

Power Routine For Growth

by

Alan Palmieri

As almost all of my readers know, I am not locked into any one set of methods and principles of training. In fact I advocate the use and testing of all of them and this has actually led to far greater success than simply following one system. Power training is a method all bodybuilders should use at some point in time to help add not only strength but also thickness to the muscles.

The growth of muscle tissue beyond the normal level required for average existence is actually a disruptive process to our system. It requires additional energy for the purpose of growth. Muscles will only grow when there is a good reason for them to do so. When our muscles are taxed only to the point of being able to accommodate the normal everyday demand placed on them, their daily workloads do not require additional exertion; therefore no additional muscle growth will take place.

Any veteran bodybuilder can attest to the fact that muscle growth is a slow process, one that does not take place overnight. It also does not occur simply by coaxing the muscles a little here or a little there. Muscles must be forced into new growth. The route taken to provide the forcing process does not rest with any one single approach. As discussed so many times, there are numerous ways to force the muscles into a state of growth. One approach I have not discussed that often over the years is a system of heavy power training, not to be confused with HIT (High Intensity Training), they are similar but there is a difference.

My reason in being slow to outline such a method is frankly, well, I don't have one. I've used power training and have recommended it for others. It's a tricky method and one that requires vigil monitoring as some individuals will suffer severe joint discomfort and pain. On the other hand, a great many will do just fine and experience none of the problems some face. If you decide to follow a power program, work into one gradually, always being mindful of the fact you can easily overstress the body and joints.

Although I have had a lot of success in using power training from time to time in my younger days, I no longer employ the method as I once did. Today I might use it once in a great while just for a change of pace. Age and experience has also taught me how to listen to my body and I know when enough is enough. There are a lot of people out there who are older than I am and they still load up the bars like crazy with no ill effects. I'm one of those who still believe we are bodybuilders, not power-lifters.

If you decide to use a power routine to spark your muscles into new growth there are some things you need to consider. Light training that places only mild exertion on your muscles is not power training. You are going to have to place a heavy load on your system. This will require an all out effort to force your muscles to go beyond the limits they have come to know as normal.

A well thought out power routine can certainly add additional strength, power and size to your physique. You don't have to follow one for long either. For me, usually four to six weeks has been sufficient. I then proceeded to follow a different program. The progress I made while on a power program carried on over to my preceding routine.

Depending on your age, body type and other relevant factors, power training may be just what you need to advance to the next level in your bodybuilding efforts. At a certain stage all of us discover that we can't get bigger unless we get stronger and this is exactly what a power routine does, it makes one both bigger and stronger.

Developing a power routine is far less complicated than most bodybuilding routines. This is due mainly to the fact fewer movements are used. On a power routine you may feel you will be under-working the biceps if you use only one movement, instead of the three or four you may be accustomed to using, but this is not the case. The demand of a power routine will actually place more stress on the muscle. You are overloading the muscles and pushing them to work with more intensity while forcing them to exert more force due to the increase in poundage used.

Some may discover they are unable to get the same muscle “pump” while on a power routine. This is actually true. You will not feel that skintight “pumped” feeling on a power routine like you do from a non-power routine, especially at the start. Others may discover they are able to achieve some “pump” although different, after a few workouts. While on a power routine, obtaining the “pump” is not a major factor for concern so don’t worry about it.

Beginners eager to pack on more weight and muscle may wish to rush into a power program, especially younger teenagers, this is definitely not advised. Youngsters can cause permanent damage to their joints and alter bones that have not yet fully developed. The inexperienced person must first acquire the ability to develop mind, body, and muscle motor skills that are achieved only through performing various movements for an extended period of time.

There are only a few movements that are responsible for developing power. One of them is often neglected, the squat. People spend hours on the bench press while devoting almost no time or very little to squats. You can’t expect to “power up” your maximum best unless you squat. No other movement incorporates more muscles, heart and lung involvement than the squat... none, period.

I’m not going to debate all the issues surrounding the squat other than to say; the squat cannot be denied as the king of power movements in an overall power routine.

Squats have a direct and dramatic effect on stimulating growth on the entire muscular system, not only the legs.

In addition to the increase in power obtained from squatting, no champion bodybuilder has ever become a champion without performing squats. So no matter what the reasons, pro and con, directed toward squats, the facts are you will have to squat for maximum power and for developing a championship physique.

Other basic power movements beside squats include deadlifts, bent over rows, almost all pressing movements, dips, power cleans, and curls. It is actually possible to detect a bodybuilder who has spent a lot of time using power movements in their training by the rugged, thick appearance of their muscles. Power lifting is responsible for a heavy development. Some bodybuilders prefer not to develop this type of body style while others strive for it with every workout. It's a personal choice and one only you can make.

A well thought out power routine would be something along the lines of the following. Remember, heavy weights with fewer movements are required. Power routines also allow for longer rest times between sets but you must be careful not to abuse this extra time. You should constantly try to reduce the rest time between sets. Your objective is to lift heavy with a forceful explosion of power at the start of each movement. If the additional weight does not permit the execution of the movement in good form, you are using too much weight. It is also permissible to employ cheating techniques while on a power routine, just make certain not to abuse them.

Monday:

1. Bent Over Barbell Rows
2. Power Cleans
3. Deadlifts



Bent Over Row



Finish position Power Clean



Finish position Deadlift

Tuesday:

Rest

Wednesday:

1. Squats
2. Calf Raises
3. Seated Press Behind Neck



Squat



Seated Press Behind Neck

Thursday:

Rest

Friday:

1. Bench Press
2. Barbell Curls
3. Dips



Bench Press



Barbell Curl



Dips

Saturday and Sunday:

Rest

Not much of a routine to look at is it? Don't let it fool you. This is one heck of a workout. As with all my material, it is designed for non-steroid and drug free bodybuilders. As a natural bodybuilder your recuperative abilities are a priority in achieving success not only with this program but with all programs.

You could adjust the schedule so that you would be working out four days a week. Some have even made adjustments so they are working out five days a week. Over the years I've had the best results with the schedule as outlined and would recommend it be followed just as presented.

Before you launch into this power routine, you may want to consider some additional points.

Power training places a lot of stress on the body so make certain you thoroughly warm up the entire body, not just the muscle groups you will be working.

Perform 2 warm-up sets of 15 to 20 reps of the movement you are going to be doing.

Depending on your bodybuilding maturity level, perform three to seven sets of each movement. Perform these in straight set fashion, not superset, tri-sets, giant-sets, etc.

The weight you use on each set should allow you to perform 6 reps. If you can only perform 4 reps the weight is too heavy. If you can perform 8 reps the weight is too light. Adjust the poundage accordingly.

Every rep of every set must be an all out effort. Holding back will hold back your results.

Start by allowing yourself approximately three to five minutes rest between sets. Granted this is a considerable rest period but you are performing each set with all out effort and maximum poundage. Gradually reduce the rest time between sets thus reducing your total workout time. This will increase the intensity and results you will realize.

A definition of power is work done per unit of time. It's not just the amount of work done, but how fast it is done that determines the muscular response to power training. Forcing the muscle to contract as fast as possible against high resistance recruits the maximum number of muscle fibers. The more fibers that are stimulated in this manner, the larger and more powerful the muscle will eventually become.

Every workout add additional weight to each movement. You may only be able to add a slight amount, 1 to 2 pounds but the goal is to add weight regardless of the amount.

If you use a cheating technique on some movements remember, there is a proper way to cheat. Don't be reckless with it and do not abuse it.

This is a method I would include in my power-training program about every three weeks. It's a version of the Rest-Pause Principle. After my warm-up I would load the bar with my 5 rep maximum. I would perform 5 reps, then without taking my hands off the bar, I would rest about ten seconds and perform 2 or 3 more reps. Again without taking my hands off the bar, rest for another ten seconds and perform 1 or 2 additional reps. I would follow this system until I was unable to perform a single rep. Three sets done in

Rest-Pause fashion will take it out of you. Just remember, if you include this in your power routine, use it only once every three weeks. It places a terrific demand on the body and it's ability to recuperate sufficiently if used too often.

There you have a power routine that I have tested, used, and experimented with on many occasions. Each time I was well satisfied with the payback for my efforts.

Good Luck!

Exercise movements illustrated by Walter Gibson.

© Copyright 2005 Alan Palmieri