

Hot! Hot! Hot! Leg Workout

By

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How far back in ones memory bank can a person go? To be certain, some can go back farther than others. Some memories can be recalled as if they just happened while others are vanished from our minds as though the events never took place. Why? I don't know and I can't explain it but I do know it happens. The following is one such memory that feels like it just took place even though it was many years ago. Something happened today that brought the event back to my memory and the timing is perfect... my workout today is thighs and calves.

Hot! Hot! Hot! It was the summer of 1966 and the heat and humidity was more than anyone should have to bear. It was summer alright, August, the hottest month of the year. It must have been over 100 degrees in my carport and not even a hint of a breeze was present. My workouts were more meaningful than usual because soon, in just a couple of short weeks, I would be headed to the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York to witness the big IFBB show held each September. I already had my tickets and my letter from Joe Weider that allowed backstage admittance. Bud Parker had sent some material and I was anxious for the day to arrive. My enthusiasm was at its peak and workouts were intense.

Yes, today was my leg workout day. Oh please, please let it rain and cool things off! I was beaten mentally even before I began to set up my equipment for the workout. That would make a tough workout even tougher. I loved training legs but the heat and humidity this day was more than I could bear. Still, I was not going to give in and skip a workout, it would be done and done the way I needed to do it. My inspiration was high as I thought about September and needed no more motivation.

I laid my barbell across dad's wooden saw horses and loaded a fifty pound plate on each end. I squatted down under the bar and stood up. Sweat was already dripping off me as I stepped forward and did 20 deep breathing full squats. Rarely would I perform a squat that was not full. That was hard breathing, sucking in the hot humid air... it seemed as though there was no oxygen in the air. I squatted down resting the bar on the saw horses and sat down on the floor gasping for air.

I knew mentally I was defeating the very purpose of my workout. I had to get in a positive frame of mind and focus on the job at hand... enough with the heat hardship junk. I was on a mission and I needed to move forward. I decided I would step back inside the air-conditioned house, get some water, take a short break and start fresh. I needed the break to clear my mind. I had to deal with the hot weather conditions and use it to my advantage.

I went to the kitchen and downed a large glass of water, preceded to my bedroom and picked up the latest issue of "Mr. America Magazine" and flipped through it. The magazine provided additional inspiration, as if any were needed, and allowed me to clear my head.

Ten minutes or so later I was back in the hot carport. Everything was set up so... here I go again. This time I'm focused and the heat, as bad as it was, didn't override my mental concentration of developing my thighs to their fullest.

Set one was completed and breathing was still difficult. As I rested the bar across the saw horses I felt a magnificent pump in my quads, much more so than usual. Was it the heat? The long break I took after my first warm up set? Was it my new dedicated mental approach? None of it mattered as I was in a state of mind that blocked out distractions and allowed complete mental focus on the job at hand.

I loaded the bar with more plates and began set number two. A brief rest of around two minutes and more plates were added and another set begun and finished. I was in a rhythm that was humming along. More weight and more sets. Each set saw a decline in reps as the added weight took its toll. I hit ten sets and wanted more. This day I would push myself to the limits of my mental and physical ability. I felt like my heart was going to beat right out of my chest, it was all I could do to breathe and all I could do to walk.

The sweat was pouring off me like a fountain. My shorts were ringing wet. My lungs were gasping for air and I was dizzy as all get out. Stupid, you bet. I was determined I would complete twenty-five sets of full squats one way or another and I was on a mission that would take no prisoners.

My rest intervals between sets became longer but not enough so as to get my tempo out of whack. My legs were like Jello and I was having a hard time just moving. Something inside kept telling me to push on no matter what. Somewhere around set fifteen or so I seemed to get a second wind. More determined than ever to hit the twenty-five set goal I set - I pushed on.

To the best of my recollection at no time did I fall below six reps. Those six reps however, were the absolute most I could do. Each set I performed the maximum number of reps and pushed myself to total failure. I actually omitted counting reps on some sets as I was so focused on completing the set I lost count. I forced myself to perform all the reps I could. It's possible some sets consisted of only five reps and others maybe seven. It was the total number of sets I was concerned with. I refrained from drinking water and could actually feel my body temperature climb. I also felt the loss of strength from dehydration. I was committed to carrying this workout to the end.

Set after set and rep after rep I pushed. My legs became swollen with blood and quivered from the exertion. Set twenty-four, the next to the last set was

finally here. I felt a surge in power and determination like nothing I had experienced before in my training, the feeling which I have not forgotten. At the same time I felt a sense of exhaustion that I also can recall as though I just went through it.

Set twenty-four saw my most sincere effort to perform each rep in perfect form. Under the bar I went and up I came. I steadied myself and took a couple of deep breaths. Sweat ran down into my eyes so that I was unable to visually focus, it burned. Rep one... deep breath and all the way down, immediately back up for rep number two. One – two – three – four deep breaths and down again. Oh the pain in my chest and legs. My lower back was killing me as bad as any part of my body. Again, immediately after hitting the bottom position I was up and ready for rep number three. More deep breathing and down I went again. I was really dizzy and thought just briefly about stopping, but no... I would go on and did just that. Somehow I managed to complete six strict reps.

Knowing I had only one set to go I felt ready to get it over with. My entire body had been pushed to its absolute limits and I knew it. I was light headed and felt funny as I tried to regain some strength and oxygen. I was sweating like I had never sweat before. I was sick to my stomach. I can't even begin to express the way my body felt. I was going to attack set twenty-five with everything I had left. As I rested I mentally set the number of reps I would perform higher and would concentrate only on achieving that goal. Ten reps was my goal. My last set and I could do it as I had already won the war and was just going to receive my reward and performing ten reps would be my reward.

Under the bar and up I came. I made the first three reps quickly. I had to stop in the top position after the third rep. The only explanation is that my mental focus was stronger than my body as it made me do things I could not normally do. It was though I was in a hypnotic state of mind. I had hoped to get five reps in fast order but my body would not allow, three was as far as I could go. Reps four

and five were solid but slower. I struggled with rep five. I began the countdown, reps six, seven, eight. I had to pause after rep eight. Could I actually make it? I couldn't see for the sweat, my lower back was cramping like someone stuck a knife in me. My legs were so pumped I could not lockout my knees and my lungs were bellowing like crazy. I felt my balance shifting and I was as light-headed as I've ever been... before or since.

Rep nine and I barely made it up. I wanted to go immediately back down again for rep ten but I couldn't. I had to pause. Even though I couldn't open my eyes I sensed I was about to black out. Down I went, I was one step away from the saw horses and I could not get up. I went below my bottom squat position. I was stuck. I could either let the bar fall from my back to the floor or I could attempt again to get up.

I struggled and forced with all my might and finally, after what seemed like an hour, even though it was only seconds, made it back up. I stepped back – squatting down and let the bar come to rest on the saw horses. I had made it!

Immediately I collapsed on the concrete floor of the carport. Somehow I managed to crawl to the driveway and there I had to let it rip. Whatever was in my stomach came out and was no longer a part of me. Not once but several times I heaved for all I was worth. This caused my head to spin more violently than before.

I was young and foolish and paid a price for my foolishness. The sad thing is this was not the first or last time my enthusiasm would cause me to endure such punishment.

The next morning I was suffering as if I had undergone a major operation or accident. I also discovered for the first time what hemorrhoids were. I never had experienced the problem before. I became frightened and went to see our

family doctor. After I told him what I had done the day before and my problem he proceeded to examine me and explain the terrible truth about hemorrhoids. Up until this time that was just something we joked about. I didn't realize just how much of a problem or how painful they were. "Doc" prescribe medication, and preached a sermon I never forgot on, as he called it, being "young dumb".

Back then it was worth the price. I accomplished a tremendous goal and overcame mental and physical obstacles. Would I do it today... well, I can't, not physically or mentally and I know it. Would I advise a youngster to attempt it...? NO!!! What I did was not smart, healthy, or productive. It was stupid and dangerous. I could have obtained the same or even better results if I had used my head and not been, "young dumb?"

Out of curiosity people often ask about some of the hard lessons I've learned and about some of my craziest workouts. Both categories are addressed with this recount of my Hot! Hot! Hot! Leg Workout.

As you can see from this article and others, I have undergone some pretty intense workouts; overloading and training beyond failure. Not all workouts were as this one was. For the most part I did train heavy, heavy for me anyway. I did outline workouts that pumped the muscles without totally devastating them. Other times I just let it rip and trained to the point of total failure. Since my first workouts I have always mixed things up. It's my love for instinctive training that keeps my enthusiasm high.

Have great workouts and make certain you use your head. Don't be "young dumb". By the way, over the years I've discovered "young dumb" applies to people who are not so young age wise.

A few of my articles, such as this one, carry my recounts of HIT and training to failure stories. I feel I need to point out that although I did train in that

manner I also trained in other ways too. There were times when lighter weights with higher sets and reps were performed. Some sessions saw moderate poundage's used for reps that remained in the eight to ten range. I have incorporated systems of supersets, trisets, decreasing sets, pyramiding sets, straight sets, etc, etc in my training. I have also never recommended or suggested anything that I have personally not experienced myself.

Over the course of my forty some years experience with weightlifting and bodybuilding I have tried almost every conceivable method and technique there is associated with the sport. Some, as provided in this article tell the story of being "young dumb" so that others may learn from mistakes and also to report a factual story of a grueling workout. Said it before and repeated again; "what works for one may not work for another". There is no "one size fits all" when it comes to bodybuilding.

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