

Angelo Berardinelli

By: Louie Simmons

Angelo Berardinelli has become one of the premier middleweights in the world. The sky was the limit for Angelo, having made an elite total as a teen. But by 1993 he was stuck, not in the clouds but at a 1620 total. While many would die to have a total like that, Angelo knew he had not touched his potential. He would tell us of the big gym lifts, but at meets he did much less, always asking, 'what happened?'

I kept telling Angelo what was wrong with his training: training with weights above 90% too long and dropping his special work long before meet time. If special exercises serve a valid purpose, why drop them at the most critical time, close to a meet? All who look at or keep records of training will testify that after 4 or 5 weeks at 90% or more your training goes backward. This is because the central nervous system starts to fail and your coordination diminishes greatly.

We convinced Angelo to try the most scientific training and get out of his 3 year rut. Not wanting to speak those terrible words 'what happened ever again, he came to train at Westside.

The first thing we did was start him on box squats, on a slightly below parallel box. At that time his best contest squat was 640, so we had him wave his squat from 320, or 50%, up to 385, or 60%. Twelve sets of 2 reps are used for the 50, 52.5, and 55% weeks, and 10 sets of 2 reps are done at 57.5 and 60%. By doing this, the barbell volume stays constant, but the total volume is waved up and down throughout a 5 week mini-cycle.

This waving of the total work volume is achieved with arched back good mornings and by rotating pullthrough's, reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, back raises, walking lunges, pulling a weight sled, and so forth. When an important meet is coming up, Angelo will push up the abs and increase his reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, both in weight and in volume. The results? A 755 squat in less than 3 years, a 215 pound increase. Not bad for a 640 squatter.

Angelo uses short rest periods between sets; 45 seconds is best. The squats are done on a slightly below parallel box. He will sit back, not down, until he is sitting fully on the box with his shins past a perpendicular position. This places all the work on the glutes, hamstrings, hips, and abs, and of course lower back. This is impossible to do without a box.

Angelo's stance is very wide, somewhat wider than his contest squat, and his feet are pointing straight ahead, not turned out. With the feet straight, it works the

hips the best. It is harder to squat down this way but much easier to come up because more muscles can be recruited.

Angelo's shoes are Chuck Taylor's. He had been wearing shoes with a heel, which would throw him forward, causing bad form. The flat shoes fixed that problem for good. You can have million dollar shoes and a 10 cent squat.

This workout is designed to build explosive and accelerating strength. Don't go heavier than the top 60%. Rather, concentrate on more speed. Angelo never takes a heavy box squat. He tests his strength on arched back good mornings: 500 is still the most weight used. Billy Masters uses the same method and, like Angelo, will push up his reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions and ab work, and he invariably squats more than 900.

Angelo's bench press was OK at 363 but, like the squat, hadn't increased for some time. Angelo is certainly built to bench, but he was training too heavy and not addressing his weaknesses. He could not understand why he could triple 325 yet bench only 363. The reason is lack of speed. It's apparent that he was not producing more than 363 pounds of force, or he would be benching more, right?

We had him do his 8 sets of 3 reps with 205. This started his bench going up. In less than 3 years, he made 470 in a full meet with three WPC judges. Right before he did the 470, he had worked his way up to using 245 for 4 sets and 255 for 4 sets. This is about 55% of a one rep max. The key was again speed and the development of explosive strength.

We all like to lift heavy, so Angelo followed our lead and tried the floor press, board press, J.M. press, incline press, and heavy dumbbell press on a stability ball. He would rotate one of these every 2 weeks, followed by tricep extensions, delt raises, and a lot of lat and upper back work.

This conjugate method of training, a rotating of core exercises every 2 weeks, led to an increase in Angelo's bench press of 107 pounds in less than 3 years.

We always have a secret up our sleeves, and this time it came from Mario Civalleri, a friend from Italy. He works with Yuri Kechi the Olympic and world champion on the rings in gymnastics. Mario suggested we try a form of ring work. Like the stability ball, the rings are another apparatus that is unstable and that builds stability. We had Angelo do pushups in the rings, with the rings hanging close to the floor and his feet on the floor. As he got better, he would raise his feet until he was doing a handstand pushup. This increases muscle mass and strength. I want to mention Mario because he is an unsung hero, one who has never laid eyes on Westside yet contributed greatly to our success.

Let's talk about Angelo's deadlift, a sore spot, to say the least, at 562. The 562 came with a 705 squat, a 143 pound difference. Angelo has brought his deadlift

up to an easy 640, this after a 755 squat. That's a 115 pound difference. How? With a training system out of the past.

Don Reinhoudt had a method of training the deadlift in a rack where he would lift a certain weight, let's say 850, off a pin that held the plates 8 inches off the floor. He would do this 8 weeks away from the meet. Each week he would lower the bar 1 inch until the meet, and he would then pull it at the meet.

Angelo did the same thing, but he would lower the bar 1 inch for 2 weeks and then rotate to squatting on a 6 inch box for 2 weeks and then back to the rack pull. Sure enough, he got a big PR - 640 - and an 1865 total with 3 WPC judges in the chairs. Again reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, heavy ab work, and a lot of lat work played a large role in his success.

Here is a man that was stuck for 3-1/2 years at a 1640 total, who was able to increase to 1865 by using this method of training. I am very proud of Angelo. He is our best all-time lifter with the Schwartz formula. This is just the beginning for Angelo, and this we are sure of.