

DELAYED TRANSFORMATION

By: Louie Simmons

The biggest obstacle for Elite lifters is displaying efforts from training at meet time. I frequently hear of lifters taking their openers before the meet. If the lifters at Westside were worried about their openers, we would not go to the meet.

What is the proper method of tapering your training for the meet?

Much depends on the weight class you are lifting in. The heavy weight classes may need more time to reach full peaking.

Leading up to any meet, the training should be divided into 3-week waves. For squatting, the months before the meet should consist of light speed strength work, 10-12 sets of 2 reps, with less than 60-second rest intervals. This results in good form and raises work capacity and above all builds speed strength qualities, which is important in order to exhibit maximum force production.

We focus on maximal speed with sub maximal weights. With max speed, 154 pounds can produce 264 pounds of force. Most training sets average 40-50% of our top meet squat, but remember, we squat on a box. For one wave we may use a blue band (200 pounds of tension at the top) or a green band (120 pounds of tension at the top) with three sets of 5/8 inch chain correctly hung from the bar (120 extra pounds at the top), or a purple band (80 pounds more at the top). It is essential to

constantly change the rate of bar acceleration by different means. We may also use weight releasers with about 12% of our best squat weight, or the lightened method, where bands are hung from the top of the rack to support, or lighten, the bar load at the bottom of the lift.

Delayed Transformation. After heavy training, such as the circa-max phase, one cannot get any stronger. This is due to the accommodation effect of the near-maximal efforts over a 3-week phase. The logical thing to do is to reduce the training load. This improves the lifter's strength or performance by transferring the previous training weeks into performance growth.

The circa-max squat phase is very strenuous. It consists of 6-10 lifts close to max to achieve strength speed, leading to a gain in absolute strength. You must change the training volume, not the exercise. If not, no satisfactory result will be achieved. Two to four weeks are needed for the realization of better results at contest time. Only the top Elite powerlifter should use the circa-max method, which is using weights between 90 and 97% of a 1-rep max. It is very severe, and most at Westside use it for meets. We recommend that a 4-week deloading occur (including the week of the meet) after the circa-max phase.

Here is an example, using Paul Childress's final 6-week training period before a meet. Leading up to the seventh week, Paul uses a high-volume system of training, working on speed strength exclusively, with weights ranging from 40 to 55% for 8-12 sets of 2 reps. When Paul starts

the circa-max phase, it looks like this:

week 1: 455 for 5 sets of 2 reps plus 500 pounds of band tension

week 2: 475 for 4 sets of 2 reps plus 500 pounds of band tension

week 3: 500 for 3 sets of 2 reps plus 500 pounds of band tension

week 4: 500 for 5 sets of 2 reps plus 250 pounds of band tension

week 5: 500 for 4 sets of 2 reps plus 125 pounds of band tension

week 6: 500 for 3 sets of 2 reps, no bands

week 7: meet result: 1052 at 308

At the Arnold Classic this year, Paul squatted 1085, a world record.

If this extremely heavy workload would continue up to meet time, he would likely fail to make a big squat because not only CNS fatigue but also physical and emotional fatigue will occur. This explains why a 4-week cycle, or mesocycle, is needed to validate the previous training and to express it at the meet. During this deloading phase, not only the number of workouts but also the number of exercises per workout are reduced. The last 4-week phase calls for full restoration and calmness. Fewer bar exercises are performed and more specific exercises for building hamstring, glute, low back, and ab strength are done along with stretching.

By stopping the circa-max phase so far out from the meet, Paul is able to do a max effort day three days later, on Monday. On this day, he will do triples in the 80% range. This pendulum training system works in direct line with the 3-week pendulum wave that I have repeatedly

written about. The fourth week is, of course, the meet.

How many weeks of deloading that are necessary depends on your level of preparedness. Anu Turtianen uses a similar circa-max phase and then a 2-week deloading phase. He recently squatted 1080 at 286. His bar weight varies from 540 (50%) to 628 (65%) plus a couple of singles at 705. The band tension is 220 at the top and 100 at the bottom.

Chuck Vogelpohl is the lightest man to squat 1000, at 220. His best squat is 1025. His circa-max phase looks like this:

week 1: 455 for 5 sets of 2 reps with 375 pounds of band tension at top

week 2: 555 for 4 sets of 2 reps plus 375 pounds of band tension at top

week 3: 575 for 3 sets of 2 reps plus 375 pounds of band tension at top

Because of Chuck's high level of fitness, he uses 2 weeks to deload, lifting at the meet on the third week, realizing a total delayed transformation.

One must learn to balance the very intense training while preparing for a meet with the efficiency to produce a high total at meet time. At Westside this is done with a system of yearly, monthly, and weekly (macro-, meso-, and microcycles, respectively) cycles for the dynamic and maximal effort days.

Of course, delayed transformation occurs in bench pressing and deadlifting as well. There is no need to take an opener the week before the meet.

In summary, delayed transformation occurs by reducing the number

of exercises of all types to reduce the total training load due to the period of none improvement that is caused by accumulated fatigue. This deloading for 3 weeks leads to an increase in strength. Its purpose is to prepare the lifter for a major competition. The higher the level a lifter achieves with a greater work capacity, the longer the delayed transformation is carried out. For those with a lower work capacity and usually a lower rank, the delayed transformation phase is shorter because they don't endure the same extreme rigors as the more advanced lifter. Lower skilled lifters don't use the same amount of muscle fiber as top lifters.

Our lifters at 275 and above always require a longer time to peak or realize the training loads as a high meet result. Even when a contest is not close, the total volume must be waved up and down to achieve high results in a yearly plan. Change your exercises continuously to help recuperation. We at Westside never do the same exercise on max effort day 2 weeks in a row. This is to avoid accommodation. The more exercises you do in a yearly plan, the more fully prepared you will be.

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