OPTIMAL TRAINING

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What is optimal training? It can be many things to many people. The optimal number of lifts is first and foremost at Westside Barbell. There is an optimal number of reps and sets, length of rest time between sets, and length of time between extreme workouts. There is also an optimal number of sets and reps with bands, chains, weight releasers, and just barbell weight. It is important to know what is optimal for you with the contrast effect, such as bands, chains, and weight releasers.

The lifts can be more effective with chains to accommodate resistance. The lifts become more taxing; thus a slight reduction is made in the total set count. When using weight releasers, only one lift out of two reps is effective because of the eccentric overload on the first rep of each set. The use of bands when applied correctly provides great tension throughout the entire range of motion.

Prilepin's 1974 research was based on numerous world, European, and Olympic competitors. He calculated minimal, maximal, and of course optimal numbers of sets and reps at certain intensity zones. His work provided us with the maximum number of reps after which the lifts would slow down and thus become less effective. He determined what load was sufficient to make progress and what load was too taxing and would reduce the training effect. His work was based on Olympic lifts, which are lighter and of course faster, utilizing less muscle tension than the powerlifts.

My work is valid, having 75 Elite lifters and nine men who total over 2500 and two over 2600 to date. Our findings are similar to Prilepin's if you calculate time under tension. Most of our box squat percentages are between 75% and 85%, for example. Of the top Olympic lifters (I am talking about the lifters overseas), 50% of their training of the lifts is between 75% and 85%. (See *Managing the Training of Weight Lifters*, Laputin and

Oleshko.) The Westside Barbell web site has training information on squat, bench, and deadlift loading as it relates to volume and intensity.

When training optimally, we observed that it is the special exercises that must be given careful consideration. I watch everything that goes on as far as training at Westside. Some of our lifters do an amazing amount of upper body training, and it shows as far as physical development is concerned, but does little to aid in their bench progress. Others do very little extra lat, triceps, or delt work, yet have a superior bench press. It should be noted that we have in house 23 700-pound benchers. This is also true for our squatters and deadlifters. We have 11 lifters who squat over 1000 and three over 1141. Fourteen deadlift over 800. Nine total more than 2500 and two more than 2600. As you can see, this is a highly skilled group.

How can the special exercise volume vary so much from lifter to lifter? Biomechanics is one reason. Some men and women are more suited to squat, bench, or deadlift than others. They obviously need less work for the primary movers such as the low back, hips, and glutes. Triceps, lats, and delts, even ab work, can vary a great deal.

What about psychological types. The introvert doesn't need as much stimulation as others in training. He appears to be more methodical when lifting maximal weights and is not as explosive. The extrovert is very explosive. Tyrel Owens comes to mind, and Ray Lewis in football and Chuck Vogelpohl in powerlifting. Not only are they very strong, but they possess a very highly active central nervous system. The two groups seldom function well together on the same program.

Many lifters seem to overanalyze training, form, rest, and nutrition. It has been my experience that these men fail to reach the very top and spend a lot of time wondering why. Plan well, train hard, and have passion to reach your goals. Your training must suit your physical, psychological, and mental needs. It can't be a cookie-cutter program.