

Training Methods Part 1: Speed Day

By: Louie Simmons:

While recovering from my second lower back injury, for which doctors recommended removing two disks, taking off a bone spur, and fusing my vertebrae, with no guarantees, I decided that I had to take a new approach to lifting or disappear like everyone else who lifted in early 1970's. I called Bud Chamiga in Michigan and asked for several of his books that were translated from Russian. These books contained an abundance of science combined special strength training. These materials helped me realize that lifting was a combination of biometrics, physics, and mathematics, not like I had previously thought. There was no mention of training with 5's or 3's.

I had followed the progressive overload system since my first Olympic lifting meet in 1960. The only period in which I did not compete was from 1966 to 1969, when I was in the army. In 1983 I was going nowhere with my training. I was stronger, but slower. That's where Bud's books were invaluable. They described methods of training and organization that I had never heard of before. Furthermore, no one in the United States used these methods until I started writing about them in Powerlifting USA. This article is meant to be a refresher about special methods and means on speed day.

Dynamic Effort Method. On speed day, use sub-maximal weights with maximal speed. This method is used to increase the rate of force development and explosive strength, not to build absolute strength. For squatting: 10-12 sets of 2 reps. For benching: 8-9 sets of 3 reps. For deadlifting: 6-10 sets of 1 rep after squatting.

Contrast and Reactive Method. Weight releasers provide one overload rep on each set. The recommended load on weight releasers is 20% of the barbell load. For example: 400 pounds on the bar, 80 pounds on the weight releasers. Use chain weight on the weight releasers for best results. Bands are a contrast method. We use only Jump Stretch bands. Only higher ranked lifters use bands. For speed strength, 65% of the total weight should be barbell weight and 35% should be bar tension. For strength speed or slow strength, used with maximal weights, 65% of the total weight should come from band tension and 35% should be barbell weight.

Lightened Method. By attaching bands to the top of the power rack or Monolift the total barbell weight can be reduced in the bottom of the lift. The percent reduction can range from 15% to 25%. This method builds your rate of force development by overcoming a load with a medium to heavy concentric movement.

Concentric Movement. With the bar suspended by chains or by using power rack pins, simply crawl under the bar and raise it concentrically. Going from a relaxed condition to overcoming a stable load with light and medium loads of 50% to 80% will develop a rapid rate of force development. When loads of 90% and above are used, this causes maximal force rather than appearing explosive. It may appear somewhat slow due to the massive external resistance. The second method with 90-100% or more to be used on max effort day.

Dynamic Method. For benching or squatting, 20-24 total lifts are standard on dynamic method day. For benching, use 40-50% of a 1RM with a method of accommodating resistance, i.e. bands or chains. For squatting, use 50-60% with a method of accommodating resistance. Bands or chains must always be used to greatly reduce the deceleration phase. You can stand up for a long time with a weight at the top of the squat; however with a large bar load made up of mostly band tension, you are being pulled back down, causing a force exceeding gravity.

Methods to develop a rapid rate of force development after an eccentric phase accompanied by a relaxed phase accompanied by a relaxed phase include box squats, floor presses, and board press. Many former college athletes are very explosive but lack a high level of maximal strength. They are very fast with light weight, but as the load grows to near max, 95% and higher, they slow considerably. This can be corrected by using a higher percentage of band tension-65% of total bar load. This slows the movement down while developing absolute strength.

Maximal force is displayed for 0.3 seconds. This can be prolonged with the use of bands to prevent a quick bar deceleration. The late Dr Mel Siff agreed with this. We have a 63-foot shot-putter that said he has always been quick, with a 363 power clean and a 565 deadlift at 250 pounds body weight. However, he could not budge a 600 deadlift. He has zero quickness there. Speed is relative when compared to the amount of resistance.

Pendulum Wave. On dynamic day, use a 3-week Pendulum wave. For example, for the squat week 1, 50%; week 2 55%; week 3 60%; week 4 back to 50%. Change from bands to chains, add weight releasers, use the lightened method or overcoming a rested load, or change your grip or stance.

General Physical Preparedness. Rest periods should be 45-60 seconds between sets for explosive and speed work. The muscles should be in an excitable state or slightly fatigued. This will cause an increase in difficulty in training. If this is impossible for you, your GPP through small workouts is low. You can raise your GPP thru small workouts between days and even prior to training. Chuck

Vogelpohl and I commonly go heavy on the Reverse Hyper Machine and do abs, lats, and sometimes reversal action workouts before a squat or max effort workout.

Small workouts during the week will greatly increase your chances of raising your total. Some of these workouts should be for special strength and some for restoration. This is a must for drug-free lifters. I've had many drug free lifters here who have greatly pushed up their lifts by doing extra workouts. It's ok to be drug-free, but don't be brain-free. If you don't do more, you will not make progress. A lot of you dudes played high school football, which included 2-and 3-a day practice sessions. You were drug-free then, so what's the difference? If these workouts are done systematically, you cannot over train. Remember when your squat was 400? 500? 600? and 700? But now you squat 800. How did you get stronger without doing more work, yet you didn't over train. You merely raised the amount of work systematically over the years. Simply stated , you raised your GPP.

Muscle Priority Sets. Train the most underdeveloped muscle groups first or a skill that is lacking.

Verbal Commands. Always use verbal commands such as "blast it", "drive it", "speed", "squeeze the bar", "head up", "sit back", and so on.

Conjugate Sequence Method. Always rotate special exercises on speed day. The more inquiring you are (extroverted), the more often you must switch exercises and the fewer exercises you need. The hardest thing for some lifters is to change. We combine many methods on speed day to fortify our training. If one used a single method, it would take forever to utilize them all and they would not be nonproductive. No one will ever understand the true definition of strength by only reading a book. You must become strong to recognize a weakness.