

## How To Reach the Top

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How does one reach the top of powerlifting? First, you must possess all the strength qualities such as speed strength, strength speed, and a high work capacity with high-intensity workouts. This means close to or above 100%. If you cannot train almost constantly heavy year in and year out, you will never reach your full potential.

There have been a lot of has-beens. They were superstars for a short time and then disappeared as fast as they came. There are many factors that contribute to these short careers. Some lifters can't cope mentally, while others fail physically. Some complain about today's gear, but its here to stay. Here's the problem with many lifters: they cannot believe in their hearts that they can lift the weights many lifters are doing today. The old guys cry foul, but in fact they used every advantage that was available to them in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s.

What about training, and how do some stand the test of time while others fall off the mountain as fast as they went up? Three lifters that have maintained a very high level of performance are Amy Weisberger, Chuck Vogelpohl, and George Halbert.

Amy has been the all-time total record holder in the 123s and currently holds not only the 132 total record at 1333 (over 10 times body weight) but also the 148 total at 1440 with a world record 590 squat, 350 bench press, and 500 deadlift, all this at 42 years old.

Chuck won the 1987 YMCA Nationals with a 1968 total at 220. In the early 2000s, he broke the squat record with a 1025 plus a 2319 total at 220. In April 2007, he squatted 1150 and totaled 2605 at 264. In August 2007, he pulled an 835 deadlift, his all-time best at 42 years old.

George has broken 11 all-time world records in the bench press in three weight classes: 198, 220, and 242.

All three of these lifters can maintain a high intensity and high volume of training. All three have developed the ability to train when they are very muscularly sore. Both Amy and Chuck use the same format. They squat on Fridays with mostly bands and chains. Because Amy is 5' 2", she places the bands over the plates. Her training sets with at least 180 pounds of band tension range from 275 for 8 sets to 365 for 4 sets. Her best box squat with bands is 440. This netted her a world record 590 at 147 pounds body weight.

The introduction of large amounts of bands added to the squat weights changed everything. While gaining weight is not conducive to raising the deadlift, Amy pulled two personal records, 485 and 500, to total 1440 at 147 pounds. Amy's two styles of deadlifting both employ bands. She pulls off the floor for speed strength with mini-bands that provide 100 pounds of tension on the floor and 220 at lock-out. She does 4-8 singles after she squats. Amy also does rack pulls with a monster mini-band or a light band. The tension may be up to 300 pounds plus bar weight.

Amy's squat and deadlift training is a high-volume, high-intensity program. Regardless of her trainability, she goes as hard as possible. She increases her GPP by mainly concentrating on sled pulling for upper and lower body. She works on flexibility, mobility, and muscular endurance and pays close attention to her weaknesses.

Amy trains the bench in the same manner: chains and bands are used 95% of the time. She also uses special kettlebells, by themselves or attached to the bar with mini-bands.

Amy has competed with the best during the 1980s and 1990s and currently, and she remains the brightness in the night sky referred to as a star.

Chuck Vogelpohl is half man, half amazing. He won his first Nationals in 1987 and the WPO in two divisions, setting world records in two weight classes and squatting more in the 275's than the 308 world record. How does he do it, and is he looking for more?

First let's look at his squat training. He had trouble in the early stages of squatting, not in the bottom, but at the very top, but after experimenting with bands, it solved his problem of extreme bar deceleration.

For speed strength training, his band weight combination is 40% bar weight and 10% band tension on the box. An additional 25% band tension is at the top of the squat. He does this type of training to build a fast rate of force development.

For absolute strength development, the band tension will be near the bar weight. His best box squat with 640 pounds of band tension is 835, which equals 1475 at the top and 1085 at the bottom on a parallel box. Chuck says that lots of heavy bands has pushed his squat up to the 1150 he has done recently.

Chuck likes to do very heavy rack pulls, sometimes up to more than 1100 pounds, a few inches above the knees. This teaches him to strain, and if anybody knows how to strain, it's Chuck.

His system is just like Amy's: high volume, high intensity, always trying to do more sets and more weight per set. His training is very dense, meaning short rests between sets per training period. He fully intends to squat over 1200 in the 275's.

His bench press is trained just like everyone else's at Westside. It has suffered somewhat from two triceps surgeries and a broken neck from playing in the gym with the late Matt Dimel. He has the best training partners, training system, and training environment, and he is a very large part of that.

Amy and Chuck use the same training system. Our max effort work is modeled after the Bulgarians'. There is a difference though; they limited their exercises to six or so after mastering form. While we max out almost every Monday and Wednesday for the squat, bench, and deadlift, we use special exercises, but seldom the actual squat, bench, or deadlift. This might consist of box or rack pulls with bands over the bar or the lightened method. Pavel refers to the second method as the future method, meaning doing a weight now that one will do in the future. Another option is box squats on a variety of box heights and with various bars. The bench workouts consist of the conjugate system, e.g., floor press with weight only, bands, or chains; board press; or incline, decline, close

grip, or wide grip bench. It is your job to find what exercises make you strong and which one shows how strong you are.

George Halbert started out doing full power meets and was very strong in all three lifts. However, he found the bench was to become his destiny. He now has world records in three weight classes, for a total of 12.

George has a speed day and a max effort day like everyone else. On speed day, he does singles with a lot of bands and with different band tensions. The lifts are an optimal 12-18 per workout. He does a lot of experimentation with multiple mini-bands while leaving the bar weight the same. George has found overspeed eccentrics to be very valuable for speed work as well as max effort work.

Unlike the full powerlifters, George only benches on the two main days; no other work is done on these days. However, he trains the bench five times a week. He has a max effort upper back day twice a week where he does lots of rows. He also has a hypertrophy day. Yes, it's a lot like body building, including curls to balance out the arms. He also does a lot of hammer curls, delt work, upper back work, and a small amount of chest work.

Everyone at Westside, including George, has a max effort day and a dynamic day and does a lot of repetition work to near failure. This program is constructed with the conjugate system in mind and constantly pushes GPP. If you want to be a star and last many decades, I suggest you try the Westside methods.

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