

WORLD POWERS

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In this article the training methods of the most successful countries in weight lifting will be examined. In Bulgaria, where many of the greatest lifters come from, the system is straightforward. Anyone who wants to reach the top (juniors and seniors) must go through the main training facility. They do few exercises. This requires that one is ideally built to succeed, with a particular body structure and muscle type. One must also possess a high work capacity with near-limit weights. As many as six training sessions per day are used. This was a proven system and was used for more than 20 years. Only the strongest survived. This system produced high results, as well as a high burn-out ratio.

Bulgaria is a small country and is economically depressed. Sport was a way out of poverty. This meant that everyone tries his best, for himself and his country. For every lifter that makes it, many go back home denied entrance. The Bulgarian training system was designed to produce one goal: one Olympic medal run. They succeeded through the process of selection of body structure to progress with a small number of exercises: snatch, clean and jerk, power snatch, power clean and jerk, and front and back squats. The athletes had to have the ability to lift maximum weight in more than one workout a day with a 30 minute break between workouts. They had to be able to do the second workout with less time on warm ups. The junior and senior teams trained together. There had to be top coaches. Normally there were three involved with the top 20 lifters. Their national coach was Ivan Abadjiev. Because he was the top coach, little variation in the system occurred.

Another super-power was the former Soviet Union. Their system was very thought out. They sought to develop top lifters with an assortment of means. The former Soviet system was vast, consisting of many thousands of lifters and a large number of coaches, many former highly ranked lifters. With so many coaches, many combinations of training evolved, consisting of different loading schemes, exercises, tapering methods, and restoration. Because of the many types of body structures, it became clear that the same exercises would not work for everyone.

In 1972, the Dynamo Club experimented with a system of exercises that were constantly revolved. A group of 72 lifters, all masters or international masters of sport, used 20-45 different exercises. At the end of the experiment, only one lifter was satisfied with the number of exercises; the rest wanted more. This was the conjugate method.

Much research was brought to the United States after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Do you know who were the first Soviets to participate in the Olympics? They

were not sportsmen, but camera men and biomechanics experts and coaches. They studied the best athletes from all over the world and at first copied them. Later, however, they introduced new innovations in training. (This is exactly what Westside has done.) They had so much training data that many of their own coaches could not access it all. Nevertheless, they had hard proof of what works and what doesn't. Many of their coaches were top lifters, training along with other lifters. The very best were on the national of military teams. They were proud of their heritage and defended it fiercely. Their training methods spread to other communist countries. They had templates to examine the strength and weaknesses of all athletes.

Here is an example for a 110 kg lifter (from "Weight Lifting Fitness for All Sports"). To be superior, a 110 kg (242) had to be capable of the following:

power snatch 396 pounds

power clean 484 pounds

front squat 573 pounds

back squat 639 pounds

close-grip bench 418 pounds

Does the U.S. weightlifting team do this? Hell no. This can be the difference between progression and regression. I have used the methods of many Russians. I have thanked some of them before, but can't possibly thank all of them or mention all their names. But here are some of them. V. Zatsiorsky's book, "Science and Practice of Strength Training", confirms that Westside is on the right track. Y. V. Verkhoshansky was the father of the shock system of training. A. S. Medvedyev, with his insight into training and restoration, brought my attention to the importance of changing volume and intensity during different phases of training.

A. S. Prilepin's research in determining the optimal training loads by intensity zone and number of lifts per workout is the foundation of training at Westside. Another super-power is the Chinese. They have made great strides in all sports, but weight lifting is in the forefront. The Chinese have always been proficient in weight lifting. They have thousands of candidates to choose from. They have always lead the way in acupuncture, acupressure, Tai Chi, and meditative methods. Their system was strengthened by adding former Soviet coaches. They have raised high-volume training to new heights. In a video filmed in a world championship training hall, I saw a 14-year-old boy squat 370, snatch grip deadlift 330, and clean/jerk 242. This was at a body weight of 110 pounds!

The Chinese select a group of lifters whose body can withstand the maximum loads required to reach the Olympics. They have barracks after barracks of lifters to choose from. It's a way out of poverty. They pick the best coaches, then assemble the best lifters. They already had perhaps the best psychological and physiological methods. Add all this up and you have a juggernaut. It's quite simple really. They break training down into separate units to make a whole. This is an example of the conjugate method.

In addition to the Russian method, now we have the Chinese method to learn from. But will we? With similar methods taught by the Russian coaches but with a higher work capacity, there seems to be no limit.

I have talked about three powerhouse countries. What about the fourth-- Westside Barbell? Many people compare the world's best lifters to ours. Some say, "Hey Louie, those Russian lifters are some of the greatest and they don't follow your methods." They also bring up names such as Ed Coan, Steve Goggins, Beca Swanson, and Gary Frank, who is the strongest man I've ever seen. They say, "Why don't your guys squat as much as Brent Mikesell or bench like Gene Rychlak, and what about Andy Bolton's deadlift?" Well, these lifters are spectacular to say the least, and they have my admiration and respect. They make a lift that seems unbreakable but then manage to break it.

But nowhere else is there a stronger collection of lifters than at Westside. In international competitions, they score the top six lifters. Our top six guys rival those of any other nation. They look like this on the Westside all-time ranking list.

1. Chuck Vogelpohl's 2319 total at 220--3rd all-time
2. Joe Bayles's 2300 total at 242--4th all-time
3. John Stafford's 2415 total at 275--4th all-time
4. J. L. Holdsworth's 2340 total at 275--6th all-time
5. Mike Ruggiera's 2505 total at SHW--6th all-time
6. Matt Smith's 2502 total at SHW--7th all-time

These totals were all made within the last 12 months. In addition, behind these six, we have more back-up than an NWA concert. Amy Weisberger is only 16 pounds off a 10 times bodyweight total at 132. We had the youngest 700 bencher, Kenny Patterson, at 22 years old, in 1995. Kenny was also the lightest to bench 700 (701) at 238. George Halbert beat that, 733 at 215. We had three teens bench over 600. Anthony Clark was first to bench 600 as a teen. Then it was Westside's Andre Henry (605), Tim Harrold (615), and Mike Brown, who as of April made 670 easily at barely 19 years old. At the same meet J. L.

Holdsworth made 775 at 284, and another lifter who may not be so familiar, Paul Keys, hit 750 at 286; the last two hit 800 on third attempts but got them turned down.

At the time of writing, Tim Harrold became the youngest man, at 20 years old (2/4/84), to bench 700, and I believe the youngest to total 2400. This pushes our 700 benchers to 8 and those with a 2400 total or higher to 4. John Stafford totaled 2415 at 275. Matt Smith and Mike Ruggiera totaled 2502 and 2505, respectively. No gym has four totals like this.

Let's not forget Fred Boldt's 584 at 181. He will be our next world record holder. We had four men break the all-time bench record: Doug Heath, Kenn Patterson, George Halbert, and Rob Fusner. These men have accumulated 20 all-time records.

We recently dropped the 500 bench club at Westside: we felt that having 63 members on the list over the years took some luster off it. So now we calculate only 550 and up; we have 43 on this list.

Chuck Vogelwohl is the lightest lifter to squat 1000. At 220 bodyweight he has made 1025. His best lifts add up to 2419. We also have 23 members who squat 800 or more, 8 over 900, and 4 over 1000. We have 8 lifters who bench 700 or more and 7 800-pound deadlifters. Twelve members total 2000 or more, 8 total over 2100, 6 total over 2200, 5 total over 2300, and 4 total over 2400.

I wrote this article for all of you, like Roy Jones Jr. says, in case you forgot. Some of our own lifters don't know our history, and I just wanted to inform our fans and anyone else who would listen.

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