

Learning from the Masters

Part 1

Five Lessons from Chuck Sipes

People who have taken my seminars know that I always give credit where it is due. Today, I will tell you what I have learned from Chuck Sipes. ('59 IFBB Mr. America, '61 Mr. Universe , '66 Mr. Olympia 4th place and '68 Mr. World) . He was particularly known for his Herculean strength in all lifts. For example, he bench pressed 570 pounds raw at a bodyweight of only 220 lbs.

I have used many Sipes training methodology gems in coaching my athletes over the last 38 years.

For more rapid gains, use two a days workout.

Sipes used to work as a youth counselor at a reformatory school which allowed him to train up to three times a day. Once I adopted this training philosophy with my athletes and myself, velocity and magnitude of gains skyrocketed.

The Sipes set/rep scheme

Sipes liked to used a system that used a combination of pyramid and step approach to determining the load. So for example, a bench press workout would look like

2 x 8

2 x 6

2 x 4

2 x 2

Sipes liked to be able to do two sets with a certain weight at a give rep number before increasing the load. I believe that his approach allowed him to overload his musculature without overtaxing the CNS. He called this set/rep scheme the tonnage system.

He would use a variation this approach at the beginning of every workout to recruit high threshold motor units, which would be followed by high rep work.

The concept of Heavy Supports

You can overcome your training plateau by using the technique called « Heavy Supports » . it was popularized by Chuck Sipes, a Mr. America known for his amazing strength in all lifts. Strength legends like Dr. Fred Hatfield later on use adaptations of this concept to set world records in the squat.

He claimed it built 'tendon strength » for a lack of better explanation. The truth of the matter is that it helps heighten the shutdown threshold of the Golgi Tendon Organ (GTO), which is a tension/stretch receptor located in the tendon. The GTO inhibitory effect can be seen when two people of uneven strength levels arm wrestle. The weaker person when losing will look like he is suddenly quitting and gets his wrist slammed to the top of the table. What really is happening is that the GTO is perceiving a rapid rate of stretch during the eccentric contraction, and yells to the brain « Better shut down the contraction, or my biceps tendon is going to roll up under my tonsils». The brain sends a rapid message to inhibit the contraction in order to prevent a muscle tear.

Now you can raise that threshold by interspersing 8 seconds heavy isometric holds a.k.a. supports in between regular sets. So my approach of making use of the “heavy supports” in your bench press routine may look like this:

Set 1: Bench Press 5 R.M. @ 85% of max

Set 2: Heavy supports of 8 seconds @ 120 % of max, basically it is a 1/16 th of a the range, you just unrack the weight and hold with your elbows just short of lock-out. The weight should be heavy enough that your upper extremities will look like they are suffering from a Parkinson attack.

Set 3: Bench Press 5 R.M. @ 85% of max

Set 4: Heavy supports 8 seconds @ 125 % of max

Set 5: Bench Press 5 R.M. @ 85% of max

Set 6: heavy supports 8 seconds @ 130 % of max

Don't be surprised if your heavy supports loads climb up dramatically. Don't be shy to use even greater percentages for the heavy supports than the ones suggested.

Make sure that you train in a power rack for this routine, and set the range limiting bars 2-3 inches below your lock-out position to prevent any free instant plastic surgery...

By using heavy supports, I would not be surprised if your bench press goes up 20-25 pounds in only 4 workouts.

The 3-Way Dumbbell ConcentrationCurls

This method allows to target a high per^[SEP] Do 3 sets each position – supinated, hammer grip Do both hand positions while seated and bent over like in any classic concentration curls. Triceps is resting on forearm stretched across leg. The third type of concentration is done bent over a table with forehead on forearm and with palm facing you touch dumbbell under the opposite arm's armpit.

The lean away dumbbell wrists curls.

Load one-dumbbell to usable poundage that you can get 20 reps with. Place the dumbbell at the foot of the bench.

Sit down with the dumbbell on the bench with one haand, resting the wrist extensors on the padding, and the hand and dumbbell extended off the edge of the bench. Use a supinated grip, with an off-set grip.(thumb set firmly against the inside plate), palm up grip, on the dumbbell handle. ^[SEP]

Lean yourtorso forward and to the outside until the upper arm & shoulder of the working hand is as close as parallel to the floor, . Stay in this position as you prepare to perform to do the Sipes Wrist Curl. ^[SEP] ^[SEP]

Now, contract the forearm muscles by flexing the wrist, curling the dumbbell up as high as possible Pause for a 2-second count at this peak contraction position. S-L-O-W-L-Y lower the hand downward so that it hyper- extends below the edge of the knee.

.By leaning the shoulder and upper arm of the working hand to an almost parallel position to the floor position you'll notice a much more intense muscle contraction in the forearm flexors, compared to the conventional way.

Since the body has not dramatically evolved since the 1960's these tips/methods will certainly bring you amazing results.

Try them out, and let me know how they work you.

Enjoy!

Coach Charles R. Poliquin