

## Training the Lock-Out

By: Louie Simmons

We are in a new millennium, and the times are a changing, as they say. Bench press shirts are a major part of powerlifting, so get with the program. No one cares what you bench press without a shirt. There are a lot of gym world champs, as long as they stay in their own gym.

I've always been a slightly above average bencher. I was eighth in 198- without a bench shirt and ninth in 1997 with a shirt. So if I can keep up with the times, so can you.

Here at Westside we have 12 men who bench more than 600 and four over 700 at the time I am writing this. Also four different men at Westside have held an all-time world record. Is this a coincidence? Hardly. We have a training plan that is designed to produce explosive power and incredible absolute strength.

I have discussed the dynamic method many times. Basically we use 45-50% of shirtless max with mostly close grips for 8 sets of 3 reps. This is followed by triceps, lats, and rear and side delt work. But what happens max effort day at Westside that has produced four 700 pound benchers, with more to come? We max out like the Bulgarians: Regardless of our level of preparedness, we do as much as possible on that day. While it may not be our all-time best, it is absolutely all we can do on that particular day.

Let's start with J.M. Blakley, who has done 710. J. M. likes to do floor presses. He drapes 200-320 pounds of chain over the bar, doing triples. After loading the chains he adds weight; after 225 he jumps 20 pounds a set. This adds up to 12-18 total lifts.

Another exercise that is popular for J.M. (and myself) is the J.M. press. It is done with a close grip, lowering the bar in a straight line down toward the upper chest, stopping about 6 inches above the chest. The elbows are at a 45 deg angle from the body, thereby taking the delts out of the lift, leaving the triceps to do most of the work. I refer to these as J.M., who first demonstrated them for us. J.M. is very dedicated to powerlifting, having traveled all over the United States and overseas to compete. I am honored that he represents us with such passion and dignity.

Kenny Patterson was the youngest to bench 700 at 22 years old. He has held all-time world records in the 275, 242, and 220 weight classes, and no doubt will break more records. One of Kenny's favorite exercises is overhead band press. Using a set of blue Jump-Stretch bands that reduce the load 155 pounds at chest level, he will work up to a max single. For most lifters, this combination will equal their contest best. This is done without a bench shirt. Kenny says these have

taught him to accelerate to the top. One learns that the weight adds on quickly as the bar reaches the top. This method truly is accommodating resistance. Kenny will also have a record with green or pink Jump-Stretch bands.

Kenny's Favorite triceps extension is with dumbbells with palms facing each other. He has worked up to 125's for sets of 8-10 reps. That takes strong triceps, and that's what it takes to break world records.

Rob Fusner has benched an all-time record of 735 at 308. What makes Rob so incredible is that he has totaled 2358 in a full meet. One of Rob's favorite exercises is the floor press with bands. The bands add roughly 170 pounds at the top. Rob will use a close to moderately close grip. After starting with the bands, he will add weight and work up to a max single.

Rob's standard triceps extension exercise is steep incline dumbbell extensions with the elbows pointed out to the sides and the dumbbells touching the upper chest. They remain touching as Rob extends them to the top. This method really works the area around the elbows, and this area is responsible for locking out the arms. Rob will perform 8-12 reps for sets until the triceps are fatigued. We look for Rob to not only break more bench records but also break the total record some day.

George Halbert was stuck at a 475 bench for 2 years. After joining us, he made an official 628 after 1 year of training at 275. George had a lock-out problem, but obviously he solved it. He dropped down to 198 and made a 683. Then George jumped up to 215 and made 701, 716, and 733 at one meet. This is the greatest bench press according to coefficient to date. How does he do it? Well, I'll tell you two ways and only ways for now.

George's lock-out problem was addressed by board press with bands. George has done 365 on the bar plus 400 pounds of band tension off four boards, and Rob did 345 plus 400 pounds of bands. George said he could lock-out that much and so could Rob. He was right. George had the stamina to do three benches over 700 at 215, while Rob made 661, 694, 716, and 735. As long as you are explosive enough to blast the weight into the lock-out zone, you can lock-out almost anything.

The second exercise helps George blast the bar into that zone. On dynamic day George, being very strong and explosive, uses 170 pounds of band tension at the top. This also provides 80 pounds of tension at the bottom. George does his speed sets, jumping 5 pounds each set up to 245 for a total of 8 working sets.

Bands have many benefits. One is accommodating resistance. Second, they add kinetic energy in the eccentric phase, by out-accelerating gravity. Third, bands work much like muscle and connective tissue. Fourth, they build

tremendous stability: just watch someone trying to bench with bands for the first time.

I have talked about four of the greatest benchers on the planet. They will lift anywhere and any time, out of respect for our competitors and for the sake of competing.

I have presented eight exercises, but there are many more to choose from. They all work for someone, and you may be that someone.

To close, I have some personal advice for all who read my articles: I keep a bottle of testosterone sitting on a triple-layer bench press shirt in the back of my gym, but I have yet to see it bench 5 pounds. To be great, it takes planning, work, dedication, courage, and aggression. If you lack one of these, you will fail, and you have no one to blame but yourself. Losers hate winners, so it's better to be hated in powerlifting than to hate.