

Biceps Peak

By

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Perhaps more than any other body part, the arms, especially the biceps, have been the focus of the most interest and attention. Since Christmas it seems like every question or correspondence I've had has been related to biceps training. I understand the "newbie's" who are asking all the questions but a significant number are coming from seasoned veterans. Why? Don't know why! It often runs like this in my business. It's usually feast or famine and that's nothing new.

I can sum up what I have been asked simply by stating what I have been asked countless times; "I want to add peak to my biceps." "I feel they could use a little more size but they don't have the peak I would like, that's my goal." An old worn out saying is; "it's better to have a well shaped and defined 16" arm than a 19" arm that has no shape and is not defined." It's true, even though some may not think so. Test it for yourself. Find a chunk of mass that is hanging down someone's arm and measures over 19" and then find someone who has a well shaped and defined arm that is smaller. Size alone does not get it, especially in bodybuilding. Why do you think bodybuilders trim down for contests? Size, definition, shape, proportion, you must have them all in order to win.

Many believe the peak of ones biceps is purely genetic. I tend to agree; to a certain extent that is. What I don't agree with are the ones who perform only mass and bulking movements with no concentrated program for peaking and clam they can't develop a biceps peak. You can't if you don't develop and follow a program that will give you a peak, that's for certain.

Over the years I also discovered that you won't really find much success in performing a peaking movement in a workout designed to provide mass. For example; I know some who will perform barbell curls, dumbbell curls, and then add some concentration curls or cable curls in as a last movement thinking they performed two mass exercises and are finishing off with concentration or cable curls as a peaking movement. This approach may have merits for those who have already developed a peak but it never seems to work very well for the majority of people who are in the stages of trying to develop the peak. The choice is either mass or peak.

I feel without a doubt the single best piece of equipment for developing the biceps peak is the Spider Bench. Since it is extremely difficult to find a gym that has a true Spider Bench, and it's almost as difficult to find a manufacture who sells them, a person could use a Preacher or Scott Bench instead as an alternative, if the back portion of the bench was flat and exactly vertical with the floor, if not you won't get the results you are seeking. The advantage to a Spider Bench is in the body position; it's entirely different from a standing or sitting Preacher bench, even when using the flat side of the pad. There is a direct and pronounced effect on the biceps that I have not been able to duplicate otherwise.

Although I'm more fond of dumbbell training than I am barbell movements, especially since I've grown older, I find the Spider Bench Barbell Curls superior to using dumbbells but don't rule out the use of dumbbells on the Spider Bench. Barbell or dumbbell, whatever feels best for you will work. The important thing to remember is the body position one can assume while performing the movement.

In the picture below, Don Howorth is performing a one arm dumbbell curl on the Spider Bench at the old Vince's Gym. Notice how his body is almost horizontal to the floor. This is the key position to be in when using the Spider Bench or any bench to peak the biceps. By the way, the name Spider Bench, it comes from the fact that the bench has so many legs, the original ones anyway.

Today a Spider Bench looks different but is designed to do the same thing. The next picture is a Spider Bench Larry Scott manufactures. It's a solid bench and delivers what it is designed to.



Don Howorth performs a dumbbell curl on the Spider Bench. Notice how the triceps is braced and due to the unit construction bodyweight is resting more forward than on the legs, this is important. Your weight needs to be up toward your arms.



The Spider Bench sold by Larry Scott

Anyone who has used a good Spider Bench can testify to the sensational feel one gets after only one set. It's surprising. Concentration Curls, and other peaking movements do not achieve the same results.

Okay, enough of the sales pitch for Spider Benches. By the way, no one has offered me a commission to promote the bench either. I'm just passing along a little wisdom obtained from personal experience.

If you don't have access to a Spider Bench you'll have to use what you have, from the pictures above I think you can come up with some way to structure a piece of equipment that will isolate the biceps while assuming a body position that is almost parallel to the floor. This is important. You have to have your weight off your feet and more on your torso so you can concentrate on your biceps and allow them to do the work.

Some have constructed a flat bench and rigged it so they can lie on their stomach and perform the curl over the end of the bench. Naturally it had to be raised high enough to prevent the plates from hitting the floor. There are many examples of what you can do. I know some who have actually built a bench from scratch. I don't think one needs to go that far but it can be done depending on how handy you are as a carpenter.

Perform Spider Bench Curls and Standing Bent Over Concentration Curls and nothing else for your biceps for six to eight weeks. You may discover the results so good you will want to extend this time and perform the workout for twelve weeks or longer. Some have actually stayed on it for a full year and achieved remarkable results. It does take a longer period of time to develop a peak than it does to develop mass so play with it and see what works best for you.

Just because you will be using a weight far less heavy than what you would use for a mass or bulking routine, don't let that fool you into believing you won't be adding size. If you can increase the peak of your biceps it will increase the size as well.

Sets and reps will vary and you should play with them just as with any movement. Sometimes use heavier weights for low reps while at other times use lighter weights for higher reps.

In addition to the Spider Bench there is one additional "trick" to building biceps peak. That is keeping constant tension on the biceps in the contracted position and F-O-R-C-E-F-U-L-L-Y contracting the biceps in the fully contracted position. If done correctly you can feel the biceps cramp. You will never be able to achieve this all important cramp using heavy weights. In fact, I can obtain the cramp I just mentioned simply by holding my arm in a certain position and flexing my biceps without any weights at all. It's achieved by dipping the shoulder down, taking the delts completely out of the picture and squeezing the biceps.

Once you learn to cramp the biceps on the Spider Bench and while performing Standing Bent Over Concentration Curls you will have discovered a real "trick". Once in the cramp position hold it for an extended period. You'll be amazed how fast your biceps change their shape.

Some will find best results training biceps twice a week, some three times a week, and I'm certain some will also find success with a once a week routine. You will need to tailor your routine to your specific genetics, experience level, and recuperative ability. Remember you are in control not your body so don't let it drain you out. A good rule of thumb to always remember is it is better to leave a workout feeling you could do a little more. Complete burnout and maxing out each workout is not very smart.



Standing Bent Over Concentration Curl

Be warned up front, the contraction, when learned and applied properly will cause significant pain. You'll feel it for several days afterward but it will be rewarding.

Peak It Up!

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