

More On The Conjugate Method: The Principle of Variety

By: Louie Simmons

Training is not as simple as doing 5 sets of 5 reps or 5 sets of 10 reps or any combination of sets and reps. You must plan to obtain certain objectives. Increases in speed, explosive strength, absolute strength, and stamina are equally important.

It has been known and discussed in *Weightlifting for All Sports* by Ajan and Baroga that a greater training result can be obtained over a greater length of time by using special exercises than by doing the classical lifts. Doing the same exercises repeatedly will rapidly decrease your coordination. There are many reasons for this. Our observation is that very few lifters can increase their abilities without special exercises.

A question that should be addressed is, when handling max lifts, how do you recover? And how do you at the same time increase muscle mass? The conjugate method is the answer. This is a complex method of rotating special exercises that are close in nature, in our case, to the powerlifts. This method also increases special strength qualities and perfects coordination, which will help advance technical skill. First, and most important, is to properly select exercises that address your particular problems. It could be an exercise that will build up a lagging muscle group or a special strength, such as starting, eccentric, or accelerating strength.

How do we train heavy continuously? The answer is to pick several special barbell exercises for a particular lift, for example, the deadlift. The good morning is very similar in motion to deadlifting. A conventional deadlifter will, no doubt, bend over. Therefore, bent over good mornings will increase the deadlift. But remember, when doing the good morning, in your brain, you must duplicate the action of your deadlift precisely. It is not so important to raise your good morning as to raise your deadlift by performing the good morning. We do many types of good mornings, for example, with a Safety Squat bar suspended from chains. But remember to use the same body mechanics as you do in the deadlift.

A popular special exercise for the deadlift is squatting off a very low box. Angelo Berardinelli does his off a 6-inch box. At this depth, Angelo's back is in a position similar to his sumo deadlift style.

We use a Safety Squat bar very often. When raising out of a squat or deadlift, the shoulders must raise first. The 5-inch camber on the Safety Squat bar teaches you to raise the head and shoulders first; otherwise you will buckle over forward. Once again, when using this bar, think about pulling even though you are squatting. To summarize, pick a core lift with a barbell and try to duplicate the same motion of the lift you are trying to increase. Pick four or five core exercises

that work for you and rotate one of them every 2 weeks. Do a max single for a 2 or 3-rep max, but no more.

For example, you could do bent over good mornings, Safety Squat bar squats, Zercher squats, very low box squats, and then finish with 2 weeks of rack pulls. This represents a 10-week cycle, rotating each of the above exercises in 2-week mini-cycles. It is important that you end with the most productive exercise for you leading into the meet.

After your selection of a core barbell exercise, pick three to five special exercises. Your workout should last less than 60 minutes. Pick a few special exercises and do them very intensely.

If your form is good, then your lower back may be holding you back. Again, select four exercises for the lower back, for example, back raises, straight leg deadlifts off a platform, pull-throughs with legs straight, and reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, and rotate them when necessary.

For weak hamstrings, do heavy reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, squatting pull-throughs, glute/ham raises, and sled pulling with your hands behind your back or below your knees while holding onto a strap.

For weak glutes, do heavy reverse hyper@5356,359 and 6,491,607b2 extensions, low belt squats, high-rep deadlifts (2 sets of 20 with back arched, glutes pushed out to rear, shoulder-width stance, hands outside shoulder-width: after first rep, drop bar to just below knees, catch and raise as fast as possible for the entire 20 reps), and glute/ham raises.

If your abs are weak, do side bends with a cable bar or dumbbell, leg raises, standing lat machine curl-overs, and strict sit-ups.

Again, pick one exercise for each muscle group and use it until it becomes ineffective, then switch.

For the bench press, you could do board press, floor press, inclines, declines, or rack lockouts for singles. Rotate one of these every 2 weeks. You could also do ultra wide bench presses for a 6-rep max. You could also do three sets to failure with dumbbells, with a 2 minute rest between sets for singles and a 5-6 minute rest for high reps. Then pick some type of triceps extension with a bar or dumbbells, some type of lat work, and raises for the front, side, and rear delts.

There are many types of exercises for each muscle group. Just change when one stops working, and your lifts should continue to increase all year long. By training with this system, you can max out every week of the year, while working continuously on speed and building muscle mass. It works for us and it will work

for you. It is the most effective form of training we have ever tried, and in the past 36 years Westside lifters have tried them all.

Just remember, it's the selection that counts. You must pick a lift or exercise that builds your particular weaknesses. Don't get caught up in doing an exercise that your friends like but that does little for you. George Halbert has special exercises he uses for his bench. Chuck Vogelpohl does things that no one does, but they help his squat and deadlift. Amy Weisberger does front and overhead squats to help her squat, and on May 9 at the Ohio State Championship she made a 445 national record squat at 123 and an 1125 total, proof that she does well in selecting her special exercises.