

Pre Meet Training

By: Louie Simmons

When is the most stressful two weeks of your life? Two weeks before graduation and you're flunking out? Two weeks before your wedding and you know your whole life will be ruined forever? Or how about the last two weeks before a power meet? This is the most important time in training. It is "make or break" for many of us. How much or how little should you do? When is the last work-out? What about taking openers? Should you use meet equipment?

Let's start with the squat. As you know, we use a wave mini-cycle for the squat. We also train with a box at or below parallel. I will use Rob Fusner as an example. His best squat is 875 at 275.

Week 1

425x8 sets of 2 reps

Week 2

455x8 sets of 2 reps

Week 3

475x8 sets of 2 reps

Week 4

495x6 sets of 2 reps

Week 5

425x8 sets of 2 reps

Week 6

455x8 sets of 2 reps

Week 7

475x8 sets of 2 reps

Week 8

425x8 sets of 2 reps

In addition to the normal bar weight, we use chains, about 120 pounds, or bands, about 150 pounds of tension. These sets are done on Friday, the dynamic method day combined with the contrast method through the use of bands or chains. The objective is to move the weights on Week 5 faster than on Week 1, and Week 7 should be faster than Week 3. This will show the development of force. That is the purpose of the dynamic method: to build acceleration and reversal strength. Short rests between sets are important for increasing intensity; 45 seconds is recommended.

We have found that the 50-60% weights work best for the squat. It is very important to push up the special exercises such as the Reverse Hyper®5356,359 and 6,491,607b2, abs, sled work, and belt squats. Use only 3 or 4 exercises after squatting, and don't forget to rotate when necessary. Remember that the goal is to become faster with the same weight on each new wave.

This can be accomplished by the use of Flex bands or chains or by increasing the special exercises that build strength in the glutes, hips, hamstrings, and abs. This will also build form by increasing the strength in the vital squat muscles. Do not do regular squats after a box squat workout. The squats will completely wear the vital squat muscles and make a regular squat seem very hard and sluggish. We do a contest style squat only at the contest, never in the gym. Also, if you do a max box squat, don't do it the week before the meet. Two weeks out is OK, but 4 weeks out is best. Don't get psyched up. Get motivated, but don't burn adrenaline. We never use knee wraps or pull up the straps on the suit. Don't do an opener. Needing to do this is just a lack of confidence. Think about it; if you are worried about your opener, you are in trouble. Rather, think PR.

Here are two examples of a comparison of box squat max to a contest best. Amy Weisberger's best parallel box squat is (82%). Her best contest squat 445, at 123. Todd Brock had a parallel box squat of 710 (86%) and a contest squat of 820 at 270. This shows a 15-20% carry over to a contest squat from a squat PR. Most can use this reference.

We seldom do any regular deadlifting at Westside. Jerry Obradovic does rack pulls the plates 2 or 4 inches off the floor. This is done only one time per month. The result is the highest deadlift/bench combine in the 275 class of all time: 804 deadlift, 644 bench. It is a rare combination to be such a good bench presser and deadlifter. It requires two different body structures. We use the same day, Monday, to do max effort work for squatting and deadlifting. About 6 out of 10 workouts are good mornings. They work most major muscle groups that squat and deadlift: the glutes, hamstrings, spinal erectors, and hips. About 3 of 10 workouts are special squats using a variety of bars.

Each time you change bars, it will change the length between sacrum and the center of the bar. This is possible by using a Manta Ray; it raises the bar

approximately 1 to 2 inches above top of the delts. A Safety Squat bar, with its cambered design, also changes this length.

On max effort day, you must push the muscles to their fullest extent. Try records in all types of good mornings, squats, and pulls. On both the dynamic effort and max effort days, you must push not only the major core exercises but also the special work, such as reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, pull--throughs, back raises, glute/ham raises, and lat and ab work.

One does not have to squat or deadlift to become a good squatter or deadlifter. If it takes 3 seconds to do a max squat or deadlift and you place the right muscles into play with a good morning or special squat, you have accomplished the same thing. The more exercises you become accomplished in, the easier it is to master any exercise, including squatting and deadlifting. Even football players play football only 20% of the training time. The other 80% is for special drills and to raise GPP. Pick the exercises that work best for you and use them closest to a meet. Rotate every 2 weeks and always max out: do singles in squatting and pulling and triples in the good mornings.

This is the conjugate method-using special exercises to raise absolute strength, as well as perfecting form. This method will allow you to max out week after week, year after year, and my friends, this is the only way to do so. If you chose to max out in one particular exercise for 3 or 4 weeks, you will stop making progress, for neurological reasons. Check your training log if you don't believe me.

If you do pulls, don't do them for more than 2 weeks and never the last 2 weeks before a meet. If your form is good and your strength is up, then there is no reason not to break your squat or deadlift record, assuming you're not a head-case.

The box squats on dynamic day are done with a pair of groove briefs or a suit with the straps down. Never wear knee wraps, but wear a belt.

As you can see, speed work is done on one day and max effort work is done on another, 72 hours apart. Friday is our speed day, and Monday is our max effort day. Speed day is designed for explosive strength and acceleration for the development of force. Max effort day develops absolute strength. Chuck Vogelpohl, who has won everything from the Y Nationals to the Worlds, simply says it is most important to push up the special work and concentrate on bar speed for squatting and deadlifting. Just remember to push the special core exercises that work best for you closest to the meet.

For the bench press, two work-outs are done per week: one for speed and acceleration and one for the development of reversal strength. Yes, reversal strength can be stored for the pause rule. Sunday is the dynamic method day.

Always train at 60% of a no-shirt max (240 for a 400 pound bench, 270 for a 450 bench, 300 for a 500 bench, and so on). We don't wave the weights in the bench; we always train at 60%, 8-10 sets of 3 reps. Use close and moderately close grips, with your little finger inside the narrow rings on the bar. Lower the bar as quickly as possible. Reverse it as quickly as possible and accelerate to lock-out. Always use chains or light Flex bands on these sets. After the 8-10 sets, train the triceps very hard. Attempt new records in a bar or dumbbell extension, J.M. presses, or any other triceps exercise.

Triceps are most important. Lats are next, followed by delt raises, upper back, and fore-arms. All this should be done in less than an hour.

Three days later, Wednesday, is max effort day. On max effort day you must max out (but not in a regular squat, bench, or deadlift). Do a one- or three-rep max in exercises such as board press, floor press, incline, decline, or seated press, or rack lock-outs. You can have records with added chains or bands. Make as many combinations as possible. This is known as the conjugate method. When one trains a particular exercise maximally for even 3 weeks in a row, growth hormone production is greatly reduced. That is why you must use special core exercises and rotate them every 2 weeks. Sometimes we even modify a special core exercise slightly each week.

Remember to pursue greater bar speed in all lifts. Push up special exercises and rotate as often as necessary to maintain progress. Stay with short rest periods on dynamic day: for squats, 45 seconds; for bench, 1 minute. Any faster and the CNS may be negatively affected. The short rest between sets causes lactic acid to accumulate. By work-ing through the lactic acid, growth hormone production greatly in-creases. So don't be a wimp. This pain pays. Don't take openers. If you are worried about your opener, what are you going to do with your second and third at-tempts? Pick the exercises that work best for you closest to meet time.

I hope this helps you as much as it does us at Westside.