

The Ultimate Anatomical Guide To Freaky Big Calves Part IV

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Introduction

The freakiest calves I have ever seen, were attached to an equally freaky obese guy! This man was a walking jelly donut with a pair of 26 inch wheels! Before bodybuilding, I never really paid close attention to things like this, but his calves actually fascinated me, from a trainer's point of view. I began to see a recurrence of huge calves residing on several, like human specimens. And I wondered to myself, can this be mimicked in a bodybuilder? Did these obese fellows have the key to unlocking calf growth?

The answer was a resounding yes! All you need is to become obese yourself, and the added stress to your lower leg limbs will cause them to grow like weeds! Unfortunately, the side effect just wasn't worth it. But, it did prove a theory. Think about it...Just because they eat hamburgers and pizza all day, does not mean they are not eating anabolically. In fact, Lee Priest eats just like this in the off season. They still get plenty of insulin release and protein intake. Since they weigh so much, every time they walk, their calves are getting a workout, and the milk shake they are drinking gives them immediate replenishment! This shows you the anabolic power of bulking, and the post workout meal does it not!? In this article we will review, the top notch theories developed for calf growth. These methods will span from before Arnold's day, to present time. Furthermore, with your now established knowledge in this area, you will have that much greater an ability to apply these growth techniques!

The Austrian Oak's High Frequency Method

Lets face it, Arnold Squawzenegger, just may be the most aesthetically pleasing bodybuilder of all time! What phases me however, is the derogatory comments I hear from " so called " modern day experts, attempting to make a name for themselves by downing our sports greats. The key to greatness, is not to down past champions, but rather to learn from them. Comments such as " Arnold " didn't know what he was talking about, or Arnold's techniques are too extreme to work are completely false. Not only did they work, but they are a driving force and have been for a tremendous amount of time in bodybuilding circles. Which means, that they worked for many other greats such as Haney, Lee Priest, Tom Platz etc. I believe that you will truly know that you have made it in your field, be it athletics, writing, business, etc. when people around you attempt to find flaws in everything you do, so as to make themselves look better.

Considering the fact, that The Oak had virtually no flaws, critics will then nit pick at anything they can possibly find, that even appears as a downgrade in his physique. His calves are one of the areas most criticized. In Arnold's earlier competitive days this was a major weakness in his arsenal. In fact he would take several of his

pictures in such a way as to hide this weakness. For example, posing while standing in the water up to his knees so as to hide his lower legs. Being the true champion that he was, Arnold decided to prioritize calves, and no one can argue, that he developed an absolutely freaky pair of lower limbs! I have pics of him on stage, or while performing donkey calf raises, in which his calves look monstrous! And they measured nearly 21 inches in diameter when cut up, and probably much more in the off season!

Finally, his methods would perhaps be more qualified than most, simply because his calf genetics were about as horrible as someone could be born with! I don't care how bad your genetics are in your lower leg, Arnolds were just as bad, and probably worse! And yet, he was able to turn a weakness into a strength, just as you can! The question is are you willing to pay the price?

In fact, when a young athlete asked the former 6 time Mr. Olympia how he could develop calves as freaky as his, Arnold's answer was as follows:

" You can have calves just as good, If you are willing to pay the price. " The young man strangely looked at Arnold and asked him what he meant. The oak then replied: " Calves like this will cost you five hundred hours, " Anything less and you won't get results. " Now the Oak was very extreme, in all his ways. What he was essentially saying was, you are going to have to grind this one out kid! He believed that the more often you blasted the lower legs, and the longer you did so the greater your results would be. And to show you just how extreme and serious Arnold was in this respect, he advised bodybuilders to work their calves up to six days per week for maximum results!

In order to properly analyze this piece of advice we will have to take into consideration the fact that many people have actually had tremendous success in utilizing it. This very well may work for you, but...anything that frequent can certainly do the opposite, and hurt your gains. The greatest lesson in my opinion, derived from this story, is the prioritization that he used for his calves! Can you honestly say that you work your calves, with as much attention, and with as many sets, variations and intensity that you work your biceps with? And if that is not the case, do you feel that it is fair if this aspect of your body is a weak point? I would say it is more than fair. Therefore the first step to developing freaky big calves, is to work them like you want them to be developed that way! Look at the body part you give the most attention too, and apply that same attention to your calves and watch them grow!

note: we will talk more about frequency and splits further into the article

Tom Platz Extreme Fascia Expansion Technique

Tom Platz was just plain sick! The things he did in the gym can only be described as cruel and unusual punishment. And yet all his pain and suffering paid off in what became known as the greatest pair of legs of all time! As you know from my [muscle memory](#) article, extremely intense, and painful stretching, while pumped can cause you to double or even quadruple your rate of growth, and enhance separation between muscle groups! This absolute legend, was a pioneer in this respect, only he took a very painful technique and made it for most athletes an unbearably painful technique!

The normal method goes something like this: You begin by filling the soleus with as much blood as humanly possible! If you asked me to suggest a method of obtaining such as state, I would recommend performing a very high rep, double drop set, followed by partial repetitions. For example, you might perform a set of 30 reps to failure on the seated calf raise machine, followed by a drop set of 30 reps, then finished off with one more drop set of 30 reps ending with several partial repetitions. At this stage, in order to stretch the fascia, you might lower your heels to the ground, while the current weight from the stack applies enough pressure to the soleus, to expand the fascia surrounding it! It takes a tremendous amount of guts to perform something like this, and a high pain threshold! Platz, however would perform a similar blood pump set, and not only allow the weight from the stack to stretch his connective tissue, but also have his partner stand on the freaking machine!

I would caution against anything this extreme if you haven't sufficiently strengthened the tendons involved in plantar flexion. But it worked for Platz, and no one can deny, that his calves have set the bench mark for all bodybuilders in his day, and all the way up to our's.

My analysis here is simple. You need to use fascial stretching in your calf program. I wouldn't recommend starting off as extremely as Platz did(although you can advance to that point), but I would highly advise making this technique a backbone in your overall program!

The Reg Park Theory

The theory here is based on human mechanics. Here is how the technique is often portrayed:

" You see, we walk everywhere, and our calves are constantly at work with our own bodyweight. With this in mind, it is best to train them heavy and with lower reps. In other words, why would you mimic in the weight room what you do all day long? "

Good Points

Let me first say, that there are good and bad points to this theory. I will address the good one immediately. You see, fast twitch muscle fibers are larger than their slower counter parts. If you stimulate growth in them, it will most certainly add mass to the lower leg region. Therefore just like any other body part, you will want to pay special attention to your fast twitch fibers.

Bad Points

There are several bad points, and I believe that this illustration clearly shows why no athlete should ever stick with one training method, or one training philosophy. Unless you have insane genetics in a body part, one method of training will never get maximized growth, and I also believe that that body part would have even reached a higher level had you been more open to several theories! Here is the problem: What happens when you focus purely on fast twitch muscle fibers on a muscle group like the soleus that is over 90 percent slow twitch based? The consequence is that you end out hindering the highest majority of muscle growth in the target region! I

don't care how badly you want the soleus to grow, if you are not creating hypertrophy in the majority of cells within it, you will not obtain your goal!

Secondly, the theory is based on the fact that bodybuilders do allot of walking. I don't know about you, but If I can take the elevator instead of the stairs, that's exactly what I intend on doing! The lazier I am in this respect, or should I say the more energy I conserve the more becomes available toward the cause of hypertrophy! My point is, perhaps this would be true in a rural society, but not in today's drive rather than walk society. And even if you did walk everywhere you went, how many times did walking on a normal errand make your calf muscles go to failure? Believe me, rest pausing out a 125 repetition set in which you failed and recovered 5-10 times(fail, rest pause, fail rest pause etc) is not the same as hauling your behind to the car every morning to go to work!

The solution however is simple. You need to properly work both your slow and fast twitch cells for each of your lower leg muscles groups. If a muscle is 90 percent slow twitch, you had better focus more on slower twitch fibers, and if it is more fast twitch then emphasize those fibers. However, even the gastrocnemius is only about 51 percent fast twitch, and 49 percent slow. Yes, fast twitch fibers are larger, and in this case, they should get more work then the slower fibers, but...to quote my last calf article:

" *Slower twitch fibers still make up, almost half of the muscle group. To ignore these would be to ignore hundreds of thousands of muscle fibers! To give you the exact numbers, the gastrocnemius medial head has 1,000,000 muscle fibers in total(10)! This means that 490,000 fibers are slow twitch, that is allot of growth potential!* " (I actually explain how to do this, in the following article [click here](#) .)

John Stanley's Theory

John Stanley is a contemporary of mine. If there was one person, who possessed all the traits I admire in a human being, it was this man. He could fight like a lion, held my same beliefs as far as what life was all about, and was as nice a guy as you could meet. Now Mr. Stanley trained similar to myself when I was into martial arts. He focused on hardcore street style training, but also was into physique building. In fact, with his genetics, I would say he could easily turn pro in the sport of bodybuilding, had it been his main focus!

In the realm of calves, John could do battle with the big boys! He easily had 20 inch wheels, and borderline 21 inchers. Being inquisitive, I ended out asking him what the heck he did to achieve that kind of size!? I said, " what is your workout John. " You know what his answer was? " I don't train my calves. " I backed up for a moment, and said what!? Then how in the blazes did you develop such freaky big lower limbs! " Get this: John said that he concentrated on pushing off hard with several of the steps he took. " In other words, he purposely, and deliberately plantar flexed at the ankle joint more than a person normally would have to while walking.

This actually made sense however from past experience. You see, an earlier summer I attended a hockey camp, in which the instructor pretty much had the same philosophy. He had us walk for a freaking hour(the distance to a nearby

beach) on our tippy toes! In hockey, with every start, you want to literally strike the ice with the top edge of your skates. The next day after this walk, my calves were absolutely killing me! We did this several times over the month I was there, and I can tell you, my lower leg muscles grew big time!

Analysis of Method:

John was a great athlete and actually did quite a bit of travel in this respect, and his method transferred his weight with every step, that much more onto his posterior calf muscles which are responsible for plantar flexion. Think of it this way: If you have superior calf genetics like John, then I would seriously suggest trying this out! Heck, it may just get you 20 inch limbs! If your genetics are not that great, or simply average then you may still utilize it. Believe me, in this sport, every inch counts and you might be surprised at how much growth it gives you in a 3 month time span.

Furthermore, you might go ahead and apply the variation used by my old Hockey instructor. For example when you are done with standing calf raises try walking around for 30 seconds on the tips of your toes so that your heel is plantar flexed. If you don't believe this will hurt like hell, you are fooling yourself! This makes an excellent superset! You might even try walking around your house, or anywhere for 30 minutes or longer on the tips of your toes. This is the type of training that will make even the most genetically limited athlete get tremendous gains! Your calves will have no choice but to grow!

Arnold's Cut Off Method

They say success breeds success, and while this is true, I also believe that necessity breeds the same results!

" But one day it occurred to me that I wasn't treating the calves as seriously as the other muscles. So I made up in my mind to rectify this situation.

The first thing I did was to cut off the bottoms of my training pants. Now my calves were exposed for me and everyone else to see. If they were underdeveloped-and they were-there was no hiding the fact. And the only way I could change the situation was to train my calves so hard and so intensely that the back of my legs would come to resemble huge boulders.

At first, this was embarrassing. The other bodybuilders in the gym could see my weakness and they constantly made comments. But the plan eventually paid off. No longer able to ignore my calves, I was determined to build them into one of my best body parts. Physiologically, it was a brutal way to accomplish this, but it worked, and that is what I really cared about. Within one year my calves grew tremendously, and the comments I got in the gym were complimentary rather than critical. "

Quote from Arnold Schwarzenegger ---

Analysis

It was no longer a luxury for the Oak to take his calf training to the next level after what each of us knows was a gutsy move on his part.

I personally believe that the necessity method is one of the best to date. It creates a sense of urgency, a sense of hunger if you will. A starving man is going to work allot harder for his food, than a fat bastard with a full belly.

Vital Discussion on Rom and Repetitions

One of the main problems, and hindrances in calf programs throughout the world, is a lack of consideration, to the short range that the ankle joint actually allows. Think about it...a biceps curl could easily take 2 seconds to lift without paying attention and 5 to lower. That's how long the range of motion is. Let alone a squat, dumbbell fly, or pull-up. But look at the seated calf raise. It can take up to 10 seconds to finish one repetition on a squat, and from my observations it can take 7 seconds for someone to complete one set of 10 on the seated calf raise machine! I am persuaded that optimal growth can never be obtained like this!

Time under tension is to vital to the bodybuilder. If you are failing before 30-60 seconds you will not stimulate maximum hypertrophy in the calves. Due to their limited range of motion, a higher rep scheme can easily be likened to a lower rep scheme with the biceps. For example a set of 12 repetitions on the standing calf machine done properly, will probably take the same amount of time for someone to perform a set of 6 on any biceps movement. What you might try, is to double the rep scheme for the calves so that they get enough work. If you normally go 10, 8, 6 to work the fast twitch muscle fibers, try 20, 16, 12 respectively. There is also another reason for this. If you were to take 80 percent of your maximum for the hamstrings, because they are mainly fast twitch you would only be able to perform about 6 reps, in doing the same for the calves which are laden with slow twitch cells, you could get 12 to 25 repetitions! A slower fiber makeup will make complete stimulation of the muscle group that much harder to reach. Therefore using my muscle fiber article([part two](#)) in the anatomy section of the site, you might try doubling their layout. I would not be surprised if your calves immediately blew up!

Training Split Strategies

As you know, the calves can be broken up into several regions. The postural calves, the side calves, and the frontal calves. People also break them up further than this, and will actually organize their split accordingly.

Here is an example of how I might set up a schedule for you, in a prioritized program:

Monday: all posteral muscles except the soleus and side calf muscles

Wednesday: earliest and thursday latest: soleus and frontal calf muscles

Saturday earliest and Sunday latest : begin again

or

Monday: postural muscles, aside from the soleus superseted with frontal calf work for a maximum pump - I.e.
standing calf raises superseted with seated frontal plate raises.

Wednesday earliest and Thursday latest: soleus and side calf muscles

Saturday earliest and Sunday latest : begin again

or you could do it all in one workout like so:

Monday: 4 sets for the postural calf muscles except soleus, 2 sets focused on the side calf muscles(as they will be pre-fatigued, 4 sets for the frontal calf muscles, and 4 sets for the soleus. Vary reps accordingly etc. this is just a sample, not a guide

Saturday: begin again

or the following

Monday: all postural and side calf muscles, you might try supersetting the soleus with the gastrocnemius. Seated calf raises superseted with standing calf raises. This one is brutal. I was talking to the highly esteemed **Animal** the other day and he did a workout similar to this. Believe me, you have to be a maniac to endure these types of combinations!

Wednesday earliest and Thursday latest: frontal calf work

Saturday earliest and Sunday latest : begin again

My suggestion is to change your split on calves as you do for other body parts. Stagnation should be avoided.

Lack of Variety Myth - The Plague That Infects Today's Gyms!

I recall a major, major expert when asked about calf growth, respond with the following:

" The problem with surrounding the calves is that their is a lack of variety when training them. You have several movements for the biceps and only two or three for the calves. " Quote - Not Mentioning names , I don't like to single out people. Its not my style

The point is that most trainees, and even experts believe this nonsense. And the fact is, that:

A. If you adhere to this you will slow your growth tremendously. Just imagine if all you did for your arms was standing barbell curls and dumbbell curls. You certainly would never reach your full potential. Why do you think Charles Glass is one of the most sought after trainers in the bodybuilding world? Because he uses a huge variety on every body part.

B. There are just as many, if not more exercises for the calves as with every other body part. Just vary the movements, and use different equipment. I will name several right now! Beefcake raises with a barbell, beefcake raises on the smith machine, beefcake raises heels elevated, heels not elevated, beefcake raises using the vertical leg press across your knees for resistance, standing calf raises with a barbell, standing barbell with heels elevated, without heels elevated, on a high platform, on a soft carpeted elevation, on a short elevation, standing with dumbbells and all the variety mentioned above, standing machine calf raises, standing smith machine calf raises, standing one legged machine calf raises, old school machine calf raises, flat footed alternating standing calf raises, hack calf raises(with the barbell behind your back), smith hack calf raises, leg press calf raises feet high up on the platform, leg press calf raises with feet on the edge of platform, leg press calf raises with feet on the platform, alternating leg press raises, vertical leg press, horizontal leg press raises, 45 degree angle leg press, hack squat machine on the pads calf raises, hack squat facing the machine on and off the pad calf raises. Ok take a breather! Seated machine calf raises with feet on the edge, with feet far up on the pad, seated one legged calf machine raises, seated barbell calf raises, seated one legged(hard to balance!) calf raises, seated one legged dumbbell calf raises, seated smith machine barbell raises, seated vertical leg press pad across knees raises, donkey calf raise machine, donkey calf raise with human resistance, donkey calf raise with vertical leg press as resistance, seated donkey calf raises etc. etc. I can go on and on using weight resistance, but suffice it to say there are all of em. From here, take each of the exercises I mentioned above and point your toes inward on them and you've doubled the movements, point your toes out and you have added tons more! Or what about how you finish the contraction! As you now know, finishing the contraction off with an eversion, or inversion targets a variety of muscle groups, by doing this you have multiplied the above exercises all the more. Want more!? Standing floor front raises, standing barbell front raises, standing heels elevated front raises, smith machine front raises, cable resistance front raises, alternating front raises, seated one plate two legged front raises, seated plate on each foot front raises, seated one leg at a time front raises, standing partner resistance front raises, seated partner resistance front raises, seated cable resistance front raises, cable resisted plantar flexion, cable resisted dorsi flexion, cable resisted eversion, cable resisted inversion, hand resisted toe plantar flexion, hand resistant toe plantar flexion, paper grasping etc. You can them multiply the above by simply performing them in your shoes, bare feet, or when safe in your socks! Each gives a different stimulation!

Believe me, I can stay here all day, but I believe you get the point! I would highly suggest varying your routines as you do for any body part. For example, if you choose 4 exercises for the pectorals each workout, why not do it for the calves? Variety is the key to constant growth!

My Theory on Forced Growth!

Ultimately, I believe that those without freaky calf genetics, will have to pay a serious price for huge wheels! This means, that you need to prepare yourself mentally for insanely grueling routines! Routines so brutal, that most people would think you were a maniac, if you told them what your workout actually was! I believe that every body part on earth can be subdued, but some take more guts than most athletes have.

Therefore you need to ask yourself, " do I have what it takes to make this happen? " If you have the guts, you now have the way to make it happen(from a physiological standpoint, in the previous articles). I would also suggest that you throw the rules out of the window. There are some workouts where I'd recommend blasting the calves Austrian Blitz style! Your goal is to literally " force " growth in this area, by any means possible! For example, recently I decided to do calves at home with just my bodyweight(I was working the postural calves minus the soleus). I ended out doing weightless standing calf raises until I reached 2, 000 repetitions! Each rep was strict, and I did not interrupt my journey to 2, 000 except when I reached failure during a set. I ended out doing endless high repetition sets to failure, and also changed the angles throughout the workout. I performed the first 1, 000 reps without shoes, and every hundred reps I changed an angle. I would finish my contraction with an eversion for 100, then with an inversion, followed by toes pointed out, then in, etc. For the final 1, 000 reps I put my socks and shoes on and it was as if I were doing a completely different exercise! It took me a week before I regained full use of my calves, but they swoll right up! This is a huge workout, and you might start with 500 reps, or 1, 000. But you get the point! If you have to do quadruple strip sets followed by partial reps go for it! If you need to use a high volume, or a high rep shock do it!

Force your lower legs to respond to your demands and your demands only! You are in control now!

note: Obviously you cannot do those types of workouts every week, but they should be a part of your arsenal.

Conclusion

Four insanely detailed articles on quite possibly the most difficult subject known to our sport! If you apply the principles discussed, I can guarantee you incredible results. I also can guarantee those without great calf genetics one thing: You need every advantage you can get in the calf wars. There are two options:

- A.** Half ass your calf workouts after working your quads and never reach your potential
- B.** Take a hold of the wheel and see gains that you never imagined were possible!

I leave the choice to you...

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