photos are used with the permission of Bill Hinbern.)

And, yes, you can do much of this with just a single KB, but the workouts will take a bit longer to do both sides.

There should be no surprises here. The double KB press is probably my favorite lift with kettlebells. If I don't have much time, I do these. If I have a lot of time...I do these. Clean the bells and press away. I like to stop each rep on the chest and make sure to keep my head up (and quiet), then drive the bells to the overhead extension. For high reps, I take two bells of the same weight and do this:

Two reps (a short rest)

Three reps (a short rest)

Five reps (a bit of a longer rest; it all depends on how it feels)

Ten reps (and usually a full rest, but there is an asterisk here)

That's twenty total reps and I can do five rounds of this (100 total reps!) easily in twenty to thirty minutes. My shoulders and upper arms are pumped, I walk taller, and I have to turn my shoulders to walk into the house (well...maybe I exaggerate a bit).

Now, the asterisk: after the ten reps, having to do a mere TWO makes me often pick up the bells and get those next two in. Since three reps is easy, I find myself cranking out those reps soon, too.

And, there you go: more work, less time. We will discuss this concept, it's called "density," later on but it is the magic sauce for building muscle.

The next three variations are all similar but with valuable differences. In the 1950s, and it carried on in my early years of training, many people did alternating presses as a way to build densely muscled shoulders. Clean the bells. Press one bell up to extension and bring it down. Repeat on the other side...and there you go. The resting bell "rests" while the active arm presses and brings down the other. If you can do over 100 pounds per hand, you probably look good.

The See-Saw Press develops naturally from the alternate press. After the first rep, as one bell goes up, the other comes down...like a see-saw. I often describe the shoulders as having independent suspension systems, so for many with shoulder issues (and really those with anything up and down the human chain), this variation just feels good. And, that's good enough for me.

The last press variation is a good one, but many might not like it. It's named after the position referee's assume after a touchdown, field goal, or extra point. If also see it in basketball on a three-point shot. Hands are extended vertically and you bring one bell down at a time. So, clean the bells, pop them up to vertical lockout,

then bring one down, press it back up and repeat with the other side (bring it down, press it up). There is a lot of tension throughout the whole system and it has an amazing hit on the whole system. It's tougher than it looks.

The Armor Bodybuilding Formula

I love simple programs. I like to get the work done and walk out the door. Bodybuilding can be a full-time occupation, maybe TWO full-time jobs, and this book is not for people who can train all day long. I don't have a personal chef, personal shopper, personal driver, personal assistant, nor a personal trainer (although I utilize a few people when appropriate), so I have to fill much of my day living a typical life.

My suggestion to you about KB bodybuilding is based on a lot of feedback from good friends and people interested in improving body composition and living real lives. The basics are simple enough:

Day One

Double KB Military Press work

Day Two

Armor Building Complex

Feel free to add additional work in here as appropriate. I have friends who insist on get ups, swings, and ab work no matter what is going on in life. Other people I know just want the basics. I mix mobility and Original Strength work into most of my training seamlessly because I need mobility and Original Strength work.

From Two Workouts to Two Months: The Armor Bodybuilding Formula

Before I begin:

Yes, warm up and cool down.

Yes, you can do more after the basics. I suggest more glute work but do what you wish.

Yes, it, like all my workouts, doesn't look like much on paper.

Yes, I suggest you do what I suggest and do what I suggest for the whole first two months.

Yes, rest between sets but it's really hard to give set perfect rest periods for all the billions of you that are going to do the program.

The Basic, Repeating Two Week Outline

First Week

Day One

Double KB Military
Press work

Day Two

Armor Building
Complex

Day Three

Double KB Military
Press work

Second Week

Day One

Armor Building
Complex

Day Two

Double KB Military
Press work

Day Three

Armor Building
Complex

The template will be slightly different for Weeks One and Two as I ask you to master the movements and decide on loads, but strive to focus on this protocol for the other six weeks until you reach the goal. The goal? See the next chapter.

The Goal: Weeks Seven and Eight

Before we discuss weeks one through six, let's look where we want to finish. The "challenge" is two-fold:

One: Finish 30 rounds of the ABC...ideally in about 30 minutes. (That's a lot of squats)

Two: Complete 100 reps in one workout with double KB military press. (That's a lot of presses)

Here is what the last two weeks look like:

Week Seven

Day One

Double KB Military Press work

If you do the 2-3-5-10 approach, do three rounds and strive to lock out all the reps. If using heavier bells, think 2-3-5 and maybe five rounds. For those of you using heavier bells every round of 2-3-5, feel free to drop to 2-3 reps on the heaviest bells.

Day Two

Armor Building Complex

This is the "big day." I would like to see you chase 30 total rounds (try to keep the rest periods tight). Finish in around 30 minutes, if possible.

Day Three

Double KB Military Press work

Cut back on the volume today...a bit. Do two rounds of the 2-3-5-10 or three to four rounds of the 2-3-5.

Week Eight

Day One

Armor Building Complex

Cut back the volume on today's workout. Maybe 15 rounds. This is a good day for extra work on anything you feel you need, if you wish.

Day Two

Double KB Military Press work

Five rounds of 2-3-5-10 or ten rounds of 2-3-5 (you have built up to this!). This is a hard workout that "creeps" up on you! But, I come back to this time and time again when I want to wake up my shoulder width.

Day Three

Armor Building Complex

Let's get 20 rounds and move on to some other kind of training next week.

How do we get there?

The First Two Weeks

I have believed, throughout my entire coaching career, that we should build up to a goal. That's pretty obvious to me and to most people but since the advent of social media (social media seems to have become my favorite target for derision), building up to a goal doesn't seem so obvious.

So, put Ravel's Bolero on your LP and let's see what how we want to build up on this program.

To review: the program is two big movements:

Day One

Double KB Military Press work

Day Two

Armor Building Complex

In the first two weeks. I suggest doing BOTH the presses and the ABCs for each workout. Flipping the order of the movements is a standard way of changing the focus and energy in a training program. So, the order will be this:

Week One

Day One

Press

ABC

Day Two

ABC

Press

Day Three

Press

ABC

Week Two

Day One

ABC

Press

Day Two

Press

ABC

Day Three

ABC

Press

I can't emphasize the following enough: practice the lifts these first two weeks. Figure out what bells are appropriate for your needs. It would be nice for you to get past the soreness of the ABC squats and decide what is appropriate for your top fives or tens in your presses.

On the ABC workouts, try to get at least five rounds each and every time. For presses, get at least 20-30 total each workout.

This is also the time to make judgements on the load. If the pressing bells are too light, you can try doing the touchdown variation of the alternating press or the standard alternating press or see-saw press. If you have any issues with your press and your physical structure, use the alternating variations and see if that works AND keeps your shoulders happy.

I love this combination of movements. Keep this a secret but I could see myself doing this the rest of my life. I've mentioned on my podcast that at age 14, I wrote in my journal that if all I did in my sixties (I was already looking down the road 50 years) was do both the clean and press and the snatch, I would take care of all my needs. When I train with barbells, I focus on the wisdom from this 14-year old! With KBs, I find the combination of the ABC and the press to answer all of my questions.

Let's discuss the next four weeks.

The Middle Weeks: Week Three through Week Six

My favorite way to get stronger (or improve any quality in any part of my life) is to nudge myself into improving. I often tell my throwers that we are “raising the floor.” If you throw the discus 200 feet, people instantly ask you when you will throw 201. Well, it took decades to get to 200, so how long will it take to add a little to your maximum effort.

The answer is “a long time.”

However, 80% of 200 is 160 feet. So, I will put a mark out at 160 and see how easy I can toss that distance. It’s really easy. Too easy. Over a few sessions, I won’t be able to keep my easy throws at 160. What we did was “raise the floor,” we made the 80% easier. And, ideally, that max (our 100% effort) goes farther.

If you have a background pulling heavy weights, you understand this. If you max out in a lift with 400 (kilos or pounds...doesn’t matter), you will find 80% “easy.” That’s only 320. You load that 320 on the bar and get some reps in. If you keep finding ways to make 320 easier (some call this “training”), you will swiftly discover that 320 feels less like an 80% lift and more like a 70% (or whatever).

Now, we “nudge” the loads up a bit and discover quickly that 340 feels like 320 used to feel. Many of us quickly experience that, when we test or compete, our maxes go up, too.

This is raising the floor. Weeks three through six focus on nudging those reps in the press and rounds of the ABC slowly come up. At first, five rounds of the ABC is a shock to the system, but over a few sessions, fifteen minutes feels like five used to feel.

I always like the weekly step up. You will find this again the barbell program. One thing I would like you to keep in mind is that the Day Two (Wednesday?)

workout should always be the hardest. If you need to shift that day to a weekend, that's fine: you'll figure it out.

On the weeks you press twice, cut back the volume from the hard workout from the previous week, the day two workout. So, if you did THREE rounds last day two, you can simply do one or two rounds of the 2-3-5-10, the following week. If you did four, you can do one, two or three rounds. Don't overthink it. Use your journal or diary to record the workout and reflect later if it was far too easy.

Too easy? Now that's a simple fix: do more! The issue comes when people go too hard and start to develop soreness, injuries, illness, or the dreaded blah. If you burn the candle at both ends and hold a blowtorch to the middle, progress is not going to be happening. It's better on those double press weeks to feel invigorated and ready for more.

On the weeks with just ONE pressing workout, try to slowly add more reps. It can be as simple as adding more rounds or by adding a few extra reps, like this:

2-3-5-10-2-3-5-10-2-3-5-10-2-3-5

By simply adding those last three sets, the 2-3-5, you added ten more reps to the 60 of three rounds. The goal on Week Eight is to do 100 reps. Climb the mountain each week.

Now, with the ABC, do the same basic idea on those weeks with just one ABC workout. I want you to slowly raise those rounds up to a total of 30 on the last week. Adding one more round is just fine, but I can see how some people would want to follow some kind of template. Try this:

| <u>Week</u> | <u>Rounds</u> |
|-------------|---------------|
| Three | 15-20 |
| Five | 20-25 |
| Seven | 30 |

On the weeks with two ABC workouts I would suggest that you have a medium and light number of rounds. A little trick I use on a lot of my accumulation

programs is striving to have the two workouts tally up a bit more than the single hard workout the week before it.

So, if you do 20 rounds, do 15 and 10 the next week (five more total rounds), if you do 30, try 20 and 15 (again five more rounds) the next week.

Don't overthink it, but do your best to keep trending forward.

And...be flexible. Some of us are not like the people online that have perfect diets, perfect lives, and never have issues with training sessions. Some of us have an occasional "day."

Well, I certainly do.

Warm Up and Cool Down

My opinion on warm ups and cool downs has always been, at best, vague. I get inspired to answer questions about these starts and finishes to training with one of my favorite interactions from the movie, Ghostbusters:

Janine Melnitz: Do you want some coffee, Mr. Tulley?

Louis: (To Egon) Do I?

Dr. Egon Spengler: Yes, have some.

Louis: (To Janine) Yes, have some.

Yes, have some. My warm ups vary from long suspension trainer “follow alongs” with the whole training group to simply taking a lighter load and doing a few reps and then start my training. I’ve done ice baths and saunas before training, long fancy movement-filled warm ups, and jogging, stretching, jumping, lunging, pushing, and pulling circuits that left me sweaty and ready.

It’s all fine. The bodybuilding tradition was to always do a few light sets with the movement and then get going. You need to do what you need to do with warm ups.

For my cool down, I walk. Generally, a two-mile, thirty minute or so amble is all I need. When I walk back up my driveway, I’m back to “normal,” whatever that word means on some days. Yes, I think walking after a workout helps with fat loss but it also helps transition from the weight room to the office or living room.

I’ve gone for years not doing any cool down at all. For my needs at the time, it was fine. As I watch the years pass, I take my warm ups and cool downs much more seriously. Warm ups are great time to check, assess the quality of the mobility and flexibility of this day, and get a sense of things. The cool down helps me with body fat levels and getting back to life. My entire Easy Strength for Fat Loss is based on walking after one trains.

So, what’s all this about walking?

Walking (!!!)

(I shared this in my Easy Strength for Fat Loss book and the benefits of walking are discussed here. Walking might be the most underrated thing we do for our fitness, health, longevity, performance, and body composition goals.)

One of my favorite things about travel is the walking. During a typical day in Galway, Ireland, I stroll 12,000 steps effortlessly. Teaching at St. Mary's and meeting my students for dinner gets me about six miles a day.

Where I live, and this might be true for much of America, the world of suburbia is not walker friendly. I don't pass pubs on my walks. Cars fly by me at freeway speeds just a short saunter from my front door. Parking lots are convenient for every superstore, shopping center and mall.

I have some elderly friends who drive to the mall to get their walk in. It's too dangerous, I am told, to walk to the mall!

So, if you live in an area that encourages long walks by making life miserable for cars consider yourself oddly lucky. Those little walks from here to there, hither and thither, are keeping you full of vim and vigor.

Ideally.

Walking has benefits beyond just the movement. By the way, for spinal health, I'm not sure I know a better movement than walking. I find myself more in tune with my world when I walk. I seem to think clearer, and walking seems to make me a better writer. I used to keep a notebook for my walking illuminations; now, I use my phone's notepad.

One quick thing: the moment I get home, the "right thing" is to rewrite my insights. Sadly, waiting too long to expand my walk thoughts often leaves me with just a few lines of gibberish.

Although credited to Saint Augustine, we find this phrase true throughout the lives of most writers:

“Solvitur ambulando.”

It is solved by walking.

Walking seems to do a lot of good for your body. It seems to do wonders for your mind. Walk.

"Above all, do not lose your desire to walk: every day I walk myself into a state of well-being and walk away from every illness."

Søren Kierkegaard

Like I explained in a podcast as to why sleeping seems to help with fat loss, walking might be the same “secret.”

“How does sleeping help fat loss? Most of us don’t eat when we sleep.”

It might be the same for walking. Enjoy the sun. Enjoy the air. Enjoy the walk. Just don’t enjoy a bunch of calories while you do it.

It’s a simple thing, walking, but the benefits are amazing according to these studies.

The main study in the BJSM special edition surveyed more than 50,000 walkers in the United Kingdom—a variety of ages, both men and women—and found that regularly walking at an average, brisk, or fast pace was associated with a 20 percent reduction in all-cause mortality and a 24 percent reduction in the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease. All the data was self-reported. Participants were asked how frequently they walked and whether they would describe their usual pace as “slow,” “average,” “fairly brisk,” or “fast.” Though self-reported data like this is often viewed as a weakness, in this case it may actually be a strength. This is because “slow” versus “brisk” for a 30-year-old is different than “slow” versus “brisk” for a 70-year-old. In other words, what the researchers

were really measuring was rate of perceived exertion, or how hard people felt they were walking. This method is proven to be an effective way to gauge effort and intensity during exercise. “A very simple way to grasp what a ‘brisk’ pace is in terms of exertion is to imagine it as a pace that gets you out of breath when it is sustained for more than a few minutes,” says Stamatakis, lead author on the study and professor of physical activity, lifestyle, and population health at the University of Sydney, Australia.

Another study, published earlier this year in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine, examined nearly 140,000 men and women in the United States and came to the same conclusion. Engaging in at least 150 minutes per week of brisk walking was linked to a 20 percent reduction in all-cause mortality.

A common challenge to these big, population-wide studies is that they don’t measure causation. While regular walking promotes good health, it could also be that you can’t walk regularly or briskly if you’re not in good health. However, Stamatakis points out that he and his team “went to great lengths to reduce the possibility of participants’ existing health status determining their walking pace.” They excluded all participants who died within two years of follow-up (a proxy for someone who may have been sick during the study period) and anyone who had cardiovascular disease when the study began. They also adjusted their results to control for participants who had other preexisting medical conditions. When you combine this with the fact that many smaller studies designed as randomized controlled trials—meaning some subjects are assigned to walk and others aren’t—show that walking causes improvements in health, you can start to be pretty confident that walking leads to good health, not the other way around.

Just after writing this originally, I popped up and walked. I remembered as I started the walk that I was born with “pistol grip” hips and I have had both hips replaced. I limped horribly for years with necrotic hips. Learning, relearning would probably be more accurate, the pleasure of pain free strolling might be why I simply love walking so much.

Don’t wait until you limp to enjoy the wonders of walking.

Measuring Success

Not long ago, I was walking down the aisle at the local pharmacy. I paused for a moment and I was amazed at the “over the counter” tools that are available to us today. There were advanced blood pressure cuffs, machines that measure your blood’s oxygen level, and a variety of other tools that can give you lots of data points. Some of you might have watches and rings that tell you about your sleep and readiness to train. Some trainers are now making their clients wear continuous glucose monitors to help with diet and training interventions.

It’s all great. I’m old school so I still stick with some basics. As you begin any (and all) programs, it’s vitally important to make some kind of measurements. Track and field, swimming, and lifting give measurable feedback. I would hope you find some help in my following suggestions.

Maybe the “best” is still the waistline measurement. Clarence Bass, Mister Ripped, has preached to us since the 1970s to measure this daily. I use a centimeter tape as it gives me a little more direct feedback. Going from 99cm to 98cm is progress, but it’s hard to figure the little lines on the inch versions. I’ve always told people to keep their waistline under half their height. Some new research from Scandinavia is clearer:

Waistline Numbers

Men:

Under 37 inches: Healthy

Between 37 and 40 inches: Some Health Risk

Over 40 inches: Clear Health Risk

Women:

Under 31 inches: Healthy

Between 31 and 35 inches: Some Health Risk

Over 35 inches: Clear Health Risk

Or in centimeters:

Men:

Under 95 cm: Healthy

Between 95 and 101 cm: Some Health Risk

Over 101 cm: Clear Health Risk

Women:

Under 79 cm: Healthy

Between 79 and 89 cm: Some Health Risk

Over 89 cm: Clear Health Risk

Although many people HATE weighing themselves and, I agree, it's a vague number (plane flights magically make me heavier), I still like the daily discipline of the weigh in. If I see my numbers trending upwards, I stop and rethink what the "h-e-double toothpicks" I am doing. My goal is to always keep my weight between two numbers as I find dipping too low, like when I drop weight for a lifting meet, tends to make me rebound upward. So, yes, I am a fan of the daily weigh in...even if the numbers don't always reflect body fat loss or muscle gain exactly.

I have always thought that before and after pictures have some value, but many of us have "that" photo from a wedding or party that might have convinced us that we have fallen from the peak of physical conditioning. I understand the value of before and after pics, just don't fake it with tanning and sucking in the gut.

I also find that clothes can be a nice assessment. If something you used to wear fits loose in the belly and tight in the shoulders that universally a good sign. Of course, compliments can be useful and it's not a terrible idea to write them down when you hear them. Not a lot of people will give you positive feedback on your fitness journey.

That's a sad truth.

Why Curls in the Barbell Training but Not in the KB Training?

Do you want the quick answer or the overwrought, over the top, over explained typical DJ answer? Okay, quick answer first:

The KB clean is a perfect biceps exercise. It's a great shoulder health move. You can get tired and sweaty doing KB cleans. You don't need more.

The long answer? Keep reading.

Kettlebell Cleans: The Least Appreciated KB Exercise

(I wrote this years ago, but I still preach everything in this piece)

I think the fact that I was a lousy javelin thrower has actually made me a pretty good coach in the event. Not great, trust me, but I can get you better in the spear toss simply because I had such a hard mountain to climb. I'm not sure people realize how honestly horrible I was in the javelin until I started my kettlebell training and followed the excellent advice of javelin coach Bill Witt. With a few simple kettlebell exercises and some simple technical clues, I managed to add seventy feet to my javelin throw. I am convinced that this Track and Field event might be the most important reason that you and I can discuss "all things training" because we survived a fairly wild landscape with our ability to pick up a sharp stick and either defend ourselves or provide dinner.

Not long ago, I decided that my javelin throwers needed "something." Like an artist, coaching is sometimes as much about instinct and intuition as it is about applying physics to the human body. Actually, science can often lead one astray as did the famous biomechanical study of the shot put that determined that the second-place thrower at the Olympics actually beat the winner according to the calculations. (If you remember the cartoon character "Foghorn Leghorn" and his attempts to outwit the young "Egghead, Jr.," you might have an insight into why the winner kept his gold medal even when the science geeks thought he got second place.)

So, I had this idea. My athletes have always complained about some kind of early season malady for javelin throwers. "Coach, my elbow hurts." "Coach, my shoulder hurts." "Coach, my back hurts."

But, that year, I had an idea. Before the season began, I took them out to the back part of our campus where we have a set of Monkey Bars. If you ever want a full upper body workout in about a minute, swing from hand to hand across the

Monkey Bars.

Hold on. Why do we call them Monkey Bars? In Wikipedia's definition of "Brachiation," there is a very interesting description of the traits of brachiators:

"Some traits that allow primates to brachiate include short fingernails (instead of claws), inward-closing hook-like fingers, opposable thumbs, long forelimbs, and freely rotating wrists."

Sound familiar? Yeah, well, look in the mirror! The Monkey Bars (the Javelin Thrower Bars?) were actually "Reverse Engineering" the Javelin throw. In the same way that the upper body works in harmony to move from bar to bar mimics the movement of the javelin throw. Moreover, it is difficult to do this movement without a "packed shoulder." And, for once, I didn't hear about "this hurts" in the preseason.

And, like all my insights, this one kept gnawing at my brain for a few weeks. There was something "right" about this idea and I knew that it would help me in my recent long venture into studying the potential of the kettlebell clean.

For the record, not long ago, I looked at the "Kettlebell Six," the six core moves of the RKC Kingdom (Snatch, Get Up, Press, Squat, Swing and Clean). It occurred to me that we had "Champions" of every movement with entire books being written about some (the Snatch and the Get Up come to mind) and others so insightfully drilled and corrected that there is literally an answer for every question for the movements, even if you don't have any questions!

And, then...the Clean. In response to any question about the Clean, the answer is usually something as uninspiring as "Well, um, it gets you in place for the press and, well, we teach it on Day Two."

This is how I began a long dark journey into studying the kettlebell clean. As an Olympic lifter, I knew first-hand the issues teaching the kettlebell clean as there are stunning differences between the Olympic version and the correct kettlebell style. In the Olympic lifts, you finish with soft legs (think of a quarter squat position) to absorb the shock of the weight. Not so in the kettlebell version as you

strive to "zip up" the finish. From Enter the Kettlebell, Page 98, we read this:

"Tense your glutes and brace your abs—don't suck them in, but wall them up as you would for a punch—to absorb the impact. Don't rebend your knees."

In the Olympic lifts, we need loose, bendy wrists to catch the barbell in the clean with elbows high to not only secure the weight as you rise from the squat catch, but to allow a springy jerk. Again, the kettlebell is the opposite:

"The fist should be kept on a straight line with the forearm and there should be no bending of the wrist in any direction." Ditto with the kettlebell lifts. A limp wrist bent back is a guarantee of weakness and injuries. (ETK, 90)

It's funny to look at those first two points as the BULK of the teaching for a young athlete concerning the Olympic style clean is dealing with technique and timing of the squat catch and dealing with the constant issue of wrist flexibility and resulting pain in the forearms.

You might remember that we started this conversation with soreness and injuries in the javelin throw. We will make the connections very soon.

In the standards of the Kettlebell Clean, three points rang out to me:

1. The kettlebell, the elbow, and the torso must "become one" on the top of the clean.
2. The shoulders must be pressed down.
3. The arms must stay loose, and the hips must do all the work.

It was here that two points collided in my brain: Our javelin throwers were becoming better at the javelin by doing the Monkey Bars. They were getting stronger, more supple, and remaining pain free by "becoming one." Moreover, they were learning to keep the arms loose and move through space with their upper body by using huge hip movements as part of their locomotion.

So, if the insights of the kettlebell clean helped me appreciate the relationship between Monkey Bars and Javelin throwing, wouldn't it make sense to look at

the kettlebell clean to replace the Monkey Bars? All I can answer you with is a resounding: "Maybe."

So, I began to add a lot of Kettlebell Cleans to our training for all our athletes. Oddly, an additional insight came from my athletes: "Coach?" Yes. "Hey, my arms having been getting bigger lately!" It was an interesting point and it led me to an interesting concept that we are now calling "Armor Building." In one of my other books, I note:

"I played varsity football for South City High back in the glory days and all my games were at night. My last game was played on Thanksgiving early in the morning. Hours later, when I normally would've been asleep, we ate Thanksgiving dinner. I was simply amazed at how much pain my upper arms felt from the banging of a game. Since that time, I've bought into the idea of armor building for football. There's no question that the more time one spends under load, the more hypertrophy that will result."

So, "Armor Building" is a term I used for Functional Hypertrophy; it is that extra mass that allows you to handle the contact and collisions of sports and life. Yes, it is possible to compete without a lot of mass, but for greater mileage consider a little padding of muscle.

The best exercises I know for Armor Building are:

- Kettlebells
- Single and Double Cleans
- Double Kettlebell Front Squats
- The Kettlebell Press Variations
- Barbells
- Zercher Squats
- Suitcase Deadlifts
- Snatch Grip Deadlifts
- Bench Press
- Curls (Try doing them with a Thick Bar!)

So, why do kettlebell cleans work the "guns" so well? To continue:

I hate being any kind of anatomy geek, but I need to add one thing: the kettlebell clean might be the best "gun," or bicep, exercise made. Now, every school kid knows how to "make a muscle" showing off the bicep and we soon learn that the twisting into the "guns" position is also a big key. The third function tips us off to why the kettlebell clean is superior for rapid gun advancement:

"The biceps brachii assists in forward flexion of the shoulder joint (bringing the arm forward and upwards). The short head of the biceps brachii also assists with horizontal adduction (bringing the arm across the body) when the arm is internally (or medially) rotated. Finally, the long head of the biceps brachii, due to its attachment to the scapula (or shoulder blade), assists with stabilization of the shoulder joint when a heavy weight is carried in the arm."

And, honestly, it makes sense. No part of the body works in isolation (well, maybe the "mind," but even then try losing it!) I discovered some amazing soreness in my lats after doing a recent "Cardio Clean" workout (see below) and I am convinced that when you do something that is both heavy and dynamic, good things happen. I nominate that as the understatement of the year.

The more I work and teach the kettlebell clean, the more simple insights I have and I am willing to share with our community. There are few technical cues that seem to need universal review.

First, the Clean is related to the Swing. Check that: it IS a SWING. Don't dead hang clean the weight (and then wonder why you keep crashing into it!). In ETK, we are given the simple directions:

"Pick up a kettlebell, swing it back between your legs as if for a swing, and bring it to the rack in one smooth movement."

So, insist on "Hike Passing" every kettlebell clean, then zip up to the rack position. Remember, it is a swing that finishes in the rack. It is not a drop and flop backwards!

Remember the advice from ETK (95):

"Throw the kettlebell behind you between your legs—not straight down. Just like the hike pass from football. The closer your forearm is to your groin, the better. The tighter the arc, the better. Taming the arc is a very important concept in kettlebell quick lifts."

Don't start from a dead stop, a dead hang clean, or a plumb line position. Swing it and clean it!

Another insight involves the elbows. Many people, especially those from either Olympic lifting or a sport that does power cleans in training, want to do large, loud, big elbow movements.

With the KB clean, try to stress something I call "Quiet Elbows." You can also use the term "Small Elbows" or really anything you want to teach the movement as a swing followed by a rack with very little flair or movement from the elbows. The Monkey Bars are excellent for teaching quiet elbows: try doing a set with a lot of conscious arm bend and see how fast or efficient you move. The elbow should be "whippy" with the hands the tip of the whip, not the bend of the elbow. Take a few sets actively trying to "quiet" the elbow movements.

A quick side note here: a good coach doesn't correct a thousand details per rep. In fact, the opposite would be true: one should strive to focus on one issue for a thousand reps. I remember asking a great high school football coach the secret of his success, he told me: "You just can't let yourself get bored watching the same play over and over again. It's really up to you to have the discipline to keep getting it right." So, when working with someone, find and fix the key issue. It's amazing but true: if you fix the big problem, the little ones disappear, too.

I think the KB clean is underrated for cardiovascular work. I have a simple little program called the "Cardio Clean" to show the value of the clean to get you hot and sweaty. It is very simple on paper and a bit harder in reality. It is simply a set of cleans, followed by an active rest with the single front squat to rest the grip and keep things ratcheted up.

Let's start with the Left Hand:

8 Single Kettlebell Cleans
3 Single Front Squats

Swing and Switch Hands

8 Single Kettlebell Cleans
3 Single Front Squats

Swing and Switch Hands

5 Single Kettlebell Cleans
2 Single Front Squats

Swing and Switch Hands

5 Single Kettlebell Cleans
2 Single Front Squats

Swing and Switch Hands

3 Single Kettlebell Cleans
1 Single Front Squats

Swing and Switch Hands

3 Single Kettlebell Cleans
1 Single Front Squats

It's a simple gasser where you end up with 32 Cleans and 16 Front Squats. Try it with a heavy bell (I use my 28 although certainly one could use less or more) and note the impact throughout the body. Notice how the squats are minimal, I would recommend you keep them in the range recommended. On the cleans, doing more than eight with a heavy bell seems to begin to sneak into the area of technical issues, although your mileage may vary.

So, with the ABC, and its two cleans, you are performing a marvelous bicep exercise.

What if you only have ONE KB?

From the moment I first shared the ABC online, people started asking for what to do if they just had ONE KB. Often, I responded:

“Buy another one.”

My humor and kindness remains boundless. So, I went to work on solving the single bell question. An issue appeared quickly when readers (and me) started just trying to do the DOUBLE ABC workout with a single bell but on both sides. So, with a single bell:

Two left KB cleans

One press

Three single side squats (or goblet squats)

Bell down (or hand switch)

Two right KB cleans

One press

Three single side squats (or goblet squats)

That’s four cleans, two presses and six squats. Even though there is only one bell, those squats are going to add up fast. A standard (for our real challengers) workout of 30 minutes ends up being 180 squats.

I’ve struggled walking upstairs after 30 rounds of the ABC (standard double variation) and the 90 squats. Yes, the load with singles is lighter, but 180 squats? That’s teetering towards my greatest fear as a coach and human person: unreasonable!

So, I went to work. I traveled across the country in my car with my single KB strapped safely in the back seat and experimented daily with variations. When I came across a winner, I then spent four weeks doing this simple scheme that you should recognize:

Week one: twice a week
Week two: once a week
Week three: twice a week
Week four: once a week.

After six weeks of experiments, I shared it online. Of course, the MOMENT it came out, people offered more and more (and more!) variations.

I stand by my version of the single bell ABC. It's reasonable. Here you go:

Left hand: One clean and press
Switch hands
Right hand: One clean and press
Immediately followed by two single side KB front squats.
Bell down to the ground. Shake out your arms and legs a moment and...go!
Right hand: One clean and press
Switch hands
Left hand: One clean and press
Immediately followed by two single side KB front squats.

And that is "One."

When one adds it up it is four cleans, four presses and four front squats. It contains the elements of the classic kettlebell workouts from the early days of 2000s when most people just had one KB and strived to find ways to utilize the tool better. The math is easy for volume:

10 Rounds
40 Cleans 40 Presses 40 Front Squats

20 Rounds
80 Cleans 80 Presses 80 Front Squats

30 Rounds
120 Cleans 120 Presses 120 Front Squats (and...ouch, the stairs are going to hurt)

The single bell ABC does take a bit longer to complete each set (all 4-4-4). If you choose to do “On the 12s (aka EMOM or OTM), you will be cutting into your rest period. Some have told me that doing half every 30 seconds works well. I think that is a smart variation. So:

When the second hand hits the 12 on your wall clock:

Left hand: One clean and press

Switch hands

Right hand: One clean and press

Immediately followed by two single side KB front squats.

Bell down to the ground. Shake out your arms and legs a moment and...REST!

When the second hand hits the 6 on your wall clock.

Right hand: One clean and press

Switch hands

Left hand: One clean and press

Immediately followed by two single side KB front squats.

Bell down to the ground. Shake out your arms and legs a moment and...REST!

This idea is a great way to compress time. 10-15 minutes of this variation would be a great finisher to a workout or an excellent way to train with little time.

Obviously, I can only do so much when it comes to some issues here. If you bought cheap, light KBs from the local superstore, the load might not challenge you for other parts of the program that includes the single arm press, probably my favorite KB movement (see below for more on this). But...for the single KB ABC, those squats, no matter the load, will add up. The single KB Armor Body Building Complex Program would look something like this:

Week One

Day One

Single KB ABC (SKABC) 20 rounds on the 12s (or variations as appropriate)

Day Two

Single KB Press

Either: 2/3/5/10 for 3 rounds

Or

2/3/5 add weight

2/3/5 add weight

2/3/5 (If you have a selection of bells to go heavier)

Day Three

SKABC 10 Rounds on the 12s (or variations as appropriate)

Week Two

Day One

Single KB Press

Either: 2/3/5/10 for 5 rounds

Or

2/3/5 add weight

2/3/5 add weight

2/3/5 add weight

2/3/5 (If you have a selection of bells to go heavier)

Day Two

SKABC 30 Rounds on the 12s (or variations as appropriate)

Day Three

Single KB Press

Either: 2/3/5/10 for 2 rounds

Or

2/3/5 add weight

2/3/5 (If you have a selection of bells to go heavier)

If you know the basics of KBs, you can add swings, snatches, and get ups. Some might find additional training appropriate such as squats, deadlifts, and other lifts. I would suggest focusing on the basic program for the first two weeks and then assess whether or not you need to add additional work.

The Single KB Press...and why I love it

In high school, we had a Universal Gym. When I look back at it, a lot of people trained really hard on it and we made pretty fair progress. One thing we did a lot of was one arm presses on the Military Press station.

We did them in a way that honestly stands the test of time: I would stand in front of the machine and my partner would have the “key.” That’s a term I haven’t used in decades either: this was the little bent selector key that allowed you to use more than forty pounds. The coaches kept them in their office, so no one could use them to work out unless they were there. Of course, every kid from Francisco Terrace knew that a bent nail worked just as well, so I had my own personal gym any time I could sneak in.

So, I would do five reps with the right arm. My buddy would move the weight to 50 pounds. Five more reps. We would continue this process all the way down the stack until I couldn’t do five reps. Then, the fun started: we would go back up, ten pounds at a time, to the starting weight of forty pounds. We called these “Burnout Sets” and the pump in the shoulders was unbelievable.

Of course, now you put your left hand on the machine and did the same all the way down and up the stack. It worked well then and I would imagine the human body hasn’t changed that much since then, so it might well be worth a try today. You certainly can go up and down the dumbbell rack at your gym or do like we do at my training group and lay a row of kettlebells on the ground and do the same basic workout.

The Varsity throwers at my school came up with a nice twist to this to help the shot put and they would only do singles, but changed the reps in a wild, chaotic way each and every rep. There was gold in this idea for throwers and I ignored it most of my career, but the variation of speed would be an excellent supplement for a thrower or fighter. Alas, I forgot it, but perhaps the next generation of elite

throwers will use it.

One of the things we all noticed from doing these one-armed workouts is how sore we were around the waist the next day. Growing up, the area between your ribs and hips was called your “waist.” Now, we call it “core” and I charge a lot of money to make you train it.

And, this is part of the point of doing single arm overhead work: it challenges you from your toes to the top of your head. Now, I am not calling for us to start dressing like “Ye Olde Tyme Strongman” with leopard prints and a saucy mustache, but there is a great tradition in strength sports to put weights overhead with one hand. Like every great lifting idea, it has ebbed and flowed through its popularity. When I first started squatting seriously, practically no one squatted in gyms. Then, squats became the answer to all questions. I like to think today as I write this that the squat has become a key lift again and its importance to general training is generally seen as crucial, but not “squat or die.”

I have always seen five advantages to one arm pressing. First, the whole body is supporting the work done by one limb. This allows me to use more weight with one hand than I can handle with two. Let’s make this clear:

If I can one hand press 110 pounds, I have two legs and one torso supporting it.

Now, if I put 110 pounds in EACH hand, I still have two legs and one torso supporting it. Now, I KNOW I can press 110 with one hand, but double 110s (220 total) would be a great challenge. So, my deltoids, triceps and the whole gang of muscles supporting this one arm lift are really challenged. Yes, you actually overload the arm, if you go heavy enough, by doing one limb movements. True, the total amount is higher with two arms, but the local load is heavier with one. For hypertrophy, it almost feels like cheating.

Second, and this should be no surprise, one arm lifting is asymmetrical. The bottom line on this is simply “Asymmetry is harder.” I strongly recommend on one arm lifting that you either use a partner or a mirror when lifting. I like the Chin, the Sternum and the Zipper (my “CSZ Line”) to remain basically in a vertical line while pressing. There will be some twisting and turning under great

loads, but limit it as best you can. Recently, I was asked:

“What do I do when I start twisting?”

Stop.

I thought my answer was brilliant.

Third, equipment needs for one arm lifts are less. At my old gym, I had 113 kettlebells, but a group of them were far too light for pressing practice. To have 40 athletes all pressing double bells, we would have had to share and that, of course, was fine. But, by utilizing singles, the whole group could lift at once. There is something magical about watching that many people intensely focused on pressing weights up and down.

Fourth, with a light load and only one limb, there is a sense of what we call “Active Rest.” Pavel, has this funny story about the military: a bunch of privates are shoveling dirt. After a few hours, one of them asks “Sir, when do we rest.” The officer answers: “Ah. If you throw the dirt farther, the dirt will be in the air longer. You can then rest when the dirt is in the air.”

My vision of rest during one arm lifts seems about the same as in this joke: you rest while the other limb is working. The funny thing is that the body seems more than able to support rep after rep switching hands. Of course, the reps are challenging as you move along, but that brings us to the next point.

Finally, one arm pressing leads us naturally to “longer” sets. Now, if time under tension/load is the key to bodybuilding or hypertrophy, it would make sense that alternating hands and continuing to move would certainly increase time. Call Einstein for the specifics on increasing time, but those who have ever had a limb in a cast know that working on the healthy arm or leg seems to keep the atrophy of the injured side to a minimum. The body is one magnificent piece with only one blood system, so hypertrophy should come with these longer sets. In my experience, and with those willing to try it, it works.

I believe in doing one arm presses standing. I have done them seated, for

example, after a surgery, but I really think there is a value to doing them with the whole body wedged underneath the bell. If you have never done them before, keep the reps low, maybe two to five reps, and get used to the movement. I strongly suggest, like in the bench press, to keep the elbow vertical under the wrist. Again, a mirror can help here. There are some variations that I will use in teaching this with interesting names like the “Bottoms Up Press” and the “Waiter Press,” but strive to keep the elbow in line with the wrist.

My favorite workout scheme for one arm presses is also the method I use in my book, “Mass Made Simple.” I strongly believe that one arm presses allow you to handle a lot of volume, so I use two “ladder” schemes for almost any purpose (sports help, hypertrophy, fat loss, this is “one size fits all”):

The 2-3-5(-10) method

I have discussed this scheme in other parts of this work, but very simply the first variation is to do this:

Two reps left arm

Two reps right arm

Three reps left arm

Three reps right arm

Five reps left arm

Five reps right arm

If light enough, to a set of ten left and right, too. This is not always possible. This workout (with the tens) is forty total reps. It won’t “feel” like forty as you moved back and forth between limbs and the reps changed. If you do this a number of times, well, this will be a lot of time under load. And, that is a good thing!

I suggest for most people to do the entire workout with one weight. Let the volume be the issue and not your technique under heavy loads. If you decide to go up, an interesting way to do this is simply:

2-3-5 (Both Sides)

Add Weight

2-3-5 (Both Sides)

Add Weight

2-3-5 (Both Sides)

I don't suggest doing this much more than this, but occasionally it would be fun to push up another round. Skip the tens on this variation as we are trying to get the biggest bells we can in the last round of five.

Any traditional rep and set scheme will work, of course. As I noted from my high school experience, I was able to recover quickly from all those sets of pressing. In hindsight, I can also understand why I had such a remarkable bench press at the light weight of 162 pounds: good pressers press a lot!

For the older trainee, the one arm press works all the muscles that Janda explained weakened with age. In other words, if a 50 plus man asked me "that question," "If you could only do one lift, what would it be?," I would answer one arm presses. Yes, it even works the glute as you can't have a saggy butt when pressing half bodyweight overhead with one arm.

Experiment with increasing the amount to one arm pressing that you do. There is no contest or Gold Medal for one arm pressing, but the rewards are great.

What If You Have Uneven KBs?

I think we have all been there! My suggestion is to use, as best you can, uneven loads when you do the double KB ABC program. Personally, I love this option. I only had a 28 kilo bell for a year before I got another...a 16 kilo bell. So, I did all my doubles work “uneven.”

If this is all you have, and I can't give you too much detail as there are so many possible options, you might find that you can go a lot longer than those of us using even sized bells. Moreover, there are some advantages as you will also be dealing with the asymmetry of the loads. Whether or not this asymmetry puts you in the finals of the Olympics or the top of the podium at a bodybuilding contest is something we can discuss at length (I'd hedge my bet that it might take more than just uneven bells).

After all these years and a massive collection of kettlebells, I still enjoy my uneven ABCs and press workouts. Remember: if this is what you have, just two uneven bells, it's a gift! You have two bells! For those of you with lots of KBs, enjoy this occasionally as a learning tool and generally fun training session.

I used to forget to switch the bells after each round until something amazingly simple occurred to me. It's really simple.

My little trick is to simply put both bells back on the ground after each round of presses or ABCs and walk around them, face the other direction, and do the next set. So, if you only have a 24 and 16:

Set One: 24 in the left hand, 16 in the right hand.

Set Two: 16 in the left hand, 24 in the right hand.

Repeat until the workout is finished.

That's pretty simple.

Some “Secrets” to Building Muscle

(I always love sharing “secrets.” John Powell, the late great former world record holder in the discus, used to joke to me that secrets in athletics are like “Buy low, sell high.” In other words...there are no secrets!)

For about six decades, I have made the gym my home. As an athlete, I used these same secrets to win national titles and break records in a variety of sports. As a coach, my simple approach to gaining mass has helped multiple football teams, track athletes and various Olympians. There is nothing fancy here, but that is the greatest fallacy of building muscle: it is not some top secret, “burn before reading” protocol. It is a touch of common sense and a lot of time with a barbell.

First, although there are truly no real “secrets,” here is the overriding principle: Muscle building, like fat loss, seems to work better with the exclusion of everything else. A guy with 12 inch arms will ask me about a mass building program, but will worry to death about his “six pack”, his cardio, his “game,” and about five other things. Once you get 16-18 inch arms, I will allow you to worry about all those other things.

Second, there is a need to spend time under load. This has been called a number of things in the past few years, but you have to find ways to load your body and move the weights for up to several minutes without releasing the load (putting the bar down or resting on a machine). All my programs are based on this insight.

Third, on a mass gaining program, you must eat. When I put on forty pounds in four months my freshman year in college, I used to eat some sandwiches BEFORE dinner so “I wouldn’t be so hungry during dinner.” I don’t necessarily want you to do this, but you must eat. I certainly can work around intermittent fasting, fast mimicking diets, and a variety of other diet/food issues, but you need to eat reasonably.

For this program, I’m simply asking you to eat more protein. A lot more. I will

discuss this later in the chapter, Eat Protein.

Fourth, you must master “resting.” If you don’t sleep eight plus hours a night, it is going to impact your muscle gains. Many famous bodybuilders have advocated the “Muscle Nap,” a long nap in the afternoon to simply gain muscle. Remember, you grow while you rest. Pick up basketball games are not rest!

Note well: walking after a hypertrophy/bodybuilding workout is probably fine. I like how it calms me down and refocuses me on the daily delights of life. So, a little is fine when it comes to extra “stuff,” but beware too much.

Fifth, this is a difficult point for many: bulking programs have very few movements. Well, let’s put this way: GOOD muscle building programs have few movements. When I had my most success with muscle building the number of movements is usually quite low. Learn to love them.

Sixth, although people have gained amazing muscle on lower reps (1-5) for most people (and mortals), the load needed to gain mass on a low rep program is “difficult.” So, until you handle a 400 bench, 500 squat and 600 deadlift, you are going to need reps to get your load into your workout. There is something magical about muscle gains around the 8–20 range and the last century of muscle building enthusiasts will bear this out, too.

Seventh, there is something that every experienced trainers know and few beginners: the answer to the question: “how long do you rest between sets?” The correct answer is “it depends.” An advanced lifter might take a year to recover from a record lift while a new lifter is recharged and ready to go literally seconds after doing a machine movement. Again, your mileage may vary.

Finally, I have a bit of “old” old school advice: save yourself on a bodybuilding program. Wear extra clothes so your body doesn’t have to use resources to stay warm. Remember, this is not a lifetime plan but a short focused fiery attempt to gain lean muscle mass.

If you came in lean after a solid program (Easy Strength for Fat Loss), you are NOT going to gain all the fat back within a few minutes of the Armor

Bodybuilding Formula.

An ABC Bonus: Let's look at the term, "Armor Building"

(I've edited an article I wrote on Armor Building years ago to explain what I mean by the concept. There are a lot of names of lifts and difficult programming ideas, but I wanted you to have some of the background.)

There are a lot of reasons most people don't succeed with their physical goals. I have thought for a while that the number one reason is simply trying to do everything all the time. I will get a question about mass building and I will recommend lots of squats, lots of food and lots of rest. The follow up question from the same person will usually include something about "six pack abs," agility work and dunking a basketball.

This is too much! I think that much of the confusion comes from the fact that I basically use one tool, the barbell and all of its close cousins like kettlebells, dumbbells, and the like, to help you accomplish your goals from fat loss and muscle gain to mobility and flexibility. So, for most people, I argue that you need to find periods in the year, usually from three to six weeks, and perhaps as long as eight weeks, to work hard on specific qualities. I think the Velocity Diet is amazing for fat loss, but it would be hard to do it while also in an NFL Training Camp. It doesn't mean that the Velocity Diet is good or bad nor does it mean that being in camp is right or wrong as this is not moral theology. And this is precisely the thought process that destroys most people:

Trying to do (or be) everything all the time.

There are times to burn fat, build muscle, get more explosive and prep for a sport, but it is nearly impossible to do this all the time. And there are some qualities that you should ONLY work for a little while and ONLY when you need it.

I work with a lot of people in the collision sports and collision occupations. One

of the hardest things to prepare for these endeavors is what I call “Armor Building.” This is a term that one of my football players coined a few years ago. Basically, he felt that some of the exercises we were doing, specifically in his case the Thick Bar Curl and the Double Kettlebell Front Squat, were helping him be a better running back. It gave him a feeling “like armor.”

At first, I didn’t understand what he meant. At first I assumed he meant like firepower. A few years ago, I worked with a high school running back, Tony N, who had a coach who didn’t believe in weightlifting. (Yes, I said that. The coach probably also didn’t like these “new fangled automobiles,” too) So, after a few sessions of working with him, he found that doing what he called “The Exercise,” a combination of Power Snatches and Overhead Squats, gave him some tools no one else had on the field. In his last five football games his senior year, Tony ran for over 200 yards each game.

But, that’s not armor, that’s not what we are talking about here. Armor is the ability to handle collisions and contact. When I wrestled in high school, I would spend the first week or so stuffing wet toilet paper up my nose as it bled every session. Magically, around week two, that very same forearm to the face wouldn’t cause a drop of blood to come out. Frank Shamrock, the great fighter, called this “callousing” and it is the first cousin to armor building. Armor building is a focused attempt to prepare the athlete for contact. True, there will be some callousing but the training will also include specific movements to gear up for collisions. Strangely, most of the athletes I have do this program note that they also look better in the mirror. In a sense, armor building is a kind of bodybuilding for sport.

(Let me add this emphasis quickly: That phrase, “Armor building is a kind of bodybuilding for sport” should be packaged and sold by somebody. That is a great way to explain this book!)

The most basic moves might also be the most exhausting. Every football player should have some intense loathing for “Grass Drills” which are also known as “Up-Downs.” The coach has a whistle and your job is run in place driving your knees high. When coach blows the whistle, you throw yourself to the ground and leap right back up to running in place. The running in place, as you soon

discover, is the easy part.

Grass drills alone can prepare you for many things. Late in my high school football career, I realized that of all the things we did for conditioning, most had no carryover to the games. But, as much as I hated them, grass drills seemed to be “game like.” Football, rugby, and war are as much about getting on the ground as fast as you can and then getting back up.

If you don’t have a high school football coach about, try just rolling. I am a firm believer that tumbling and rolling is the missing link for most people’s training. Tim Anderson, has been writing a lot lately on how simple rolling “resets” the body. I know this: one of the great fears of adulthood is to say, and here comes the advertisement: “I’m fallen and I can’t get up.” I am proactive about just about everything and would rather practice falling and getting up. My standard “Do this” tumbling training is this:

Five Somersaults (Forward Rolls)

Five Right Shoulder Rolls

Five Left Shoulder Rolls

Four “Ninja” Rolls (Right shoulder roll, left shoulder roll, right, left)

Bear crawl

Three Cartwheels facing one direction

Three Cartwheels facing the other

And, finally, as I always joke, run to the bucket.

For whatever reason, tumbling seems to affect the tummy when we first teach it.

For many, grass drills and tumbling tossed into some training weeks once or twice a year might be a fun jump start to a fat loss program or even a nice way to keep the motor running towards the end of a serious ripping program. One of the reasons I like the Turkish get up so much is that it is a kind of Tai Chi Grass Drill or Tumbling Session. Rarely do I see the typical fitness enthusiast touch the ground save for planks and that exercise seems to wave in popularity.

Remember the axiom: if no one in a typical gym is doing something, it is probably pretty hard to do. Rolling around on the floor doing Get Ups is going to be an insightful, thoughtful way to reorient you with getting off the ground.

And, as you age, learning to catch a fall, recover and get up might be the secret to a more vigorous old age. Trust me: you will get older nearly every year.

With the barbell, there are several great armor building moves. As I noted before, the thick bar curl has been one of my odder “go to” movements for a few years. I am not sure what it does to the forearms, elbows and guns, but try them. I use both actual fat bars and those new grips that mimic the thicker, and expensive, bars. I think your budget will decide which way you go on this decision. The thick bar curl can be done for reps up to ten, but usually I notice I just simply fail when the reps go up. Whatever the reason, this exercise seems to get the body ready to take a hit.

The snatch grip deadlift and the duck foot (heels together, toes out) deadlift seem to also help the collision athlete. I have been thinking that this compromised position tends to wake up more of the system, especially the connective tissue. I have gone heavy with snatch grip deadlifts in my career and I always seemed to be able to take a whack or two. Correlation or causation is never too important to me because these two movements will quickly tax you out and we won’t need a deep philosophy discussion after doing them.

For squatting, I hate the Zercher Squat. Hate it. It kills me, but I have always noticed that my human inner tube seems much powerful after doing these squats. This is that odd internal pressure, talk to a martial arts person for details. Also, holding the bar in the crook of the elbow is callousing for the ages. I have also experienced, as many other brighter people than me, that the Zercher Squat demands a kind of moving mobility that has to be experienced to understand. If you hate Zerchers, you are probably doing them right.

With Kettlebells, before the ABC, I used to have a tough workout based on Double KB Cleans and Front Squats. Here is a challenge:

One Double KB Clean and One Double KB Front Squat
Two Double KB Cleans and Two Double KB Front Squats
Three Double KB Cleans...and you see where this is heading.

I have a challenge here: all the way up to ten cleans and ten squats with the 24

kilo bells (32s if you are serious) without putting the bells down. This kind of ladder, with the reps ascending, is very difficult as each round increases in volume.

So, there you go:

Grass Drills

Tumbling

Get Ups

Thick Bar Curls

Duck Stance Deadlifts

Snatch Grip Deadlifts

Zercher Squats

Double KB Cleans and Front Squats

Beware each of these as they all bring forth an odd kind of soreness. I think you can do Armor Building for a long time. Reps and sets HAVE to be open ended. Honestly, without a coach blowing a whistle at you, it is going to be tough to push through some of this.

Generally, Week One should emphasize Get Ups and some tumbling. In the weight room, try a few simple moves. Obviously, you should be fine tuning your conditioning and basic technical skills, too. You should spend the bulk of your time prepping for the season.

Monday

General warm up

Get Ups

General Orientation into the tumbling moves (practice!!!)

Double KB Cleans and Front Squats (practice!)

Tuesday

General Warm up

Snatch Grip DL practice

Zercher Squat practice

Thick Bar Curls

Wednesday

General warm up

Get Ups

General Orientation into the tumbling moves. Try doing a basic rolling sequence (see above)

Double KB Cleans and Front Squats. Try getting to 5 + 5

Thursday

Sports Practice only

Friday

General warm up

Get Ups

General Orientation into the tumbling moves. Try doing a basic rolling sequence (see above)

Double KB Cleans and Front Squats. Strive for two sets of 5 + 5

Saturday

General Warm up

Duck Stance Deadlifts (Practice)

Snatch Grip Deadlifts

Thick Bar Curls

Week Two

Monday

General Warm Up

Get Ups

Duck Stance Deadlifts

Snatch Grip Deadlifts

Zercher Squats

Thick Bar Curls

Tuesday

General Warm Up

Tumbling

Double KB Cleans and Front Squats (Try to get beyond 5 + 5)
Grass Drills

Wednesday and Friday
Repeat Monday

Saturday
Repeat Tuesday

Week Three

Monday
General Warm Up
Tumbling
Double KB Cleans and Front Squats
Grass Drills

Tuesday
General Warm Up
Get Ups
Duck Stance Deadlifts
Snatch Grip Deadlifts
Zercher Squats
Thick Bar Curls

Wednesday and Friday
Repeat Monday
Saturday
Repeat Tuesday

Now, you may ask where your beloved Bench Press is on this program or whatever your heart desires that is missing. Well, add it in! Or, as I usually suggest, leave it out. This is only three weeks and we are trying to use or valuable time to literally toughen the skin and body for contact.

Even if you are not a collision athlete, I think there is still a lot of value in trying

some of these lifts and moves. From a fat burning perspective, you are going to have a hard time finding movements more compelling than grass drills and tumbling. With the odd barbell moves, you are going to discover the simplicity of the basic deadlift and squat when you return to them.

Here is the lesson: when it is time to kick it up a notch, you need to take a few weeks aside and really attack it. If you need to get some callouses and some armor, take some time to do it before you need it.

Section Two: The Barbell Armor Building Formula

The Barbell ABC

This question comes up all the time: can I do the ABC with barbells. Well, actually, people ask about dumbbells, bodyweight, and canned food as options, too, but let's stick with the barbell.

Yes!!!

Yes, with some variations. The program with the barbell can be done with the old standard home barbell of 110 pounds or 50 kilograms. I use my Olympic barbells and plates but whatever you have is just perfect.

The exercise selection, like with the KB ABC, is quite short:

Continuous Clean and Press

Curl

Front Squat

Before I tell you what we are going to do, let me share my biggest insights since we started experimenting and playing around with this idea.

Five Things I Didn't Believe about Building Muscle with Barbells, But I Do Now

When it comes to bodybuilding, I tend to only use resources before the early 1960s. Let me just cut to the chase: with drugs (anabolics and “speed” variations), it’s much easier to have a massive, ripped body. With the stuff people inject in themselves now, one only imagines what long-term disasters are looming for the few seconds of fame.

I can tell you one issue: death. It’s a rare week where someone I know in the field of performance and body composition doesn’t die way too soon. That’s the price for a lot of this nonsense and I’m not the first to point this out.

When I review the classics of training, the books, magazines, and training programs of the legends of the field before the steroid era, I begin to see certain patterns emerge. Certain exercises show up again and again. Recovery tools like taking a week or a month off seem part of many of these traditional training systems. Finally, a certain understanding of time seems to be evident, too. Basically, the understanding of time is this:

It’s going to take some time to achieve your goals!

I don’t see the overnight stuff. I don’t see the two-weeks to success. The process, like everything valuable in life, takes some time.

You know this. It’s true. When Coach Maughan told me the secret to success in the discus was to: “Lift three days a week, throw four days a week...for the next EIGHT years,” I desperately wished for a faster route. As I oft, too oft, repeat: the long route is the shortcut. Of course, I continue to look for shortcuts because there are great ideas floating around. My issue is that I have missed a lot of great

ideas from the past but ignored them because of what I perceive as better, newer, and sexier.

So, the door to my brain stays open to new ideas and new suggestions. My mistake has been to not look at the past (circa 1950s) enough to gather new insights. Once I put on my humility hat and listened, I discovered some things that I didn't believe about building muscle, but now I do.

The First Thing I Now Believe

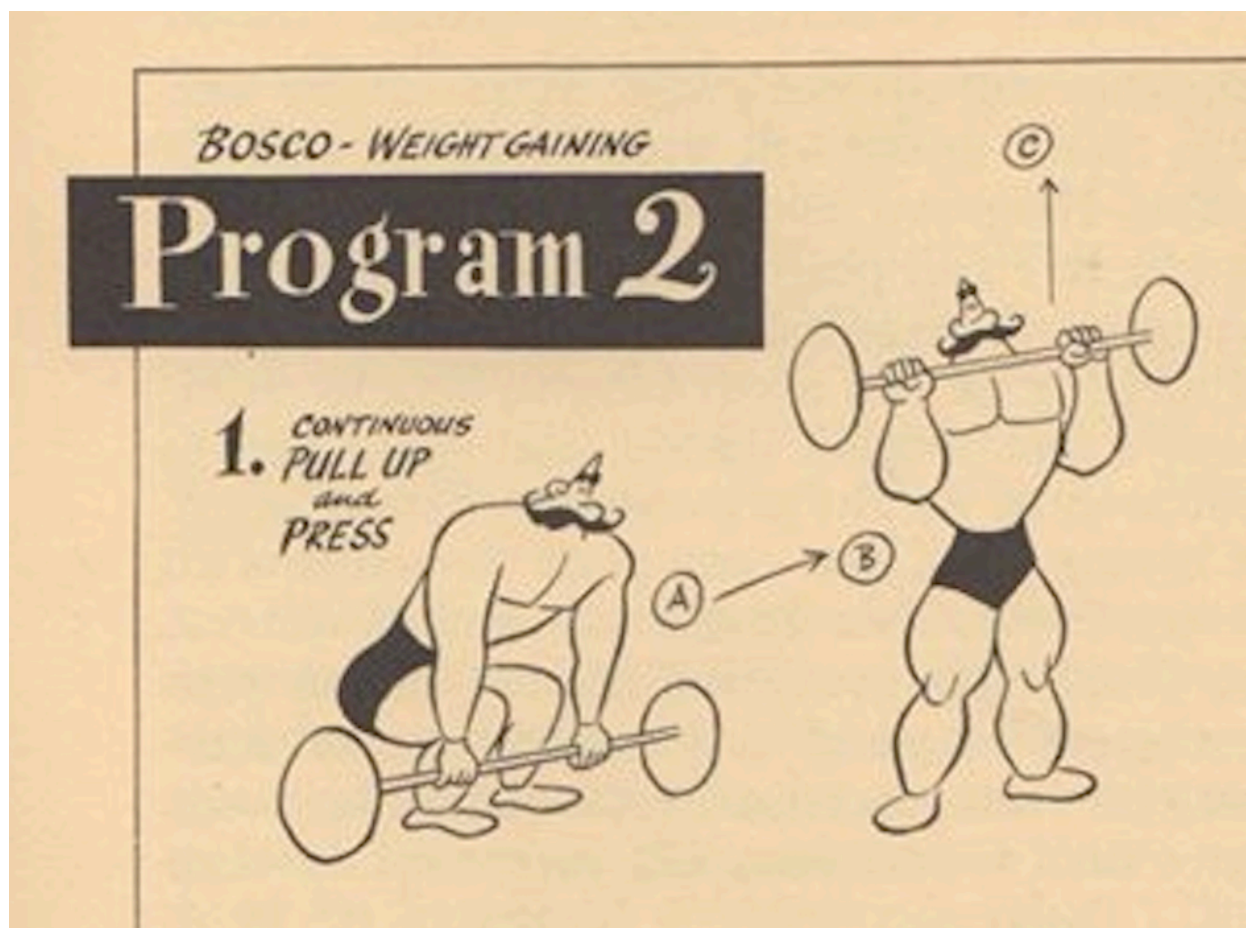
The Continuous Clean and Press

In the 1970s, I would still see men come into the gym (and I frequented the whole spectrum of gyms from the most famous in the world to small racquetball court gyms with just dumbbells) and look around for a minute. Very often, these strong men would pick up two dumbbells and clean and press, clean and press, and clean and press. Often, they would shake their grey hoodied selves off and proceed to repeat this with two heavier bells. Down the line of bells, the men would do continuous clean and presses, every press had its own clean, and then move on to train.

In some cases, they would nod to the rest of us and walk out the door. Now, with my advanced insights because I read bodybuilding magazines, I would be doing the stretch of the month, the superset of the week, and the lift of the day. My warm ups took up an hour and our other lifter friend was probably already in his smoking jacket sipping his martini.

I did these exercises in our junior high strength class. One day, Coach Freeman had us do sets of eight with the Continuous Clean and Press and I remember that I was still sucking wind when it was my turn after the other three students lifted.

Harry B. Paschall, who drew the immortal Bosco, has a series of books on strength and muscle building. In his programs, his first exercise is generally the continuous clean and press or an exercise he calls a “flip snatch,” a light snappy power snatch. I’ve littered my training programs in the past with these lifts as a conditioner for American football, wrestling, and transformation programs for athletes moving from one sport to another with the change of seasons.



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Only recently, with the help of many of friends (please don't call them lab specimens), I discovered that for muscle building and general overall body composition, the continuous clean and press is a gift that keeps on giving.

In my gym, we either start with the barbell in the rack or on the floor. It's certainly fine to put the weight back on the ground after every completed press, but most quickly discover that simply bringing the barbell back to the thighs (just below the knees and just above the knees seems most common) and hang cleaning the load keeps the exercise moving at a quick pace.

The load (barbell, dumbbell, or kettlebell) moves a long way. The shoulders experience fatigue from a number of directions. The heart rate goes up and there is a wonderful feeling of a "pump." For some, I suggest adding two or three front

squats after the last rep to make it a full body conditioner.

I'm suggesting this for most people interested in muscle building as a base exercise. Whether you use it to warm up or to fire up those barnyard wide shoulders, it doesn't matter.

The gym trainers of my youth were right to do this as the focus of their training.

The Second Thing I Now Believe

Curls as a Cornerstone

I take personal responsibility for my disdain of certain things. Watching people do idiotic things on social media with exercises accounts for much of this, but I have to admit I have always had great respect for true bodybuilders. For the record, I have absolute, untainted, complete admiration for bodybuilders who just get up on the podium and compete. I have watched friends prep for that and, like Dick Notmeyer used to tell me, if I had the discipline of a normal competitive bodybuilder, I would have been great.

It's the frat boys and gym rats, and social media influencers, that drive me crazy with these movements:

- Lunges
- Burpees (Royale Burpee must be rolling in his grave watching the abuse of this test)
- Twisting movements of all kinds
- Push-up idiocy (and all other kinds of extreme nonsense)
- Curls

You will not see these in my programs. Check that: you would not have seen these in my earlier programs. I've come around to one of these movements:

Curls

Now, before my normal audience calls the authorities worrying about my mental state, as I do get called out for being crazy on forums, let me explain:

1. People freaking love doing curls.
2. Doing curls early in a workout gets people "warmed up," physically and mentally.
3. It's not training the most important muscle group for elite performance,

but, damn it, people like nice arms. Whether or not curls are the perfect answer, I don't know.

4. With a barbell, you have to pick the bell up and put the bell down. Always a positive.
5. People freaking love doing curls!

So, yes, curls are a foundational movement in most people's body composition goals.

The Third Thing I Now Believed

Here. Here is Your Ab Workout. You Will Be Disappointed

In my youth, calisthenics were the Alpha and Omega of the training world. And, calisthenics deserve whatever accolades an exercise system should be given. Hand these movements an award after a red carpet event filled with celebrities. The family of bodyweight and light apparatus training certainly enjoys any and all fame.

Fame. I'm going to live forever.

And, like all good systems, as well all jokes, houseguests, and fish, calisthenics can stink after a bit, too. I've done my share of idiotic push up workouts, pull up challenges, and sit up tests. These all have their value until they don't.

I recently enjoyed a phone call with Bill Hinbern and he remarked that he gets calls from people about how "nice it is" to be allowed to do sit ups and leg raises again. They weren't banned. Well, where I live, they were not banned. The issue in the past few decades isn't that sit ups and leg raises are bad, it is that we overdo them.

Hell, we overdo everything, but let's stick to the point.

Crappy sit ups and crappy leg raises can damage the tissues, the spine, and the joints. In the field of personal training, we overdo EVERYTHING. That's usually the issue.

I have spent many a minute on my back raising my upper body, lifting my legs, and doing both at the same time. There is nothing wrong with a well performed ab exercise.

And...there is the problem again: "well performed." I would love to see the return of the classic ab exercises, but we have to get out of the "reps until death."

Quality of movement is key, so let's look at what I suggest.

I only recommend three ab exercises for most people I train. You can pick one or two or mix and match as you wish.

The AB Press-Up

(Note: not the Press Up (the American Push Up) that my European readers might think)

Lay on your back, keep the knees bent and keep the feet flat on the floor. Now, press your lower back arch into the ground as hard as you can. You should feel the ab wall cramp. Now, curl (roll, really), your head, neck, and then upper shoulders towards the ab wall. It's a small movement. If you feel cramping in the ab wall, you are doing this right.

The Ab Wheel

I love those damn things. I have a high-tech steel one with roller blade wheels, but the cheap ones I get for five bucks are great, too. I do use pads for my knees, but I simply roll out, pause, then roll back. Ease into these, please. Besides rhyming, you should take my advice because these can really hurt untrained and unready abs.

The Suitcase Carry

Pick up a load (dumbbells and kettlebells are best) with one hand. Stand tall with the load in your hand like a single suitcase. Now...walk. Go as long as you like, then switch hands and finish. At first, this is it. Over time, add more loops and load. It is as simple as can be so don't overthink it.

If you don't have a dumbbell or kettlebell, put some stuff in a suitcase. Carry that. Or you can do like I did when I "invented" the name for this exercise: take your two daughters on a trip and let them pack themselves. Carry that across a big airport and discover two things: this is a great ab challenge and my daughters really overpack.

My throwers do the suitcase carry three days a week and the ab wheel once a week. This is a good reminder for those of you who are NOT collegiate athletes: even at this level, ab work is done judiciously. Be wise when it comes to the ab wheel. The AB Press-Up can be done on the floor watching TV or even in bed. It's the easiest of the varietals here and I like how it seems to remind my lower back that it isn't fighting the fight alone.

I won't often plan ab workouts for people as it can be a "dosing" issue...a little, done correctly, goes a long way. In Easy Strength for Fat Loss we only do one set of ten in the ab wheel and a loop of suitcase carries and much of the feedback I receive includes high praise for this valuable, but relatively easy, combination.

The Fourth Thing I Now Believe

Legs Are the Key. But You Don't Have to Suffer

"Do as little as needed, not as much as possible."

Coach Henk Kraaijenhof

This quote dominated strength and conditioning social media for a while a few years ago. In the world of performance, enough is enough. More is just more. It's a hard truth to learn. When Coach Maughan told me the "secret" was eight years of work, and let me remind you that I had put in a decade already, I remember being stunned at this "hard truth."

Doing what you need to do when it comes to lower body work is the "secret." Now, when I was asked to write this book, I had a clear command: most people do NOT want a six week program from hell. Most people want to "look good, feel good, and move good" and I know from experience that high-rep, high load back squatting is not going to make you feel, or move, very good.

When it comes to leg training for most people, the right answer is "Yes, do some." Some of you love lunges; others like squats. I get a lot from hip thrusts, in all variations, and some coaches might not see the need. Most of us would get all we ever need from hill sprints, but others will argue, to death, about all the various reasons that they can not do hill sprints.

People who specialize in getting clients to look good for events and photoshoots have taught me that to "look good," leg work is important, yes. But there is no need to bulk up like an NFL lineman or Highland Game athlete.

I took my own advice here and started focusing on goblet squats as a warm up, and then working the lower body with hip thrusts and a few high rep deadlift variations. I felt good, dropped some body fat, and generally had a bit more skip in my step.

So, yes: train those legs. Within reason.

If this isn't hard enough, get my Mass Made Simple book and follow the materials exactly. After hundreds of squats in the six week program, you will have trained your legs well. Good luck on MMS!

The Fifth Thing I Now Believe

The Cult of Pull Ups

When I pick up and dust off some of my old books on bodybuilding and strength training, I begin to see something. No, that's not right: I begin to NOT see something.

Most of the bodybuilding books don't have pull ups or chin ups. It's barbell work. Certainly, in my youth and long before that, the pull up and chin up were part of testing. For our President's Fitness Tests, we all hopped up on the bar and gave our best.

And, then, we hopped down and didn't look at the pull up bars again. Frank Zane, the three-time Mr. Olympia, tells us in his classic text, *Let's Grow*, that he made his early progress with:

- Bench Press
- Row
- Squat
- (Some) Deadlifts
- Press
- Curls

...all done with barbells. He started with three sets of ten and then, he explains to us, he got some advice to train with these reps: 12, 10, 8, and 6 but go up in weight every set. That simple progression added thirty pounds to his bodyweight.

So, I'm not going to recommend pull ups or chin ups. Now, I know that many readers may need a visit to the hospital after reading this as there is so much hyperbole about hypertrophy. I've included it in many of my programs and I always get this feedback...always:

“I don’t have a pull up bar, what do I do?”

“Pull ups hurt my elbows, what do I do?”

“I can’t do a single pull up, what do I do?”

That last one, for me, was the clue: I believe in progression, so if the person can’t even begin to do a movement, where’s the progression? Doing the row, in a safe and sound manner without a lot of jerky movements, is something that can work as well as any other exercise for the big lat muscles. Mix in some deadlift variations, and maybe even farmer walks, and you have a chance to really work your back (and grip) without flailing and failing from the pull up bar.

I realize that I sprinkle the Easy Strength programs with this phrase “Vertical Pulling.” In the feedback I get, most people tend to focus on building up the overhead press, deadlift variation, and loaded carries, while sprinkling in the ab wheel and vertical pulling (pull up or chin up) as salt and pepper.

You certainly can keep pull ups and all the variations in, yes. But for everyone else I know and I coach: let’s skip these...for now.

It's Okay: You NEED to Make Mistakes

I'm always shocked when I read discussions about my training programs. Not long ago, I read a long, and I do mean long, discussion about load progression in one of my programs. One guy on THE Facebook (see the movie for why that is funny) kept commenting and commenting and commenting on my, Dan John's, inability to clarify things for him enough.

He even quoted me from a post: "You have to give it a few tries to get the loads right for you." This wasn't enough: he wanted the answer to his needs. He has never met me. I have never met him. Yet, I was supposed to pull this information from my vast experience and genius and help him train perfectly without any mental effort on his part.

And...for free.

I added a small three word point:

"Commenting versus committing."

He had comments. He had lots of comments. He didn't have any commitment. I'm not being a jerk, I'm not being insensitive: sometimes we have to TRY something to see if it fits. Most of us know that there are times we have to try on the shoes to see if they fit. When it comes to nutritional approaches, I have tried many and many approaches just disagree with me. Too much of any one thing, and this includes dairy and wheat and corn for me (sorry U. S. Senators from the midwest...I can't eat all those subsidized foods!), does damage to my delicate gut.

Trust me, don't spot me in back squats when I am doing a gallon of milk a day for bulking. Don't light a match either!

Here is something so many people make: it's fine to make mistakes. There is so much to be learned from trying something and not exactly succeeding. My brother described an exercise to me in 1972, it was something the world record holder, Ludwig Danek did, and I mixed everything up. I got Danek's exercise wrong, but I came up with "Discus Specials" from this little mistake. I've used this exercise with athletes my whole career.

Please, I beg you, make mistakes. We do a massive disservice to children by forcing them to think that passing a test is education. I'm far more interested in learning. I end every podcast and newsletter, with this:

"Until next time, let's all keep lifting and learning."

Making mistakes with load, exercises, volume, and challenges gives us insights, hard-earned ones, that you can't buy in a book or stolen from a website. I can tell you stories about 10K runs, triathlons, sprinting 400 meters, and back squatting bodyweight for 51 reps. I'm not sure any of these were a good idea, but I can tell you things I learned doing them.

I've spent a lot of time with people who got (earned) good grades in school, but never learned a thing. They "aced" the test, won the award, and got the certificate for attendance, but never discovered that learning to learn was the real prize.

When it comes to building muscle, or any other physical challenge, make some mistakes. This journey, not the short cut or the hack, will take some time and there will be ups and downs. Like everything good and wonderful in life, the little set backs are the steps up the ladder of success.

The Barbell Program for the Armor Bodybuilding Formula

Programs One and Two

I've been sharing this simple hypertrophy/bodybuilding program with some friends both online and "in real life." The results have been excellent. The feedback I receive over and over again convinces me that I am on the right track for many people interested in improving their body composition goals. I have several emails that tell me that "people are noticing that I (my experimenter) look a lot better." The beginning program can be added to practically any other sport or game or simply stand alone.

Now, a warning: the first program is ONLY two exercises. We will add to them but it is clear that there needs to be a break-in period on this program. Honestly, every program needs a bit of break-in with light weights and technical practice for a bit of time, but rarely do people actually do this protocol.

I'm telling you this: do the two exercise program for just a few weeks. Spend your free time figuring out ways to get MORE:

More sleep
More water
More protein

Let's go.

Program One: The Break-In Program

Exercise One: Continuous Clean and Press

Five total sets of eight reps.

To do these, I think you MUST clean and press every repetition. So, whether you clean from the floor or the knees (called the “hang clean”), after you press the load overhead, bring the weight back down to the floor or hang, clean it again and press. So, this is one set:

Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press

Put the weight down and rest.

That loud noise in your chest? That’s your heart beating...I hope!

For most, the empty barbell is enough for the first set. For the second set, add a little load after that first empty barbell set. Add load for one last time, again not much and do sets three, four, and five.

Here are the two options I most commonly recommend for lifters with some seasoning:

Set One: 45 pounds (20 kilos, the empty barbell)

Set Two: 55 pounds

Sets Three, Four, and Five: 65 pounds

Or

Set One: 45 pounds

Set Two: 65 pounds

Sets Three, Four, and Five: 85 pounds

As best you can, keep the rest period between sets under three minutes for sure,

but I would rather see you between 90 seconds and two minutes. If you are chasing conditioning, you can shift to one minute but, having done this, it makes it hard to see this option as repeatable, doable, and reasonable. I want you to get at least six workouts with this first break-in program, so ease in with the rest periods between sets.

Some have asked about the rest period between the clean and press repetitions. The correct answer would be “none,” but if you need to catch your breath, I like to do it with the load over head in the press lockout. If you must, for safety reasons, put the load down, I suggest you cut back on load on the next set. If you just do the empty bar, or even something lighter for the first few sessions, that is fine. Keep coming back.

Exercise Two: The Barbell Curl

Three to Five Sets of Eight Reps

Deadlift the barbell with a curl grip. Stand tall and curl the barbell to the shoulders eight times. Return the bell to the ground.

Depending on your previous training history, some will find that three sets of eight is plenty of curling. Others like the balance of the full five sets with the five sets of continuous clean and press. I prefer five sets of curls because I never did much curling, so I really enjoy doing them.

I would suggest a load that causes few issues with the first and second set and makes one struggle a bit on three. Rest periods can be as short as a true minute, just sixty seconds of rest. I notice the accumulation of fatigue when I keep the rest periods of curls strict.

So, Program One:

Three Days a Week (Monday-Wednesday-Saturday, for example)

Five sets of eight in the continuous clean and press

Three to Five sets of eight in the curl.

Six workouts (Two weeks)

I strongly suggest finishing the first exercise, all five sets, before moving on to the second movement (the curls). The entire workout, including whatever warm up you decide to do, shouldn't take more than thirty minutes. It probably should be less.

Repeat this same program for a total of six workouts. If you train three days a week, you will finish in two weeks.

Program Two: One Short Week of Supersets

Most people find that they can curl the same load as what they continuous clean and press. The clean and press is a long movement and this family of movements, essentially the classic Olympic lifts, and the distance the bar moves is a factor in why the intensity of the movement is so high, even with a lower load.

Program Two is just three workouts. It is a transition program and it has only one change: we are going to do the classic superset approach. So, instead of doing all the clean and presses followed by all the curls, we will go back and forth.

Clean and press

Curl

Clean and press

Curl

Clean and press

Curl (if only doing three sets of curls, stop the curls here)

Clean and press

Curl

Clean and press

Curl

I feel marvelous after this little workout. Rest periods will be a bit individual, but

many find that the curl is very easy to recover from in view of the clean and press. One might still be huffing and puffing a bit after the rest period finishes from the clean and press, but the curls don't take nearly as much out of many people. So, just saying: "Take two minutes after each set to rest" might be good for the clean and press aspect but maybe a waste of time for the curls (too much rest).

The decision on load (how much weight on the bar) might help with figuring out rest periods. Basically, for me and many others, the barbell will be same for the continuous clean and press and the curl. When I first experimented with this, I did the eight clean and presses, put the weight down, curled it eight times and then walked away and rested.

Don't race through this workout. In contrast, don't take too long. We want the feeling of some pump in the shoulders and arms and a general glow of heat and sweat.

Do this workout three times in one week. Ideally, have a day of rest in-between each workout (Monday-Wednesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday or the classic Monday-Wednesday-Saturday).

So, Programs One and Two finish after nine workouts (three weeks). There is a great value in simply repeating this pattern, two weeks with Program One and one week with Program Two, until you are bored. Each time I do just one of these workouts, not even the full three weeks, I mutter to myself: "Why don't you JUST do this?" Well, I have some other needs, as does every reader and lifter, and we will address them in the next program.

The continuous clean and press and curl combination sets the stage for massive changes in body composition without a lot of brain power, physical damage, and overuse issues. I hate how hard I breathe after I finish Program Two's workouts with such a light load.

Here is what you might miss with the brevity of these first two programs: you can spend the rest of your week dealing with the other issues in your health, fitness, longevity, performance, and body composition goals. If you need to lean

out, drop some body fat, finish these workouts like we do with Easy Strength for Fat Loss and head out, while still panting, for a half-hour plus walk. This adds up to three hours a week of training which leaves you with plenty of time for focusing on quality meals and quality sleep, the twin towers of true body composition changes.

A quick note on warm ups and cool down for most people. For warm ups, it doesn't have to be much. For me, I like two big full body stretches and a bit of simply moving around to get warm. Playing catch with a ball or frisbee is basically the standard for what we do here at my gym when the weather is nice. There are days that we play for quite a while and that "play" is probably better than most of the nonsense people do.

Each and every day, I hang for thirty seconds from my chinning bar and then sit in the bottom of a goblet squat for an additional thirty seconds. If you don't have a chinning bar, the Child's Pose from the yoga tradition is pretty good. (Just look it up) We also use Tim Anderson's Original Strength a lot in our system, so his rocking combined with some gentle arm pandiculations (repeated pumping in the extended positions) works well, too.

Anything you do for warm up is pretty good. Don't overthink it. As for cool downs, I always walk. Prepping for an Olympic lifting meet, the walking seems to calm my whole system down (O lifting is tough on the nervous system) and my whole body gets a lovely movement massage.

So: three weeks invested. Now, let's get to the workout that really changes lives: Program Three.

Program Three

For most people, Programs One and Two can be the catalyst to body composition changes. If you know my Easy Strength for Fat Loss system, combining two rounds of ES4FL followed by a few rounds of these first two programs will change the way you look...and feel and move...as well as any kind of crazy thing you see on TV or on social media.

Let me restate this: for a LOT of people Programs One and Two are going to be all you need. Combining ES4FL is going to cover the other gaps in your lifting life. Programs Three and Four are deeper paths into “easy muscle building.”

Frankly, the nonsense you see on these killer DVD or on-demand workouts with paid actors giving testimonials is, at best, merely dangerous, if not outright sinful. I’ve met a few people who finished these soul-crushing programs and, yes, they look better than when they started, but the gains disappear as quickly as the body fat reappears.

Our third program adds one exercise to the mix, the front squat. Now, if you don’t want to front squat, you can’t front squat, or you won’t front squat, just move on to the next programs. Like Murtaugh in the Lethal Weapon movies, I can’t spend any more time convincing people of the value of front squats. Basically, I’m too old for that stuff. (This is how the show, *How I Met Your Mother*, cleaned up the original.)

The upside of Program Three is that I’m only asking for the continuous clean and press work (and the curls) to be done twice a week. You will be adding the front squat to these days.

The middle workout of the week is a “practice session.” Long-term, I will be asking you to use this middle session as a lower body focus day, but, for now, I want you to experiment with the movements that you might like to do on this day. Keep the reps relatively high, around the twenty rep number, and just get a sense of how things feel. For clarity, if you train Monday-Wednesday-Saturday,

this would be the Wednesday workout. If you can only access other equipment on only one day a week, certainly flip the schedule to work with your needs.

Examples of what to do on that second workout of three:

Any machine work you like

Hip thrusts and the whole family of glute work (We call this day “Buns and Guns.” Lots of glutes and arm work. I do goblet squats, hip thrusts, deficit deadlifts, clam shell, and far too many curls and triceps extensions.)

- Lunges
- Deadlifts
- Shrugs
- Other squat variations
- Rows
- Pull ups and the whole family of vertical pulls
- Ab work at your pleasure, including side bends

Any and all pushes, pulls, hinges, squats, or loaded carries you fancy. If you only want to do one exercise, have at it! For me, I generally recommend the lifts that first, you like, and second, enjoy doing. Both liking a lift and doing the lift are oddly important here.

Keep the reps high. Basically, consider 16-20 reps with the exercises. I enjoy the weird accumulation of first the fatigue and then the “burn.” If you can pump up the muscles, pump away. Pick things that you want to do and don’t worry about making a perfect training program.

The Program Three week will look like this:

Day One

Continuous clean and press...finishing with front squats
Curls

Day Two

High rep work with your choice of exercises (Usually, I do “Buns and Guns”)

Day Three

Continuous clean and press...finishing with front squats
Curls

The addition of the front squat leads us to the whole family of complexes. Complexes are doing a series of exercises with one tool (barbell, kettlebell, or dumbbell) back to back to back for a set number of reps. The load is ONLY put down after every lift is finished.

It is similar to circuit training, but generally in circuit training, one moves on after each exercise to another piece of equipment. So, complexes are one tool; circuit training can be many tools.

In Program One, we did the continuous clean and press like this:

Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press

Put the weight down and rest.

With Program Three, we add the front squat:

Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press

Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Clean and press
Front squats (up to eight reps)

Put the weight down and rest.

Certainly, one could go from zero to hero here; one can choose to do eight front squats on day one. I prefer you to build up to it, but if you wish to jump right in, jump!

After the eighth clean and press, bring the barbell to the chest, raise those elbows to make a shelf, then squat. I suggest building up the reps slowly.

Week One

Workout One: Do just ONE front squat
Workout Three: Do two front squats

Week Three

Workout One: Do two front squats
Workout Three: Do three front squats

Week Four

Workout One: Do three front squats
Workout Three: Do four front squats

Week Five

Workout One: Do four front squats
Workout Three: Do five front squats

Week Six

Workout One: Do five front squats

Workout Three: Do six front squats

Week Seven

Workout One: Do FIVE front squats

Workout Three: Do seven front squats

Week Eight

Workout One: Do FIVE front squats

Workout Three: Do eight front squats

After you finish the continuous clean and press plus front squats, do your curls. By now, you probably should be doing five sets of eight.

Note well: These clean and press with front squats should be done for FIVE ROUNDS! So on Week Eight, that's five ROUNDS of clean and press with front squats (for eight front squats) plus FIVE rounds of curls.

Again, the week looks like this:

Day One

Continuous clean and press...finishing with front squats
Curls

Day Two

High rep work with your choice of exercises

Day Three

Continuous clean and press...finishing with front squats

Curls

After finishing the eight weeks here, I strongly suggest a week off of training. Certainly, keep walking and eating appropriately. With your spare time, think about where you want to go from here. You can certainly repeat the programs and try to go up in load.

Or, you can focus on building more strength.

Program Four

I've always been a fan of Reg Park. He was also Arnold's hero, and it was Reg's advice for Arnold to stop focusing on building more size in his arms and upper body and learn to become a more complete bodybuilder. Reg told Arnold to work his lower body especially his calves much more seriously. His advice for the rest of us was simple: Reg recommended a program for building bulk based on what some now call "The Reg Park Golden Six." I read an article many years ago written by bodybuilder Bill Grant that called these same moves "The Arnold Six." Like so many things, success leaves tracks and sometimes the tracks lead you back to the truth. Here you go.

- Barbell squat.
- Barbell bench press (wide grip).
- Chin-ups.
- Neck press behind the neck.
- Barbell curl.
- Bent knee sit up.

Honestly, I still recommend this to many people. True, I must then come up with variations because some people feel that at least half these exercises are somehow "bad for you" and others see the other three as "bad for you." This pretty much sums up why so many people are confused about health and fitness.

Reg also sold a series of programs and his recommendation for the beginner interested in mass building was this template.

| | | |
|------------------------------|--------|---------|
| 1) Back hyperextension raise | 3 sets | 10 reps |
| 2) Back squat | 5 sets | 5 reps |
| 3) Bench press | 5 sets | 5 reps |
| 4) Deadlift | 5 sets | 5 reps |

Practically every serious lifter I know has done something like this in training for a while. It still stands the test of time. Moreover, this is very close to what Harry

Paschall gave us in his Program Two:

- Continuous clean and press
- Curl
- Row
- Bench press
- Squat
- Chest lift (a rib cage stretch)

For our audience, these programs and suggestions are absolutely appropriate, if you have the equipment and interest in doing these big exercises with the big loads on the bar. For the home gym trainee or the lifter who worries about ongoing aches and pains, I offer you Program Four.

I suggest about six to eight solid weeks of doing Program Four. You can certainly extend the time, but most of the benefits sneak in around week six. These are the lifts:

Warm up

Continuous clean and press

One to two sets of eight

AB press up (See "Here is your Ab workout")

One to two sets of eight

Goblet squats (One to two sets of eight)

Any general movement that gets you ready to go (Play catch, walk, clean up the gym)

The workout exercises:

Curls

Press variation (if you have spotters, bench press, otherwise, pick military or incline presses)

Row (always (!!!) pause when the barbell touches the chest)

Deadlift variation (usually I recommend rack deadlifts, but other variations you like are fine)

Cooldown (Go for a walk, play a sport, or do anything light and refreshing.)

The workout is a simple variation off Reg's "5 x 5" system. I did a deep dive into lifting history a few years ago and I began to cobble together what "5 x 5" means for different coaches. When I tried the following variation, things worked out "best." Now, certainly for some, they can handle more load and variations in intensity, but this worked well.

The first two sets of five are warmups. This is one of the few times percentages actually work well for most audiences.

Warmup set one: 5 reps with 50% of today's load.

Warmup set two: 5 reps with 75% of today's load.

Don't try to be perfect here. Generally, just think of the first warmup as really light and the second warmup as just enough to get you ready for the work sets. The work sets are three sets of five with the same load each set.

For many people, the curls, the presses, and the rows will be with about the same loads. This saves a bit of thinking. For the deadlifts, take your time building up the loads.

The three sets of five are not max attempts. Rest as you need between sets. Few need much rest between the curls and presses. I want you to stay fresh between the sets of rows and if you don't have the ability to pause the load at the chest, (I tell people a "two count" pause. The key is to be able to completely control the weight and squeeze the bar to the chest) do two things: first, stop the set and put the weight down and, two, lighten up for the next set.

I like longer rests on back exercises, so both the row and the deadlift can be given a bit more time between sets.

Reminder: the load is expected to go up over the weeks, so the warmups should also progressively get heavier. I would suggest that the first week, and perhaps the second week, one would use oddly light weights. Like Easy Strength, don't

miss and don't even get close to missing a lift. It's better to go too light the first two weeks and progress slowly upwards than it is to get an injury or other setback by chasing too much load.

I recommend doing this three days a week. Most people get what they want out of fives after about six to eight weeks of training, so pencil in the next two months for some heavier lifting. After the two months, take a week off of training, a vacation sounds nice, and come back to one of the previous programs.

If you went straight through the Programs, you did this:

Program One: Two weeks

Program Two: One week

Program Three: Eight weeks

Rest week

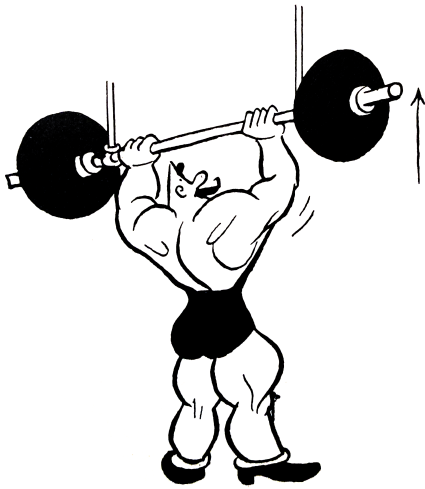
Program Four: Eight weeks

Rest week

That's twenty weeks of effort with a week off to rethink things. If you added any ES4FL workouts before this program, you are basically invested for half a year. I'm reaching my sixtieth year in the weight room and I did the math: that's 120 "half-years." You can do a lot in half a year. Imagine what you can do in a year. So, what's next?

Obviously, I would love to see you start at Program One again and march through each successive training program. This time around, most lifters find they have the loads dialed in well. And, generally speaking, more load equals more muscle.

Adding Easy Strength to Programs One and Two



(Harry Paschall's Bosco showing us how to press. With permission from Bill Hinbern.)
Well, I'm the Easy Strength Guy, so it is natural that a lot of people want an ES option with this program. Here you go.

Don't overthink it. Programs One and Two are excellent programs with the basics of ES. I would argue that you choose wisely on the ES lifts here. I think you have two options:

Horizontal Press
Deadlift variation

Personally, I would prefer you incline bench press unless you have a good spotter that you can trust every session for regular bench press. If your shoulders can handle it, dips are a good suggestion, too. So, there you go: inclines, bench press or dip. For deadlifts, I would suggest rack deadlifts (bar set at either just above or just below the knee) or a deadlift variation that you can do a lot of volume with each week.

As always, keep the Easy Strength reps at ten or less total reps. So:

Five sets of two
Two sets of five
Three sets of three

Read my other works for every variation, but I suggest you do what I originally did when I used ES to prep my best years as a discus thrower and Highland Games athlete: stick with two sets of five. Start lighter than you think, never fail, and add load when you perceive that the current load is too easy. Every few weeks, maybe months, try a heavy double to see if you have improved.

For simplicity's sake, let's give you the basics:

Warm up

Hang for thirty seconds
Sit at the bottom of the goblet squat for thirty seconds
Move around until you feel warm enough to get going

Easy Strength

Two sets of five in the incline bench press
Two sets of five in the rack deadlift
If the loads feel light, go heavier next time.

Program Two

(All for eights)
Clean and press
Curl
Clean and press
Curl
Clean and press
Curl
Clean and press
Curl

Clean and press
Curl

One loop of suitcase carries.

Generally, I like to do Easy Strength five days a week. But, with this program just do three days a week following the Program Two recommendations. If you like to train on weekends, the Monday-Wednesday-Saturday option seems “best.” As always, your mileage may vary so adapt as you need to adapt.

If you have more time on one day, perhaps Saturday, use Program One for the continuous clean and press and curls. Progression in both the Easy Strength protocol and Programs One and Two is slow and steady. I explained the Tortoise and the Hare in Easy Strength, but in all areas of lifting (and life) “slow and steady gets the job done.”

A Bonus Program

I've threatened people with my Mass Made Simple program for years. It's lots of work and it is exhausting. Very quickly after people began using the program, some gym trainees asked about where to go next. As much as I love MMS, I know that, at most, it can only be done twice a year and most people are finished with it after the first time through.

So, I came up with this little addition. The downside of this program is that there are larger equipment issues that the home trainee might not have nor be interested in. Even if you don't want to do this, the ideas are sound and worth a quick visit.

The Program is based on an older successful concept of training that repeats the same exercises daily, but with focus on certain body parts each workout. For example, as you will be focusing on squats on Workout C (lucky you!), you still will be repeating the movements from Workouts A and B. There are several excellent reasons for this:

First, mastery of the movements is a key to mass building. You will not be making great gains if you have to tell yourself to "bend elbows" when you Bench Press, in fact, you may kill yourself.

Second, the best movements for mass building are a very short list and you need to do them. A lot. I wish it was more complex than that.

Finally, the best tonic for soreness is to do the movement that got you sore in the first place. Enjoy!

The Exercises:

Double Clean and Press:

Two dumbbells, one in each hand. Stand tall. With a bit of a hinge clean the bells

to the shoulder. From the shoulders, press both to lockout overhead. Return to the bells to the shoulders and reclean the weight. Press and continue. Each “Clean and Press” is one repetition, so a set of ten is ten cleans and presses total. Do NOT do ten cleans THEN ten presses, you will gas out trying to do this.

Back Squat: we will be doing the Back Squat, “the King of Exercises,” each and every workout. There is no more important movement to master than this whole body movement in your search for mass.

Straight leg deadlift: this is a “tonic” throughout the program. With soft knees and a light weight, lower the weight down about “sock” height and stand back up. Try to feel it in the hamstrings, not the lower back. If you have any issues, don’t do this movement. It is a post squat tonic, not a training movement.

Pull Up: The Pull Up serves double duty as a great lat builder and perhaps the best ab machine I know. I have yet to find someone who can do 20 plus Pull Ups, but can’t dominate any test of abdominal strength.

Machine Back Row: in the past few years, I have changed my tune on my machines. The standard Barbell Bent Over Row is marvelous, done correctly. It’s that whole issue with “done correctly” that I find issues with in the gym. If your facility has a good machine that doesn’t stress your lower back, please use it.

Bench Press: with the dumbbell Clean and Press in the first part of the workout, the Bench will take care of all your other needs for upper body mass and pressing.

Barbell Curls: I hate how the barbell curl is maligned. I have always thought that the strict curl is a window into the general strength levels of an athlete. I once saw a guy strict curl...strict, no back bend or elbows sliding behind the lats... with 225 pounds. It remains burnt in to my vision. Funny thing, he also had really, really big arms. Go figure.

Farmer Walks: my answer to the world’s worst strength question: “if all you could do is one movement, what would it be?” If you have the courage to push the weights up to half bodyweight in each hand and trudge bravely “out there,”

you will discover that there is not an inch of your body that won't have an opinion about what you just did!!!

First Week Break In workout (Three workouts to familiarize you with the movements and get a sense of the poundages for the future)

General warm up. Keep it around five minutes and do what you need to do to get a little warmer, every joint a bit looser and have the general feeling that you are ready to go.

Dumbbell Clean and Press.

This is the lift that is going to sneak more results into this program than practically anything, save the Back Squats.

Go to the row of dumbbells and pick two very light bells. Do an easy set of five Clean and Press. With a short rest, slowly progress up the rack, grabbing heavier and heavier bells. Do not struggle with any of the presses as that would indicate we have gone too heavy. For most people, around 35-50 pounds is going to be the target weight for this movement in the beginning. Remember this top weight.

Back Squat: If you have no experience with this movement, find someone who can help and practice the movement. If all you do is master the Back Squat, you will magically find the mass you are looking for in your physique. If you do have some experience, I want you to do three sets of five with the weights going up each set, but well within your capabilities.

Straight leg deadlift: for most people, grab the empty 45 pound bar and perform one set of twenty reps after the squats. It should feel invigorating.

Machine Back Rows: again, we are practicing here. In three or four sets of five, find a weight you can do five solid reps without a bunch of hitching or tugging.

Pull Ups. Real pull ups are a great ab exercise and lat exercise. I would suggest jumping up on the bar and seeing how many sets it takes to get to ten. If it takes one, you are doing fine. It takes me two: a set of eight and then a double.

Bench Press: most people have an idea what a set of easy five reps should feel like in the Bench Press. Find a comfortable weight that you can do a set of probably eight reps without too much struggle.

Curls. Get a sense of what five strict reps are going to feel like with a barbell. Don't do them in the squat rack, by the way. Add weight until you realize that curls with a barbell are much harder than you thought.

Farmer Walks. Grab two serious dumbbells. I have high school sophomores start with 85 pounders, but your mileage may vary. Simple stand tall, eyes neutral and go for a walk. Keep an eye on your surroundings. Be sure to put the dumbbells back into place at the end (this is the hard part!). I suggest learning to walk up to 100-200 yards.

After the initial break in week, strive for five weeks of the following.

Workout A, usually Monday, Back Focus.

Warm Up

Dumbbell Clean and Press

Strive for 3 x 5 with your manageable dumbbell. Keep the rest periods short.

Back Squat:

3 X 10, add weight to each set. Over the weeks, strive for bodyweight on the last set here.

Straight Leg Deadlifts:

1 x 20 with the empty barbell

Machine Back Rows:

5 x 5 really trying to hold the squeeze in the finished position. Go as heavy as you can get five reps in.

Pull Ups:

How many sets does it take you to get to 25 reps?

Bench Press:

3 x 5. The last set should still keep a couple of reps in the tank.

Curls:

3 x 5. Keep your eye on slowly increasing the weight on the bar here. Although adding reps is tempting ("I feel the pump!"), mass gaining is all about load.

Farmer Walks:

One set with heavy dumbbells. Try to make your walk end in front of the racks. You will thank me later.

Workout B, usually Wednesday, Press focus

Warm Up

Dumbbell Clean and Press:

Strive for 5 x 5 with your manageable dumbbell. Keep the rest periods short.

Back Squat:

2 X 10, add weight to the second set. This is a set up workout for Workout C.

Straight Leg Deadlifts:

1 x 20 with the empty barbell

Machine Back Rows:

3 x 5 really trying to hold the squeeze in the finished position. Go just a little lighter than in Workout A.

Pull Ups:

How many sets does it take you to get to 15 reps?

Bench Press:

5 x 5. Warm up with a few easy reps before you start counting the sets. All five sets should be relatively heavy.

Curls:

3 x 10. It's okay to feel the burn and pump today.

Farmer Walks:

Two sets today. Walk out as far as you can from the rack and put the weights down. Then, simply return them!

Workout C, usually Friday

Warm Up

Dumbbell Clean and Press:

Strive for 3 x 5 with your manageable dumbbell. Keep the rest periods short.

Back Squat:

5 X 10, add weight to each set. Plan the workout so that set four is bodyweight and set five is just a bit more. This last set is the one that makes or breaks your training.

Straight Leg Deadlifts:

1 x 20 with the empty barbell

Machine Back Rows:

2 x 5 really trying to hold the squeeze in the finished position. Go as heavy as you can get five reps in.

Pull Ups:

How many sets does it take you to get to 12 reps? The goal would be one set.

Bench Press:

3 x 5. The last set should still keep a couple of reps in the tank. Rein it in a little today.

Curls:

2 x 5 plus one set of ten. The best of both worlds in the curl today: a little strength

and then finish off with getting some blood in the biceps.

Farmer Walks:

Strive for a heavier bell each week here. Make yourself push this movements to the limits here. Walk a long ways, stop, refresh and try to go a little farther. I always had a target or goal to get to. Now, of course, coming back...

After six weeks, one week of break in and five weeks of A/B/C workouts and lots of food, assess your progress. I strongly suggest you begin the program with a before picture and it is well advised to finish with an after. Bodyweight gains of up to twenty pounds have been recorded on this program, but it is more common to see ten to fifteen pounds of new bodyweight. And...that is success!

Section Three: The Objections to Everything I Said So Far

The “Push Back:” Not Part of the Program

At the start of this project, I read a lot of forum posts on the Armor Building Complex. I often then simply ask a lot of people questions about something that might be obvious:

“What do you want?”

The KB and barbell programs I offer here in the Armor Bodybuilding Formula are fairly close to the parameters that I heard and read in these conversations. As always, many people in the general population still stumble over any and all things related to fitness, health, longevity, performance, and body composition. I began listing the “push backs” from people and I thought it would be fun to share this with you.

The Five Stumbling Blocks for Adults Seeking Human Perfection in All Things

Okay, that was an exaggeration but sometimes when I am answering questions or helping clients, I get the sense that only perfection is the goal. The cliché list is fairly long, but I usually settle on “Perfection is the minefield to pretty good,” as I think “pretty good” is about the highest praise I can give. It’s also stated as “perfection is the enemy of good,” and even William Shakespeare found himself at a loss for words sometimes and ended up just writing something brilliant instead (see Sonnet 103).

If you want to improve your body composition, more muscle and less fat, the route is fairly simple:

Eat protein and veggies.

Drink water.

Sleep soundly.

Lift some weights.

Do more walking.

I keep trying to sell this but people push back really hard on the simplicity of this list. Now, Gentle Reader, of course...not you.

The stumbling blocks, by the way, can seem like an economics class. That’s probably because some of the best coaching, training, and life decisions are usually covered in Econ.

And...at some level, none of this is going to be new to you.

Stumbling Block One: Shoulda / Coulda / Woulda

Jeff Foxworthy, the great American comic, and the HBO series, back when it was good, *Sex and the City*, discussed this concept far better than I possibly can. Basically, this simple concept, let's call it SCW (Shoulda / Coulda / woulda) to save me time, is regret about what one SCW done in their past.

Art Devany, and I think I quote this in everything I write, was once asked about what to do about losing body fat. His answer, not exactly a popular thing to say, was simple:

"Don't get fat in the first place."

It's rough, but it's true. It would have been far better for you to have read every book you were assigned, learned every skill possible, mastered every sport, and ate nothing but a perfect, clean diet your entire life up until this very moment.

You may not have done that.

You may have done something else.

You can't change the past. You can't change your previous diet and exercise (or lack of) decisions. It's behind you. Let's bring out the biggest cliché from my youth: "Today is the first day of the rest of your life."

Yes. Cliché. But...it's true.

You can spend hours on SCW. If you fast while you do this, you might move nudge a few fat molecules to provide some energy.

Other than that: STOP. The past is past. Final cliché: "Stop *shoulding* on yourself."

Act. Get going. Get moving forward.

Stumbling Block Number Two: Sunk Costs

"Past mistakes are irrelevant."

Richard B. Lipsey

First Principles of Economics. Oxford University Press

This is a tough thing to discuss: a lot of us have exercise equipment, supplement bottles, and various diet foods tucked away, tucked under, and carefully hidden throughout our homes. To let you know that I suffer from this, I popped up the top shelves of my kitchen and pulled out, and threw out, a host of magic potions that would be the envy of any student from Hogwarts.

Maybe you have a plastic device that allows you to squeeze your thighs together while watching television. Or there is a cheap device that makes you run like a gazelle or row like an Olympian. I spent \$1300 on a top of the line aerobic device and used it, faithfully I might add, for a few weeks. It then became a fun chair in the gym where people slid forwards and backwards.

So, yes, this is like SCW, the "shoulda/coulda/woulda." But instead of lamenting like a character from Homer that you coulda been the Olympic sprint champ save for the fact that your coach hated you, the evidence of Sunk Cost stares at you as you pass the exercise device in the laundry room. The potions and powders crowd out your cinnamon and cumin. For others, it was (usually "is") that gym membership that keeps pulling ten to twenty bucks out of your checking account monthly and you simply don't have enough lawyers to get out of the contract.

Throw it out...whatever "it" is. Yes, it was expensive. Your cousin's multi-level marketing diet plan left you exhausted, hungry, and angry so toss out the other thirteen days of crap for that two-week program.

Put the costs behind you.

Stumbling Block Number Three: We Don't Notice When Things Go Well

Nic Peterson's book, *Bumpers*, changed my vision on a lot of things. The wonderful idea that if I simply stay happily between my bumpers in life, like keeping my bodyweight from going too high or striving to drop it too low, keeps me sane and sound.

He makes a point that is so obvious that it pains me to think I have been part of this problem...this obesity epidemic. Edna loses thirty pounds. She shows up at a party and we all admire her for her discipline. Next year, Edna loses thirty pounds. Again, we applaud her for her ability to change her life. Next year...you see where this is going.

Sadly, it's always the same thirty pounds. And, underneath the hood, you might discover that she put on forty pounds, took off thirty, added another forty, lost thirty and on and on the merry go round.

Maurice went to all three parties, too. His weight went unchanged all these years. No one noticed; it seems no one cares.

Maurice is doing it right.

This is such an important insight, so don't miss it: few people notice when the lights come on when you come home from work, the car starts in the morning, or the roof remains where it belongs. It's when they don't that suddenly we notice things.

Long before I read Peterson's book, I used to tell my students a funny thing. Each year, just before flu, cold, and allergy season, I would have them all breathe deeply into their noses.

Ahhhh.

I would follow up with this: “Just remember this feeling when you are all stuffed up.” I had figured out, like many grass allergy sufferers (a horrid issue for a football and track coach), that being able to fill up the lungs without effort is a marvel and joy.

I haven’t had the allergy issue in a few years. I almost didn’t notice it until I started thinking about it.

We don’t seem to notice things when things go well.

So, how does this help with body composition? When people I work with go on a short term dietary challenge, I like Rusty Moore’s Fat Loss Boost or Phil Maffetone’s Two Week Test, I will often follow up on them. Usually, the first response I get is the mistakes, the failures.

“I ate a piece of bread, I’m a failure.”

Wait. Two weeks of chicken and veggies, yet you find fault in a single piece of bread? Obviously, this brings us back to the idea that perfection is the enemy of pretty good.

Here is an odd thing that keeps reoccurring with people I know: a couple goes on an all-inclusive resort. After a week of sunning, eating, drinking, sleeping, and relaxation they worry mightily at the bathroom scale. Wonder of wonder, miracle of miracles, very often, more than one would think, they lose weight on these vacations!

Relaxing, strolling, and smiling are secret tools in the war against fat? Well, the research is pretty clear and I have shared this before in Easy Strength for Fat Loss:

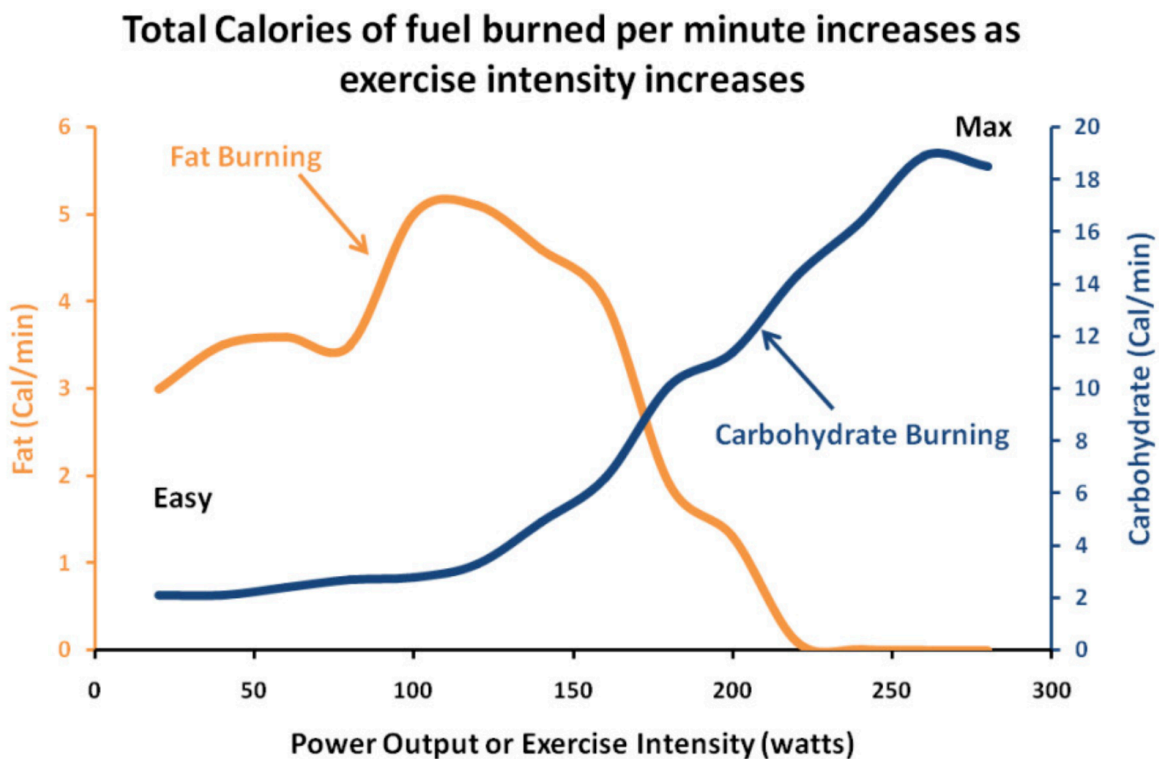
Another selling point is that it suggests exercises that target fat. This is, at best, a lie.

Here’s why: as exercise intensity increases, the body relies more and more on carbs for energy, which is biologically non-negotiable.

Therefore, here's a comprehensive list of the most fat-burning exercises possible, in ascending order of percentage of calories burned from fat:

1. Walking
2. Sitting
3. Sleeping

That's about it, as anything even remotely intense begins metabolizing carbs. Standing outside your office and smoking a cigarette burns a higher percentage of fat-calories than doing a back-flip or a burpee.



Jupiter Health

https://www.cracked.com/article_34268_cracked-s-eatin-weird-4-ways-food-and-fitness-culture-overcomplicate-things.html

The article included this chart. Going easy burns more fat than dialing up the exercise bike. It's not a popular point for people who think we should sweat ourselves to salvation.

Start noticing when things are going. Enjoy stability. Enjoy a vacation. If you find yourself overeating, get more sleep. Walk more. It doesn't make a good video on social media but the truth doesn't do well on social media either.

If you lose fat walking. Notice it. If you look better training easier, make a note of that, too!

Stumbling Block Number Four: Your Brother's Friend's Aunt Disagrees

I have this theory. Basically, since every human person has a body, we are therefore all experts on the human body. Thankfully, much of the processes that keep us alive are fairly automatic, so that alone keeps most of us alive.

If we could control our pancreas or liver like we can control our basic movements, I'm sure there would be a lot less of us. So, my theory holds up.

Sadly, in view of this life-changing theory, most people are also experts in all areas of fitness, nutrition, longevity, and performance. Watch literally any sporting event and some bucket of goo eating expert will have sage advice for the players, coaches, and teams. I can raise my hand and honestly say: "Yup, I do that exact same thing, too. That's me, too: the armchair expert."

After five minutes of viewing the Winter Olympics, I am an expert on luge, half-pipe, downhill, and biathlon. Come back five minutes later and I will have organized a national program for excellence. My mother used to say that people like me were "full of it." With her accent, I may have been missing two letters from that last word.

I'm going to tell muscle building clients to eat more protein and lift weights. I can see myself not long from now at a gathering where someone asks me about the materials in this book. I will sum it up with "eat more protein and lift weights."

"Well, I don't know about that. My cousin, Freddie, has big arms and he..."

Fill in any relative, neighbor, friend, or brother's friend's aunt here. Fill in anything with dirt that doesn't align with "eat more protein and lift weights."

I realized years ago that few people want sound advice. Mark Twain taught us to buy real estate to make a fortune, Bob Hope bought real estate to make a fortune,

but your brother's friend's aunt recommended that you invest deeply in beanie babies.

Good plan.

When I get investment advice, I tend to ask either wealthy people or a financial advisor who makes money only if I make money. When I want information about water issues in a home, I hire a good plumber.

I'm odd this way. I tend to trust experts. Sadly, I don't trust your relatives... unless they are experts!

Stumbling Block Number Five: This Isn't What (Celebrity's Name) Did

I watch these documentaries about famous people on television. One is a female actress who pushes claims about products that literally border on farce. When I hear her recommendations, I actually think this is comedy. Another is a superhero actor who travels with a full-time posse of people who make his meals, train him, and keep him from putting stuff in his mouth.

Years ago, a former assistant to a comedian noted that her former boss, who had lost a lot of size for a movie role, probably had to hire two people to swat the woman's hands from stuffing crap in her face. I remember thinking: "Wow, order of milk for Table One."

If you missed my joke: that's a catty comment.

Before you read that article in that magazine about some celebrity's discipline and training program, take a moment to look at the resources behind this body transformation. For a few seconds on the screen popping those abs, this person might train a year with MASSIVE resources supporting the diet, exercise, dance, speech, and acting training.

If you have a full-time job, kids, spouse, and busy weekends, get back to me when you have the full-time chef, trainer, and support staff.

Yes, lunges and squats and more veggies made this Hollywood star look good for this film. So did DNA. And don't forget resources. Lots and lots and lots of resources.

I don't have access to this kind of help. If you do, you probably stopped reading a while ago.

Summary of the Stumbling Blocks

I would say ONE thing summarizes the five stumbling blocks:

Now.

It's a simple point but for changes in body composition, we have to deal with the now. In some of my other works, I discuss the worst personal training clients and almost universally the worst ones don't live "here." They talk about their past Herculean efforts, their svelte bikini body from a generation ago, and lament over the things they did right or wrong. They listen to every breeze in the wind and, here comes another cliché, take three steps back for every two steps forward.

Now. Think about now. Right now.

The body you currently inhabit is the body that your brain and body agreed to have considering the nutritional, physical, and life choices you have made since you first took those baby steps. When you decided that you hated this or that (and it can be anything), your body took notice. When you figured out the joy of this or that (again...anything), your body listened.

If you fell in love with veggies, protein, and water every meal and daily exercise, you might feel pretty good about how things are going.

Let me add one more thing...

I know I am a grumpy old man but I do struggle with this modern age of free information available at the touch of a button (or whatever the device has for you). Many of my readers simply want me to do something that is often referred to as “closing the loop.”

It’s not fancy at all. You wonder who won the first Oscar of Best Picture? Type or speak to your device and BAM you have the answer. (It was Wings and it is a great movie. Seriously.) So, you have your answer. Maybe you brush your hands off like a 1950s actor after a scuffle, a brouhaha, or a donnybrook and swiftly forget what you just discovered.

In fact, my biggest issue with modern American education is teaching to the test. For a few decades, we have decided that passing a test is the sign that the students learned. Learning is much more than getting a True-False question right. Learning is a lifelong task and proper learning shapes one’s decisions that, hopefully, shapes one’s outcomes. Standardized tests can be wonderful for showing gaps as well as strengths and weaknesses.

Clicking “True” answers the question but where was the learning?

The BEST coaching of my career has been when I faced dilemmas. I coached a national champion and multiple state champions at a school that had no field and no facilities for the throwing events of track and field. At first, I shuttled all of the students up to another location but it was a lot of time and energy. I was trying to mimic what I had at other places.

I was hitting the wrong button on this test! When I decided to think differently, adapt to the situation, and make use of what I had not what I wished I had, coaches from around the country visited the school to see what I was doing.

There was no magic. I simply discovered that I couldn’t follow the recipe on the box. I had to, heavy cliché time, “think outside the box.”

In the terms of Nic Peterson, author of Bumpers, I had to keep the loop open. How does this apply to you?

Let me give an example I literally deal with every single day. If you buy a training program that ask for multiple kettlebell options and you only have one, sit back for a bit and figure out some ways around this before you start looking up the answer. I might have some ideas for you, yes, but you need to keep that loop open for a bit.

Oddly, some of the greatest insights I have ever had as a coach and athlete is misunderstanding something, working on what I think “they” were talking about, and later discovering I was wrong. But...I was right. With the rocky road of error, I found that not only is the correct way better, but I also filled my little coaching and training quiver with a lot of new arrows.

Many of us who learned the Olympic lifts from pictures back in the day were gifted with some amazing skills and strengths. Later, when someone, in my case Dick Notmeyer, said, “Well, try it like this,” I instantly improved but I still stood on the foundation of all the insights of my poor techniques or training ideas.

So.

So, if you don’t understand something in my work, or anybody’s work, but you put the work and will power to overcome it, I think you might learn things that perfection in the beginning can’t do. If you don’t have a piece of equipment, figure out something else.

Learning is often that simple: you figure out something else.

Section Four: Long-Term Planning

Let's Talk About Long-Term Progress

I love the ABC and all of its variations. I love the press, the clean, and the squat and the whole family of what I do in my weight room and facilities around the world. But, there is some ideas about keeping going in training, in my case six decades, and I think the following concepts are crucial to understand.

Some of the materials on volume, intensity, and density may be review materials for many readers, but it's sound reasoning to review the basics...all the time.

Volume, Intensity, and Density: The Three Phases of Body Composition Work

Training, of all kinds, for the human is about adaption. Dolphins don't go to swimming classes and many mammals sprint within minutes of birth. We are wired differently. Of course, the human advantage is the ability to use tools. Yes, our brothers and sisters in the ape family use wet sticks to gather ants and our friends the crows can figure out how to get water out of a cup. An octopus is going to figure out how to escape and my dog uses cuteness to get a treat.

Humans, of course, adapt marvelously. Human beings seem to go through several stages and I tend to focus on just two. First, there are those changes in the nervous system. Tim Anderson, the founder of Original Strength, teaches us that we are wired from birth for our gait pattern and observing babies gives us the tool kit to rediscover movement.

As Tim always reminds me: "It feels good to feel good."

When people ask me how to get strong(er), I always take them back to my typing class. We didn't do forced reps or high intensity typing. We practiced. We came back every day and did some more. When I became an administrator, I spent hours every day organizing databases, written materials, and volunteer records. I wrote countless letters and slowly turned the office from a room full of typewriters into a group of people using computers.

To get there, I had to type FAST. I got fast by typing. To riff off of Tim Anderson:

"I type fast because I typed a lot."

That's how you learn to throw the discus far, swim faster than the competition,

and hoist more weight. The nervous system figures it out and, almost universally, we get better.

With enough reps and enough progressive load, the next change happens. I have always loved Robb Wolf's phrase, "the hormonal cascade." After the nervous system adapts and begins to strain the existing system, the hormonal system steps up to build a bigger engine.

And...that's bodybuilding. That's performance. I spend my whole life helping people with their body composition goals and improving their marks in competition but behind the scenes it's simply:

1. Let the nervous system figure out the quickest and best way to do "this."
2. Provide enough stress in the forms of repetition, load, and time to encourage the hormonal cascade.

And that's basically what I do. It's my job to stand back and let the magic happen. When it comes to body composition, certainly diet and recovery (just call it "sleep") are often far more important to success than the actual training, but the role of training can not be overlooked.

Again, the formula is going to be simple:

1. Get those repetitions in and slowly increase the total number of reps. We can call this "volume."
2. We can only go so far with volume. Soon we have to increase the resistance, the load. We can call this "intensity," but most of us simply call it "lift weights."
3. The third stage is attempting to keep the volume and load at a higher level, but do the training in less time. This is called "density."

It's hard for me to read all of this because I make my living selling to people this obviously extremely simple concept. I'm only saved by the phrase that keeps me centered in coaching: "I said it was simple, not easy."

Asking someone to spend weeks, months, or years to achieve a goal is basically

the antithesis of everything you see and read on social media. I often note on podcasts that “the short cut is the long route.”

“Eight years” was what my coach told me that it would take for excellence

I’m not sure how to rush eight years. I’m not sure I want to.

For most people, focusing on volume is going to solve the riddle of so much of body composition. Obviously, over time, we need to progressively add load and, sometimes, variations to continue to grow and adapt. Although a wonderful tool, density is often brought in too early or trained with too much intensity... although “too much violence” might be a better term.

Let’s spend a little time looking at these concepts: volume, intensity (load), and density.

Volume Training

It would be a rare person who doesn't understand the basics of body-building and volume. Anyone who has survived high school physical education classes knows that first we do a few, then some, then more.

More what? Well, that is the key question to attaining lean body mass, but generally we know that certain exercises like bodyweight work, the whole family of calisthenics, the basics of gymnastics, and any introduction into resistance training leads us to the conversation of volume.

In my experience, we were expected to do at least one pull-up as freshman, then more as sophomores, and then maybe a dozen before graduation.

Volume can be thought of simply as more.

If you begin with one set of ten in a workout, that's ten total reps. When you build up to ten sets of ten in a workout, that's a hundred. Let me stop here and tell you one of my favorite coaching points.

At the store, they are selling ten pounds for ten dollars. Is it a good deal? Well, ten pounds of what??? Ten pounds of steak for ten dollars might get you wondering about the quality of meat here.

When it comes to volume and increasing volume, the quality comes first.

Hundreds of reps with fork won't impact your biceps but, if you have food on the end of the fork, it will impact your belly! "Of what" is the key to working with volume.

Before we go on, let me quote from my favorite explanation of reps and sets. It's from The Tea Council of the U.S.A. It's a pamphlet entitled "Your Guide to Physical Fitness." On page 17, it did a great job, quickly, explaining the concepts of training:

Anyone starting a weight training program should know what's meant by terms repetitions and sets. A repetition is a complete exercise from start to finish. The common term, 10 reps, simply means repeating the exercise 10 times without a stop. A set consists of a group of repetitions.

Hence, when you read about doing 3 sets of 10 reps, it means to perform the exercise, 10 times, rest for 3 or 4 minutes, do another 10 exercises (sic), rest for 3 or 4 minutes, then do a third set of 10 exercises(sic). Note that short rest period between sets. This is very important to avoid over-exertion and over-fatigue.

(Note well the following.)

The beginner should start with only 1 set of 10 to 15 reps for each exercise. Don't become over ambitious by using heavy weights or trying to do 3 sets. Nature must be pushed slowly, or you'll find yourself stiff as a board the next day.

By the way, you read that right: The Tea Council. I adore this little booklet. The training program recommends that you start with perhaps 30 pounds, lighter if you must, and build up to three sets of ten with the following exercises (I've updated the names of the lifts).

- Deadlift
- Squat
- Toe Raises (Calf Raises)
- Clean and Press (Continuous clean and press)
- Upright Rows (Called "pull-ups" in the booklet)
- Curls
- Reverse Curls (Called "forearm curls" in the booklet)
- Bent-over Rows

I've been coaching a while and this would probably better than most of the nonsense I typically see in my inbox. And, on the last page of this booklet, we are reminded by three noted figures from the Ohio State University, Louisiana State University, and Columbia University about the importance of tea in your training table meals because of the ease of digestion. It's a wonderful booklet.

Many readers may have experience with bodyweight exercises. As a teen, we used to do push-up contests. Tony Martin and I played this game with a deck of cards and push-ups. You had to do the number of push-ups corresponding to the flipped card. Face cards were an even ten push-ups. Tony would flip a card, do the push-ups indicated, the three of spades was three push-ups, then I would flip a card. Sometimes the face cards seemed to come up one after another.

We got very good at push-ups. We were already lean, “ripped” as we would say today, being active youths before the age of all the sugar-laden performance drinks and snacks. Recently, one of my throwers asked how I was so lean in high school. Well, I played sports every single day AFTER P.E. Class and survived on:

A bowl of cereal and a piece of toast for breakfast.

A sandwich, a piece of fruit, and two cookies for lunch.

Meat, potatoes, and a canned veggie for dinner.

And as much milk and other stuff I could cram in as I could.

This was my training table and I thrived. Save for the basic lack of veggies, at least had a low calorie diet for almost all my youth. This is not a “woe is me” point, it’s how most people lived until the advent of Big Food in America. When I see the calorie loads on fast foods, I am often staggered. A local Mexican food place has an inexpensive (99 cent) burrito with 490 calories!

Basically, you can eat SEVEN eggs (with about fifty grams of protein) for this one burrito. One of these burritos, and I have done the experiment, doesn’t fill me up, so I can easily eat three.

Those three burritos sneak up on 1500 calories and you might be hungry in few hours. Let me know how you feel after eating those same calories with eggs (that’s a lot of eggs).

Getting back to my point, most of us tried to change our body composition

through volume. With a limited diet, lots of push-ups, games, sports, physical education classes, and the need to walk to everything kept us all “ripped.”

So, there you go: Play all day and do push-ups with your friends. And, this is good life advice but some of you might have an issue with your boss or family about doing this full-time.

Volume works...obviously. It simply does. Then, it doesn't. There are many trainers, usually online in some magical place far from reality, that will tell you that more is always the answer. I bought workouts with just variations of push-ups and squats and one is expected to sneak up to 500-1000 repetitions a day. Certainly, if you can do that, good for you.

Few can. Few do. Fewer get any benefit from this approach.

Most people benefit from volume training. It is the best approach, by far, for beginners. Now, remember: ANYTHING works for the first six weeks, so be careful following some program that promises success and mentions the first six weeks...and nothing beyond that time. So, who are beginners?

If you have never trained, you are a beginner.

If you haven't trained in a while, and that is a personal assessment, consider yourself a beginner.

If you are coming back from an illness or injury, let's get back to the beginner mode for just a bit.

If you have a lot more yesterdays than tomorrows, and this takes a moment of self-reflection, go with the flow and enjoy training like a beginner again every so often.

And, you are interested in long term success, embrace the beginner's approach every so often.

Load and Strength Standards

No matter what I do or say on my podcasts, there always tends to be one question in the response forum like this:

“Can I do this with just bodyweight?”

Recently, I had someone ask about doing Mass Made Simple, my book and program about using complexes and high-rep heavy squats to achieve increased body mass. The question was simple:

“Can I do this with just bodyweight?”

No.

That might be the toughest word to understand in the modern age of social media and easily accessed information. No. No, you can't. “But...but.” No. No, you can't.

Certainly, you can look good on bodyweight only programs and the world is filled with fine examples of looking good on bodyweight programs. I don't disagree. The formula for continuing to build muscle mass is not shocking:

Lift weights.

Eat Protein

Maybe I need to update this with: Lift MORE weights. There is a beautiful symmetry of the original four words (“Lift weights. Eat protein.”). Maybe I shouldn't mess with symmetry and maybe people should stop asking about not lifting MORE weights. There: solved!

I find that having standards help people with understanding the need to add more load. Years ago, Paul Lyngso, a good friend and coach, shared with me these standards in the weight room.

Men's Standards

Squat Movement

1. Proper Form in the Goblet Squat
2. Goblet Squat: 24K x 10
3. Double KB Front Squat: 32K x 10
4. Bodyweight Back Squat
5. Bodyweight Front Squat
6. Bodyweight Back Squat x 15
7. Bodyweight Overhead Squat x 15

Hip Hinge Movement

1. Hip Hinge with Proper Form (From stand, floor and loaded)
2. Kettlebell Swing: 24K x 20 (Proper Form)
3. Double KB Clean: 32K x 10
4. Barbell Clean: Bodyweight
5. Barbell Deadlift: Double Bodyweight
6. Barbell Snatch: Bodyweight
7. Barbell Deadlift 2.5 x Bodyweight

Press Movement

1. Push Ups x 10
2. One Arm KB Press: 24K x 5 per Side
3. Double Press: 32K x 5
4. Bench Press: Bodyweight
5. One Arm Overhead Press: ½ Bodyweight
6. Bench Press: Bodyweight x 15
7. Two Arm KB Press: Bodyweight

Pull Movement

1. Batwings, thumbs in armpits, 16K x 10

seconds

2. Bodyweight Row on Rings/TRX x 20
3. Bodyweight Row, feet elevated, x 10
4. Chin Ups x 5
5. Pull Ups x 8-10
6. Pull Ups x 15
7. Weighted Pull Up with 48K

Women's Standards

Squat Movement

1. Proper Form in the Goblet Squat
2. Goblet Squat: 12K x 10
3. Double KB Front Squat: 16K x 5
4. Back Squat: 135 x 5
5. Bodyweight Back Squat
6. Bodyweight Front Squat
7. Bodyweight Overhead Squat

Hip Hinge Movement

1. Hip Hinge with Proper Form (From stand, floor and loaded)
2. Kettlebell Swing: 16K x 20 (Proper Form)
3. Double KB Clean: 16K x 10
4. Barbell Deadlift: 1.5 x Bodyweight (or 135 x 5)
5. Double KB Swings: 24K x 10
6. Bodyweight Clean
7. Barbell Deadlift 2 x Bodyweight (or, simply, 275lbs.)

Press Movement

1. Push Ups x 1 (Excellent Pushup)
2. One Arm KB Press: 10K x 5 per Side
3. Double KB Press: 12K x 5
4. Double KB Press: 16K x 5
5. One Arm Overhead Press: $\frac{1}{3}$ Bodyweight

6. Bench Press: Bodyweight
7. Two Arm KB Press: 2/3 Bodyweight

Pull Movement

1. Batwings, thumbs in armpits, 8K x 10 seconds
2. Bodyweight Row on Rings/TRX x 20
3. Bodyweight Row, feet elevated, x 10
4. Chin Ups x 1
5. Chin Ups x 3
6. Pull Ups x 3
7. Weighted Pull Up with 24K

There is a “secret” to these standards. Through my experience, I discovered that it was better to be at all one number, or close to it, than being a “one” here and a “seven” there. With many of my athletes, they can crush the press numbers but fail (flail!) on the pulls. Use these standards as a guide, but keep an eye on the balance of the four.

For my American high school athletes, I used these numbers. There was an additional rule: one had to do ALL the lifts in one session.

Big Blue Club (Boys)

Power Clean 205
Deadlift 315
Back Squat 255
Front Squat 205
Standing Press 115
One Arm Bench 32kg5 Right/5 left
Power Clean & Jerk 165

Big Silver Club (Girls)

Power Clean 95
Deadlift 205

Back Squat 135
Front Squat 95
Standing Press 70
One Arm Bench 12kg10 Right/ 10 left
Power Clean & Jerk 75

Around the turn of the millennia, Ethan Reeves shared his collegiate football standards with me. You can see that this was the template for my standards and I can't thank him enough. And, as I have told countless parents and athletes, the difference between a collegiate athletes and high school athletes is the attention to detail. And...really getting stronger.

Wake Forest "Gold Standards"

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Power Clean | 300 |
| Deadlift | 400 |
| Back Squat | 352 |
| Front Squat | 300 |
| Hang Clean (with Straps) | 308 |
| Standing Press | 198 |
| One Arm Bench | 125 5 Right / 5 Left |
| Power Clean and Jerk | 264 |

I spent a looooooong time putting together these numbers and I had 1000s of athletes and dozens of phone calls to help me set these standards. They might seem high or low to many, but they are real.

Finally, I offer you one of my favorite lists from the early 1950s. I still think these stand the test of time. If you are a male athlete, this is practically a blueprint for success.

Harry Paschall's Numbers from *Development of Strength*

Moderately Strong Numbers (for men)

Snatch 165 pounds

Clean and Press 165
Squat 200
Deadlift 350
Two Hand Dumbbell Press 60

Strong Numbers

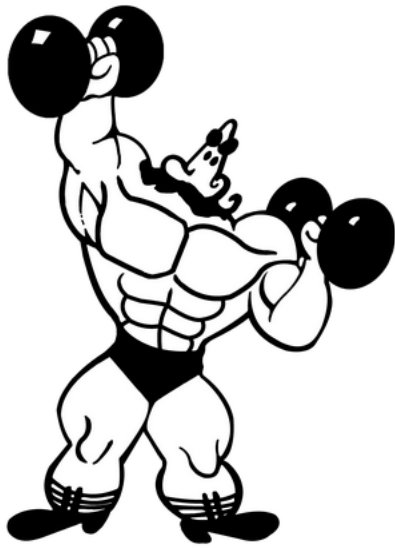
Snatch 200 pounds
Clean and Press 200
Squat 300
Deadlift 400
Two Hand Dumbbell Press 80

Super Strong Numbers

Snatch 225 pounds
Clean and Press 225
Squat 400
Deadlift 500
Two Hand Dumbbell Press 100

Super Dreadnought Numbers

Snatch 275 pounds
Clean and Press 275
Squat 450
Deadlift 600
Two Hand Dumbbell Press 120



(Printed with permission from Bill Hinbern of <https://superstrengthtraining.com/>)

It's fun to look at Paschall's numbers. These numbers come from the pre-drug lifting world and still impress. A few things stand out: first, the squat numbers might seem low to lifters/fans from the post-Powerlifting universe. Squats, even when I first started lifting, were much deeper than one sees today (this new phrase "ass to grass" was called "squatting" when I was young). Also, when there were squat racks available, they were two small tubes with extremely small weight holders.

You would take your life in your hands replacing a squat bar back into the racks. Every time.

We always erred on not only making the lift but surviving the squat rack at the end of the set. I have noticed in my almost sixty years in the weight room that squat and bench press numbers have really improved at every level. Racks and equipment improvements are a big part of this change. And...overhead press lift numbers, of all kinds, have gone down and I would argue that it is the popularity of the bench press now.

So, yes: increase load. BUT...keep an eye on keeping balanced through all your lifts.

Density

Let's make this as simple as possible:

Same amount of work in less time.

I think the kettlebell is the master density tool as so many complexes and circuits can be done with one bell. Do the sequence once, make a note of the time needed to finish, and then strive to beat that time. The runners in track and field and swimmers understand this perfectly: the 400 meters is always 400 meters and dropping time is the goal.

For muscle composition changes, density works well with supersets when the body is properly prepared. Going back and forth from continuous clean and press to curls is a master study in density. Like both volume and load, it can certainly be overdone, but use density wisely to really encourage that wonderful term Robb Wolf uses: the hormonal cascade.

My athletes often feel nauseous when we begin to play with density. Some argue that this is indicating that growth hormones are being released and I am happy to tell my athletes this...whether or not it is true.

Density training can often be overdone as there seems to be a belief that this will torch body fat, incinerate adipose tissue, and leave you ripped, sliced, and diced. Well, caloric restriction does a far better job of eliminating body fat (along with some targeted lifting and walking; see Easy Strength For Fat Loss) and overdoing density can often lead to a frazzled, haggard feeling that overtakes the rest of your life. So, use it appropriately.

Single Progression

With volume training, one improves by adding reps. With intensity, broadly, one improves by adding load, and with density training, one improves by doing that same work with less time.

Generally, most of us make progress with choosing one of these factors (volume, intensity, or density) and focus on it for a bit. Even with a light load, one can get the repetitions up to a level that will challenge the best of us. The 16 kilo kettlebell is light for many at the certs, but doing ten minutes of snatches or clean and presses would scare most of us.

Single progression (pick one of these and progress: intensity, intensity, or density) remains the least appreciated method of improving body composition and athletic performance. For volume, adding repetitions each and every workout is going to make the body order up some adaptations. Obviously, there comes a time where adding more reps isn't enough and we need to move along.

Clearly, adding load is the “secret” of weight training. When you ordered that barbell set, all those plates are designed to go on the barbell and make it heavier!

After this statement, I might need to pause a moment and let the thunderous applause ease up and quiet down a bit.

Adding load, like adding repetition, certainly has a ceiling. I'm not sure this is true everywhere, but I have had to sit many a father down and explain that little Bobby's improvements are not going to continue on the linear path.

“So, Bobby lifted 100 pounds last year and 200 pounds this year, then he should lift 400 pounds next year?”

Maybe not. Certainly, we improve. But increasing load does flatten out. The magic of changing exercises is partially that we can explore new limits with some mild variations. Also, and the research has been around since before I was born,

when we return to a lift we haven't done in a while (or even if we stopped training completely), we quickly return to our former levels of load.

Once you choose to get strong, the strength seems to stay.

With density, most Americans would probably get the television network's idea of a personal trainer: "Faster, faster." I have a great love for appropriate density training and some of my workouts, like the Humane Burpee and the use of complexes, are density training in their purest form. Complexes are when you pick a flow of three to six exercises to perform without stopping or putting down the load. Here is an example I use with my women collegiate athletes:

Snatch Grip Romanian Deadlift x 8 reps (without putting the bar down, continue)

Hang Snatch x 8 reps (again, continue)

Overhead Squat x 8 reps (again...)

Back Squats x 8 reps. (Put the bar down and rest)

One might say that this is easy on paper. 'Tis. It's really hard in real life. This example is only 32 total reps per set but it takes a lot longer than you think and it is far harder to do than just talking about it.

If I can start someone out with no experience in the weight room, I teach the lifts with volume at first and, if possible, hold back adding load unless it is just stupid easy. Then, we add load...over time. When we are comfortable that every rep will be lovely, some clients can use density training.

For the general population, we can probably stick with adding volume for a while, then add load.

You can see the issue almost immediately: even when we are just trying to progress in one area (volume, load, or density), we soon need to move to Double Progression.

Double and Triple Progression

Okay: for single progression, you increase one of three key elements of training.

For volume: do more total reps.

For intensity / load: add weight to the bar or bell.

For density: go through the work faster!

Personally, most of my programs, advice and current training involves chasing one of the three key elements. For me to add more load, like preparing for an Olympic lifting contest, I have to tease out extra weights on the bar by cutting down the volume. There's nothing new to this and everyone recognizes this with the concept of PEAKING for a contest.

Yet, at a contest, I have very strict time limits between lifts. In many competitions, I have to "follow myself," which means that I make my attempt (the name for a lift on the barbell platform), either miss or make it, and then I have a minute or two to step back up and either try the same lift again or attempt a heavier weight.

Contest training, as simple as it is, does involve sitting back and making these decisions about volume, density, and intensity. Whereas one might be in great shape with lots of volume and density, that training might not prepare to take you maximum lifts. Too much intensity often leads to injury and illness and being hurt and sick is not a great way to step on the platform for a personal best either.

I give workshops on The Art of Coaching and so much of what we need to do to prepare for high-level competition is balancing the three elements (volume, intensity, and density) but also preparing the athlete for "all of this."

At championship events, the pregame festivities often cause issues. Songs are sung, flags are unfurled, children dance, confetti blows up, fireworks explode, and, at least in America, we have commercial after commercial after commercial.

Note well how often the first few minutes of the “Big Game” (a term I hate) are not the shining examples of elite performance.

Why? Well, part of it is that the normal routine of game and meet preparation is shaken by all of the sideshows.

Why do I mention this with double and triple progression? Well, sometimes, even the best laid plans (“of mice and men” and thank you Robert Burns) get derailed by weather, life, and streakers (people who run nude across sporting event fields...I don’t know why they do it).

Single progression can be easy. With volume and intensity, one adds more. With density, we do it in less time. Combining these elements is tricky. That’s why I like programs like the original ABC. You do a few rounds and build up the rounds but strive to keep the load and rest periods fairly constant. If you can barely do five rounds on day one and breeze through thirty or more in a few weeks, we can be assured something is going right.

In my experience, few people can handle triple progression for very long. I have seen challenges and workouts that demand more and more and faster. Human joints seem to disagree with this approach after a bit.

Double progression is a nice thing to dose at times and one’s journal and diary are going to be one’s best friend in determining how you are doing. I’m a big fan of the phrase: “More work, less time,” but not everyone is wired to do this beyond a few weeks.

So, for MOST of your training career, chase one progression for a bit then move to another. Simply, get your volume up, then start adding more load. After a bit adding load, shift back to volume. If you wish, test yourself on cutting the time back on these workouts for a bit.

But don’t overdo it.

The Armor Bodybuilding Formula nudges (there’s that word again) you to expand your qualities in a reasonable manner over a generous amount of time.

Section Five: The Science of Muscle Building

(Or: Lift Weights and Eat Protein)

The Science of Muscle Building

Let me sum “The Science of Muscle Building” for you:

Lift weights.

Eat protein.

Now, the “truth,” the “why,” and the “how” is a challenge. For most of us who have trained for years, we may find that the shoulder shrugging “Yeah, whatever” when it comes to science isn’t necessarily rude or ignorant.

If I feel good and look good, the “why” might not be the most important question. The “what do I need to do to look better?” question is probably more important.

And...maybe, just maybe...the science might just change.

As a child, I learned some interesting things about dinosaurs. So, we were tested on this group of animals that every young child seems to love. My grandson, Leo, can discuss dinosaurs but doesn’t know his ABCs.

Yet.

I was taught, and tested, on these facts:

Dinosaurs were cold blooded and needed to live in swamps to hoist up their massive body sizes.

They grew slowly and didn’t seem to be good parents.

Some were so large that they needed a brain for their tail.

Of course, none of this is true. Well, I don’t really know much about dinosaurs, so I trust the experts. The books Jurassic Park and The Lost World explained it to me better than I can explain it to you. My point is simple here: Sixty years ago, this information was a best guess, and like most guesses, these guesses were

wrong.

Casinos do very well on your guesses. Just saying.

So, I'm going to talk about the science of muscle building. I feel strongly that years from now, maybe as soon as six years, not sixty, the information I share will be as moldy and oldly as the brontosaurus's second brain. In other words, I am cobbling together the available science and knowingly know that, at best, some of this is educated guesswork.

I will strive to emphasize the truths that we also learned from our experiences for the past few centuries that support the scientific insights. When in doubt in the weight room, I trust the experience.

This is important: when in doubt, I trust experience.

This is important: when in doubt, I trust experience

Basically, building muscle is an attempt to build the size of the muscle. I'm not sure that statement needed to be stated! Those endless sets of curls are attempting to increase the volume of the muscle cells. There seems to be a value to building muscle volume by both making the muscle generate force and, at the same time, fight against fatigue.

There are two ways the body increases muscle volume: sarcoplasmic hypertrophy and myofibrillar hypertrophy. Sarcoplasm, and I learned this in Mr. Jacob's biology class when Fonzie first started on Happy Days, is the cytoplasm of muscle cells. Unusually, this cytoplasm contains large amounts of glycogen. Most of us who read fitness articles would know that this glycogen is the engine for short bursts of effort. (The shortest bursts are fueled by creatine phosphate and the long efforts, ideally, are powered by body fat).

So, sarcoplasmic hypertrophy is the attempt to achieve greater muscle volume by increasing the glycogen in the muscle cells. More volume equals a bigger biceps peak.

Myofibrillar hypertrophy, and this is as simple as possible, reminds us that muscles are made up of muscle fibers which are made up of myofibril. The myofibrils contain actin, myosin, and titin (as well as other proteins) and are developed long before birth. Muscles merely contract and the beautiful wiring of the rest of the human structure allows those muscles to speed us through water or trees or savannah. If we apply force and fatigue, the body adapts.

One of these adaptations is the physique of your dreams.

Progressive Resistance Exercise, a term coined by Thomas DeLorme, has been the best way to build muscle volume, as well as strength and power (whatever that may mean), for a long, long time. After the initial learning period, the

nervous system needs to figure things out first, the strength trainer soon finds the myofibril's thickening and the volume of glycogen filling out the muscles.

In other words, lifting weights makes the muscles grow bigger.

I think you might have known this already. Some things naturally help us grow bigger. It seems to help to have supportive DNA, it seems to help to be a male lifter, and proper nutrition, especially protein intake, can make a huge difference. As an old coaching friend of mine used to say: "You can't make chicken salad out of chicken feathers;" there are people out there that have a lot of advantages when it comes to muscle building.

Dick Notmeyer was good friends with a famous bodybuilder who once simply told Dick that all this bodybuilder needed to do was some simple, basic training to look better than anybody else. He had the genetic makeup to do a little bit of work and look better than all the rest of us.

So. There. You. Go.

Just like there are naturals in basketball, we call them "extremely tall people," and naturals in sprinting, we call them "extremely fast people," there are naturals in body composition. If you ever meet a famous model, you will instantly "see" that DNA favors some of us. We are not all supermodels. Well, I'm not.

Clearly, increasing load in your lifts as well as applying variations in volume, intensity, and density will go far in reaching your potential. In terms of diet, we know that eating and properly digesting protein does seem to help with muscle building. There is still enough disagreement about how much protein to ingest daily (and how many times a day to eat this protein and how much protein should be consumed these eatings) that I always worry about giving specific directions.

So, let's review the groundbreaking science of muscle building: Lift weights. Eat protein.

Lift Weights

For muscle building, I am still a fan of simply lifting heavy weights with low reps. That's great.

As much as I like to believe that this is true, heavy weights for low reps is really the long and winding road to muscle building.

True, one can, with great grit and determinations, step up or step under the barbell and hoist massive loads for short reps and gain elite muscle mass. It's what I strive for with my athletes. Athletes are fighter jets: build a bigger engine and strip off the excess.

Over time, this leads to injuries, illness, and retirement. My advice for the general person interested in looking good, feeling good, and moving well is a bit different. There is no question that lifting weights is the BEST route to improving body composition (with a nice appropriate dosage of daily walking) is lifting weights.

For many people, training for muscle building will NOT be the same route as professional or Olympic athletes, even though many great athletes have used bodybuilding techniques for improvement. Trust me when I tell that great athletes are generally great athletes with just about ANY approach to elite fitness.

For the bulk of the population, we need to train with reps appropriate to muscle building. Fat loss we can take care with nutritional intervention (read that as "eat less crap") and some walking. The best summary I ever read about muscle building was Barry Ross's marvelous work, *Underground Secrets to Faster Running*.

At the turn of the millennia, weightlifting went through a massive reboot. Kettlebells showed up (again) on the scene and Pavel's book, *Power to the People*, became an instant classic for those interested in strength training. Barry Ross was working with elite sprinters and found that his experience tied in well

with the concepts of heavy training and low reps. In his book, he went on to show the problems of having elite sprinters (and basically all other athletes) training like they are prepping for a bodybuilding contest. His breakdown on fiber type training is still the best I have seen.

Ross notes that there are reps schemes to avoid as athletes. Those same reps schemes are the answer to most general population training.

Let's repeat that: most athletes should avoid certain rep schemes. Those same rep schemes are what most people **SHOULD** do.

Type IIA fibers develop sarcoplasmic hypertrophy in the 16-25 rep range. Type IIB fibers develop this quality in the 6-10 rep range. These are the rep ranges that we chase for the "burn," that fun little lactic acid bath. If you ever raced 400 meters, you know this burn. That fun near-death experience, also known as the "Bear," is your body swimming in lactic acid. It might not be ideal for strength and power but it does wonders for bulging biceps and door-wide deltoids.

This is nothing new. The great doctor, Thomas Delorme, developed these same basic numbers in his book, *Progressive Resistance Exercise*. Let's take a moment to review his great insights.

Thomas Delorme and the Basics of Muscle Building

(I have shared the basics of this chapter in many settings. My kettlebell cert instructors would know this well as I send this to them as part of their prep package. Enjoy.)

If you use the word “sets,” “reps, or even practice “Progressive Resistance,” you need to thank a brave WWII doctor name Thomas DeLorme. In 1979, I was told that no one has ever proved to find a better training protocol than DeLorme’s famous three sets of ten (or eight).

Terry and Jan Todd, along with Jason Shurley, have written extensively on DeLorme’s influence. They summed his work as:

*“In the latter years of the Second World War, the number of American servicemen who had sustained orthopedic injuries was overwhelming the nation’s military hospitals. The backlog of patients was partly because of the sheer number of soldiers involved in the war effort, but it was exacerbated by rehabilitation protocols that required lengthy recovery times. In 1945, an army physician, Dr. Thomas L. DeLorme experimented with a new rehabilitation technique. DeLorme had used strength training to recover from a childhood illness and reasoned that such heavy training would prove beneficial for the injured servicemen. DeLorme’s new protocol consisted of multiple sets of resistance exercises in which patients lifted their 10-repetition maximum. DeLorme refined the system by 1948 to include 3 progressively heavier sets of 10 repetitions, and he referred to the program as “Progressive Resistance Exercise.” The high-intensity program was markedly more successful than older protocols and was quickly adopted as the standard in both military and civilian physical therapy programs. In 1951, DeLorme published the text *Progressive Resistance Exercise: Technic and Medical Application*, which was widely read by other physicians and medical professionals. The book, and DeLorme’s academic publications on progressive resistance exercise, helped legitimize strength training and played a key role in laying the foundation for the science of resistance exercise.”*

Oddly, today, many of us forget DeLorme...or have never heard of him and his

pioneering work. Of course, most of us don't know a lot about the history of lifting.

Most of us know the story of Milo.

Milo was a wrestler and multi-time Olympic champion in the original Games. His father-in-law was Pythagoras, who made life easier with his idea that "The sum of the areas of the two squares on the legs (a and b) equals the area of the square on the hypotenuse (c)." Milo also consumed, we are told, a daily amount of twenty pounds of meat, twenty pounds of bread and eighteen pints of wine. But, that is not why we remember Milo. It was his idea to pick up a bull.

The story goes that each day he would walk out to the pasture and pick up a certain calf and then carry it around for a while. The next day, he would repeat this until the bull was full grown.

Oddly, when I tell people what they are missing in most training programs, Loaded Carries, I think I am trying to remind people that Milo CARRIED the bull.

At some level, we all know Milo was right. In 1945, DeLorme wrote a paper, "Restoration of muscle power by heavy-resistance exercises," published in the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery.

In 300 cases, he found "splendid response in muscle hypertrophy and power, together with symptomatic relief," by following this method of 7-10 sets of 10 reps per set for a total of 70-100 repetitions each workout. The weight would start off light for the first set and then get progressively heavier until a 10RM load was achieved. Over time, things changed in terms of volume. By 1948 and 1951, the authors noted:

"Further experience has shown this figure to be too high and that in most cases a total of 20 to 30 repetitions is far more satisfactory. Fewer repetitions permit exercise with heavier muscle loads, thereby yielding greater and more rapid muscle hypertrophy."

A series of articles and books followed where they recommend 3 sets of 10 reps

using a progressively heavier weight in the following manner:

Set #1 - 50% of 10 repetition maximum

Set #2 - 75% of 10 repetition maximum (Later, many started just doing 5 reps here)

Set #3 - 100% of 10 repetition maximum

In this scheme, only the last set is performed to the limit. The first two sets can be considered warm-ups. In their 1951 book, *Progressive Resistance Exercise*, DeLorme & Watkins state: "By advocating three sets of exercise of 10 repetitions per set, the likelihood that other combinations might be just as effective is not overlooked... Incredible as it may seem, many athletes have developed great power and yet have never employed more than five repetitions in a single exercise."

Today, there are still a few people who don't believe that we can build power (and bulk) through low reps (reps of 1,2,3,4, or 5), but simply viewing elite strongmen, powerlifters and Olympic lifters certainly should convince many of this fact.

I have come back to this method time and again with my personal and professional work. I convinced it will stand the test of time.

It usually takes a week or two to get the loads dialed in. I often recommend doing beginning sets two and three one minute after the preceding set. The accumulated fatigue of the light and medium set puts some restraints on the last set.

At some level, I have always thought there was value in this idea of pre-fatigue in hypertrophy work.

The last set, after a short build up period to dial in the reps, should be done for as many quality reps as possible. Those reps can give insights about the next workout.

Bryan Mann from the University of Missouri did an interesting study on using

the DeLorme and Watkins protocol. His insight on a standardized progression was very helpful, as well as was the fact that he proved that the old school methods still work. You can use the following general template to adjust the load for future training sessions.

Based on the number of reps completed for set number three, reduce, maintain or increase as follows—

4–5 reps: Reduce the weight by 5 to 10 pounds next time

6–8 reps: Maintain weight or reduce by 5 pounds next time

8–12 reps: Maintain weight next time

12–15 reps: Increase the weight by 5 to 10 pounds next time

15+ reps: Increase the weight by 10 to 15 pounds next time

If your client only gets to 0–3 reps on the heavy set, you either overshot the weight estimate, or there's something else going on. When the numbers for each of the third sets put the client in different categories (for example, 7, 9, 12, and 15), you may need to make an educated estimate for the next session.

If you decide to continue doing this for up to six weeks, you may discover that you cannot continue to progress with load. You might find the need for a light day (with loads you can easily finish), a medium day (with loads that feel good throughout and you get the ten reps comfortably, but with some focus) and the heavy day where you continue to strive for more load. In my experience, doing M-L-H, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (or whatever works out for you) seems the best plan.

To continue progressing, you would probably want to move to the Reg Park workouts of five sets of five, utilizing the M-L-H as you continue, but that is for another chapter.

Don't overlook the classic, Old School methods. They work.

Eat Protein

A few paragraphs back, I noted the secret to building muscle: Lift weights, eat protein. I am not an expert in nutrition and even the experts in nutrition seem to disagree about everything. In college, when the first discussions about milk and gluten issues first appeared, a few of my teammates were talking about cutting out wheat at a party for better performance.

One of our nutrition majors, a girlfriend of my friend (they didn't last...thank God), chimed in: "You can't eliminate wheat! Even (insert name of major hamburger chain) has wheat in their milkshakes." I wanted to correct her to tell her that they were called "shakes" not milkshakes because they had no milk, but I paused. I paused while all these elite athletes pondered why a nutritionist would recommend fast food for elite performance.

I still hire nutritionists for my own personal work and those of the people I train. I certainly wouldn't say it is cheap to do this, but I think by having some "skin in the game," I follow paid advice closer than advice I get for free online. The more I pay, it seems, the more I listen.

My last meeting with the nutritionist changed my views of how nutrition impacts my performance and body composition. For the record, I tell EVERYONE the following about diet:

"Eat more protein and vegetables. Drink more water."

Please make a note of it. Obviously, I did NOT. After looking over a lot of journals, food diaries, and pictures, the gavel thudded down and I was found guilty of...

Not enough protein. Not enough water.

The water thing was an easy fix. I'm either great about drinking water (I seem to do well with the standards of eight glasses of water a day) or I tend to just forget.

When I travel, I do drink less water because using the toilet on airplanes seems to be a bigger and bigger issue every year. Sadly, when I get home, it takes me a few days to get back to drinking a lot of water.

So, first: I need to drink more water every day. Even if I travel.

With protein, like most strength people, I thought I had enough each day. Well, I was told, nicely, to up my numbers up to 150 grams a day. It took about a week to dial into this number with the increased powders, bars, and eggs, but I got there.

I also dropped about five pounds that week. Extra water and protein works just like I said when I advised all those other people to do it! Now, I am doing it!

The nutritionist gave me a formula I will share with you, but don't take this as a law or rule or medical advice. It works for me, and as the cliché goes, Your Mileage May Vary. It's simple: take your weight in kilograms and multiply it by 1.5 for the number of grams to consume each day. Generally, after a 150 grams of protein a day, one probably is at an upper limit. This limit may not be for your ability to digest the protein but your ability to shovel it down. So:

60 kg bodyweight-90 grams of protein a day
70 kg bodyweight-105 grams of protein a day
80 kg bodyweight-120 grams of protein a day
90 kg bodyweight-135 grams of protein a day
100 kg bodyweight-150 grams of protein a day

For my American audience:

132 pounds bodyweight-90 grams of protein a day
154 pounds bodyweight-105 grams of protein a day
176 pounds bodyweight-120 grams of protein a day
198 pounds bodyweight-135 grams of protein a day
220 pounds bodyweight-150 grams of protein a day

If you are in the middle of a range here, maybe reach higher to the next level. I

have had to supplement with powders and bars to consistently get into my range. When I first started training, that would have been an issue because of the low quality of protein supplements when I was young, but now things seem so much better.

Let's say this once and for all: there was a major company that used soy, probably low end soy, and one took their life in their hands spotting someone in the squat who used these products. The gas was just foul. I'm sure there are still some lousy protein resources out there, but just use common sense.

So, for appropriate muscle gains: Eat protein (and veggies)and drink water.

Oh, and lift weights.

The Sandwich and Concentrated Calories

I love Barry Estabrook's book, *Just Eat*. It's his journalistic journey through all the diet and nutritional information available to Americans. In this candid book, he highlights the common issues about why so many Americans can't manage the basics of eating food. His humor as he gently pokes fun at so many fads and so much idiocy is a delight.

His insights in the last chapter are remarkable. He shares with us what works... for him. Personally, I think that most of us probably have a clue about what nutritional tweaks from shopping to serving a meal work for us and our families in the situations we are in.

I can eat fish for dinner three or four times a week. I'm sure some of our readers just had some bile kick up into their mouth from reading that. I eat veggies at every meal and rarely at home do I NOT have sauerkraut and kimchi on my plate.

You see: It WORKS for me!

Estabrook shares some wonderful insights about HIS dietary journey. More beans, exercise, veggies, and olive oil. He also found less meat and smaller plates, as well as no sugar, snacks, or booze nudged the needle on the bathroom scale.

One thing that leaped off the page to me was "No Sandwiches." His insights are spot on: the sandwich is an amazing device for transporting a LOT of extra calories with each bite.

Back in college, a bunch of us headed down to Pete's Spudnut Drive-In for their weekly special. I think it was five burgers for a dollar but my memory on the price seems to be fading. I remember the owner sitting down with us and asking which sports we played at Utah State. Like most people in the Cache Valley,

telling him I threw the discus (a great tradition at the school at the time) made him smile. He said:

“You finish those and the next five are on me.”

I ate ten burgers that sitting. That’s a LOT of food. That’s a lot of calories. As a college thrower, I struggled keeping my weight up with the hours of throwing, Olympic lifting, and hill sprints. A couple of extra thousand calories here or there simply kept me coming back to practice.

No, this fun little utopia didn’t last long...no.

If you take a good hamburger apart and set the burger here, the buns there, and eat the rest as a salad, it’s going to take longer than simply shoveling the food down the pie hole.

So, concentrated calorie foods are going to be helpful on your mass building voyage. For body composition, especially fat loss, keeping those foods apart and perhaps eating in courses is going to help your body hold back those raging stallions of hunger and thirst.

For bulking, sandwiches are a great idea. For leaning out, avoid those calorie bombs. Now, the follow up point is important, too:

If you want to increase your veggies, soups and stews are an excellent way to cut back on some things (my chicken noodle soup doesn’t have noodles) and increase all the wonders of our plant friends. I find veggie omelettes far more palatable than some eggs “here” and some veggies “there.”

So, to repeat what I learned in 1984 from a famous nutritionist hired by a famous organization for elite performance, to do this:

“Eat protein and vegetables. Drink water.”

She followed this up with: “I don’t see why people make this so complicated.”

Conclusion

Three words dominate my thinking when it comes to training, and everything else in life:

- Repeatable
- Doable
- Reasonable

In my gym, we talk a lot about the “perfect program” being “5 x 52.” That’s five days a week, fifty-two weeks a year (not five sets of 52, but go ahead and do that, if you wish). Many readers might fall in love with the intense videos we see online or on television of people training to a sweaty mess each and every day.

Did you know many of these companies hire models to give testimonials? I think it is something you should know. For a person making a living from how their body looks, they may need to do whatever it takes to look good for the camera.

For the rest of us, we need to move often and move well. I need to carry these 75 pound dog food bags from my car, up the stairs, and into the dog’s food bin. And, the whole time I am doing it, I am scrambling around two very excited dogs who want to help by cutting me off the whole process.

I call this “life.” Throughout this work, I have tried to emphasize a reasonable (and repeatable and doable) training concept that will absolutely make you look better, but also give you enough time to enjoy the fruits of your training. The Armor Bodybuilding Formula is more than just the cleans, presses, and squats: it’s a chance for you to get your training in and enjoy your walks and live life each and every day.

Let me know how things are going. Over at danjohnuniversity.com, we have people who were the testers of this program and we would love to hear and discuss your feedback. I’ve enjoyed not only the process of writing this for you but I have enjoyed the workouts...if “enjoy” is a word I can use after 90 squats in

the 30 minute ABC challenge.

Remember: it's the doing of the program that brings results. Give the Armor Building Formula (and variations) a bit of time, a few months, and enjoy the impact it will make on your life.

Thank you for reading.

Who Is Dan John?

Dan has been lifting weights since 1965 when his brothers brought home a Sears Barbell. He fell in love with the concept of progressive resistance exercise immediately. He played both American and soccer football, wrestled, and hurdled throughout his scholastic years. He began throwing the discus in his freshman year in high school and competed at the national level for 41 years. He has won numerous state and national championships as a discus thrower, Olympic lifter, Highland Gamer, and Weight Pentathlete. He has attained All-American status multiple times as a thrower and lifter.

Moreover, he has advanced degrees in history and religious education and traveled the Middle East as a Fulbright scholar. He has written extensively on weight training but also medieval texts and religious studies.

He continues to compete as an Olympic lifter striving to keep breaking masters records. His greatest joy are his daughters, Kelly and Lindsay, and his three grandchildren, Danny, Josephine, and Leo.