

Visitors to Westside

By: Louie Simmons

At Westside Barbell we have a steady Invasion of visitors. Recently people have come from Brazil , North-west Territory (Canada), and South Africa and from all across the United States . Most lifters to have made a trip here found it was worth the effort.

Mike Hill came here from West Virginia with a 1450 total in the 220 class. In less than 3 years he has done 1855 in the same class. How? By working on his technique and discov-ering his weaknesses. His training partner, Chris Young, a 242, was doing 1740 when he came here with Mike. In less than 3 years, Chris raised his total to 2000. Both are regulars here, visiting as often as possible.

I received a call two months be-fore the 1998 WPC Worlds in Aus-tria from Andrew Dexter, from Canada . He wanted to come here to train the last six weeks before the Worlds. Of course, we said yes. If anyone is willing to live in a hotel in a foreign country just to train, we are happy to have them. Andrew had a 1600 total at 198. He was 23 years old. He told us that only two Canadi-ans were USPF Elites. Well, after 6 weeks, he became the third, with a 1747 total and a Junior World title.

Andrew's form in the squat was terrible by our standards. He was box squatting, but not sitting back nearly far enough. Nor was he pushing his knees out to the sides, and he would round over. Building up his abs stopped him from rounding over in the squat. To teach him to push his knees out to the sides, we used a verbal reminder on each squat set. We also had him sit on a well-below - parallel box with a flex band wrapped around his legs just above his knees. Then by pushing his knees apart, his hips became stronger and he learned to force his knees apart. This is ad-duction/abduction work, but this will not work on a machine because the hips must be lower than the knees to be effective. Machines are built so the hips are higher than the knees. By doing this and a few other special exercises, Andrew's squat went from 573 to 633 In 6 weeks.

Andrew's bench press was 400 when he arrived here. His triceps needed work, and he had a bad habit of pushing the bar over his face. First we had to fix his bench form. To do this, he had to build the correct muscles. The strongest muscle must be the triceps. A set of thick lats and upper back are next. The delts, espe-cially rear, are next. The chest will take care of itself.

On speed day, Andrew would use 205 for 4 sets of 3 reps and 4 sets of 3 reps with 225 plus a set of chains (on all sets). The chains add 20 extra pounds at lock-out. On max effort day, he sometimes did benches with 275 and 1 set of chains for a single, adding another set of chains for a single, and continuing to add chains until he failed. A second special core lift was a 4-board press with 150

pounds of tension from a set of Flex bands. He would work up to a max. He also did steep Incline, working up to a max. These exercises were done as three minicycles, 2 weeks each. Each core exercise was followed by triceps work first, lats, upper back, and then hammer curls. The result was a 440 bench, a 40-pound increase.

For the deadlift, Andrew had been deadlifting every week. He was shocked when we told him not to do any regular deadlifts. It was his best lift, 640, hard but legal.

Andrew did good mornings for the first minicycle. His best was 360 for 3 reps. He worked up to 365 for 3 reps and thought he was done. But our guys pushed him on to 425 for 3 reps in the bent-over good morning. The atmosphere at Westside is 'do or die', and it's better to die than not to try. It would have taken a year or two for Andrew to reach 425 for 3 reps back home in Canada.

The Reverse Hyper®5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 helped tremendously. One hundred pounds was hard for him at first, but in 6 weeks he was doing 225 for 4 sets of 10 reps.

Although his abs looked good, looking good doesn't cut it. He did all his abs standing up in front of the lat machine. Oblique work was also done in the same fashion.

He pulled one time: 315 plus Flex bands. This was 4 weeks before the Worlds. At the meet Andrew pulled a 672 PR. That made it possible for him to total 1747, a 147-pound increase in 6 short weeks. Here is a guy who has good potential, but is not a genetic freak. And he can go back home and continue to make progress.

John "Chester" Stafford moved from Minnesota to train with us at Westside. He is a very talented lifter; he had a 1978 total in the 275s. After 4 months here, he made a 2070 total in Washington, D.C. How? Basically, his problems were much like Andrew's: poor squat form and weak triceps.

For the squat, we had John take his squat stance out as far as possible to build up his hips, and we had him push up the Reverse Hyper®5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 weight. John likes the good morning and all its variations, and he has a very strong back. By building up the correct muscles, his form has greatly improved, taking him from a 749 squat to an 800 squat in less than 4 months.

His bench press was a bit off because of his weak triceps and because he didn't know how to use a bench shirt. For the triceps, John did J.M. presses for a few weeks for a 3-rep max. When he started to stall on these, he moved to straight bar extensions to the chin for 5 reps. These helped considerably, but as

they started to fade, he moved on to two-arm dumbbell extensions for fast sets of 10 reps.

We are still teaching John how to use a bench shirt. He would let the shirt blast the weight out of the bot-tom, and then he would try to take over where the shirt left off. By early 1999, we will have taught him to push along with the shirt to the top.

John's deadlift is pretty good. At his second meet he made 750 in the 275's. He has very good form and a very strong back. The box squat is bringing up his hip strength so he can lock out that 800 when it comes. Sled work and glute/ham raises have helped too.

It doesn't matter if you visit Westside or move here; progress comes to anyone. With 22 lifters totaling over 2000, 22 with 800+ squats, and 18 with 550+ benches, we have a good experimental base to work from. Anyone can make fast gains if they pay attention to the complex training system we offer.

Before he came to Westside, George Halbert's best bench was 475 for 2 years. After 1 year at Westside he made 628 In the 275's. He is now the holder of the all-time best bench in the 220's (657) and 242's (688).

Bob Youngs went from a 1470 total to 2000 in 2 years.

Tom Rutigliano was stuck at 1570 in the 181's. He became the WPC World Champ with an 1851 total in 3 short years. Tommy lives in New Jersey.

Tom's friend John Wardell was stuck in the bench press at 418 for an incredible 8 years. After 3 visits in 5 months, he did 501 in the APF Nationals.

Tom Waddle's best total was 1855 for years. After 6 months at Westside he made 2060 at the 1993 APF Nationals. Tom did 2259 at the 1995 APF Nationals.

Amy Weisberger came here with a 760 total at 123. She was told that she would never make any more progress. She has now totaled 1125 in the same class.

People come to Westside from around the world. Flavio Danna, from Brazil, visited us for 6 weeks. He had a 352 bench. One year later, he did 484; what a jump! Flavio found, like most visitors, that his triceps were well under par. When he concen-trated on his triceps, upper back, and lats, his form changed considerably. He now pushes the bar in a straight line.

I am proud to say we have fans all over the world, and we are fans of our fans. We believe that it is just as important to do that first 300 bench as it is the first 600, and that's the truth. We have two new friends visit-ing from South Africa,

Mike Barker and Brett Burchell, both super heavyweights. Brett, at 350 pounds, has a lot of potential in the squat. George Halbert is helping Brett with his bench press, and the morn-ing crew, which I train with, is con-centrating on Brett's deadlift and squat. On February 27, 1999, we will see how Mike and Brett respond to our methods.