

The Greatest Training Style of All Time!

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Note: Due to the extreme importance of this first question, I have separated it from all other questions this month, for easier reading, and comprehend-ability.

Once And For All What Style Is The Greatest!

Question: There's this huge guy at my gym. The only strange thing is that he works out for like two and a half hours every workout, what's the deal Jacob? I thought that you couldn't workout for more than 30-45 minutes to gain muscle? What I am trying to say is, what is the best training method. There's like a zillion of them out there, and they all claim to be the best?

Thanks Jacob

Curtis

Answer: Hi Curtis,

What you have actually done is emphasize the point I am about to make. Your question is an extremely valid one, and is usually only answered one way. I mean that literally. One trainer will say that their method is superior, while another will claim the same about their own. The fact of the matter, is that this has actually become a pattern and a rather aggressive one at that.

What will happen is that one guru will say that 30-45 minute training is the only way to go. And in order to prove this point he will show just how inferior all other training methods are. For example, he will address volume training like so:

"Volume training is just an excuse for less intense individuals, blah, blah, blah, and so on and so forth for 100 more pages in his book."

What happens after this, is that the " guru's " advocates will all act the same way. They will go to the gym and proclaim that every athlete using high volume, are screwing up in just about every area.

"I can't believe that guy does 12 sets for his arms, hell I don't even do direct arm work...."

Then you will have another Guru come on the scene and proclaim that failure training is trash.

"When you adhere to failure training, you could start a chain reaction that could conceivably shut down your entire central nervous system! (kind of sounds like back to the future to me). All those who train to failure, train to fail!"

Then the next day, a guy who has made all of his progress training to failure will adopt this new philosophy and down everyone who trains to failure.

Excuse me? Why are you training to failure? There is no correlation between pushing yourself to the limit in your training and muscle growth...

This then starts a chain reaction. As if a pre-requisite for being a guru, is to not only prove your methods are superior but to down all others. For example the great and famous Charles Poliquin believes that higher volume is the key to optimal strength and mass gains. Being a great athlete and trainer, he has an endless supply of studies to back up his findings.

There has been considerable debate about whether or not only one set is needed to elicit strength gains, with a vocal group of strength coaches saying there are no advantages in performing multiple sets of an exercise.

Because those promoting these one-set systems are often charismatic and because some athletes enjoyed progress on these programs for brief periods, a perception grew that weight training was simpler than we had thought. It would be great if this were true, but the fact is if you want your athletes to get big or as strong as possible as fast as possible, you can't adopt such a simplistic approach to training.

I wish that the subject of sets could be covered with a few simple guidelines such as the one-set proponents advocate, but sometimes a "dummies" approach is simply dumb. – Charles Poliquin (1)

And of course Charles Poliquin is known for assigning 12 sets of just one exercise to blast a muscle group and then some! He says and I quote:

A higher number of sets develops the skill of activating more muscle fibers for maximal gains (1)

He essentially explains the importance of volume, in countless ways. Now what do you suppose a HIT advocate, or low volume athlete would say in response to Mr. Poliquin? Do you think it would be positive? I remember one person actually attacking Charles' credentials. And so the game continues. Even you must admit, it is certainly entertaining. But in many ways defeats the purpose. If one person likes low volume, they will adamantly attack those who adhere to higher volume routines. This is across the board, expert verses expert, and trainee verses trainee. One expert will question another's experience, and one trainee will challenge another trainees ability to perform a certain program, or even his character.

Note: I am proud to say, that our forums, are one of the few places on the net, in which flaming is virtually non-existent. Most of our athletes are concerned with improving themselves and others, and that is why they have come here! Unfortunately many people go to forums to flame, talk trash, and not to improve their actual bodybuilding ability! If that is the goal, then these people soon find out that abcbodybuilding is not the place for them. They are self evident, and can be found spending 100 percent of their time in the chat areas of forums, and not in the bodybuilding areas. While chatting is certainly fun, productive in relieving stress and

getting to know each other, I find it ironic, when people who never go to training, or nutritional forums can complain??? But that is an entirely different subject.

What we have covered so far, is that there are endless experts who say that their style is superior, and all others are inferior...Therefore what we should now do is examine the physical evidence and base our decision on that.

Failure

The first method that has been attacked is failure training, yet it has countless success stories, and has been a measuring rod for decades with extreme success. From a " bodybuilding " perspective, considering its wide variety of successful advocates, you would have to, based on physical evidence say that this is one of the most legitimate training methods ever. Larry Scott would not only train to failure, but use supersets to go beyond it! We know what Arnold advocated. Here are a few more quote from present and past champions:

I take every set to failure, and will also use force reps, strip sets, and other shocking principles to tap into new muscle fibers --- Dorian Yates 6 Time Mr. Olympia

When you hit failure your workout has just begun - Ronnie Coleman - 3 time Mr. Olympia

I believe that Mike Mentzer's thoughts are well known on this subject:

Anytime you do not train to failure, you are under training - Mike Mentzer

To stimulate optimal size and strength increases, it's imperative that you regularly attempt the momentarily impossible. For example, if you can curl 100 pounds for a maximum of 10 reps, but never attempt the 11th, your body has no reason to enlarge upon its existing capacity. It is only by regularly attempting to go beyond your existing capacity that inroads are made into your body's reserves - Mike Mentzer

Obviously the above athletes have spawned countless failure advocates who have had tremendous success with this training method. If you have ever watched Shawn Ray you would know that he regularly performs strips sets to take him past failure, Kevin Levrone uses cheat reps, forced reps and anything else he can find to stimulate growth, and Cormier is the same way. Charles Glass, probably the best trainer in the world uses every shocking principle listed on this site to take his trainees past failure.

I'm not sure about CNS, I can only tell you what works for me. I train to failure and I get great results. I stick with what produces and it continues to do so for me --- Mike D'Andrea - OHIO STATE BUCKEYE LINEBACKER

The forum members know this quote from Buckeye. So how has this style of training panned out for him?

He is rated as the best prep linebacker in the country, Espn rated him as the No.1 overall linebacker in the country. He Recorded 140 tackles as a senior, averaged 15

yards-per-catch as a tight end. Mike is now playing for one of the best colleges football teams in the world, the Buckeyes! He also won the best body contest for his team, weighs over 240 pounds with single digit body fat, benches over 450 pounds, squats over 500 like it were the bar, runs a 4.50 40 time, and broke his old college teams leg press record! And the numbers only keep going up. Look for Mike to do damage for a long time to come!!!

Volume

We then have volume training. This training style has perhaps produced more champions than any of its kind. Lee Priest, Lee Haney, the Austrian Oak, Charles Poliquin, and the list goes on and on. I would say that the main benefit of using volume, is a maximum stimulation of muscle fibers, a maximum build up of mitochondrial density, a maximum exposure to nutrient rich blood, a maximum learning exposure, a higher hormone release and much much more. It however, is most critiqued for its taxation on the human body. In other words, if you are not sleeping, and eating perfectly this training style can certainly over train you and is attacked mainly from that perspective.

HIT – Medium Volume Training

High intensity training is probably the most ridiculed of all the methods, simply because its founders ridicule other training styles more than any other guru's. If you throw a punch, expect to take a few. Going outside of the political realm of things, HIT certainly has a wide resume of advocates, who are living proof that this training style is legitimate, and can work wonders! Its greatest asset, is that it allows the athlete to have more recovery time than any other training method. This certainly can enhance the anabolic environment. After all we grow in the kitchen and in bed, not the gym. Again, another winner. Medium Volume training is a step above Hit, in that it usually lasts for only 30-45 minutes. Again, it allows more recovery. It essentially seeks a middle ground between HIT and volume.

So What's The Best Style? I think we are making headway. So far we have narrowed down the fact, that each style has its physical evidence. To refute the fact that this is the case would be a waste of precious time. You can talk to you are blue in the face about cns failure, but you cannot refute the fact that countless athletes have successfully built physiques with failure training. You could also do the same thing with volume training, and why it is so negative to bodybuilding and you would end up wondering why so many legends have sworn by it. And this could again be shown with HIT advocates.

What I would like to do now is analyze the testimonials given by the majority of these advocates and perhaps through them we can see which of these styles is the greatest of them all. When you open up a HIT book what is the first thing that you see? You could pretty much recite it by now couldn't you?

I trained with volume for 10 years straight, and worked out 6 days a week, twice a day for that time span. Then one day I tried HIT training and my gains skyrocketed! --- A story I've heard in every single HIT book introduction

Lets analyze this if you will. The person said, that he had used volume for freaking ten years straight and then finally changed his routine up and " his gains

skyrocketed. " Ok...first of all, why would anyone use a training style for that long(and the testimonial ranges from quote: years, and the most I have seen is 15 years) ? See the point? Almost every testimonial is based on the fact that the trainee used one style for years, and made gains when he was intelligent enough to change his routine up. In other words, he did not necessarily make gains because the style was " superior. " But because he switched his routine up. Most people get stuck in using one method of training, and when they finally decide to mix things up, they notice incredible gains. I would venture that this is due to the shock of the change, and not that the method was better than the other.

However, the words above stick in their heads, and because these quick gains matched what they read about, they are now convinced that what the author of the book said was the infallible truth. This same scenario can be applied from someone switching from low volume to high volume. Most likely your gains will skyrocket.

With that in mind, I have come to a few very important conclusions:

1. There is no superior training style. Or one training style that out does all the rest.
2. There are however, time proven, outstanding, incredibly productive methods out there. I,E, Volume, HIT, Medium Volume, etc.
3. From analyzing the testimonials we basically see a common thread. That the athlete who used the method, had " stagnated " with his old training style.

Where do we go from here? I believe that the most sensible approach is to use a combination of all the training styles. In other words, when one method is not yielding optimal results, switch things up! Take a look at Old Schools routines. He will utilize volume, and then taper off to HIT training. It's open mindedness like this that just plain produces results! And in my opinion a bodybuilder can benefit from cycling methods throughout a years time:

Cycle One – Heavy Compound Movements, shorter duration workouts. And an emphasis on progressive resistance

Cycle Two – Apply your new found strength to pure bodybuilding. Lift slightly lighter weights. Use more isolation exercises, focus on the negative, increase volume and variety.

Cycle Three – You conditioning should already be increased. But go ahead and work on mitochondrial density. Be sure and enhance supersetting, extremely higher repetitions, shorter rest periods, and perhaps some intense cardiovascular work to rev-your overall conditioning. This is vital, or you will inevitably run into a brick wall.

Or another example would be

Cycle One - High Volume

Cycle Two - Medium Volume

Cycle Three - Extremely Low Volume

There are many other examples, but you see my point. I believe the key to success in this sport, and also to constant mass gains is an athletes willingness to change, and also to use the best of all available, proven methods.

Sincerely

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