



**THE SAVAGE
STRENGTH
TRAINING SYSTEM**

**DONT
PUMP IRON...**

**BECOME
IRON!**

MANIFESTO

By Mike Gillette

 **CRITICAL BENCH.com**



LEGAL STUFF

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SECTION 1: SAVAGE STRENGTH ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Former SWAT Commander and Executive Bodyguard, Mike Gillette is a relentless student of the human factors which allow people to succeed against overwhelming odds. In his line of work, these 'odds' have centered on threat management and peak performance training methods.

His research and experiences have taken him through many different worlds and disciplines. They have ultimately produced a body of knowledge which has been put to use by clients ranging from armed professionals to ordinary people who must operate in extraordinary circumstances.



Mike Gillette Former SWAT Commander and Executive Bodyguard

Mike's knowledge was first put to the test after he was injured in a climbing accident in 1984. This came just several months after he had left active-duty service as an Army paratrooper to attend the University of Arizona on an ROTC scholarship. With a broken back and screws holding his ankles together, Mike was discharged from military service.

This was hard to take for someone who had received perfect scores on every one of his Army fitness tests and had run his first marathon on a dare.

The next four years were a combination of discipline, experimentation, and disappointments. But through diligent study, pain and hard work, Mike had

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restored himself physically to the point where he could enter the field of law enforcement. As distinguished graduate of his academy class and with several academy fitness records under his belt, Mike was selected to attend a police fitness-trainer pilot program.

Mike excelled as a trainer, and would eventually become one of the most highly credentialed tactical trainers in the United States, with over 25 different Use-of-Force and Weapons Systems instructor designations to his name.

In 1995, concurrent with his law enforcement and training duties, Mike returned to military service in a part-time role. Following a rigorous selection process, he was accepted into the 194th Long-Range Surveillance (Airborne) Detachment and full 'jump' status.

This was a significant milestone for Mike, who had been told 11 years earlier by an Army surgeon that he would never run again, much less jump out of any more airplanes.

Post-9/11, Mike was been tapped to provide threat management training and consulting to a variety of high-risk public and private-sector clients. He is also recognized as a subject-matter expert for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in the areas of counter-terrorism training and threat assessment. Mike's current duties include regular assignments providing close-protection for CEOs and high net-worth individuals throughout the United States and abroad.

Often sought for his distinctive commentary, Mike has been featured by such media outlets as Forbes Magazine, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, CBS-TV and Fox Television's "America's Most Wanted."

Mike Gillette has been active in the study of martial arts for decades, having earned advanced black belts in Japanese, Filipino and American martial arts styles.

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In 2010, Mike was inducted into the Martial Arts Masters Hall of Fame. Mike has also, by necessity, pursued a life-long study of strength and conditioning methods and is considered a master practitioner of mind/body power. Through his sometimes unnerving public demonstrations, Mike provides real-time validation of his training methods.

Mike's current mission is sharing his unique mind/body improvement techniques with the world through speaking, workshops and private coaching.



INTRODUCTION

Over the years I have trained everyone from military and law enforcement personnel, executive bodyguards, competitive fighters, to regular guys looking to get strong.

And along the way I have helped all of them attain some pretty incredible results.

But for most people, the whole idea of strength training is pretty subjective and seems to mean a lot of different things.



So before we start talking about exercises, programs or techniques, I need to make sure that **you** understand just what **I** mean when I talk about strength.

So my first order of business is to define just what strength is and my approach to building it.

After all, we need to be on the same page, speaking the same language, so stay with me...

For me, the whole idea of strength starts on the inside and moves out from there.

It's all about what you want to accomplish.

Many people talk about strength but what they're actually talking about is the visual approach to training. Meaning... they just want to look good.

Now I don't have anything negative to say about that, it just holds absolutely no interest for me as a singular goal.

So when someone tells me they want to 'get in shape', I have to ask them what they mean by that.

What does 'in shape' mean to you?
What's the desired outcome... the end goal?

I have had some people look to me because they want me to tell them what their goal is.

So I have to draw things out further and say, "Okay, what do you want out of **life**?" "What do you want from your **relationships**?" "What do you want from **yourself**?"

Now why do you suppose I would ask such questions? Why would this have anything to do with strength?

Here's why... If you want everything you can get out of life, you need to be strong.

If you want long-term, healthy relationships you need to be strong for other people.

If you want to achieve anything meaningful in life for yourself you need to be strong for YOU.

Here's the thing... just looking good doesn't get anything done in this world. A spray on suntan and a nice set of abs can't do anything.



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Capability is what counts... Performance is what counts.

So getting strong, **really** strong, is what gives you the ability to make yourself and your corner of the world better.

I have a saying... “Don’t pump iron, become iron.”

And this what I want you to do... to become like iron.

Become strong so you can start making the world a better place.

You need to remember that your body is designed to do this, to adapt, to get stronger and stronger.

So let’s get to work making your body fulfill its intended purpose.





WHAT IS SAVAGE STRENGTH AND WHY YOU NEED IT...

In preparing for this book project, I reached straight for Webster's Dictionary.

The reason was to provide a clear frame of reference regarding my ideas about strength so that everyone can understand them.

So here is what Webster's says about strength, what it means to me, and how I apply it in the real world...

First and foremost, strength is defined as *"the state of being strong."* This makes sense, right?

But the definition expands from there, stating *"the power of resisting attack... impregnability."*

But what does that mean specifically? Well, start by thinking about the word 'impregnability' and imagine having the ability to resist attack and go from there.

Think for a moment about the sorts of things that you actually are attacked by.

You get 'attacked' by other people's attitudes and situational circumstances.

And of course you can also be attacked by actual hostile aggression. There's an old expression; "Weakness invites tyranny." While that expression is actually about politics, this same idea plays out on the street all the time.

We might refer to this as 'the politics of the street'. It's the whole bully dynamic where a bully perceives weakness in another person.

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This perceived weakness emboldens a bully and causes him to harass or even attack the other person.

But *strength* introduces stability into a situation... It calms things down.

Strength often prevents the different kinds of attacks that you experience every day. Now let's look at another example...

Strength also provides the power to resist stress, meaning it promotes what I refer to as 'durability'.



What kinds of stress are we talking about?

Well there's physical stresses such as discomfort, illness or fatigue and even emotional stress.

And if you think about the words I just listed, they are all in opposition to the very idea of strength.

They literally sound like opposite terms.

But possessing strength is what allows you to handle those things, to be durable.

Strength is also about the capacity for effective action, we can call this a 'show of strength'.

Remember what I just said about perceived weakness and how it invites trouble?

Well projecting the capacity for effective action, really projecting it, can make

trouble go away.

Now this is fundamentally different than puffing out your chest and acting like a jerk. That kind of thing *invites* trouble.

People who do that are actually projecting insecurity or instability. Those things never calm a situation down.

A strong man doesn't have to do anything, and often doesn't even have to say anything.

He settles things down simply by showing up.

And if the other people around him decide to make poor life choices..?

Well, those choices may require some effective action.

A strong man can deliver that action but he doesn't do it out of anger and he doesn't do it out of an inability to control his emotions.

A strong man simply does what needs to be done.

There's an old Samurai saying that speaks to this, which states; "Only the strong can show mercy."

This is absolutely true.

Mercy, which is a pretty noble quality, can only come from someone who is strong.



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If you are weak, the best you could do is *beg* for mercy.

And I don't think anyone reading this wants to be a weak person.

The last thing that Webster's says about this subject and this is really important, is that having strength means having the ability to maintain a moral or intellectual position firmly.

Now think about that for a moment.

In this day and age... so enlightened and politically correct, almost nobody is willing take a stand or actually stand for anything.

We're so concerned about being tolerant that we tolerate almost *anything*.

It's a rare person anymore who maintains their own ethics and their own sense of morality, and it takes strength to do that, **real** strength.

WHAT SAVAGE STRENGTH IS NOT...

Now before we move on let me say one last thing, and that is how strength is not defined.

Ready..? Here goes... Strength is not defined as **big**.

Anyone who has ever met me will tell you that I am not a big guy, I am far from it.

For the record, I am just five foot nine inches tall and 185 pounds.

So for me to have been so successful in the world of executive protection is proof positive that it's not about what you look like, it's about what you can actually do.

Here's another example...

The strongest man that I know is physically even smaller than I am.

And he routinely does things that are not merely impressive, they are **scary**.

They are so far outside of what most people can even understand it's ridiculous.

But strength, even extreme strength is attainable and that's why I keep hitting this point.

Most people equate strength with simply being big, and there is no



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doubt that being big provides some serious physical advantages.

But no one who reads this should be thinking that all of this is beyond you if you aren't a big guy.

Or maybe you're someone who tried to 'get big' in the past and you weren't successful. So don't feel dejected about not getting big once upon a time.

Forget all that. Because I am talking about **strength** and all of the different ways it can improve your life.

And believe me, I am talking to YOU.

Now I'm going to share with you a well-kept secret...

I know you've seen those enormous dudes in the bodybuilding magazines hawking supplements that can "get you as crazy awesome huge as the professionals!"

But here is the secret... most people **cannot** get really big. For a drug-free athlete getting big is very, very difficult.

And even most big guys have to scratch and claw for every bit of muscle mass they can muster.

But everyone, and I mean EVERYONE, can get **stronger** than they are right now.

And even if you are already strong or you've been lifting weights a long time, I will still make you stronger than you are now... Much stronger

HOW TO GO BEYOND BODYBUILDING...

So let's talk about some different aspects of training because this is where a lot of people get tripped up.

First off, they get tripped up because they never really identify what their true goals are.

Secondly, they fail to make sure that their training is focused on achieving that goal.

So first thing, we need to dial in your objectives.

I often tell prospective strength trainers that they need to move 'beyond bodybuilding'.

Now bodybuilding is the most common frame of reference for people who engage in weight training.

So they then say to me; "What do you mean by that?"

The answer to this is that you have to understand what bodybuilding really is and what it's all about.

The bottom line is that bodybuilding is about a many things.

Yes, it's about big muscles, but it's also about the right proportions, symmetry, extremely low bodyfat percentages, smooth skin, suntans, and charisma.



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So practically speaking, competitive bodybuilding is a visual pursuit rather than a functional objective.

Now let me expand on that a bit...

Most bodybuilders, and I'm saying "bodybuilders" in quotation marks... *don't* compete in contests and could never be competitive.

These are the guys who are always in the gym, working on 'getting big' and trying all kinds of ways to do it.



But even though they are lifting weights, their goal of 'getting big' is still a visual thing.

It's not performance-driven, and it's not specifically about strength training.

But because *our* focus is the development of strength, we have to train outside the bodybuilder mode.

That means we say "No!" to endless reps of wussy weights, staring at ourselves in the mirror and worrying if our posterior deltoids are displaying adequate enough separation.

To the casual observer, some aspects of bodybuilding-style training may look the same as what we do, but it's very different.

It's different at the program design level, but it differs even further in terms of the basic ingredients; the movements themselves.

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We start with things which are hard and then we find ways to make them even harder.

For example, think about pull-ups.

How many guys at a commercial gym do you ever see doing pull-ups?

The answer is almost none. And why is that?



Is it because pull-ups aren't effective?

I mean, it would be easy to draw that conclusion since the typical gym has so many machines which allow you to do all kinds of exercises *instead* of pull-ups.

But the real reason most people at the gym aren't doing pull-ups is because they are hard. You can always find gym people lining up at the Lat Pull-Down Machine or to do some cable rows, but if you can even find a pull-up bar at your gym, I guarantee that there won't be people standing in line to use it.

But the fact remains that pull-ups are a great exercise, always have been. And they're good for everybody... athletes, bodybuilders, **everybody**.

Now we do pull-ups, lots of pull-ups.

And not only do we do them, we also find ways to make them even harder...

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We hang dumbbells off our waists, we strap on ruck-sacks full of weights and sometimes we even do pull-ups upside-down.

So the point here is that getting strong does not require high-tech machines.

In fact, it doesn't require *any* machines at all.

The magic formula to getting strong is hard work performed intelligently.

It's about the right program made up of the right movements and then taking that program and working your butt off.



That's it. Where the 'mystery' lies is what exactly that program is and just what those movements are.

IS ATTAINING SAVAGE STRENGTH REALLY POSSIBLE?

Hang on, I know what you're thinking...

"Just how hard does Mike want me to work?"

"Is this program going to hurt me?"

"Mike may not realize that I'm old... out-of-shape... have a bad back... or 'D' all of the above".

Alright, stop right there... Let's clarify something right now.

I'm 48 years old... I have suffered a broken back... But I still train and I train **hard**.



However, I have changed my approach to training over the years to continue to make my body do exactly what I want it to.

To *function* effectively... to be truly **functional**.

So let's talk about just who the prime candidate is for SAVAGE STRENGTH training.

Is it just younger guys who want to get strong, or athletes who want to improve at their sport?

Is it effective or even safe for people who are in their 40s or even their 50s?

Just who is this kind of training for?

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The answer is that it's for a lot of people because it works for a lot of people.

And yes, it's even for people my age and older.

It *will* make you stronger and it will make you more functional.

When I use the term 'functional', what I mean is getting your body to the point where it will do *what* you want it to *when* you want to do it.

You want to be able to get up out of bed like you always have.

You need to be able to jump in the car and go places.

You need to be able to play with your children, or if you're like me; grandchildren.

You need to be able to straighten out street punks if the situation arises.

Anything that you want to do in life or that you have to do because your life may depend on it... well, you don't want a lack of physical readiness to be the problem.

But if it is, that's okay because it's a problem that you can start solving right *now*.

So of course it works well for guys in their 20s or 30s, but it is very effective for people who are older than that.

And this is something that a lot of people have a hard time wrapping their heads around.

Because they look at what I do and say, "Mike, you're doing some pretty extreme things."

"It looks dangerous... it looks like stuff that only young guys or athletes should attempt."

But this is not the case. As a 48-year-old, I am obviously no kid.

And more than that, I am **not** genetically gifted as an athlete.

My strength comes from the fact that I know what I'm doing.

My *gift* is that I am very good at teaching others how to know what they're doing.

It comes down to knowing how to perform these movements in a technically correct manner.

Now is this training for younger people or athletes too? Absolutely.

But people don't just need to be educated on correct technique, they frequently need to be corrected in terms of what they 'know'.

With the internet, information flows at lightning speed. And bad information moves just as quickly.

This creates a lot of problems for people who try to conduct their own research of physical training topics online.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING STRONG AND 'BEING IN SHAPE'...

One of the fads floating around the fitness world right now is a trend towards bodyweight-only training where people are using calisthenics as the only element of their workouts.

Now there's nothing wrong with this, but the people who are caught up in this 'calisthenics are the only way' approach need to know that these exercises do not build **strength**.

Or I should say that they don't build strength the way that almost everyone does them.

Calisthenics can develop your overall work capacity and they do have the ability to provide you with increased muscular endurance.

But... being **strong**, which means being able to move heavy things, lift heavy things, (or bend heavy things if you're so inclined) all require **strength**.

For example, let's say that you can do 1,000 body weight squats in a row.

This would indicate that you have an excellent work capacity.

But it does not necessarily mean that you are strong.

Maybe you are strong, but we would need additional tests to bear that out.





People need to understand that there is a difference between maximal effort strength and muscular endurance.

To put it another way, there's a big difference between being able to bench press 500 pounds and being able to knock out 500 push-ups in a row.

In this program you **will** see certain body weight exercises as base movements.

But... I have ways of making them very hard to do.

The idea is to make (whenever possible) these certain bodyweight exercises deliver the same demands as lifting weights... Instead of doing endless repetitions of a fairly low intensity exercise.

The bottom line is that this training is for everybody who is in search of **real strength....**

- athletes who need every extra edge over their competition
- older guys who need to have a body that works the way they want it to
- and finally... for those guys who simply **need** to be strong

And this last group is where I came from.

I was a small, skinny kid. And there was a certain time when I hit the point where I just *needed* to be strong.

So I fed that need. I was lucky.

Feeding that need has given me a pretty amazing life so far.

So as a result, my favorite people to work with are the ones who are like I used to be... I call them the 'highly frustrated but highly motivated' type.

So let's talk about the building blocks of real strength. In very basic terms... first is the element of power.

Power refers to a person's ability to generate maximal force.

Not a *little force*, not even a *lot of force* but **maximal force**.

We are talking **steel bar-bending force**, where you learn to squeeze out every ounce of effort from your body to accomplish things you never thought you could.

And our programs develop power better than many standard strength-building routines.

Why? Because most strength training programs are very one-dimensional.

Or worse, they are based on crappy bodybuilding routines. All 'show' and no 'go'.



Forget that bodybuilding stuff! Remember, it's much better to be strong rather than just *look* strong.

Wait, **I know** what you're thinking... "But Mike, **looking** strong is great!"

Really? I think **looking** strong may be great until someone actually calls you out.

That's when you better **be** strong, because **being** strong is what solves problems.

THE ORIGINS OF SAVAGE STRENGTH TRAINING...

The routines found within this program are all functional, meaning they are designed to work and to allow your body to work better.

But they're not strange, exotic or over-complicated. It's not about that.

The focus is really the movements themselves, the actual exercises which serve as the building blocks of these routines.

Learning the right movements is what allows me to do what I do and it is what will make you savage-strong.

Personally, I had to become much more movement-focused or I should say *alternative* movement-focused after I turned 40.

When I turned 41, I had recently left law enforcement and had been full-time in the private sector for about a year.

All I was doing at that point was conducting tactical training of various types.

This was right after 9/11 and I was also doing a considerable amount of work with the airline industry.





And I was also traveling more than I ever had before.

So I was suddenly forced away from the gym and the track much of the time.

Now here's the strange thing... up to that point, I had trained so consistently day in and day out for many years, that I didn't actually realize how much I was suddenly now **not** training.

What I mean is that it still felt like I was training even when I wasn't.

This sounds strange, and I can only guess that it was because my training had become such a routine part of my life that I had stopped really thinking about it.

For example, you probably ate breakfast yesterday.

You may not remember what you ate, but you feel positive that you ate *something*.

But here was the other problem... over the years I had done certain exercises, exercises that were considered pretty standard in the gym.

Things like heavy benching, pull-ups behind the head, military presses behind the head, savage heavy curls on the preacher bench and so on.

Now there are some guys who do all that and more and never have any injuries.

Not me.

And after 40, my body started to make me 'pay' for having been focused on what are really bodybuilding-type exercises.

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I started having problems and lots of them.

Shoulder problems, elbow problems and even wrist problems.

These things were wreaking havoc with my training, which combined with my less-frequent workouts caused everything to go completely south for about nine months.

So once I got my work schedule calmed down and was able to get back in the gym on a more regular basis, I knew I had to make some adjustments.

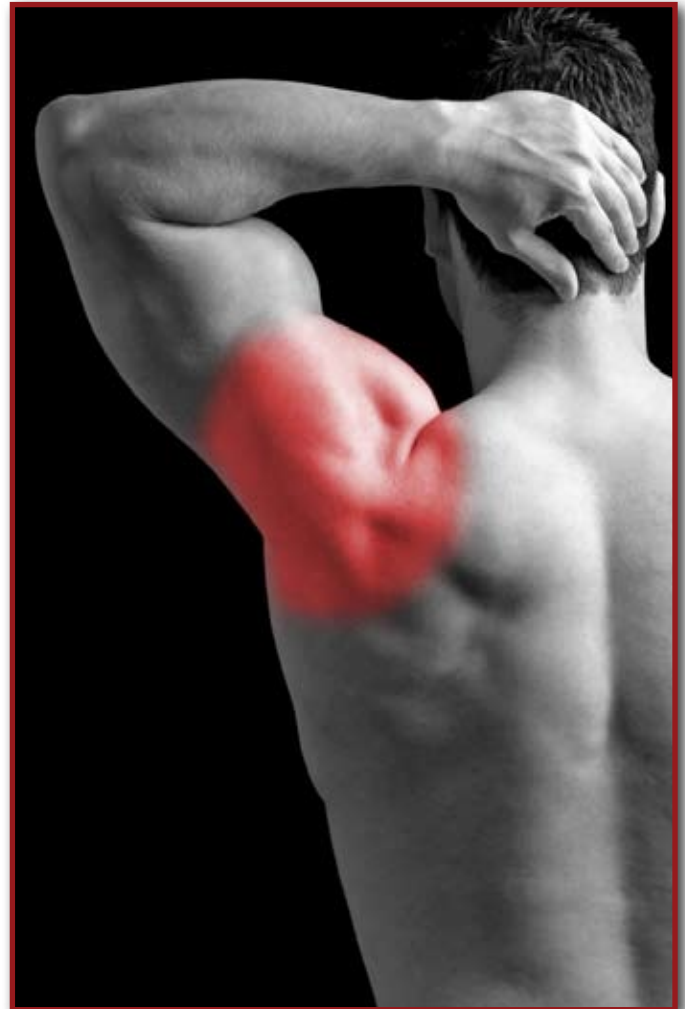
So I stopped doing all of those things which had created so many problems for me.

And believe me, that was difficult to do.

After spending years developing certain habits and having once made a lot of progress with those habits... to completely change my whole way of thinking was much harder than I expected.

This led to a very frustrating year, where I was still in a lot of pain, trying to figure out how I could maintain the strength I had developed.

But more importantly, I needed to figure out how I was going to continue training productively into the future.



Little did I know that I was about to experience a physical re-birth from a couple of plastic rings and two nylon straps.

For several years I had been seeing ads on the internet for training rings.

If you haven't seen them, they're kind of like gymnast rings only they're made of plastic and are designed to be hung from anything; a chin-up bar, a tree branch, etc.

It might have been 2001 or so when I first noticed them but it was a couple of years later before I decided to pick up a pair.

And that was it.

Suddenly I was doing things on those rings which I hadn't been able to do on conventional apparatus for several years.

It was **amazing**.

So I was finally back to training functional movements and training them very hard without all the joint pain.

For example, chin-ups on a horizontal bar, I used to do them all the time, I would kill them.

But I had to stop doing them around age 40 because they were tearing up my joints.

Now I was back to doing them again and they felt great.



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And the motivation I got from this was tremendous.

This led to other things on the rings and those things led to many of the progressions that you will see in the program.

I consider myself very fortunate to have had this second chapter in my life strength-wise.

And those plastic rings were an important step in my continued exploration of alternative methods of strength training.

These include the unconventional loading techniques and leverage principles that I developed which you will see later in this book.

All of that started to come to fruition with those rings.

And that first set of rings has travelled with me on security operations as far away as China.

But let me again reiterate the point that although some of the things that I do can seem pretty extreme, they're very joint-friendly.

Additionally they *really* help to stabilize the back and the core. This is really important for preventing injuries and staying as active as possible.

And while the conventional wisdom is that you need to many sets of high-repetition 'ab' exercises to build a strong core, in actuality, doing really heavy lifts is one of the best things that you can do for your core tissues.

DOES SAVAGE STRENGTH TRAINING REQUIRE HIGH-TECH EQUIPMENT?

So let's talk about equipment, because people get all wrapped up around the idea that they need this machine or that one to *really* work out.

And this is one of the primary ways that commercial gyms use to compete against each other, by outspending their competitors to bring you the 'latest, greatest' chrome contraption.

What I want you to understand is that it is not about what kind of gear you can get access to sometimes, it's about how easily and often you can get to whatever gear you have.



One of the things that I was able to enjoy for many years was 24-hour gym access, long before that sort of thing was commonly available.

When I was in law enforcement I would often work out an arrangement with a local high school to get use of their weight room for myself and the rest of the SWAT team.

When I was a police chief I built out a pretty serious gym for the department so everyone would always have 24-hour access.

The reason that this was a huge priority was both logistical and psychological.

First off, 24-hour gym access is a very big deal for those people who have to contend with shift-work.



Most businesses are not set up to accommodate people who have to work while the rest of the world is asleep.

Secondly, cops are just like everyone else. They have to *drag* themselves to the gym too.

So making sure that their gym 'never closes' is important.

To be successful in your training, you need as few barriers to deal with as possible.

Now a lot of people might think that I am 'down' on commercial gyms.

Not at all.

Having a gym membership is great, but it's really about what you do with it.

One of the good things that a gym can do for some people, is that it makes training more fun.

It makes training more social and some people really need that extra motivation to go.

But, one of the problems with a commercial gym is that you can become a hostage to it.

You are a hostage of the available equipment or lack of it, you're a hostage to how crowded the gym is and you're also a hostage to the policies of that gym.

What I mean is that some gyms won't let you do certain exercises; even such staple exercises as dead lifts might be prohibited.

You may even have some personal trainer come over and tell you you're

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doing an exercise incorrectly, because you're doing something they've *never even seen before*.

Who needs that?

Nobody needs to waste time arguing about the efficacy of their training program with a guy who went through a weekend certification course.

So if it's the right gym it can be a really good thing, but a gym by itself is not a requirement.

You don't actually even *need* a gym.



In the past two years, the only times I've trained at a commercial gym is when I've been on the road, travelling for work.

Otherwise, I've trained exclusively in my garage or backyard with a very limited amount of equipment.

Whoa, hold it ***right there!*** Did you get that? What you just read is **very important**.

Why is it important? Because I depend on my strength to make a living.

So if the best way to get strong was at the commercial gym down the street, that's where I'd be.

But the 'best' gym is wherever you are, as long as you know what to do.

That is why the SAVAGE STRENGTH Program will also show you how to set up your own, very effective, home gym for very little money.

IS THIS REALLY THE BEST WAY TO TRAIN?

“Come on Mike, aren’t calisthenics are just as good and safer than SAVAGE STRENGTH Training?”

Recently, some people have deliberately moved away from the whole idea of gym training.

But they didn’t do so because they wanted to set up their own home gyms, they did it for a different reason.

As I mentioned earlier, some people have been getting into bodyweight or callisthenic training in a big way.



There are even a couple of self-proclaimed experts out there who say, “Look, regular weight training is **dangerous** and you should only train with calisthenics.”

(Would it surprise you to know that these statements are all coming from guys who have calisthenics books and DVDs to sell?)

But this ‘safety’ argument is actually a load of **crap**.

First of all... Bodyweight exercises, as performed the way almost everybody does them, are a ‘low-intensity’ exercise.

And the way that I am defining a ‘low-intensity’ exercise as one which does



very little to stimulate a large number of muscle fibers or your CNS.

So what most people do with a low intensity exercise is they combine with a high-volume application, meaning they do a TON of repetitions of that exercise.

But as I've explained previously, this really only improves the endurance of the muscles associated with performing push-ups.

It does not make those muscles appreciably *stronger*.

And ironically... this high-volume, high-repetition training is much harder on your joints and more likely to lead to such things as tendonitis than heavy weightlifting ever will.

But beyond those issues, where do you take your calisthenics-only training program into the future?

Most of the bodyweight programs I've seen (and I've seen a lot) do not have effective strategies for varying the resistance.

So ultimately, what do you do..?

Do you just keep adding more push-ups?

"Today I did 1,000 push-ups... Maybe eventually I'll get up to 2,000 push-ups, and maybe *then* I'll be strong."

Trust me, there's a better way to get stronger, and it doesn't require endless hours working out.

I mean... you've got to leave the house sometime.

So back to equipment... Like I said, I get excellent workouts at home and it's not because I own thousands of dollars worth of gear.

I do have gear at home, but... number one, I've got the right gear... number two, I know what I'm doing... and number three, I work really, really hard.

And number three is really the **key** issue.



Did you know that canceling your gym membership could make you stronger than you ever imagined, if you create the right home gym set-up for yourself.

And that's because a home gym is at **home**.

This takes away all the excuses.

Bad weather? Don't worry about it.

Long day at the office and you got home late? Don't worry about it.

Your gym is right there.

Working out at home for me is a very liberating thing.

My work schedule is very unpredictable. If I didn't have the option of working out at home, I would not be able to be successful maintaining the kind of strength that I need to.

So if you're going to be working out at home, the next question a lot of people have is what kind of gear do you need?

Do you need one of those crazy multi-gyms? Not at all.

What you are going to see in the workout guide is that some of the equipment is completely improvised.

We are talking primitive components at very low cost.

You see a rucksack, cinderblocks, a keg, a board, rope and some chain.

And you will see all of the different things that can be done with those things.

I don't think we've even scratched \$100.00 yet with those items... It's very inexpensive.

Now if you are one of those people that just absolutely **need** the gym environment, don't ignore the exercise library.

I understand that need, I had some of that in me when I was younger.

There was a time that I had some really motivated guys who I trained with and that was a powerful thing.

But this doesn't have to be an either / or situation.

There was never a time when I didn't have some equipment at home even when I was regularly working out at a commercial gym.

Sometimes it was simply an issue of training variety.



MANIFESTO

BY MIKE GILLETTE



So I had a couple of pieces of gear at home so that every now and then I would just do some crazy, marathon-length workouts.

Things you'd never do at a regular gym.

These occasional 'insane' workouts would create a much different stimulus than my more conventional routines.

There are benefits to this, and as I said earlier, you do have to push yourself hard sometimes.

So if you want, go ahead and keep your gym membership. We'll still be friends. (But keep some gear at home too).



SECTION 2: SAVAGE STRENGTH SECRETS

Secret 1 – Toughness

Now a key point which needs to be brought up right now, at the beginning, is this... strength training... really hard, teeth-grinding strength training builds something in you that goes beyond just strength development alone.

That quality is physical **toughness**.

What do I mean by toughness?

Let's go back to Webster's, where toughness is defined like this...

Toughness: *“capable of enduring strain or hardship <as in tough soldiers>, marked by an absence of softness”*

Being tough is a big deal.

Mostly because there aren't a lot of tough people around anymore.

Toughness has become an endangered resource.

When I was young I used to hear people use the phrase; *“be a man.”*

Now nobody ever said to you “be a man” because they were telling you to compromise, or to make someone else feel good about doing a half-a@#ed job at something.





They were telling you to **toughen up**.

Meaning... suck it up, stop whining and take care of the problem.

But here's the good news; you can get start cultivating toughness today, by building toughness into your strength training program.

The toughness I'm referring to here is the ability to withstand uncomfortable stimulus, which is a fancy way of saying **pain**.

Sometimes strength training can hurt a little bit.

But a little temporary pain is actually a good thing because you need to know that you can take it.

I'm *not* talking about anything that's abusive or damaging to the structure of your body.

There's a big difference between a little temporary pain and an actual injury.

But a little discomfort, which can simply be the result of compressing some rest periods or doing some intense interval work after finishing some heavy lifting, that kind of discomfort is beneficial.

Again, just to show yourself that you can do it. It is a discipline-builder.

Sometimes you should train outdoors when it is very hot.

You need to be smart about it and hydrate accordingly, but this is something that people don't normally do.

People navigate towards what's comfortable and comfort does not build toughness.

Conversely, in the wintertime go outside and work out.

Train smart, but go outside and push yourself.

Break past what your mind tells you is doable and forge new goals based on what you want to do and not what other people tell you can do.

Am I saying you should train like this all the time?

The answer is “No.”

But periodically shocking the system to prove to yourself that you can do things you didn't think you could do before is extremely beneficial.

The discipline that this develops can propel your training farther than anything else.

This is the benefit of developing mental toughness, which is the real barometer of your potential success.

It's simple... mentally tough people get stronger than people who are not mentally tough.

This may sound self-evident but it's absolutely true.

When we're talking about **strength** training, we're talking about transcending genetics, vanity and even our own ideas about what is reasonable or even possible.





Remember, the mind navigates the body... so make them both as tough and as strong as you can.

And here is where we reach the point where people start to get a little freaked out.

They think “Mike is **extreme**. I’m not sure I can do what he’s saying. It sounds too hard... maybe I’m too old... maybe Mike is just crazy...”

Well guess what... you’re not too skinny, too old or anything else. If you want to be strong, *you* can be.

Strength is an aspect of physical development which can be improved upon at any point throughout your entire life.

Numerous studies have been conducted with senior citizens who had been placed on resistance training programs.

And even at their advanced ages, these test subjects improved not only their strength but connective tissue resilience and even bone density.

So we’re not talking about anything that someone has to stop doing simply because they’re approaching middle age or even beyond.

This should be a lifelong pursuit.

Secret 2 – Understanding Movement Patterns

Now let’s talk about the building blocks of strength development. In very basic terms we are talking about understanding how the body moves and the best way to train yourself for powerful movements.

At a basic level, the body does a few different things as far as movement is concerned.



With the upper body... there is vertical pushing, vertical pulling, horizontal pushing and horizontal pulling.

With the lower body... there is lower-limb pushing, posterior chain movements and anterior chain movements.

These are the primary planes of motion, but there are a few others like arcing motions and isolation movements which focus on single-limb applications.

So let's break these down with some examples...

THE PRIMARY MOVEMENT PATTERNS	
Vertical Push:	Dumbbell press variations, push presses or handstand push-ups are all examples of vertical or overhead pushing
Vertical Pull:	Chin-ups, pull-ups, rope climbing and even vertical work on a climbing wall are examples vertical pulling
Horizontal Push:	Bench presses, dumbbell presses and pushups all require a strong horizontal pushing motion
Horizontal Pull:	Rowing movements using barbells, dumbbells, bodyweight or odd implements all emphasize horizontal pulling
Lower-limb Pushing:	These motions are seen in exercises like the squat and all of its variations, step-ups, lunges, sled drags and box jumps



THE PRIMARY MOVEMENT PATTERNS

<p>Body Extension Posterior Chain:</p>	<p><i>(the muscles that make up the posterior chain include the hamstrings, glutes, and erectors of the lower back)</i> Hyper-extensions, good mornings and most of the variations of the dead lift all focus on this critical group of muscles</p>
<p>Body Flexion Anterior Chain:</p>	<p><i>(anterior chain muscles include the abdominals, obliques and serratus)</i> sit-up variations, leg raises and bridging postures are among the exercises used to target this muscle group</p>

SPECIALIZED MOVEMENT PATTERNS

<p>Arcing Movements:</p>	<p>These are motions where the path of resistance follows an arc. Dumbbell / kettlebell swings, front raises and pullovers are all examples of these less-often trained movements.</p>
<p>Isolation Movements:</p>	<p>(Also referred to as single-limb movements, this is actually a category of exercises instead of a group of movement types). A variety of exercises fit this category: single-leg squats, lateral raises, concentration curls and so on. Isolation movements are not typically emphasized in strength programs and are more commonly used by bodybuilders. But when used intelligently, they still have their place in our strength-building domain.</p>

So it is from these different patterns that we will be building out our workouts. Stay with me...

Secret 3 - Repetition Speed

In general, many strength athletes tend to follow the same routines that power lifters use... heavy weights with low repetitions. And they tend to perform these movements with a slow repetition tempo.

Why slow? Because powerlifters tend to perform their lifts slowly.

This is a necessary thing because it takes a LOT of grinding to push your way through a savage-heavy squat or dead lift.

And mechanically and neurologically-speaking, there's a certain repetition speed which will give you problems.

If you try to push too fast on a big power movement, your central nervous system (CNS) thinks you're about to injure yourself.

So, your CNS will put the brakes on your lifting movement without you being able to do anything about it.

When that happens, at that precise moment, you aren't pushing *anything*.

You may have even seen this happen at the gym before... a rookie trainer psyches himself up for a big bench press, with probably more weight than he can handle.

And because he's a rookie, he hasn't mastered the graduated, grinding push that power lifters are so good at.



MANIFESTO

BY MIKE GILLETTE



So at the exact moment that this guy decides it's time to do the lift, he gets all quiet...

Then a few loud breaths in and out.

And suddenly he slams his hands and arms upwards against the bar, perhaps hoping that some momentum will help carry the weight upwards.

But there is **zero** chance of that happening.

As soon as our lifter comes up against the initial resistance provided by the barbell, sitting motionless on those uprights while he's driving upwards at top speed, his body does something that he doesn't want it to.

At the first sign of resistance, there is a brief interruption of effort while his body, thinking that it is saving itself from injury, actually prevents the push.

It stops it cold. And even though this only happens for a fraction of a second, that's all it takes to prevent him (or you) from making that lift.

And it's also frustrating to the novice who may have lifted that same weight in the past.

He might even think that he's becoming weaker. He's not, he just needs to learn the right techniques to get strong.

The lesson here is that you can no more speed your way through a heavy dead lift than I can speed my way through bending a steel bar. You have to be able to apply maximal effort over a period of time and not just for a second or two.

Now there are certain exercises that we do, which are not performed at these moderate tempos. In fact, we perform certain movements in an explosive manner.



Any time we are pushing sub-maximal (lighter) loads such as in a round of ‘Century Sets’, then we push or pull those lighter weights as explosively as possible.

These explosive-type movements allow our bodies to recruit additional motor units, which develops greater power as well as muscular activity.

And this is good news for you guys who want some extra muscle mass to go along with your strength development.

You are going to get some mass courtesy of those explosive movements.

So to review... Savage-heavy weights cannot be effectively moved quickly, nor should they. Lighter weights can and should be lifted as fast as you can safely handle them.

Secret 4 – Goal-Specific Rest Intervals

Rest intervals are the individual breaks taken between sets of exercises. These breaks are an important and often overlooked factor in strength training programs.

Many trainees don’t think much about them or they don’t really understand how rest intervals fit relate their training program.

Depending on your training goals, an optimal rest period between sets can vary from 30 seconds or less on up to 5 minutes.

“Five minutes Mike?” “Really?” “But the personal trainer at my gym says rest periods should be as short as possible.”

Of course your gym’s personal trainer tells you that. That’s because your gym wants you in and out as fast as possible to make room for the rest of their members.



But the customer traffic flow at your gym has **nothing** to do with you getting stronger, so just ignore that guy!

Why do you need that kind of recovery for these kinds of weights? Because heavy lifts use a particular part of our energy systems more than others, in this case the Phosphogen system, to generate the chemicals needed to fuel your muscles for brief, powerful bursts of energy.

And that system gets tapped very quickly. It needs anywhere from 30 seconds to around 3 minutes to refresh itself.

Interestingly, it is your breathing hard between sets, that helps you replenish those chemicals you need for energy. So, if you notice yourself really gasping after the last rep of your set, that's a good thing.

This means if you are looking for strength, decent rest (or recovery) intervals are critical. Without them you just won't have the fuel to power your lifts.

In the SAVAGE STRENGTH program we are training for explosive, low repetition activities of short duration.

This means that muscle mass or muscular endurance are not our primary concerns. (We don't have anything against either one, they're both nice to have). But in this program it is all about building strength.

So, for supreme, strength-only development, an optimal rest period range is actually around five minutes. This kind of full recovery allows you to produce the greatest muscular force possible for each set performed, providing the greatest absolute strength gains from your training.

But these intervals are generally only used by competitive strength athletes who weight train two times a day, six days a week. You, on the other hand, probably don't have that kind of training time available to you. And if you train

at a commercial gym, I don't want you to get arrested for loitering. Our goal is to get you recovered just enough to keep you powering through the next set of exercises.

So to perform the Savage Strength Program, use rest intervals of no less than 30 seconds.

Secret 5 – Load Manipulation

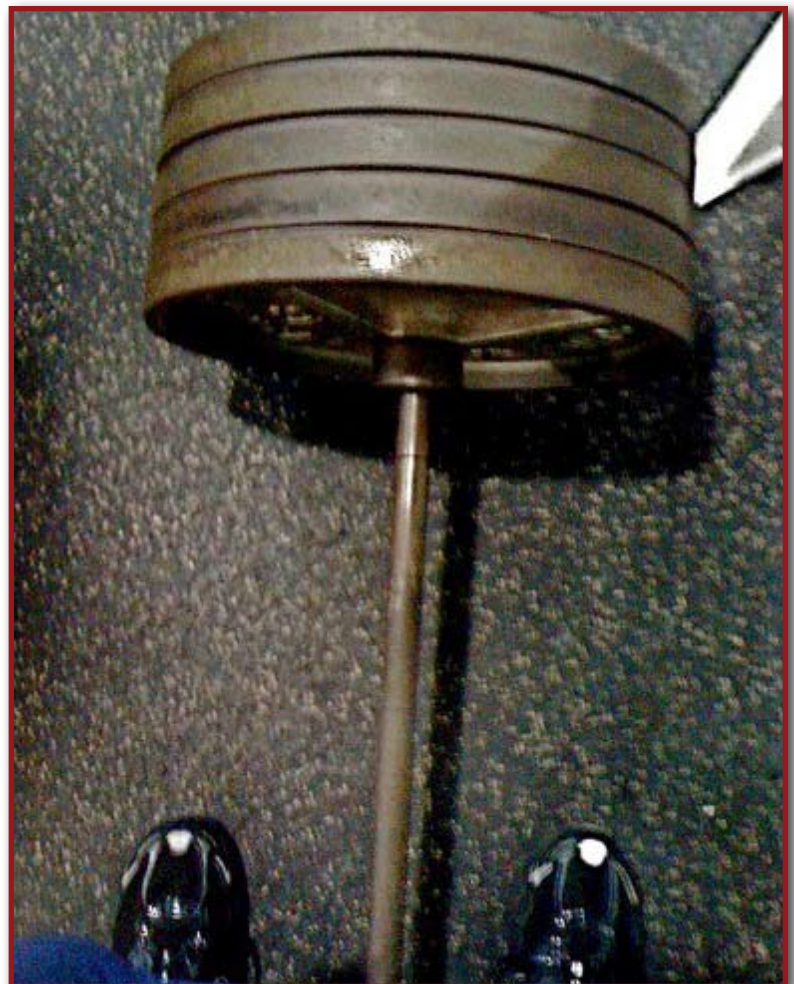
Load Manipulation is at the heart of what gets us the results that we're looking for, results that allow us to do some amazing things.

But first we need to understand the difference between conventional loading as applied to resistance training.

We refer to this as the 'actual load' being lifted. So an example of actual load is placing 100 lbs onto a barbell. The actual load of that barbell if you were to lift it off of the ground is 100 'actual' pounds.

Perceived loading is different. Perceived loading relates to how heavy you can make the weight feel by the way that you lift it. Let me give you an example of this...

Performing strongmen often do something called leverage lifting. They will pick up a sledgehammer by grasping the very bottom of





the handle. Then they will extend the hammer upwards or forwards or even behind them.

The reason this is an impressive feat is that a standard 16-pound sledgehammer feels heavier and heavier the further down the handle that you grasp it as you move your grip away from the weighted sledge.

The most extreme examples of this are the notorious leverage feats attributed to a legendary strongman named Slim “The Hammerman” Farman. Slim performed this feat with a custom-built pair of sledgehammers.

These hammers had extra weight plates attached to the sledges and had handles which were 31” long.

Slim would pick these hammers up at the very end of the handles. He would then extend his arms completely straight forward and locked out.

He would then allow the sledges to slowly tip down towards his face while his arms remained locked. *(And in case you don't think that sledgehammers are extreme, Slim also does the same thing with large axes!)*

Any break in concentration or momentary muscular failure would have split his skull and snapped his wrists like twigs.

Now hear this... This off-balanced load, as Slim grabbed these hammers by the very end of the handles and held them at arm's length actually created an unbelievable 1,736 pounds of pressure on his wrists.

Now pause for a moment and digest just how incredible this feat is... And in case you were wondering, Slim's achievements in leverage lifting have not only never been equaled, no one has ever come close.

What I want you to take away from this example is the idea of leverage

manipulation and its relationship to perceived load.

You can manipulate leverage the same way and increase the perceived load of many exercises.

This is how I can make you stronger using just your bodyweight and some items which can be purchased from the hardware store.

This strategic off-balancing of load can do amazing things for your strength development, and not just for the muscles that we're specifically targeting.

There's a tremendous amount of stabilization our bodies must perform whenever we choose to off-balance load during an exercise.

Here is an example of off-balanced loading that I experienced myself the first time I trained with Dennis Rogers.

Earlier, when I made a reference to the strongest man I know, I was talking about Dennis.

He is called "Pound-for-Pound the Strongest Man in the World" because he is.

Dennis introduced me to a unique training exercise that he calls a table curl.

The table curl requires the use of a very special dumbbell.

First off, this dumbbell is 85 pounds.



Now if you were to put a standard-sized dumbbell weighing 85 pounds into the hand of a typical gym rat and told him to curl it with the one arm that he was holding the dumbbell with, it would be unlikely that he could do so.

Even most big guys would have a lot of trouble curling 85 pounds with one arm.

But this particular dumbbell is not only heavy, it is set up on an enormous handle, measuring three feet in length.

And Dennis had set this dumbbell up with two 25 pound plates, attached to the 3 foot, 35 pound handle.

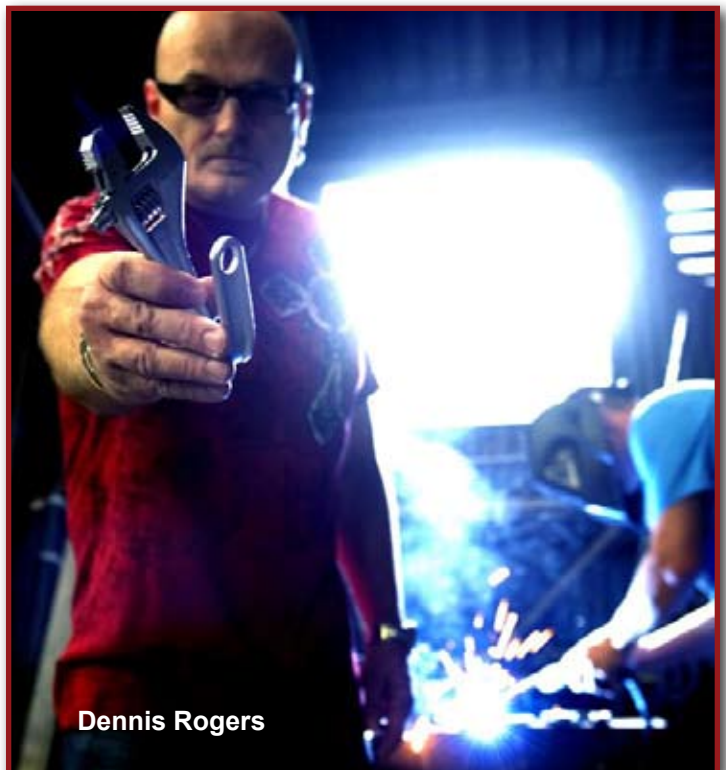
So you begin by standing next to the table, laying your forearm down and grabbing a hold of this oversized bar.

Then, with no momentum... using nothing but concentrated effort, you lift this thing, curling it upwards so that the dumbbell becomes perpendicular to your forearm once it's in the upright position.

Now once the dumbbell is straight up in the air, you would think that the hard part of the exercise is over.

But it's not, because on the small pivot point of your elbow you're trying to stabilize this three-foot dumbbell while those weight plates rotate back and forth.

So your wrist is doing everything possible to prevent the rotation of the



Dennis Rogers

weight and limit the lateral torque on your wrist joint.

The amount of effort this takes is something that really has to be experienced. And my experience with this exercise felt like it was going to twist my bones until they snapped in two.

So this is what I'm talking about when I use term **perceived load** as opposed to **actual load**.

I'm talking about Slim and his sledge hammers and I'm talking about Dennis and his oversized dumbbell.

You need to understand these concepts because they are essential to getting strong.

Secret 6 - Fatigue Management

Now many of you who train with weights have had a different frame of reference for perceived load.

It's something like this... you're doing bench presses and your one-rep max is 300 pounds.

So now that we've established that 300 pounds is your one-rep max, let's say you're lifting 50 percent of that, or 150 pounds.

So you start your bench press workout with 150 pounds.

So when you first lift that weight the correctly perceive or 'feel' the load as 150 pounds.



MANIFESTO

BY MIKE GILLETTE



But after each subsequent repetition it starts to feel heavier and heavier.

Now the human body is not 'smart' in that it cannot read the numbers on the plates.

So while you still have 150 pounds on the bar, as you grow tired and get to the point you can't lift it anymore, the last repetition that you must struggle to complete feels like 300 pounds.

And then if you brought the barbell back down to your chest and tried lifting it just once more, the load may now feel like 400 pounds because you can't even move it a few inches.

Now in this second example, our continued effort does relate to our perception of load, but it relates differently than leverage manipulation.

In the second example the perceived load changes because of the accumulation of fatigue.

Dealing with this variable is something I refer to as 'fatigue management'.

Fatigue management is a huge factor in strength training.

Again, with the sledge hammer and 3-foot, 85-pound dumbbell examples the perceived load felt 'heavy' as soon as they were picked up due to the off-balanced weight relationships which were described.

So this means that we could take a given weight, we'll say 20 pounds and make it feel like 40 pounds just based on how we pick that implement up.

Now everything that was just described about fatigue making things feel heavier still applies.

The only difference is that we can double our difficulty when the elements of



perceived loading and fatigue are combined. And because we want to be 'fresh' when attempting difficult exercises, we need to manage our fatigue levels.

So how do you 'manage' your fatigue while strength training?

It's pretty simple. Just take a tip from competitive weightlifters instead of bodybuilders.

Take longer rest intervals between your sets of exercises.

Remember that strength training is not just about training your muscles but your central nervous system (CNS) too.

Muscular fatigue or cardio-respiratory fatigue will always try to put the brakes on your all-out strength efforts.

Which brings me to another key point... Do **NOT** train to failure.

What do I mean by failure?

When you are slamming out reps to the point where you're too tired to do any more.

This is the state of momentary muscular 'failure', where your body is fatigued to the point of not being able to budge the weights another inch.

But here's the problem... Bodybuilders love training to failure.

Just ask them about it and here's what they'll say...

"Going to failure gets me so pumped!"

"I go all out to feel the 'burn'!"



"Training to failure is totally high-intensity!"

Believe me, I've heard it all before. But listen to me here... I **don't care** what you **like** to do in training.

The only thing that you should worry about is if your training method is actually doing you any good.

And making a habit of training to failure is **not** doing you any good.

The problem with going to failure is that when we train, we are not only training the muscles as was said earlier.

Training to failure is very hard on the CNS and really interferes with your recovery ability.

Training to failure needs to be avoided if you want to keep making progress and avoid burnout.

You can train *just short* of failure and get really strong.

Your SAVAGE STRENGTH training is already intense enough.

Don't slow yourself down with bad habits and bad training dogma.

Here's one last point about why we need to get so creative with angles and off-balancing...

It is because many SAVAGE STRENGTH trainees will be working out at home with a limited amount of equipment.

So a creative training approach will help them (possibly YOU) to get the most use out of a few dumbbells, or whatever someone has available to them.

Secret 7 – Overcoming Fear

I need to address this point right now....

Some people have a ‘fear of training’.

They may also have a fear of success... or a fear of change... or a fear of looking foolish.

But there will be those with a legitimate fear of starting this training program because it looks too different, or even too extreme.



So let me explain here and now why this training approach is **good for you**.

It is important to do this because if I don't, some people will just look at the exercises and decide that they're not going to do them.

And why? Again, because they look **hard**.

And nobody is going to want to attack difficult exercises if they don't understand why they should do them.

It's hard to motivate yourself to do something that's really challenging.

So it's essential that people really get what we're trying to accomplish here and what they can accomplish by understanding the theory behind the movements and the arrangements of those movements.



So now, let me get to the last key element of our training.

In our pursuit of SAVAGE STRENGTH, the best way for us to maximize muscle fiber recruitment and an adaptive response from our nervous system is to use very heavy loads.

And this freaks some people out.

The main reason it freaks people out is that they think it sounds dangerous.

“Won’t I hurt myself?” And that kind of thing.

Now understand this, when it comes to weight training people don’t get hurt because they use heavy weights per se, they hurt themselves because they don’t know what they’re doing or they’re using weights they’re not ready for.

They haven’t yet mastered the ‘technique’ of training.

Technique is huge, and this manual will show people what they need to know to train correctly.

But building a strength foundation before going ‘heavy’ is also essential to avoid injury.

The key to understand is that the term **heavy** is relative.

That means whatever weight is heavy for you is **heavy**.

Forget what other people can do, this is *your* journey and it can’t be rushed.

And we’re not only talking about strengthening muscles here, your connective tissues need to be strengthened as well.



And these tissues require stimulation in the form of heavy loads.

Without heavy loads your muscles simply take over and do all the work.

The body likes to find the easiest way to do things and the advantage of using heavy loads is that it is a very effective way to stimulate connective tissue as well as bone density.

Light weights or endless calisthenics will not do this.

The problem is that everyone wants results and they want them now.

But there are no shortcuts, people have to be smart about training.

You have to condition the body over time before you can even think about performing advanced exercises or movements with really heavy loads.

It may seem scary, but you must start from where you are.

Secret 8 – The Technique of Tension

Really understand this... maximizing strength comes from generating the maximum amount of tension that you can. And developing the ability to maximize tension comes subjecting yourself to heavy loads.

For example, if your one-rep maximum curl is 100 pounds and you only use 50 pounds when you train, you are not stimulating all of your available muscle fibers.

Your body always tries to do the least amount of work to get the job done.

This means your biceps will only activate just enough muscle fibers to perform that 50 pound curl.

To 'wake up' more fibers you would have to increase the load.

This means 75 pounds activates up more fibers than 50 pounds and 90 pounds activates even more.

On the other end of the spectrum, you could take just 25 pounds and do endless repetitions of curls with it.

Now you would end up pumping a lot of blood to the muscle, and you could stand in front of the mirror and think you've really accomplished something.

But all that was accomplished is a bicep full of blood.

It might look impressive for about 10 minutes or so, but you didn't develop real strength.

It's also important to understand that you don't just get more muscle fiber recruitment by lifting heavy weights.

You also get more focus.

When you are under a heavy load you tend to not get distracted.

If you're at a gym you suddenly stop paying attention to the music.

You tend to pay less attention to members of the opposite sex when you're lifting heavy.

It requires your complete attention and respect.





There's something very powerful about that.

Heavy load training is also very important for your nervous system. If all you do in training is calisthenics and you suddenly find yourself in a situation that requires real strength you will not be up to the challenge.

And this is not just a 'muscle' issue.

This is because if you suddenly try to make your body do something that is way beyond anything you've ever done in training, your nervous system will shut you down.

Any time your nervous system thinks you're about to injure yourself, it will not let you do that thing.

Perfect example... the side splits.

Very few untrained people could do side splits if they were to try.

Why? Is it because there is something unique about their body that prevents them from doing them?

No. It's actually because their bodies don't 'think' they can do them.

Look, I know your body doesn't actually *think* by itself, but your body does many things that you cannot consciously control.

And this is how your body can seem as though it has a mind of its own.

If your legs have never gone that far in that direction and you try to drop down into the splits, your body, thinking that it is protecting itself from injury, will respond by forcibly contracting the muscles of your legs.



This will effectively put the brakes on your attempted side splits.

But here is the interesting thing... if the average person is under anesthesia and completely knocked out in an operating room their legs could be positioned into the side splits.

Why? Because under anesthesia, the nervous system has also been 'put to sleep' and is no longer 'in control' of the muscles.

The same thing goes with lifting heavy weights.

This is one of the chief reasons why I do the extreme things I do.

I train my body to *not accept* what it thinks are my limits. And I continue to redefine those limits in order to get stronger.

On this topic there is one last argument that always seems to come up so let's get to it... I call this argument the 'Gymnast Paradox'.

Whenever I say that bodyweight exercises alone don't really produce a lot of strength or that they're not even that efficient for muscular development, someone always says...

"Oh yeah, but what about world class gymnasts?"

"I see the gymnasts on TV and they look like Greek gods. They do nothing but bodyweight training and they look amazing"

It's true, world-class gymnasts *do* look amazing.

But remember, I did just use the phrase 'world-class'. This means we are talking about the best athletes in the world, people who have won the genetic savage-bonus lottery.

World-class athletes do not represent the norm, and modeling your strategies based upon the habits of supremely gifted people will lead you on a path of frustration.

And did you know that most top gymnasts *do* lift weights?

But all competitive gymnasts have one thing in common which is critical for strength development.

Gymnasts have been trained to maximize muscular tension... Maximizing tension throughout their entire body.

Just like a power lifter who is deadlifting 700 lbs, both the gymnast and the power lifter have mastered the skill of generating tension throughout their entire musculature, using all of their available strength resources simultaneously.

When you see a gymnast holding an iron cross you better believe that they are keeping every muscle fiber under their control *tight* from their toes to their hair.



In gymnastics they even have an expression for this... “Tight is light”.

The ability to generate absolute muscular tension throughout the body is what allows gymnasts to maintain those radical positions that are used in their training and their competitions. So even though gymnastic training is ‘only’ bodyweight training, it is the most advanced bodyweight training in existence.

Now there is nobody who I am aware of who



goes into gymnastics specifically to develop really big delts or a killer set of abs.

Gymnastics training is skill training. The resulting physique of the gymnast is a byproduct of the training, and not the objective of the training.

The impressive muscular development that they possess is primarily a result of mastering muscular tension.

The concept of generating maximum muscular tension is the reason why we use heavy loads in our programs.

Gymnasts do one other thing that we also do in our strength program and that is they train in unstable environments. I refer to this as the use of deliberate destabilization.

This is first implemented on a variety of bodyweight exercises as a way to prepare trainees for the rigors of the more advanced movements performed with loads.

For example, we will position a weight on just one side of the body.

This requires that not only the weighted side of the body is tight but even more critically, the other side of the body must be kept tight.

So if I were to have you perform a one-armed bench press using a single dumbbell in your right hand, that one dumbbell will start to teach your body how to develop high levels of muscular tension in order to stabilize your body while it is deliberately destabilized.

This is the kind of thing that is going to make you really strong.

To sum up... the most important concepts in developing strength are these: it

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requires a lot of perseverance because it's very hard work, and number two, it's very hard work.

Meaning that the effort it takes to perform some of these exercises will surprise you. I don't want you to be freaked out by that, concerned about that, or even de-motivated by that.

If you aspire to do 'impossible' things, you've got to be prepared to be humble for a while.

To make your body do amazing things, particularly if you're like me and you've 'been around a while', it takes some time.

There are no shortcuts.

You have to do the work, but the benefits are amazing.

You will amaze yourself.

You will become better.

This is the best way to train.

SECTION 3: THEORY & APPLICATION THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SAVAGE STRENGTH PROGRAM

The training concepts contained within this program first emerged in the late 1970s.

This structure was very successful at developing serious strength (and size) in college and professional football players.

This was a key period in the overall genesis of football training.



Just consider the speed (and size) of football players from the 60s and early 70s in contrast to those in the late 70s and afterwards.

There's just no comparison.

The new breed of player, honed in the weight room, is bigger, faster and much, much **stronger**.

The reason behind this transition period is that for many years, football coaches had mistakenly believed that weight training; particularly **heavy** weight training, would slow their athletes down.

This of course is completely untrue.

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The best examples to contradict this idea are champion sprinters.

These athletes, the fastest in the world, all enhance their speed (and strength) through systematic resistance training.

And far from being 'muscle-bound', these world-class sprinters also possess some of the most impressively 'functional' physiques found in any sport.

So back to the program... What you will love about this program is that it's simple to learn, simple to perform and if you put forth the effort, it will deliver serious results for a long time.



Now you may be tempted to over-think the program, particularly if you come from a bodybuilding/high-volume training background.

Don't do it.

Follow the base program. Follow it for a month. During the first month, perform the same exercises at every workout and use the 5x5 structure.

When you begin your second month of training you can start to incorporate the program variations at those times when your progress starts to flat-line.

And remember the other key component of the Savage Strength approach... exercise variety.

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For example, performing dumbbell chest presses on Monday, weighted dips on Wednesday, and incline push-ups on Friday.

When you build your own program by choosing from a variety of challenging exercises, all targeting the same movement patterns, your body will find it almost impossible to adapt.

The result? Your training is always productive, always challenging and above all, fun!

This is what keeps you fresh and mentally engaged with your training.

This is what keeps you coming back for more.



LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT HOW TO GET STARTED PERFORMING THE SAVAGE STRENGTH BASE PROGRAM...

The primary structure of this program are groupings of five sets of a given exercise and five repetitions of that exercise.

This means that after you have selected an exercise for a particular movement pattern, you will perform five sets of five reps (5x5) of that movement.

Now for this to be effective, you need to select a load that will challenge you as much as possible while still allowing you to perform within those set and rep parameters.

So pay close attention to this next example which will show you just how to determine an appropriate load.

This first 5x5 training example uses a hypothetical load of 200-pounds. Your goal is to do 5 sets of 5 repetitions with 200 pounds.

The first time you perform this set you will probably come up a bit short of the intended 25 total repetitions.

To progress, you should increase the load only when you reach the point that you can complete 5 full sets of 5 reps.

Also, if you cannot perform at least **14** total repetitions during your five combined sets, then your starting weight was too high, so you'll need to adjust downward.



Look at the examples below:

STARTING WEIGHT WAS OKAY:

200x5, 200x4, 200x3, 200x3, 200x3 = 14 total reps

STARTING WEIGHT WAS TOO HEAVY:

200x4, 200x3, 200x2, 200x2, 200x2 = 13 total reps

In the second example, the workout totaled 13 repetitions.

This means that the starting weight of two hundred pounds was a bit too much.

This trainee should start their next workout with approximately 5 pounds less, or 195 pounds.

Once you hit your repetition goal of 5 sets of 5 repetitions you need to increase your load by 5 to 10 pounds.

Program Variations:

Variation #1 — ‘Load Lightening’ This 5x5 variation is designed to allow you to get all five reps every set.

To accomplish this you will lighten the load (removing weight) of your later sets so that you can always hit your five reps despite the accumulation of fatigue.

But the *key* here is not to make things too easy on yourself.

Lighten the load just enough to allowing yourself to hit those five repetitions on each set but no more.

Variation #2 — ‘Fatigue Fighting’ Start out with a slightly lighter weight. In



this case a weight that you **could lift** eight times, but you will still perform just five reps.

By the end of your five sets, completing all five reps will become challenging as you experience the cumulative fatigue of your efforts.

One way to add intensity to this variation is to reduce the amount of rest time between sets while still hitting all five reps per set.

Variation #3 — ‘Up & Down’ This method involves initiating the first of five sets of exercises starting with your five-rep max weight.

On the second set, add 2.5% of additional weight and perform a set of four repetitions.

On each subsequent set, continue to add an additional 2.5% to the load.

This means that your final set will be a **single repetition** of your approximate one-rep max. So in other words, the load goes up while the repetitions performed go down.

This Up & Down example uses a hypothetical starting load of 200 pounds.

Set One:	5 x 200
Set Two:	4 x 206
Set Three:	3 x 212
Set Four:	2 x 216
Set Five:	1 x 220

Once you can complete the prescribed sets and reps, you will need to add additional resistance to your starting weight and recalculate the whole sequence.



THE SECRET 'SYSTEM-SHOCKER'... CENTURY SETS

A Century Set is, as the name suggests, a set of 100 total repetitions. So how is it done? Very simple... Select an exercise such as chins-ups.

Then perform as many chin-ups in a row as you can. Let's say that you did 10.

This means that you have 90 more chin ups left to complete before that Century Set is finished.

But to use Century Sets most effectively, they need to be structured as much as possible instead of always going for your maximum rep count at each attempt.

So if 10 chin-ups is your current max, cut that number by 50% and perform sets of five repetitions until you reach 100.

This means 20 sets of five repetitions until you would be finished.

This is a two-phase workout where two exercises are alternated until you reach 100 reps with each movement.

You will then transition to a second pair of exercises, and continuing the workout until you reach your second pair of 100 rep totals.

So this means that in the course of just one workout, you will have performed four different exercises for an overall total of 400 repetitions.

In the Savage Strength Program, you will perform the Century Set workout once after the first four weeks of training and then once every three weeks thereafter.



Here is what the Century Set Workout looks like...

CENTURY SET WORKOUT		
Chin-Ups	20x5 = 100 reps	alternated with...
Chain Dips	20x5 = 100 reps	then proceed to...
Upright Rows	20x5 = 100 reps	alternated with...
Chain Squats	20x5 = 100 reps	

Designing your own Savage Strength Training Programs...

Using the templates which were just provided along with the exercise library, you can design your own Savage Strength training program. Or, if you want to get started right away, just use the example workouts below or refer to your training logs and you will immediately be set for four month's worth of Savage Strength training.

Remember...

- If you haven't been training for a while, go easy.
- Let your enthusiasm work for you, not against you.
- You have many exercise examples to choose from to customize your program, so if a particular movement is uncomfortable, pick another one.



SAVAGE STRENGTH EXAMPLE WORKOUTS PHASE 1

The **SAVAGE STRENGTH** 'Base' Program =

- 5 sets / 5 repetitions per movement.
- A minimum of 30 seconds rest between each set.
- Complete each exercise before proceeding to the next one.
- Do not change the exercises or the repetition amounts for the first 4 weeks of training.

Whenever you perform bodyweight/calisthenic movements you must add resistance in order to challenge your body in performing the pre-determined number of repetitions

Train three days a week. For example... Mon/Wed/Fri. Or, depending on your personal schedule, any sequence of days that allows you to alternate training days followed by a rest day followed by two rest days after the third workout of the week.



Weeks 1 through 4: SAVAGE STRENGTH Base Program

SAVAGE STRENGTH BASE PROGRAM	
WEEKS 1 — 4	
MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Lower Body Push	<i>Chain Squats (add weight if needed)</i>
Vertical Push	<i>Standing Dumbbell Press</i>
Vertical Pull	<i>Chin-Ups (add weight if needed)</i>
Horizontal Push	<i>Suspended Incline Push-Ups</i>
Horizontal Pull	<i>One-arm DB Rows</i>
Body Extension	<i>Suitcase Dead Lift</i>
Body Flexion	<i>Weighted Sit-Ups</i>

Weeks 5 through 7 / Variation #1 / 'Load Lightening'

The goal of Variation #1 is to get all 5 reps on every set. To do this, lighten the load as needed (remove weight) on the later sets so you can always hit your 5 reps as you become fatigued.

VARIATION #1 / 'LOAD LIGHTENING'	
WEEKS 5 — 7	
MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Lower Body Push	<i>Box Squats</i>
Vertical Push	<i>Standing Shoulder Press/Barbell</i>
Vertical Pull	<i>Pull-Ups (add weight if needed)</i>
Horizontal Push	<i>Floor Presses</i>
Horizontal Pull	<i>Body Rows (add weight if needed)</i>
Body Extension	<i>Good Mornings</i>
Body Flexion	<i>Weighted Sit-Ups</i>



Weeks 8 through 10 / Variation #2 / 'Fatigue Fighting'

Start with a lighter weight that you could lift 8 times, but perform just 5 reps. Then, to increase intensity during these two weeks, reduce the amount of rest time down from 2 minutes between sets to as low as you can while still hitting all 5 reps per set.

VARIATION #2 / 'FATIGUE FIGHTING'	
WEEKS 8 — 10	
MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Lower Body Push	<i>Barbell Step-Ups</i>
Vertical Push	<i>Handstand Push-Ups (any variation)</i>
Vertical Pull	<i>Chin-Ups (add weight if needed)</i>
Horizontal Push	<i>Dumbbell Bench Presses</i>
Horizontal Pull	<i>Bent Row with Dumbbells</i>
Body Extension	<i>Body Drops</i>
Body Flexion	<i>Weighted Leg Raises</i>



Weeks 11 through 13 / Variation #3 / 'Up & Down'

Start the set with your 5-rep max weight. On the second set, add 2.5% of additional weight and perform a set of 4 repetitions. On each subsequent set, continue to add an additional 2.5% to the load. This means that your final set will be a **single repetition** of your approximate one-rep max. So the load goes up while the reps go down. Once you can complete the prescribed sets and reps, you will need to add additional resistance to your starting weight and recalculate the whole sequence.

VARIATION #3 / 'UP & DOWN'

WEEKS 11 — 13

MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Lower Body Push	<i>Barbell Stationary Lunges</i>
Vertical Push	<i>Dumbbell Shoulder Presses</i>
Vertical Pull	<i>Pull-Ups (add weight if needed)</i>
Horizontal Push	<i>Dips (add weight if needed)</i>
Horizontal Pull	<i>Bent Row with Barbell</i>
Body Extension	<i>Stiff-Leg Dead Lift</i>
Body Flexion	<i>Overhead Weighted Sit-Ups</i>



Weeks 14 through 16 - Variation #4 'Base +'

All five sets are 5 repetitions using a constant weight as in the original 'Base' Program. Additional Arcing and Isolation Movements are added at the end of the workout.

VARIATION #4 'BASE +'	
WEEKS 14 — 16	
MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Lower Body Push	<i>Dumbbell Step-Ups</i>
Vertical Push	<i>Handstand Push-Up (any variation)</i>
Vertical Pull	<i>Chin-Ups (add weight if needed)</i>
Horizontal Push	<i>One-Arm Dumbbell Bench Press</i>
Horizontal Pull	<i>Dumbbell Bent Rows</i>
Body Extension	<i>Body Drops</i>
Body Flexion	<i>Weighted Sit-Ups</i>
Arcing	Week 14: <i>Chain Roll-Outs</i> Week 15: <i>Straight-Arm Pullover</i> Week 16: <i>Chain Flyes</i>
Isolation	Week 14: <i>Dumbbell Curls</i> Week 15: <i>Dumbbell Tricep Press</i> Week 16: <i>Tricep Chain Press and Barbell Curls</i>

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So here is a summary of your first 16 weeks of Savage Strength Training

SAVAGE STRENGTH TRAINING

Weeks 1 through 4	SAVAGE STRENGTH 'Base' Program
Weeks 5 through 7	Variation #1 - 'Load Lightning'*
Weeks 8 through 10	Variation #2 - 'Fatigue Fighting'*
Weeks 11 through 13	Variation #3 - 'Up and Down'*
Weeks 14 through 16	Variation #4 - 'Base+ '*

*The last workout of this cycle is a Century Set. This means the last workout of Weeks 4, 7, 10 and 13 is the following workout ...

Century Set Workout

(Note: Complete this Workout as quickly as Possible!)

CENTURY SET WORKOUT

<i>Chin-Ups</i>	20x5 = 100 reps	alternated with...
<i>Chain Dips</i>	20x5 = 100 reps	then proceed to...
<i>Dumbbell Upright Rows</i>	20x5 = 100 reps	alternated with...
<i>Chain Squats</i>	20x5 = 100 reps	

Now dig into your Savage Strength Training Logs and get to work!



BONUS:

SAVAGE STRENGTH XTREME ADVANCED PHASE

Week 17 OFF

Weeks 18-21 – The 8x3 Program

While there are no 'number fives' in this 8x3 program, it is included here as a variation to the 5x5 structure, because of the similarities in execution. In performance you proceed much as you would on a 5x5 program. The key difference is that you will be handling heavier loads over a longer period of time for each exercise.

You need to have at least four months of solid 5x5 training under your belt before stepping up to this program variation. It is also recommended that you take one full week completely off from training after completing Phase 1 before beginning this next Xtreme Phase of Savage Strength. Concentration is key; don't start these 8x3 sets if you are not mentally prepared for serious battle.

In the performance of this program the priority is to get as many of the total targeted 24 repetitions as possible. As a result, you need to approach your starting weights in the same manners as 5x5 Variation #2. This means that your starting load will be your approximate five-rep max. Once you can successfully complete eight sets with three repetitions, increase the load and continue on with the program. Look at the examples below with a hypothetical starting load of 200 pounds:

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Starting weight was okay:

200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x2, 200x2 = 22 total reps

Starting weight was too heavy:

200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x3, 200x2, 200x2, 200x1 = 20 total reps

4-DAY A WEEK SPLIT-BODY PROGRAM	
DAYS 1 & 3	
MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Vertical Push	Handstand Push-Ups
Horizontal Push	Weighted Dips
Body Flexion	Weighted Sit-Ups
Isolation Push	Tricep Press-Outs
Arcing Motion	Shoulder Swings
DAYS 2 & 4	
MOVEMENT	EXAMPLE EXERCISE
Lower Body Push	Step-Ups w/Weights
Vertical Pull	Weighted Chin-Ups
Body Extension	Good-Mornings
Horizontal Pull	Body Rows
Isolation Pull	Rope Curls
Arcing Motion	Straight-Arm Pullovers

Your very last workout of this advanced phase is the Century Set workout found on the next page.

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Century Set Workout

(Note: Complete this Workout as quickly as Possible!)

CENTURY SET WORKOUT

Chin-Ups	20x5 = 100 reps	alternated with...
Chain Dips	20x5 = 100 reps	then proceed to...
Upright Rows	20x5 = 100 reps	alternated with...
Sissy Squats	20x5 = 100 reps	

Remember.....

**DONT
PUMP IRON...**

**BECOME
IRON!**