

Mass with Class

Contributed by Branch Warren
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Squats— The Exercise We Love To Hate

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I've said it before— usually it's the exercises you hate the most that are the most productive for you. Me, I hate deadlifts. Seriously, they are just about the most uncomfortable thing I can imagine and I f***ing hate them! But I do them because working hard on them gives my back a thick, powerful look that is almost impossible to get otherwise.

The same thing goes for squats. Can you build big legs without squatting? Yeah, you might be able to work hard and heavy on leg presses and get some decent wheels— but you're fighting an uphill battle. Squats are the most direct path to gaining mass in the legs. It's like asking if you can drive cross-country in a beat-up jalopy that keeps breaking down and taking the back roads. You'd probably get there eventually, but you'd get there a lot quicker and more reliably driving a new car and taking the interstate.

Hopefully this makes sense. Unless you have some real reason to avoid squats, such as a lower-back injury, you should be doing them even if you're not a "big fan." Not many people are when it comes to squats, but they do them because they work so damn well!

Up Where We Belong

What is a good way to bring up the

upper inner chest? I hit chest first in the week and start with dumbbell flyes or cable uppercuts to isolate the chest and then move to incline presses next. Any ideas? I respond well to the pre-fatigue technique.

My first question to you is, what the hell is a cable uppercut? An uppercut is a type of punch as far as I know. I am guessing you mean cable crossovers on an incline, or maybe cable crossovers done with the pulleys set at the bottom. The pre-exhaust technique is fine for guys who have a real problem with either their triceps or front delts taking over on pressing movements, but otherwise I think you are sabotaging your results by doing it all the time. I say this because it takes away from the weight you can handle, and heavy weights in good form are what build mass.

I think you would see better results from pressing 100s instead of 75s. You have the right idea by doing incline pressing movements first. My upper chest used to suck until I started doing incline dumbbell and incline barbell presses first in my routine, then moved on to flat presses and dips. I save all the flye and cable movements for the end, as I just don't consider them to be as valuable for mass gains. Try doing it my way for a few months and see if that doesn't make a difference.

Yes, I Got This Way Lifting Two-Pound Pink Dumbbells

Branch, my training partner (35 years old, 240 at 6-7 percent body fat— not a small guy, haha) hasn't competed in SEVEN years and he is just maintaining his size and shit. I told him if he wants gains he needs to lift much more intensely and lift heavier weights, but he doesn't want to. "My joints would be destroyed," he says, "and besides, do you really think the pros train heavy all the time? It's only for photo shoots to look like a hero." Being that you are known for your intense training sessions and your strength, could I get an honest response from you to the statement above?

Sure, I only train heavy when I'm at a photo shoot. Usually I am using the little chrome dumbbells and cables with just a little bit of weight on the stack. Get real! Some pros definitely train heavier than others, but we all train heavy. That's the only way to build the extreme levels of mass that we have.

Honestly, I don't know how your buddy managed to get to 240 at 6 percent body fat with his lazy attitude. I'm sorry to say his claim is almost definitely an exaggeration—6 percent isn't far from contest condition, and not many people can walk around like that year-round unless they are Dexter's twin brother. You didn't say how tall he was, so maybe he's like 6'4", in which case a lean 240 would be big, but nothing spectacular.

I don't mean to bag on your friend; it's just that I find it hard to believe he carries that much lean muscle without training with heavy weights and intensity. Maybe he's just a true genetic freak, in which case he would be 10 times bigger and more impressive if he did push himself harder. I should also say that in some photo shoots, guys do try to use a little more weight than what they normally would, just to make the shot look more hardcore. That's not too smart because when you're in contest condition (which is when almost all photo shoots are done), you are a lot more susceptible to injuries than you are in the off-season when you carry more body fat and water.

I also know that sometimes, fake weights are used. But training DVDs are a pretty accurate glimpse into the type of weights we use in our everyday workouts. You may get the occasional stunt, like when Ronnie loaded up the leg press at Metroflex to 2,500 pounds for his video, but usually it's just us pros training like we always do—hard and heavy.

As for me, I can say that with the exception of the 2-4 weeks I take off from training after a contest to let my body heal, and the 2-3 weeks it takes me after that to gradually ease back into heavy weights, I definitely train heavy all the time and push all my sets to failure or beyond. Even with great genetics and all the best food and supplements in the world, it still takes some serious effort to make muscle gains once you're past the intermediate level. Your friend can believe whatever he wants to. Obviously he doesn't really care too much about getting bigger and seems to be comfortable with his current size. Stop wasting your time worrying about him and you keep doing your thing and getting bigger and better!