

Battle Plans - 24 weeks to Ultimate Triceps Mass

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Don't Tread On Me!

- Part three in the "24 Weeks to Battering Ram Pushing Power" series

During the past sixteen weeks we've honed in on the powerful pectoral and deltoid muscle complexes. Enhancing these two dominating groups of muscles is vital to exceeding previous pushing power limitations.

No doubt, you've begun adding some serious size and strength capabilities to these two all encompassing areas of your physique.

This last eight weeks are going to focus exclusively on tricep power.

Building war-worthy triceps is no easy feat. These next eight weeks are going to be just as hardcore as the previous sixteen. However, the design feature of these workouts is going to take all the guess work out of what it takes to build the Ultimate Triceps!

Restructuring the Triceps for Anatomical Enhancement

The Triceps brachii is the chief extensor of the arm and is located on the posterior aspect of the upper arm. Its name is derived from the three tear-shaped heads that make up this multiplex of muscles.

1. The Long Head:

The long head (caput longum), is the largest of the three heads (Caput = head). It originates from the shoulder blade just below the rounded socket of the shoulder joint, and extends almost three-fourths of the way toward the front of the arm.

The long head of the triceps is located on the back of your arm. It is the only triceps head connected to both the shoulder and elbow.

This means shoulder exercises will heavily stress the Long Tricep head. Caput longum aids the shoulder in stretching your arms behind your body.

Your triceps are used in a host of movements, especially pressing movements. So, strengthening this area of the triceps will help increase your power in other compound pressing movements as well.

2. The Lateral Head

The lateral head (caput laterale) originates below the greater tubercle of the humerus and lies on the back and side of the upper arm.

Caput laterale is located just under the shoulders.

3. The Medial Head

The medial head (caput mediale) originates below the radial groove and curves around the back of the humerus (upper arm bone) and is mostly covered by the long head.

Caput Mediale is positioned near your elbow.

The lower end of the muscle inserts in the flattened end of the ulna (olecranon). This muscle is innervated by the radial nerve and supplied by muscular branches of the brachial artery.

4. Isolation of the Three Tricep Heads

It is impossible to completely isolate a particular portion within a muscle. But there are numerous ways to over-emphasize certain areas within a muscle. One of those ways is but it is by stimulating the muscle through a variety of angles.

For example, when we performed barbell incline presses in 8 weeks to bigger Pecs, we effectively worked the entire chest area. *But* by lifting the weight from an inclined angle we forced the upper chest to resist the weight harder than the chest as a whole. In other words we forced the upper chest to take the majority of the load by stimulating uneven distribution of the weight via a sloping angle.

Our bodies are designed to be able to work from a vast amount of positions. It would only make logical sense that our nervous system would have the ability to adjust to these numerous angles and compensate by signaling particular areas within the muscle to contract harder than others.

This would allow the body to focus its muscular energy and endurance to any one particular area of that muscle that would be better equipped to perform the work to complete the given task.

In this instance the work load is being forced at such an angle that the upper chest muscles would be better equipped to handle the force being mustered against it. Thus, the nervous system sends a signal to your upper pectorals to contract harder than the other portions of your chest muscles to better deal with the stress of the inclined resistance.

In the case of triceps the lateral and medial heads of the triceps are strained most by press-downs and kickback movements. While, arms-overhead movements will favor growth of the long head.

5. Viewing the triceps.

The appearance of each head will be more prominent depending upon what angle your body is at.

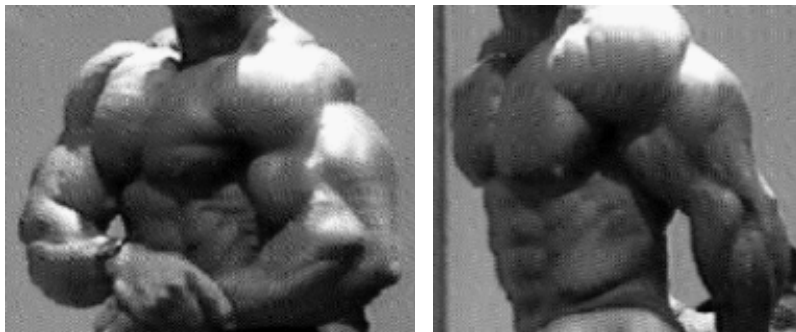
From a *front-on view*, the lateral head will appear as a large "knot" on the sides of your arms when developed, giving you a broader appearance.



When looking on from a *rear view*, all three heads will be visible as well as their relative proportion to each other.



When looking at a *side view* of the upper arm, the long and lateral head will be most pronounced. When fully developed they will make your arms look much thicker.



Finally, in a *front double biceps pose* the long and medial head will be the main attractions.



Putting all the Pieces Together!

I'm a big believer in strategy. If we go into war without a strategy we are no more than an unorganized local militia. If we approach war with a secure plan of attack we are already one step ahead of an unsuspecting enemy.

Think of it like this. Your body is always on the defensive. When you enter the gym you muscles have no idea what's about to hit them!

But if you approach the weights without an effective plan of attack, or the same old routine your muscles will yield as little effort as possible.

Our body's muscular systems are extremely complex designed structures. Your body is very adaptable and naturally accommodates to stress. Adding muscle is a very unnatural thing to your body. As I've stated before it prefers to stay in a homeostatic state of equilibrium, or maintenance.

Your body will add as little muscle as necessary to get the job done.

That's why you have to constantly give it new jobs it's not used too. In a sense adding a new plan of attack (a new principle or new shock) to your routine is literally an overload to your system that forces your muscles to grow. That's why they work so well!

As I study my physique and my workouts, I like to analyze the problems and come up with solutions. It is the goal of Beyond Failure magazine to give you as many solutions to any potential problems you might encounter on your pursuit of the perfect anatomy.

Let's say for example I am doing a self-critique (Jacob's Self Assessment Sheet is excellent for this) of my front double biceps pose and I notice my inner bicep head is lagging. I will come up with a list of principles and strategies for tackling this problem. In this instance I may use the specialization principle and list numerous exercises and shocks for better stimulating hypertrophy in my inner biceps.

I would have a much better chance of achieving my goal if I go into the gym with a strategy for attack, as opposed to just going in the gym and "going through the motions" so to speak and putting no pre-meditation into it.

That's why these last sixteen weeks we have been implementing new strategies of attack.

Throughout the course of this series we've learned two new principles for putting together more powerful pushing power:

In "8 weeks to bigger Pecs" we learned about the Stabilizer/Non-stabilizer Principle (S/NS Principle). The basics of the principle involve starting with a free-weight exercise, and following that with a machine or cable exercise. This will allow us to go heavy and stay heavy throughout the entire workout!

During "8 weeks to bigger delts" we focused on the Specialization Principle. This principle can be summed up as prioritizing a particular part or range of motion (angle) of a muscle group, while at the same time prioritizing the muscle group as a whole.

In effect it takes the prioritization principle to the next level of hardcore! You can see another excellent example of the Specialization Principle in action in Jacob's "Ultimate Anatomical Guide to Freaky Calves Part IV".

These last eight weeks I have an all new principle to introduce...the Power/Stretch Principle!

Once you start implementing this principle into your training you are going to experience some serious shock inducing growth. It works by prioritizing certain types of movements that will focus on the properties of the muscle's role in exertion with that exercise.

First let me explain some of the basic mechanics of a muscle.

When your muscles encounter resistance, a complex set of actions takes place to allow the muscles to exert themselves and also to ensure no damage is done to the muscle. Let's consider what happens in the Triceps.

Reciprocal Inhibition:

As the tricep (the antagonistic muscle) contracts a signal is sent to the bicep, via the nervous system, (the antagonistic muscle) to relax and allow the tricep to tighten.

Stretch Reflex:

Inside the Tricep, and all muscles, there is an exclusive muscle fiber called the *annulo-spiral receptor*. This receptor is responsive to the rate and extent the tricep is being stretched. As the tricep lengthens this receptor sends a signal, relative to the amount and rate of the stretch, to tell the Tricep to contract. This is, in a sense, a safety procedure to prevent the Tricep from being overstretched.

Inverse Stretch Reflex:

Enclosed in the tendon of each muscle is the *Golgi tendon receptor*. This receptor is receptive to the build up of tension when a muscle is either stretched or contracted. The receptor has a tension threshold which causes the tension to be released when it gets too high.

As the Tricep lengthens the added response of the stretching action and the stretch reflex contraction cause an upsurge of tension in the Tricep tendon. When the maximum is reached the receptor will send a message to the Tricep muscle causing it to relax. This will allow the Tricep to be stretched further.

The Power/Stretch Principle

The basic concept of the Power/Stretch (P/S) principle can be applied by breaking up exercises into two types of categories; Exercises that emphasize power, and exercises that emphasize the stretch.

What determines if a movement is a stretch exercise or a power exercise?

A power exercise has the majority of its stretch factor during the negative portion of the range of motion, for example a barbell curl, or a Close-grip bench press. During the positive portion of these exercises, you are basically only fighting gravity and rely on muscular power to lift the weight along its path of movement.

A stretch exercise is stretched heavily on the positive portion of an exercise and over-stretched on the negative portion of an exercise.

The resistance against the stretch on the positive portion of the exercise causes the muscle to lengthen. Your muscle is then subjected to twice the amount of stretch on the negative portion of the exercise causing an over-lengthening effect. This over-lengthening of the negative phase is a result of both the resistance of gravity and the naturally stretched state the exercise starts in.

A few stretch exercise examples would be Incline curls, pullovers, or lying hamstring curls.

I consider cable movements as stretch exercises due to the constant tension they put on the muscle under subjection.

There are many combinations in which to apply the P/S principle.

Methodology

For this series we will divide this principle into four phases:

Week one: Stretch exercises

Week two: Power exercises (except for French Presses, but for maximum development of the long head I included these even though they are a stretch exercise)

Week three: Super setting power and stretch exercises

Week four: A giant set consisting of the two types of exercises.

As you can see in week three we will be super setting the two types of exercises.

This is one of the most lethal combinations for super setting ever invented. As you will see this combo can result in some serious growth!

Try out these other superset combinations:

Dumbbell Flys and Bench press, Barbell Curls and Incline curls, Pullovers and Barbell Rows, Leg extensions and Hack Squats.

These three principles can in effect be used for any muscle group you want to target. For example the specialization principle could be used just as well for triceps as the stretch/power principle could. Or the S/NS principle can be used for increasing your deltoid power. All of these principles are just three more pieces of weaponry to add to your training arsenal!

Reverse Supination

Reverse supination is a technique that can be used for adding extra peak onto the entire tricep and especially on the inner tricep head. It is simply the opposite motion of the extra twist you give at the top of a dumbbell curl for biceps. You are using the same technique only reversing the twist.

Let's use the tricep dumbbell kick back for an example of how to execute reverse supination. To add extra intensity to a tricep kickback, you can twist your wrist and rotate your hand (supinate) so that the back of your hand is aiming toward your body. You may not actually be able to twist your wrist that much, but that is the hand position you are aiming for. This helps to contract the triceps peak similar to twisting at the top of a bicep movement! The rotation takes place slowly and steadily until the movement is completed and starts about half way up. You then lower the weight just like you raised it until you are back to the starting position.

You can use it at any time you wish during this series. It doesn't work as well for compound movements over the head, like barbell tricep extensions or French presses, but it is excellent for movements like tricep pushdowns and kick backs. Also one handed exercises such as one-arm at a time tricep extensions or tricep overhead presses are other excellent candidates.

Here's another top secret. Use reverse supination with your side chest or tricep poses. It adds a mean peak!

WAR MACHINE

During these eight weeks, I recommend training the triceps on a day of their own for added intensity and power. After you complete these eight weeks I recommend switching your split around so that you are working your biceps and triceps together on the same day. This will only shock your arms into further growth.

At the completion of these eight weeks you will become a walking instrument of war. You will have mastered three new strategies for taking the enemy by surprise, and summoned new depths of pushing power. Good luck with this series!

In the spirit of hardcore,

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