

Smith Machine

by

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I've listened to some pretty heated debates concerning the Smith Machine and I'm sure you have too. I believe some of the negative comments have merit and are right on target, some are not. As for the positive comments, well they can get carried away themselves. It seems like there exists a love / hate affair concerning the unit. Personally I like a Smith Machine. I think the key is knowing when and how to use it.

I personally have found success and pleasure with the Smith Machine and over the years never incurred an injury due to its use. There are some things you can do and some things you can't do and still other things you shouldn't do with a Smith. Used improperly the Smith Machine can do some pretty serious damage to the body and that is where I believe many find displeasure with the unit or at least have had bad experiences.

Problems arise if you attempt to use the Smith unit for heavy squats, heavy presses (both bench and military), heavy rows, heavy shrugs and so on – as you can see I preference each movement with the word “heavy”. That is the catch phrase and something to remember when using a Smith Machine.

No “heavy” movement should ever be attempted on a Smith Machine or any other apparatus that restricts the normal movement of the joints and muscles. You're just asking for trouble if you use any piece of equipment in that manner. Trying to max out is one sure fire way to develop a bad relationship with a Smith Machine.

When I've used a Smith Machine for things such as a special squat that places my feet close together (almost touching) and out in front of my body, this movement would not be possible without a Smith unit. Another movement I like is seated presses, incline presses, upright rows, calf raises (both standing and seated), and bar behind the back shrugs just to mention some of the exercises I perform on a Smith unit. In each instance however, I do not use extremely heavy weight or try to max out. I use poundage that allows me to use the Smith for a nice fluid movement.

I can't get a better pump at the end of a delt workout than I can when using the Smith for a few sets of seated presses. The same holds true for a great pump at the end of a chest workout. Since I usually train at home and don't have a calf machine the Smith works great for me. I can take many exercises and use a weight heavy enough to stimulate growth and max out in safety.

I've seen many people, especially inexperienced youngsters, load a Smith up with eight or more plates and attempt shrugs. I've been witness to several of these attempts when the bar would come out of their hands and damage the unit. Stupid, of course it is, but all too often an example of someone not knowing how to use a Smith unit properly.

For me a Smith Machine is not unlike any other piece of equipment, if used properly it's beneficial, misused you pay the price.

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