

Training Methods Part 2: Max Effort Day

In part 1 I wrote about the numerous methods that Westside uses on dynamic squat and bench day. Many methods are combined and rotated in the conjugate system. Combining the speed and max effort days, five elements of strength are trained: quickness, explosiveness, speed strength, strength speed, and absolute strength. This is much like a 5-speed transmission. We all know what happens if you miss a gear or take off in wrong gear. Your car doesn't run very efficiently, and neither will you.

At Westside we train with either very light weights or max weights. Very seldom do we use medium weights, in the 80% to low 90% range. We prefer to break new ground, continually trying new records in special squats, pulls, good mornings, or benches. Remember, if you train at 90% or higher for more than 3 weeks you will fail due to fatiguing the central nervous system.

We max out each week. How? By switching exercises each week. This is the conjugate method. Exercises can fall into three categories: general, directed, and sports specific.

General exercises include the Reverse Hyper machine, glute/ham raises, box jumps, inverse curls, lat work, ab work, tricep extensions, hip extensor/flexor work etc.

Directed exercises include good mornings, belt squats, deadlifts on a box or from a rack, floor press, rack or board press, and dumbbell press.

Sports specific exercises include legal-depth box squats, close grip bench, wide bench, and deadlifting with the opposite style that you normally use (sumo vs conventional).

At Westside, all three categories are used each week. They are not done simultaneously. Why? If a specific type of strength is not trained during a three week period, a loss in strength of 10% or greater occurs. This is true for agility, coordination, and even flexibility.

As Dr. Zatsiorsky states, "why climb three-quarters up the mountain only to go back down and start back over?" he is, of course, referring to the progressive overload system. This system is a dead-end street. It was obsolete 40 years ago. At Westside we get faster, stronger, and more muscular, all year long. Here's how.

Westside Barbell is closed to the public. Its members go to meets regularly. Because all 30 members compete, we send about a third of our lifters to a particular meet. This enables some of us to help our teammates.

I believe our success comes from maxing out on maximum effort day even if you are not going to a meet. This goes on all year long. Our maximum effort system is much like the Bulgarian model. Regardless of our trainability, we max out. It might not be an all-time record, but it's all you're capable of on that day. This means that lifters who are not close to a meet will not get PR's. The lifters who are approaching a meet should make PR's although the Bulgarians use primarily six main exercises, we use countless special exercises designed to build the weakness of each lifter in all three lifts. The system we find most effective is the conjugate system: a wide variety of special exercises are constantly rotated to make training more effective and fun. This system allows for a longer lifting career. If you have a longer career in any sport, you will benefit from new technology, such as tracks, balls, ball fields, and in our case supportive gear.

The following illustrates how we use various methods in our training.

Let's start with the *maximum effort* bench day, which occurs 72 hours after the speed bench day. This is because 72 hours should separate extreme workouts, and we max out each week. Let's look at the floor press.

Floor press can be done with pure weight or with 3-5 sets of chains to *accommodate*

resistance. It can be done with at least three different band tensions. This also accommodates resistance but alters the speed of the bar. The unexpected can happen at a meet. The weight can seem harder or easier than expected. By alternating the amount of band or chain, the bar velocity can change, which happens during each attempt.

You can use a regular bench and add weight releasers. This is a pure *reactive method*. The weight is released on the first rep of each set at the bottom. This causes a contrast effect. The *contrast method* is one where the weight is different at the bottom compared to the top of the lift. This method can be used with any style of pressing including incline, decline, or seated.

In the bench we will lower the bar as fast as possible, then catch it just before it hits the chest and reverse from eccentric to concentric as fast as possible. This *ballistic lifting* is to be done with speed strength weights of 40-60% while doing your triples. Caution: do not use maximal weights. Although ballistic training is not plyometric, it does ensure a rapid shock loading effect, resulting in a strong myotactic stretch reflex, plus taking advantage of the stored energy of the connective and elastic tissues of the muscle complex during eccentric muscle contraction.

Power rack training for developing a *fast rate of force development* can be done with your speed strength sets off pins or from chains by resting the bar at any point from the chest to lockout and then exploding to lockout. Simply relax the muscles, and then contract them concentrically as fast as possible. Remember to relax after each lowering phase for 3-4 seconds to reduce stored energy before doing additional reps. To avoid overtraining, take into account the different rates of adaptation to all training systems.

Box squatting and floor pressing combine two proven methods of strength development *relaxed-overcome-by-dynamic work and static-overcome-by-dynamic work*. Both build explosive and absolute strength.

Shock training examples are box jumps and rebounding on special devices. To be explosive, this method is necessary. The most extreme work should be performed the day before max effort day. This is to prevent delayed onset of muscular soreness (DOMS), which occurs 48 hours after intense exercise. DOMS can be avoided by doing small restoration workouts 6-12 hours after one of the four major workouts.

Small 20 minute workouts for strength gains in particular muscle groups can also be done, to develop general physical preparedness (GPP) or special physical preparedness (SPP). A small workout can be done for flexibility, agility, or balance also. All lifters should do at least 2-10 extra workouts per week. This is especially true for drug free lifters to provide some form of restoration.

There are many methods of training that are used on both max effort and speed day. It is also very important to change core and special exercises frequently. It is vital also to change bar speed by using bands, chains, weight releasers, heavyweight, and light weight. Monitor your intensity zones properly to ensure, for example, that a 400 pound squatter is doing proportionally the same amount of work as a 900 pound squatter. Remember that just when your body has all the answers, you have to change the questions.