

Increase your bench press today!



With summer extremely close, so are pool parties, beach vacations, rafting trips, and other shirtless recreation. The perfect accessory? A nice pair of pecs that leave everyone wondering what you were doing while they hibernated during winter.

As The Incredible Hulk (Lou Ferrigno) once said, “It’s necessary to gain strength in order to gain mass. It’s that simple; get stronger and you’ll get bigger.” So let’s take a look at how to get stronger at everyone’s favorite exercise, the bench press.

5 SETS OF 5. Beginning your chest workout with this bench press routine has often proven itself to be many top athletes’ quickest route to pure strength. After a brief warm-up, start by choosing a single weight that you are positive can be done for 5 sets of 5 reps each. It is better to choose a weight that could be too light rather than too heavy. If you clear all 25 reps, add 5 pounds total to the bar the next time you train chest. If you fall even one rep short, try the same weight again at the beginning of each chest workout until

you clear the 25. *The most crucial point with this routine is to rest a minimum of three minutes between each set!* This is critical in allowing lactic acid to depart and ATP to return, and is what will ensure you make it all the way through the last rep. When the strength coach gave me this routine, I wondered how it could possibly get me past my sticking point. After clearing 280 lbs. for all 5 sets of 5 reps, I realized nothing could have gotten me there faster.

SHOULDERS, SHOULDERS, SHOULDERS...

Cannonball shoulders can assist in almost every upper-body exercise, but it is in the bench press that they can truly be the strongest ally. Simply training shoulders more intensely can often lead to a much higher total bench weight. I recommend keeping to the basic shoulder movements: standing barbell presses to the front, seated dumbbell presses, and machine shoulder presses of any kind. Stronger shoulders equal stronger bench.

START THE PRESSES! Although cable flyes, dumbbell flyes, and pec decs can be fun and thought of as a great way to “shape” the chest, they really do little for overall power and size. Stay with the basics. Bench press, incline bench press, flat dumbbell press, incline dumbbell press, and even good old push-ups are much better at building raw strength.

Use any of these three tips and you’ll notice the numbers in your training log going up week after week, or better yet, use all three for ultimate gains! Whether you’re lying down on the bench for a quick 5 sets of 5 with over 200 lbs., or you’re stripping off your shirt for the wife’s summer office party, people will know you didn’t spend the holidays on the couch. Train hard and good luck! 🍀