

THE LIGHTENED METHOD

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At Westside Barbell, we often use the contrast methods:

bands, chains, and of course the lightened method.

For squatting, we use three different bands: the light band, the monster mini-band, and the mini-band. A light band hung over the Monolift will reduce the load around 200 pounds in the bottom of the squat. Remember, we always box squat just below parallel. A monster mini will reduce the load 110 pounds, and a mini-band will unload the bar about 55 pounds. If our intention is to become stronger, we start with the mini-bands. We add weight for 3 weeks and wave back and start a second 3-week wave with the monster minis. Again, we wave back and start a new 3-week wave with the light bands. The stronger the band, the greater the contrast.

A 9-week wave would look like this.

With a mini-band at the top:

week	weight	sets	reps	weight at top	weight at bottom
1	455	8	2	455	400
2	505	8	2	505	450
3	555	6	2	555	505
4	605	8	2	605	495
5	655	8	2	655	545
6	705	6	2	705	595

With a light band at the top:

7	755	8	2	755	555
8	805	8	2	805	605
9	855	6	2	855	655

This series of squats is done off a box just below parallel.

The rest between sets is 1 minute 15 seconds to 1 minute 30 seconds.

We use this system at Westside on a regular basis. It is less taxing

on the body. It is important to learn acceleration. It is even more important to change the rate of acceleration. The lightened method is just one way to accomplish this.

This method is also used on max effort day as one of our rotations. Tim Harold made a lightened method squat of 1115 at the top and 1000 at the bottom. His best squat is 1005. Matt Smith has used the same method with 1150 at the top and 1035 on the box, which has produced a 1102 squat. As you can see, Tim's effort falls short of Matt's, but this sets a standard to realize a contest potential. Although this method was used for youth training in the old Soviet Union, at Westside it is used in many of our exercises with great success. It has helped produce two 1100 squats, one at 268, Chuck Vogelpohl (a world record), plus five 1000-pound squats.

Westside often uses the lightened method in the bench press. For benching we use four different strength bands. For max effort work we primarily use the strong bands and the medium bands. The bands are choked at the top of a 7-foot power rack. This reduces the bar weight at the chest by 155 pounds. With 455 pounds on the bar, the weight is reduced to 300 at the chest, but the weight is reloaded progressively until lockout, which is again 455.

In a second max effort workout we would use a medium band, to reduce the load 95 pounds at the bottom. After unracking the bar loaded to 455, it reduces to 350 at the chest and returns to 455 at lock-out. A light band at the top of the rack will reduce the load at the chest by 65 pounds. This time 455 at the top will weigh 390 at the chest. As you can see, the greater the band strength, the greater the contrast. This system builds speed or absolute strength depending on band tension. For speed benching we use a light band or a monster mini-band. A 500-pound raw bencher would use a bar weight of 315. Light bands would reduce the bar weight to 250, or 50%, at chest level. This is a good

alternative to other speed work. The three most common are bands, chains, and weight releasers.

For pulling, we use a strong band looped over a pin 5 feet 6 inches off the ground, which will unload the bar at floor level about 135 pounds. Joe Bayles pulled 745 with the lightened method. This resulted in a 775 P.R. at a meet. This was greater than a 30-pound positive result. Tim Harold pulled 900 pounds and later pulled 855 at a meet, which was a P.R., but a 45-pound negative result. Regardless, this will give some guidelines to go by.

This method is also very good for high pulls as well as increasing the second pull. Kneeling cleans, snatches, and squats are used in the same way.

Use your imagination. You can use the lightened method for J.M. presses, triceps extensions, overhead presses, inclines, and declines. It is a fantastic tool for all sports. It will increase not only your vertical jump and long jump but also your hand speed. It teaches you to accelerate throughout the entire range of motion. Conventional weight training has a distinct deceleration phase. The lightened method will help eliminate this phenomenon. Look at it this way. With this method, a young ball player can unrack 135 in the squat, but at the bottom it weighs nothing; 225 at the top would be 90 pounds in the bottom; 315 at the top would be 180 in the hole, and so forth. This teaches acceleration.

One must take advantage of all training methods to succeed. People are getting stronger every day and are smart enough to make the most of their equipment. Don't be a hater. Take advantage of everything at your disposal. If the great lifters of the 70s, 80s, and 90s had shirts and suits, you can bet the bank they would use them. Some of these lifters lasted only 5 or 6 years. If they had modern-day gear, maybe they would still be competing with today's stars.