

Outside the Box 4

by Rob Bush 08_01_06

Strength Training

In the iron game, strength training has become the major element in building the perfect body. In fact, it is often times the main goal of the individual towards attaining what he, or perhaps she, thinks is a high fitness level. The problem with a lot of people who "train" for strength is that they think they are becoming "fit" simply because they are striving to move more weight. This is a fallacy because how strong an individual is does not necessarily say how in shape they really are. Just because an individual can bench 350lbs. or even squat 500lbs., does not in anyway determine a well-rounded fitness level. The numbers game has become the ultimate goal of the majority of males who train with weights. This is true of the average Joe as well as many athletes training for sport performance. It is not uncommon to walk into any gym and see individuals pushing week in and week out to move more weight, doing the same exercises over and over. This kind of bravado is extremely limiting and most of the time only seeks to satisfy the ego, whether it is for a personal best or a passage toward bragging rights among peers. Most often these individuals only train with a bodybuilder mentality, not really knowing or even understanding what they are in it for. Too often, a person will early on make significant gains, (which are not to be looked down upon); only to eventually realize that they have hit a plateau, which they find nearly impossible to get over. Many times, strength training revolves around isolating a particular muscle and blasting it with every compound movement a person knows to simply get stronger. It has become second nature to go into a gym and "train heavy" to be able to move more weight. Strength is no doubt an important element within training protocol, however, it should be approached in a way that benefits the entire body, as well as strive towards achieving total balance in the wheel of conditioning found only in Renegade training. This is not to downplay those whose goal is to be a bodybuilder or even a power lifter. But, for the average person seeking to get in great, all around shape, there is a proper way to go about building tremendous, explosive strength. Understanding and applying Renegade training for strength is the ultimate guide towards achieving strength goals and more importantly having a well-balanced fitness level.

There are many different forms of strength. For example, absolute strength is ones' ability to move a maximum weight for one repetition. This is the goal of the competitive power lifter. It can often be the goal of a bodybuilder too. Bodybuilders tend to strive for strength endurance. This is the ability to move a given weight for multiple repetitions. Endurance strength is often performed in a very controlled, deliberate manner. The problem for the athlete who trains in this manner is that they overlook the ability to move a given weight explosively. In turn, their movements will generally be slower within their sport of choice. Explosive strength is the absolute key to improving athletic performance. The ability to move a weight quickly is what transfers onto the playing field. Whether you are a competitive athlete or a person who trains for health, being able to perform weighted movements quickly will produce the best overall benefits to the body and improve fitness levels.

The key to understanding this is to realize the fact that muscles cannot determine the amount of weight being used. Muscles can only react to the force being

generated against the weight. This brings into play reactive strength. How fast can you move the weight in an explosive manner? Can you move it with correct form and perfect postural alignment? These are both equally important elements in strength training. What you do in the weight room needs to be able to be transferred onto the field of play, whatever that may be. Reactive strength is being able to stop on a dime and redirect the weighted movement from an eccentric motion to a concentric one. The best example is a rubber band. When stretched out during the eccentric phase, kinetic energy is stored and conversely released during the rebound, or concentric phase of the movement. Intense reactive strength will shorten the time between the co-centric phases and will yield result towards improved force and power. There are three factors that need to be understood for success when dealing with this.

First off, the focus needs to be on control and speed of the eccentric part of the lift. This is the build up phase of energy which, when released, shortens the time between the actual lifting of the weight and the finishing part of the movement. You must attack the movement with intensity! Visualize the lift before you perform it. See yourself attacking it before you do it. Use controlled aggression. Intensity is a must!

Secondly, vary your training environment so that it is imperfect in nature. What is meant here is change your exercises up as well as where you actually perform them. If you use a barbell one session, use dumbbells the next, or perhaps iron woody bands. Always challenge yourself with something new and approach it with the same intensity you would use for a more familiar movement. Get out of your comfort zone! Do not let the body adapt to a movement too much!

Thirdly, learn to refine movements through positive repetitions. This will improve fine motor skills as well as enhance the neurological response by repeating the patterns of stressful movements, which are similar to your sport of choice. If your form begins to break down then stop, put it down, rest a moment and come back to it. Focus is a must to perform weighted movements correctly.

With these factors being understood, we now can look at resistance training and the two major types found in Renegade training. First in any routine are Focus lifts.

Focus lifts are based mainly upon Olympic style lifting. This is because these types of lifts teach the body to move harmoniously as a single unit. Focus lifts are mostly done using weight intensity between forty to sixty five percent of one's max. Each weight training session utilizes 3 focus lifts. Each lift should be 4 sets of 6 reps for a total of 24 total reps for all three lifts. Rest between sets is no more than 35 to 45 seconds. Beginners need to first concentrate on performing the movements properly before putting them together. Bar speed is of the highest importance here. How quickly you can move the weight correctly will no doubt render development of explosiveness and quick reaction. Examples of focus lifts are:

- Squats – regular, pause, and dead-start variations
- Power snatch – Hang snatch
- Power cleans – Hang cleans
- Dead lifts – both regular and snatch grip

Bench press
Push jerks/ push press

Please be sure to learn each of these movements properly, using correct form throughout. Never sacrifice proper form to move more weight.

Following focus lifts are Supplemental lifts. These lifts are related to focus movements but are more hybrid in nature. They are also pre/re-habilitative to the body. Each session will consist of 4 exercises; three sets each of repetitions in the low range, 3 to 4 reps each. Weight choice will be in the 70 to 95 percent range. The total number of sets will be twelve just like the focus lifts. Examples of supplemental lifts are:

Hi Box Step Ups
Bulgarian squats
Jump shrugs
Glute ham raise
Russian Splits
Good mornings
Muscle snatch

Again, please learn each movement properly so your movement is smooth and fluid. When combining a weighted routine of focus and supplemental lifts through Renegade one can ensure themselves a proper balance of explosive and pre-habilitation training. Once your foundation has been solidified using these training principles, you may begin to use varying complex training methods. Optimum gains can and will be realized through Renegade strength training. Please refer to the many Renegade training books and dvds by John Davies to reinforce how to strength train correctly. The results are truly amazing.

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Rob began training back in the early 80's being drawn to working out by some of the bodybuilding's great names. He is a fitness enthusiast who raced amateur motocross for 3 years in the late 80s. Rob dove into power lifting back the mid 90's and plans to begin recruiting clients to personal train R-Style in the Macon area. Rob is also a well accomplished trumpet player who has performed in various ensembles through the years from grade school thru college and beyond. He studied privately for 6 years. Fitness-wise, Rob has worked in several training centers over the years.