

## **Fitness for the Novice Powerlifter**

What does fitness mean to you?

Fitness improves heart and lung efficiency, it allows the body to recover faster from exertion and to deal with the physical effects of stress. Circulation is improved allowing the body to rid itself of toxins and other waste more efficiently and, muscular tension is also reduced.

Once you begin to exercise regularly on this type of training you will feel the benefits not just in your chosen activity but, in your everyday life also

For a building to withstand the strains of the winds and storms over the years it needs to be built on a strong foundation, with as few weaknesses as possible.

For those of us who are fortunate enough to remember the nursery story, of the three little pigs and the big bad wolf. Do you remember in the end all three pigs were safe and sound in the house built of bricks and on concrete foundation's.

The levels of stress, placed upon the body of the power lifter over the years of training and competition far exceeds the stresses it was ever intended to withstand. So much can and needs to be done to prepare the beginner and, any lifter who is returning from an extended lay-off or, even getting back into training after a competition, when the body has been pushed to its limits thus, running down its reserves, and the immune system along the way.

Developing a sound foundation is a must for the beginner, and should include methods of preparing his body, for the stresses created within his training along the way to his first competition.

Here are some tips that I have picked up along the way and have helped me and many of the athletes I have coached over the years.

First, develop a solid foundation of fitness, by using full range exercises in your training. By doing so, the lighter weights you will use, will place less stress on the ligaments and tendons. This will allow them to grow thicker and stronger, thereby capable of withstanding greater stress, when you are able to handle much heavier weights.

In your training routines try to maximize lean body mass, while at the same time reducing your body fat. This will require intensity in your training along with a sensible diet. This does not mean cutting out your carbohydrates, these are essential where intense training is the order of the day.

In conjunction with the above, you need to concentrate on developing the prime muscles used in the three lifts, whilst not forgetting to exercise the stabilizer muscles. By concentrating on the smaller stabilizer muscles, it will become quite evident later on that, when called upon for maximal effort in the three lifts, it will be the smaller muscles involved within the movement that will break down first, rarely will it be the prime movers.

Remember always to concentrate on your weaknesses. A good approach here is to start assuming that you have no strength at all, only weaknesses.

The following training system that I will describe is mainly intended for the beginner, but, in many cases it can be used by the advanced lifter as well, especially when coming back from injury, or when a return to basics is called for to eliminate any observed weaknesses.

### **The Superset Routine**

This system affords the beginner with many important points of development. It allows for increased flexibility which is so important in avoiding injury, along with the development of good technique. It also helps by increasing your metabolic processes involved in weight control, especially in respect of fat burning. It will assist in developing strength along with increased muscle size.

The term superset indicates a very big set.

Two antagonistic movements are used in each superset, and each movement is repeated for the required number of sets and reps, without rest until completed.

Thus, for example bench press is superseded with bent over rowing in the following manner:

|                    |                         |                              |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Bench press 8 reps | Bent over rowing 8 reps |                              |
| Bench Press 8 reps | Bent over rowing 8 reps |                              |
| Bench press 8 reps | Bent over rowing 8 reps | Total 6 sets = one superset. |

As one can see a total of 48 reps are done in the one superset, as shown above.

There is no rest between bench press and bent over rowing.

By doing all 48 reps without rest, should enable you to achieve a heart rate somewhere in the region of 80% of max, maximum being approx 150 beats per minute for a 20 year old strength athlete.

A point that should be made here is, that between each of the 48 reps, a slight pause of less than a couple of seconds should be made to allow the muscles to relax, thus, allowing fresh oxygenated blood into the muscles being exercised and used blood to escape. This practice will allow for a speedy recovery during the course of the superset. This is essential, so that the lifter is able to maintain maximal tension throughout the superset, instead of having to progressively lower the weight being used during the course of the superset, due to increased fatigue. ( The slight pause mentioned above, will take place as you move from one exercise to the next.)

The strength athlete should aim to achieve a 30 second or less rest, between each pair of exercises.

Typical superset workout.

|                              |   |                                   |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Crunchies 10 reps         | + | Hyper Extensions 10 reps x 3 sets |
| 2. Leg Press 8 reps          | + | Leg Curl 8 reps x 3 sets          |
| 3. Bench press 8 reps        | + | Bent over rowing 8 reps x 3 sets  |
| 4. Dumbell press 8 reps      | + | Lat pull down 8 reps x 3sets      |
| 5. Triceps extensions 8 reps | + | Barbell curl 8 reps x 3 sets      |
| 6. Side Bends left 8 reps    | + | Side bends right 8 reps x 3 sets  |

Above is a typical superset workout, which covers most of the core exercises that are important to the power lifter. This would be a very good starting point for a beginner.

### **The Set System**

Although not normally thought of as adaptable to cardiovascular training it can be used as a build up to the superset system.

Using the normal type set system schedule with 3 – 4 sets of 12-15 reps on all exercises and train right through the schedule with a rest of not longer than 30seconds between sets and exercises.

As you become more accustomed to this style of training, you must try to bring the rest periods down to 20 seconds or breathing back to normal.

Rest periods include time spent loading bars.

So as you can see, one has to be very well organized using this type of training, as it can sometimes prove to be difficult, when training in a busy crowded gym. Just train as quickly as is possible.

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