



SHOW AND GO

High Performance Training to Look, Feel, and Move Better

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Disclaimer

The information in this book is offered for educational purposes only; the reader should be cautioned that there is an inherent risk assumed by the participant with any form of physical activity. With that in mind, those participating in strength and conditioning programs should check with their physician prior to initiating such activities. Anyone participating in these activities should understand that such training initiatives may be dangerous if performed incorrectly, and may not be appropriate for everyone. The author assumes no liability for injury; this is purely an educational manual to guide those already proficient with the demands of such programming.



Introduction



In the fall of 2006, Matt Fitzgerald approached me about writing a book geared toward getting the masses – the Average Joes you see in every gym – stronger. I initially shot down the idea. In fact, I flat-out rejected Matt's proposal.

Sure, according to the National Sporting Goods Association, weight training is the fastest growing fitness activity in America. And, it's also one of the most popular already, with an estimated 35 million participants in 2005. There was just one problem, though.

I didn't think a canned – or pre-made – program could work.

You see, as the owner of a strength and conditioning facility, I was biased. When folks come to Cressey Performance, they are all assessed individually on a variety of flexibility, stability, and movement challenges to gather information and create programs suited to their unique needs.

And, they all have unique goals. The baseball pitchers want to add velocity to their fastballs, and improve shoulder health. The guy with the chronic back pain just wants to be pain-free so that he can play with his kids. The basketball players need more mobility training than the yoga enthusiasts. How could one program help them all?

The truth is that one program will never be exactly right for all of them. However, as luck would have it, that afternoon, I was working on the program for a new online consulting client of me – and it changed my mindset altogether.

This guy had *everything* wrong with him: chronic elbow, shoulder, knee, and lower back pain. These issues didn't bother him during his daily activities, but no matter what he did in the gym, they flared up. And, as I reviewed the programs he'd done for the previous few months, it wasn't any surprise why he was in so much pain as he attempted to participate in the type of exercise he really enjoyed.

The exercise selection was atrocious. His program was roughly 75% upper body training. There was far more upper body pushing than pulling.



He was using loads of machines in his training. There was no dedicated flexibility training. Soft tissue work was completely absent. He did no single-leg training. There were no planned deloading periods. It was just poor exercises, done with poor technique, in a program with poor structural balance and zero long-term planning. He wasn't just wasting his time and seeing inferior results; he was also ruining his body. He was a wreck.

And, that's when it occurred to me.

This guy's program and body – either taken in entirety or in bits and pieces – was surely remarkably similar to many of the programs of the 35+ million weight-training Americans (and loads more in other countries). You don't have to look any further than the commercial gym on every street corner to see people doing absolutely moronic crap. People really need direction – not just in terms of lifting, but in a comprehensive manner that positively affects health, quality of life, and performance, not just looks.

Think about it: if you needed a contract, you'd hire a lawyer, or at least purchase a book on contracts. If you needed your taxes done, you'd hire an accountant, or purchase the appropriate software and instructions to do it yourself. However, for whatever reason, the overwhelming majority of people are experts on their own fitness. If you actually look at the statistics, only about 3% of the population can afford a personal trainer (who are often woefully unprepared for such a responsibility), and frankly (with a few exceptions), the majority of fitness books out there are absolute rubbish. And, if you enter any commercial gym in the country, you'll encounter people on exercise equipment doing stuff so atrocious to their bodies that it very well might make your eyes bleed.

So, hoping to change the world, I emailed Matt and told him that I was a "go" – and [*Maximum Strength*](#) was born. That week, we got to work on the proposal for the first fitness book that not only showed the average guy how to become as strong as he can possibly be, but also how to get healthy and look better in the process. While the Cressey Performance facility wasn't accessible to everyone, I wanted to give people



the “client experience” in terms of the type programming – including dynamic flexibility warm-ups, soft tissue work, strength training, and energy systems development.

The feedback was nothing short of phenomenal – far more than I ever expected, in fact. As part of our book deal, I purchased 1,000 copies for resale – and I sold them all out in under two weeks. The book became a mainstay in the Amazon.com top 5,000 books, rising to the top 10 of the bodybuilding and weight training category seemingly overnight. I got an entourage, several pairs of leather pants, and started wearing sunglasses while indoors.

Okay, so that last part isn’t true, but what is true is that as I write this in August of 2010, in just over two years, over 16,0000 copies have been sold. Sure, these aren’t Stephen King, James Patterson, or Malcolm Gladwell sales figures, but I feel pretty good about the fact that all these people have adopted (or at least read about) some habits that’ll markedly improve their weight-training experience and, in turn, their quality of life.

However, that just speaks to the sales volume – and that’s not really what led me to write the book you’re reading now. Rather, I was blown away at the awesome feedback I received from those who completed the original “cookie-cutter” *Maximum Strength* program. It wasn’t unique to each individual, but people were regularly improving their box squats, deadlifts, bench presses, and chin-ups by hundreds of pounds in just 16 weeks. If you simply head over to EricCressey.com and search for “Maximum Strength,” you’ll see loads of before/after improvements folks have experienced.

In fact, my own business partner, Pete Dupuis (one of the initial *Maximum Strength* Guinea Pigs), experienced the following improvements over four months:

- Bodyweight: 180 pounds to 200 pounds
- -Vertical Jump: 24.9 inches to 29.2 inches
- -Broad Jump: 96 inches to 106 inches
- -Box Squat: 265 pounds to 300 pounds



- -Bench Press: 215 pounds to 265 pounds
- -Deadlift: 345 pounds to 400 pounds
- -3-rep-max chin-up: 225 pounds to 257 pounds

And, over a year later, Pete blows these numbers out of the water thanks to more programming that built upon what he did with the *Maximum Strength* program. He's 210 pounds with a 36-inch vertical jump, 315-pound bench press, and 300-pound three-rep-max chin-up.

Chris Howard, another Cressey Performance staff member, even added 120 pounds to his deadlift on the same four-month program during his initial internship with us. Effectively, these guys went from intermediate to advanced lifters – and that's where this book picks up.

You see, in the book proposal, we said that *Maximum Strength* was "the first fitness book that shows the average guy how to be as strong as he can possibly be." The problem is, though, that after 16 weeks and great improvements, *Maximum Strength* veterans aren't "average" guys anymore. That's the reason I've received so many emails from people saying, "Thanks a ton, but what next?"

The answer, as you probably have already realized in the process of purchasing *Show and Go*, is the program in this book. Read on.



Chapter 1:

What this Program is All About



Before we get to the “meat and potatoes” of this program and my rationale for it, I should make something very clear: this program is challenging and assumes that you have considerable resistance training experience.

In *Maximum Strength*, we took people who just *worked out* and taught them how to *train*. With this program, the goal is to take motivated individuals to the next level – just as I did when I took up powerlifting myself years ago. If the original *Maximum Strength* appealed to the 35-40 million people in the U.S. that consider weight-training a hobby, this book might appeal to 1-2% of them – including you.

In other words, *Show and Go* is a niche book. To demonstrate what I mean, I’ll be blunt; ***this book is geared toward people who really give a shit.***

I wouldn’t have even been allowed to say “shit” – much less put it in bold – if this was a mass-market book. In fact, you’ll find that the tone of this manual is much less conversational and entertaining, and much more “troubleshooting” and “do this and get diesel.” Fortunately, just as you’re more tolerant to cursing, you’re also more tolerant to training programs that will challenge, educate, and motivate you to all new levels of strength, performance, and health. My feeling is that ***you didn’t purchase this e-book to be entertained; you purchased it to get direction and results.***

In the program that follows, I can do a lot more in terms of exercise variety, at least within the confines of what “typical” gyms’ equipment selections allow. I can build more “on the fly” strength tests into the programs on top of the already-challenging loading protocols. I can include both 3- and 4-day-a-week training programs to accommodate your unique schedule. I can provide exercise alternatives if you lift somewhere that doesn’t have all the equipment you’d need to perform the program as-written. And, I can create an online video library to make it easier for you to see the exercises and learn some of the exact coaching cues we use with our athletes at Cressey Performance.



Additionally, self-publishing affords me several luxuries; most notably, I have no restrictions on the length of the text. I can write as much or as little as I want – and basically do whatever is required to make the program exactly what I want it to be. Exercise descriptions aren't limited to a certain number of sentences, and if I want to include seven exercises in a specific day's session instead of six, for instance, it's okay. I can also include ready-to-use templates that you can print out and take with you to the gym to record weights used, whereas traditional books are never conducive to this. Rather than do just one chapter on nutrition, I (thanks to the help of Brian St. Pierre) can have an entire section that could be an exhaustive resource in itself.

And, on perhaps the most badass note, instead of just exercise photos for demonstrations, you'll find an entire video library where you can view the proper technique for every single exercise in the *Show and Go* program. That's about 175 exercises – which constitutes just enough on-camera time to qualify me for an Oscar in the "Best Performance by a Balding Meathead Strength Coach" category. Assuming an average of 12-15 seconds per video, you've essentially gotten yourself the equivalent of a 35-45 minute DVD on top of all this programming and my charming wit and personality.

This, of course, is why the price was higher on this manual than it was with *Maximum Strength*. Obviously, you get more. To take it a step further, though, I certainly don't expect it to appeal to as many people as in the first go-round, but I still felt it had to be written for those of you who do want to take things to the next level.

To be honest, I think I sometimes become a bit desensitized to what we do every day; writing programs like these is what I do on a daily basis. Not everyone has a training facility like Cressey Performance at their fingertips, so they generally don't have the caliber of programming required to take mediocre or even good gains to the optimal or outstanding level. I was thrilled to get as much positive, unsolicited feedback on *Maximum Strength*, so I was all for pulling together a manual to enable these folks to continue in their gains.



Also, I wanted to be able to interact with my readers more since it was more “nixed.” If you have a question, email me and I’ll do my best to get back to you. Just be sure to reference “*Show and Go*” in any email you send me – and please be patient, as I get a ton of inquiries!

To continue with this “give-and-take” between writer and reader, I’m going to ask two more favors of you – and both of these favors will ultimately benefit you.

First, I ask that you be responsible with your weight selection and be extremely critical of your own technique. As with any physical activity, there’s a risk of hurting yourself with poor resistance training technique and loading protocols. So, **if you can’t lift a weight in perfect form, you should not be lifting it.**

To this end, I encourage you to get videos of your technique to ensure that it is acceptable. And, be sure to conservatively select your weight increases. You’ll find throughout this book that I’ll repeatedly encourage you to avoid missing lifts. I would much rather have you training at 99% - or even 90%, 80%, or 70% - than I would having you miss lifts at 101%. Be smart and you’ll stay healthy, and you’ll be extremely pleased with all the results.

The second favor I’m going to ask is actually two-pronged. I’d like you to meticulously track your progress on the sheets provided (the same templates Cressey Performance clients use). Then, when you’ve completed the program, give me your honest feedback. I’ve had several “guinea pigs” go through this program, but I am always looking to increase my sample size to see if there are more ways to get better.

In fact, it was feedback like this after *Maximum Strength* that led me to modify some things in this manual.

For example, based on reader feedback, I included in this manual 3x/week programs for those whose schedules and/or recovery capacities didn’t work with a 4x/week program.



You'll also find a collection of exercise substitutions for those with limited equipment access or physical limitations that don't allow them to complete the program as-is.

You'll see that there are five different "supplemental" training options from which you can choose based on your goals, as we found that everyone from powerlifters to marathoners saw great benefits with the original program.

You'll see that there is a separate warm-up protocol for each phase, not just the two options for four months, as was the case last time.

You'll see several chapters of Frequently Asked Questions that were compiled from the group of "Guinea Pigs" that test-drove this program from February through June of 2010.

I've incorporated more of the "filler" exercises we use with our athletes between sets to address imbalances and make better use of training time.

The nutrition component is far more than just a "taste" of what you need to perform at a high level; it really sets you up for success.

In short, this is a more comprehensive program with more versatility, more variety, and more resources available to make you successful.

In fact, research has also showed that it will make you 57% cooler to the opposite sex, 71% wealthier, and a whopping 83% more likely to hang out celebrities. This data was published in the *Journal of You're a Sucker if You Believed Any of That*. Who else delivers like that?

Kidding aside, I **WILL** promise you'll get stronger and feel, move, and look better in the process.



Chapter 2: Getting Started



Let's delve further into the aforementioned meat and potatoes.

Equipment

You will need some equipment. Mandatory for this program are a power rack (or squat rack), barbell, weight plates, and dumbbells. Any commercial gym should offer these items, and if it doesn't, you shouldn't give it your business.

Ideally, you'd also have access to a foam roller, some exercise bands, and a cable column. Again, most gyms should have these items. If they don't, you can pick up some bands and a roller very inexpensively (I recommend [Perform Better](#), which carries both and offers outstanding customer service).

You can see the exercise modifications section later on in this e-book for substitutions for those who don't have access to cable columns (as well as any other equipment restrictions that may come into play).

If you're too stubborn to find a power rack to do the squatting in this program (or you have some issues that makes squatting contraindicated), just plug in extra deadlift and single-leg variations to fill the void.

Pre-Testing

Before you begin, I would strongly encourage you to take "before" pictures. Men can just do it in a pair of shorts, and women in shorts and a tank top or sports bra. You should do front, side, and back photos with your arms relaxed at your sides. It might seem stupid to you to do them, but four months down the road, you'll be glad you did them.

With respect to pretesting, in the original *Maximum Strength*, readers tested their broad jump, box squat, bench press, deadlift, and 3-rep max chin-up. All are acceptable tests – and ones that you can perform if you're up to them.



However, I'm leaving it entirely up to you. I realized that we have strength sport athletes, endurance athletes, and people just interested in body composition changes following this program – so everyone will have different tests that are specific to their goals.

Please just remember that a good test isn't just specific; it's also SAFE. Don't go in and take a heavy squat or deadlift if you aren't confident in your form and positive that you'll walk away from it healthy. A three-rep max chin-up and vertical jump test might be even more helpful, and give you quantifiable numbers in addition to your before/after pictures.

Reading the Program

A lot of you might get a bit confused when you look at the program templates featured later in this book. Specifically, the "A1," "A2," "B1," "B2," etc. designations may be unfamiliar to you.

When you see A1/A2, it simply means that you are alternating back and forth between the two exercises (during the session, not from week to week) before moving on to the next pairing. So, you'd do a set of A1, then a set of A2, and then A1, A2, and so on until you'd completed all the sets of this particular pairing. Then, you'd move on to B1/B2 and so on. If it was A1/A2/A3, it would just mean that you're rotating among three exercises (triset) instead of two (superset).

Let's examine Monday of Phase 1 as an example to further clarify things:

A1) Front Squats: 5x3

A2) Quadruped Extension-Rotation/Scapular Wall Slides: 2 each x 8

This would equate to:

1. Front Squat set of 3
2. Quadruped Extension-Rotation set of 8 per side



3. Front Squat set of 3
4. Scapular Wall Slides set of 8
5. Front Squat set of 3
6. Quadruped Extension-Rotation set of 8 per side
7. Front Squat set of 3
8. Scapular Wall Slides set of 8
9. Front Squat set of 3

Then, one would move on to the next exercise(s).

Rest Intervals

You'll notice that while there is a "rest" column in the training templates, it's rarely filled in.

Rest periods are subject to so many factors that I never make recommendations. Big guys need longer than little guys, and metabolic conditioning factors play into it as well. In a broad sense, I recommend the following: on strength work (fewer than six reps), rest as long as you feel you need, and then *add* 30 seconds. On higher rep stuff, rest as long as you feel you need or just knock 15 seconds off that figure.

In short, I am a lot more interested in quality than I am in rushing you through a training session just so that you can adhere to rest intervals that may not be right for your goals or fitness level. Take your time and do things right – but don't drag your heels so much that you lose out on a training effect altogether.

Tempo

Likewise, the "Tempo" column is generally empty. Unless otherwise noted, assume a "normal" tempo of 2-3 seconds controlled lowering (eccentric) and lifting (concentric) portion that's as fast as possible. This would be denoted as "30X0." The first number is the duration of the lowering (eccentric), the second number is the duration of the pause at



the bottom, the third number is the speed of the lift (concentric; "X" means fast!), and the fourth is the duration of the pause at the top.

There may be also situations where I will use the tempo column to outline the parameters of an isometric hold on an exercise, though. It'll be clearly spelled out; I promise.

The tempo column may also be relabeled as the "Load" column. Below, you'll see several percentages listed. This just means that I want you to work at a specific percentage of your estimated one-repetition maximum (1RM) for that exercise for the sets in question. You'll usually see this when I want you to do speed work, which basically trains the movement with a submaximal load but picture-perfect technique.

Selecting a Weight

Let me preface this explanation by saying that the goal of this program is to get stronger. And, I fully expect you to do so.

Now, if that's the case, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to base your loading recommendations on percentages of one-rep maxes that were taken before the program even began. By the time you get to phases 2, 3, and 4, you aren't going to have sufficient overload to make optimal progress.

So, to that end, I never assign training percentages. All sets should be to one rep shy of failure; basically, go hard but never attempt a rep that you won't complete on your own. Each session should be somewhat of a test of your new strength as you work up to heavier loads and listen to your body along the way.

As a frame of reference, on your first (main) exercise(s), just work up to your heaviest set of the day (in perfect form, of course), and then find 90% of it. Anything you did above that 90% number "counts" as a set. Anything done before it is a warm-up. So, imagine I had 4 set of 3



reps on the bench press, and I worked up to 300 on my heaviest set using the following progression:

Set 1: 45x8
Set 2: 135x5
Set 3: 185x3
Set 4: 225x3
Set 5: 275x3
Set 6: 295x3
Set 7: 300x3

That puts me at three sets (275, 295, and 300) above 90% of my heaviest load for the day (300). So, to get my fourth set in, I just need to get one more set somewhere between 270 (90%) and 300 (100%).

By the next week, this 90-100% range may have shifted up by 5-10 pounds, so you have to accommodate it – and prescribing percentages on an old one-rep-max just doesn't do the job justice.

Picking the Right Program for *You*

Each month, you'll have several different options from which you can choose. The pre-lifting foam rolling and warm-ups will, however, be the same for both groups – because no matter who you are and what you do, these two entities should be near-daily mainstays in your training. On the strength training side of things, though, you'll need to choose between the 3x/week program and 4x/week program.

Those of you involved in other activities (endurance training or other sports) are probably best-off going with the three-day option. And, I absolutely defer to you on potentially dropping the volume a bit by ditching a set here and there if you find that your other competing sporting demands are too high. In your case, you lift weights to improve performance and stay healthy in some other discipline, not just for the sake of getting stronger.



So, if you have a big half marathon coming up, I don't mind if you skip your regularly scheduled full-body session 24 hours before the event so that you'll be fresher; you can get to it when the time is right! Or, if you're a guy who plays beer-league softball on a Saturday and are worried that you'll pull your hamstrings if you're a bit sore from a Friday lift, you can hold back on the lower-body stuff on your Friday training session. Just remember that this strength training **is** important and you do need to *make time for it instead of just finding time for it*.

Conversely, if this is going to be your only exercise program, then I'd encourage you to go with the 4x/week option, if you schedule allows. While I'm sure many will disagree, I just have never found 3x/week full-body programs to be quite as good as 4x/week upper-body/lower-body split programs when it comes to building size and strength.

The options don't end there, though. You'll also be able to choose among five options for the supplemental training on non-lifting days. Select one of the following to complete in addition to your strength training:

Option 1 – This will consist of two “movement training” sessions per week. Essentially, these will be some sprinting and agility progressions for those of you with more athletic goals in mind who may not already be participating in another sport.

Option 2 – This will consist of two interval training sessions per week. If you want to drop body fat or simply improve cardiovascular fitness in addition to getting stronger on this program, these are for you.

Option 3 – This is effectively a combination of Option 1 and 2, as it consists of one movement training session and one interval training session. It's a good one for those of you who are looking for the best of both worlds and just want plenty of variety in your training.

Option 4 – This will consist of simply doing your own thing. Like kayaking on Wednesday nights and playing ultimate Frisbee on Sunday afternoons for your conditioning? More power to you! This would also be



appropriate for the athletes in the crowd who have practices and/or competitions.

Option 5 – This final option allows you to do no additional work in addition to your strength training. Yes, you skinny guys just looking to get bigger and stronger can do absolutely nothing on your off days. I would, however, recommend that you try to move around a little bit on your days off with some dynamic flexibility or even just a walk in the park.

To recap, you'll need to decide whether you're going to strength train three or four times a week. Then, you'll need to pick one of the five supplemental training options for your off days from lifting. Just please don't try to do more than one supplemental training option; that's not how it works!

Accessing the Video Databases

For many of you, the video databases will not only be tremendously valuable resources during this four-month program, but also for years to come as you look back on these demonstrations to critique your technique and remind you of old exercises that you need to "reincarnate!"

For ease of access, we've subdivided all the videos by Phase and then placed them into one of three categories: Warm-ups, Movement, and Strength Training. Here are the direct links to them, with their password in parentheses following the name of the album (all lower case):

Phase 1 Mobility (p1ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/685042>

Phase 1 Movement (p1ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/181085>

Phase 1 Strength Training (p1ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/684905>

Phase 2 Mobility (p2ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/195307>

Phase 2 Movement (p2ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/195304>



Phase 2 Strength Training (p2ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/195302>

Phase 3 Mobility (p3ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/222419>

Phase 3 Movement (p3ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/222423>

Phase 3 Strength Training (p3ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/222421>

Phase 4 Mobility (p4ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/208100>

Phase 4 Movement (p4ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/208104>

Phase 4 Strength Training (p4ec): <http://vimeo.com/album/208101>

To make accessing them easier, I'd strongly encourage you to save the passwords to the folders on your computer so that you don't have to re-enter them each time you want to view a video.

Knowing When to Go With Barefoot

If you've read any of my stuff, you probably already know that I'm a big proponent of incorporating some barefoot training in your exercise programs. However, that doesn't mean that I encourage you to go barefoot for everything, as going "cold turkey" on footwear is a sure-fire recipe for kickstarting some lower leg pain.

To that end, in the programs, you'll see that I've indicated which exercises should be performed without shoes on. If you don't see the "barefoot" designation, perform the exercise with sneakers. You can also use the video database as a reference on this front; I demonstrated all the exercises exactly as they should be performed with respect to shoes on vs. shoes off.

I understand that many of you will be in commercial gym set-ups where you may not be permitted to go barefoot. If that's the case, just do your best to perform the exercises in shoes that don't have a pronounced



heel lift. Good options include Converse All-Stars (Chuck Taylors), Nike Frees, Reebok Travel Trainers, and some of the “old school” Puma flats. Take my word for it; deadlifting in most cross-trainers and running sneakers markedly interferes with optimal lifting technique.

Working with the Limitations of Commercial Gyms

Most of you will certainly be following the *Show and Go* program in a commercial gym setting. We’ve gone to great lengths to give you plenty of exercise modifications in case they don’t have the equipment you need, but one thing we can’t account for is how busy your gym is. Obviously, equipment availability is going to dictate whether you can superset back and forth between exercises in the way that the program dictates.

My suggestion to those of you who train in busy commercial gym settings is to take a proactive approach and *assume* that they are going to be busy. In other words, have a plan B. Keep the sets and reps the same, but have a similar back-up exercise in place if you can’t get to what you’re really supposed to do. In the grand scheme of things, you aren’t going to ruin the program by doing a 1-arm dumbbell row instead of a seated cable row.

Just don’t plug in some foo-foo pansy exercise instead of squats or deadlifts; that’s not the way this works! Consider yourself on the honor system.



Chapter 3: Frequently Asked Questions



Once you've had a chance to select which programming options are the best fits for you, you'll surely have some questions about those programs. Fortunately, we've already had quite a few "guinea pigs" go through the program, and they asked a lot of questions along the way.

I've answered those questions below in a phase-by-phase format. You'll notice that most of the questions come in Phase 1, and folks "get the hang" of the program as the months progress.

Also, if you have questions on exercise modifications to take into account equipment restrictions, please refer to chapter 5.

Phase 1

1. For the 3x/week program, do the lifting days have to be Mon/Wed/Fri or can I do a Tue/Thu/Sat schedule? Also, depending upon my schedule I might have to switch between Tue/Thu/Sat and Mon/Wed/Fri occasionally--is that okay?

It's fine to do TueThuSat. Just push everything back a day - and it's no problem to rotate between MonWedFri and TueThuSat from week to week.

And, for the 4x/week folks, feel free to shuffle the schedule as needed, based on your schedule. Just try to avoid lifting three days in a row.

2. Since you don't give percentages, when should we consider a set a work set? I believe I remember you mentioning this on your blog; it was something along the lines of, "keep adding weight until you are near your max for the day." All sets within 10% of that last one count as work sets. Is this correct?

Exactly. For easier calculation, just work up to your heaviest set of the day, and then find 90% of it. Anything you did above that 90% number "counts" as a set. Anything done before it is a warm-up.



As was the case with our example from Chapter 2, assume you were going to do 3x3 on the bench press, and your warm-up sets went like this:

Bar x 10
135 x 5
185 x 3
225 x 3
260 x 3
290 x 3
300 x 3 (this was the heaviest you could go while still getting three reps)

In this case, you'd calculate that 90% of 300 pounds is 270 – and only the sets above 270 pounds would “count” toward your work sets. So, you'd have 290 and 300 as work sets – meaning that you'd still need to do one more set of three reps between 270 and 300.

In terms of progression from week to week, I generally tell folks to make the heaviest load in week 1 as the first work set of week 2 (assuming the same rep scheme). So, in our previous example, you'd want to go right to 300 for your first work set – although you still might find that one of your “work up” sets counted toward your set total.

3. I cannot do glute-ham raises. Are negatives okay?

Absolutely. The video in our exercise library reflects this. In fact, I wouldn't expect most people to be able to do natural GHRs. Lower yourself under control, and then push yourself up. As the video shows, this can be done in reverse on a lat pulldown or seated calf raise – or you can just have a training partner hold your feet.

4. I don't have a band to add resistance for pushups. Will we be using bands enough in this program that you'd recommend me getting some? And if so, could you recommend which bands I get?

I would highly recommend picking up both the 1/2" and 1" versions, as you will be using them quite a bit. You can find them [HERE](#).



5. Is it okay to foam roll at home, and then head to the gym (10-minute travel time) to do the mobility portion before the workout?

As long as the gap between the two isn't too long, that's fine.

6. I'm quite weak at neutral grip pull-ups; should I just do these band-assisted?

Yes, or have a partner help you up on each rep. A third option is to jump up and then lower yourself under control. If I had to take my pick, it would be the partner-assisted version.

7. Does it matter if I change which option for cardio I wish to do? Do I need to stick with one in each week or can I vary them? I'm curious because they all look interesting!

You can pick whichever cardio option you want. Variety is good for you, so have fun with it. Just be prepared that some of them will yield some soreness – which you'll only have to deal with in week 1 if you use the same option for the entire month.

8. For the supplemental training in phase 1, there is a "front squat to push press to overhead reverse lunge x10" – so do you do ten reps of front squats then 10 reps of push press etc., or are you switching exercises every rep? Also, would it be possible to do those with dumbbells rather than a barbell so I can do Friday's workout without going to the gym?

Yes, it's 10 front squats, then 10 push presses, then five reverse lunges on each leg. And, it's fine to use dumbbells for it. Heck, you can use a keg, if you'd like!



9. Prior to performing the first working set of a heavy movement – say, front squats – what are your recommendations as far as proper warm-up or feel sets are concerned? Do you suggest something along the lines of "one set 50%ish, one set of 60%ish, and go to town?" Or, do you prefer something more along the lines of "do as many as you feel with a lower weight?"

This is a tough question to answer simply because stronger individuals will require more work sets than those who don't have as much absolute strength. If you only bench 85, then the bar (45 pounds) is more than 50% of your 1RM bench. This article is a good resource (you can skip through the sciency stuff, if that's not your cup of tea): [Warm up to PRs](#).

That said, older individuals and those with a history of injuries and loads of soft tissue restrictions will generally need longer warm-ups. So, the short answer is that the best warm-up is the one that gets you warmed up and ready to accomplish the task at hand! I would rather see you warm up for too long than too short, though, if you want to play it safe.

10. Do you recommend your clients/athletes to work through the reps (whether 3 reps or 15) as fast as possible (fast through the concentric portion, controlled during the eccentric)?

Yes. Unless otherwise noted, assume a "normal" tempo of 2-3 seconds controlled lowering and as-fast-as-possible concentric (lifting) portion.

11. During the work sets, do you recommend sticking with one weight for all sets or increasing the weight a little each set?

This is a tricky question to answer, and I reiterate: **the goal is to get stronger!**

If you go into a training session thinking that you are going to do X weight for Y sets of Z reps, then you aren't really going to push yourself to take advantage of strength gains. Therefore, as I noted earlier, my recommendation is to get your first "official" set under your belt at the heaviest weight you used in the week before. That way, even if you just



stick with the same weight for all sets, you're still doing more total work in the session than in the previous week (this assumes the same rep scheme per set). If you need to go slightly up or slightly down for subsequent sets, that's fine. Of course, you'll need to ramp up to this weight with a few sets beforehand; don't just go directly from your general dynamic warm-up right to 90% of your one-rep max.

That said, listen to your body. If you get to the gym and are feeling really terrible on a given day, just get your reps in with picture perfect form and don't go for personal bests if you aren't "feeling it." You'll get it next time – but not if you push too hard and wind up injured.

12. You mentioned picking a weight that would allow enough reps but "leave one in the tank." Does this mean that if you call for a set of 10 reps and the weight is too low, we should continue until we only have one rep left in the tank? Same goes for if you can only do 8 out of 10; should we stop the set at that point?

When you see "3 sets of 10 reps," assume that means "3 sets of 8-10 reps," as it's okay if you stop the set a bit early to avoid failure.

If you get to 10 reps and feel like you can bang out a bunch more, just don't count the set; it's a warm-up.

13. My gym has an actual glute-ham raise. Would the natural glute-ham raises still be my first choice?

No; you might as well use the actual GHR.

14. Is there room in this program for direct neck work? If so, what would you recommend?

I wouldn't add it unless it's specifically necessary for what you're trying to accomplish (wrestling, football, etc.). You could add it to the end of an upper body day.



15. Is it okay if I go MonTueThuFri for the four-day split?

Yes. While it's not optimal, in my opinion, I'm okay with it. I actually touched on this in an old blog post, if you'd like to read up on how to potentially modify things to make it work a bit better: [Training Four Days in a Row](#).

16. Are we to just foam roll until we decide to stop, or is there a certain number of passes we should be doing?

I encourage folks to spend about 15-20 seconds per area. So, you should be able to get all your foam rolling done in 5-6 minutes. If an area isn't too "gunked up," you can skip right over it. Just don't "race" over each area.

17. Can you provide a rough rule of thumb on how long each lifting session should take? I know this will depend on individual rest periods, but a rough guide would be appreciated.

I would plan for 75 minutes. The rolling and warm-up should be about 10-15 minutes in all, and then about an hour for the resistance training session. It may be a bit longer at the beginning of each phase as you learn some new exercises and "feel out" the weights you'll be using.

18. Since I am trying to gain weight, I am in the "Do Nothing" category for off days. Nonetheless, I want to do everything I can to get the best results. Is there any recommendation for daily programming outside of the gym? I know you included the static stretches. Are there any targets I should work toward (e.g. all stretches twice a day, 15 minutes rolling a day, etc.)? I thought this type of advice would be pertinent to all groups, even if they have off-day activities, since it is low-impact.

You can roll through your dynamic flexibility warm-ups on off-days and do the static stretches. It won't hurt you to go out and play a bit of pick-up basketball or ultimate frisbee here and there, though.



19. Is there a trick to foam rolling the pecs? I've never felt I've done this that well and am wondering if I am missing something?

Yes, don't rip off your nipple! Actually, kidding aside, the secret is to make sure the roller is positioned at a 90-degree angle to the direction that your arm points. You'll also find another pec soft tissue modality in the tag-along bonus and video section from Chris Howard that accompanies this resource.

20. Is that the only warm-up for both upper and lower body days? It seems to be heavy on the lower body mobility/warmup, and little on the upper body?

Yes, it's fine. I prefer general warm-ups with the specificity coming with the actual lifting progressions. That said, if you feel you need a longer warm-up, you can borrow some "extras" from other phases.

21. With the stretching built in on some days, should we be adding additional static stretches on the other days?

You can certainly add in more static stretching on off-days by simply selecting from Chapter 4. Pick the ones that are most suited to your needs and integrate them whenever you can.

22. Is it possible to fit the Tuesday energy system work into either Monday or Wednesday workout to allow a day off within the week?

If you'd feel better doing a double session on one of those days, that's fine.

23. The "Mobility Warm-up" mentioned in the supplemental conditioning options means the first page foam rolling and mobility/activation stuff, correct?

Yes. Feel free to mix and match exercises from the other three phases as well, just to keep things interesting.



24. On Monday's A2, there are two exercises listed; do we do those back to back? And the sets say two each – so is it quadruped, scapular wall slides, quadruped extension-rotation, then back to front squats?

It goes front squats, quadruped extension-rotation, front squats, scapular wall slides, front squats, quadruped extension-rotation, front squats, scapula wall slides, etc. So, you do a different mobility drill between each set of front squats.

25. I switched to sumo style deadlifts a while back; does it matter if I do conventional or sumo style for the speed deads?

Do them conventional unless otherwise noted (in future programs).

26. On reverse lunges (C1 on Monday), is it x8 right leg, rest, x8 left leg, rest, repeat, or x8 right, x8 left, rest?

Do eight on your right leg. Rest. Eight on your left. Rest. Then go to Pallof presses (C2), then back to lunges.

27. For the Seated cable rows with a pronated grip, do you prefer using a bar or two handles?

A bar.

28. I'm usually doing 3x15-20 right now for the ab wheel, but still have trouble trying to do them on my feet. What should I do to hit the eight reps and have it still be challenging?

You can progress right away to the band-resisted version featured in the Phase 4 video library.

29. Slightly elevated conventional DL: is the person elevated on a box, or are the weights elevated on a box (similar to rack pull)?

The weights are elevated. Please see the video demonstration for details.



30. I am doing the Option 3. My gym has virtually no running area and I live in Canada and it's cold here, so running outside would necessitate far too much gear. Any suggestions for substitutions? Otherwise, if possible, I may go to Option 2, which means less running and should be more doable in general.

I'd go to option 2. When the weather is nicer, you can switch back.

31. I can't do chest-supported rows on my benches. No matter which way I slice it, I just can't configure it so that it's a safe exercise. They have spotting platforms that get completely in the way of the dumbbells. What would prefer I do instead? I may be able to do a chest supported cable row but haven't attempted this yet.

Try the head-supported DB row that I uploaded to the "Exercise Modifications" video database.

32. Are the warm-ups done for each workout day or just the off-days, and how long should be devoted to them?

They should be done prior to any training session. If you're feeling ambitious, feel free to do them on off-days. In all, I would plan on 10-15 minutes for the foam rolling and warm-ups (combined).

33. When you do apply load percentages; is it the % of what I normally do?

It would be the percentage of estimated 1-rep max.

34. Where can I buy a foam roller and what are your recommendations?

A regular 1" high-density one will get the job one affordably and with good durability. You can pick one up [HERE](#).



35. Are any of these weeks deload weeks where intensity will change? I see the volume manipulation, but should the loading be aggressive, and should we aim for suitable increases each week on all movements?

Deloading is a pretty individual thing. For most folks, dropping volume but maintaining intensity is the way to go. However, if you're a stronger guy with a lot of training experience, dropping a little intensity and just getting your reps in may be the way to go. Listen to your body; it'll tell you.

36. I was hoping you could direct me to some article or articles about dead lifting. I don't have much experience doing them and just want to make sure I have my form down.

I think you'd like this three-part series I wrote:

[Mastering the Deadlift – Part 1](#)

[Mastering the Deadlift – Part 2](#)

[Mastering the Deadlift – Part 3](#)

[This video tutorial](#) I made will also help you (the password is "deadlift" – without quotation mark).

37. When you use an exercise (speed deadlift) with low reps and 50% of 1RM, what is the target? Is it to limit the fatigue from the heavier weight? I can do more weight, but I do follow the 50% criteria. I am just curious, as you sometimes tend to stay away from the lower rep/higher weight philosophy on some exercises.

The goal is to optimize technique and groove the movement pattern; make it absolutely perfect! If you can learn to lift a weight fast and develop force quickly, you'll be able to move bigger weights long-term.



38. We typically use a 4" Reebok step for the lunge with a deficit. Is this enough or does it need to be higher, like 6" or 8"?

We use a Reebok step as well, so 4" is perfect.

39. Is this a program to be done individually - without anyone spotting me?

I would definitely prefer that you have a spotter whenever possible! Sure, you don't need one for chin-ups or deadlifts, as examples, but if you are going to squat and bench, it would be really valuable to have a spotter on-hand. Plus, it's advantageous to have a training partner with you – so you get safety and encouragement at the same time.

40. Do you have a specific depth on the front squats? Ass-to-Grass? Parallel?

Go as deep as your flexibility allows you to go in perfect form (no lower back rounding).

41. I've always done the Pallof press for time (i.e. 30 seconds, which has generally kept the weight down). If we are doing it for 10s/rep, should I be using a corresponding heavy weight?

It can be a bit heavier, but don't get it so heavy that you're side-bending and bringing your feet out wider just to jack up the load.

42. For the seated rows, would you like us to use a close pronated grip, or one of the bars that allows you to be wider yet pronated?

Wider, yet pronated (overhand).



Phase 2

1. Are the dumbbell push presses done with the shoulders in neutral or does it not matter?

I prefer that people use a neutral grip (palms face one another). It tends to make it a bit more "natural-feeling." It's not a big deal if you are pronated (overhand) set-up, though.

2. For the front box squat, we're told to use a % of our 1RM. I only know my Front Squat 1RM; should I use this value or adjust it? And if I adjust it, by how much? My front squat 1RM is 95kg.

I would estimate that it will be right about the same as your front squat, or perhaps slightly higher. So, in your case, you'd base it off 95-100kg.

3. Is there an alternative to landmines, as I don't have the stand or the handle to put on the bar?

You don't need the stand or handle. If you check out the video I posted, you'll see that all you need is a barbell and a corner. The video shows both the set up and the exercise performance aspects of things.

4. Are we trying to avoid training to failure at all costs?

Yes. Never attempt a rep you won't complete own your own - particularly on your heaviest sets. The difference between 101% effort (failure) and 99% effort is huge on the recovery side of things.

5. When you use the stage system, do you use the same weight even with the higher reps due to post-activation potentiation, or do you drop the weight? In other words, can you review the 2x2, 2x4 rep sequence?

Let's say I work up to two heavy sets of two reps at 300. Then, I am going to drop down and do two sets of four reps at, say, 275. Post-activation potentiation allows us to get more reps at a higher percentage



of our previous sets; it wouldn't just magically add two reps to an already heavy set with no change in weight. You might normally only get four reps at 265-270, but the heavy doubles at 300 make it possible to get them at 275. So, to make a long story short, the sets of two are heavier than the sets of four.

6. Any specific reason why you want us to use wrist straps for the snatch grip rack pulls? I'm used to chalk.

I prefer chalk alone for every other deadlift variation except for the snatch grip - but all of those allow us to use the alternate grip (one pronated, one supinated). We simply can't do that with the wider snatch grip set-up. With the double overhand set-up needed for the snatch grip, the grip will fail before we can ever appreciably load the lower body.

I feel that this is one instance where straps are definitely justified. However, if you have a freaky grip and can hold on to the bar with a double overhand grip, roll with it.

7. For the chest-supported rows, do you prefer the use of the machine or free weights?

Well, the typical chest-supported row set-up is more of a bench with free weights than it is a machine, as the line of motion isn't fixed. That said, I would prefer you use DBs on an incline bench over a machine with a fixed path of motion. Both videos are included in the database.

8. In phase 1, I had a hard time with the front squats. I plateaued very quickly (on week 3 I did every single set at the same weight, the max weight I've ever been able to use). I really think any progress is near impossible. So, I'm just wondering if this will affect the possible gains I could obtain with this program?

So you're saying that you not only hit a personal best, but repeated it several times in the same session? Uh, that's pretty good, dude - hardly what I'd consider a plateau.



Don't expect to hit a new 1RM every time you walk into the gym. Remember that fatigue masks fitness. You should feel pretty beaten down by the end of week 3 and really want some rest during week 4 so that you can bounce back stronger at the start of week 1 of the next phase. In order to adapt favorably, you have to impose fatigue and then allow rest to permit fitness to come back at a higher level.

You're not at a plateau; you are just ready for a new program. Everything works for a bit, but nothing works forever.

9. I have some sort of inability to do ab wheel or bar rollouts. It is not that I can't do 4 or 5, I can't do a single one. Suggestions?

Absolutely. Don't go all the way down. Gradually increase the distance that you can go before collapsing onto the floor. If even that doesn't work, take a step back and use stability ball rollouts instead.

10. Is it ok on the deload week to still go relatively heavy because it's such low volume?

For most folks, maintaining or even slightly increasing the load is the right way to go. However, for the really strong folks out there, backing off on intensity (load) is a good idea as well. Listen to your body.

11. For the box squat, what height box should we be using?

Box height will depend on your leg length. Most people will fall in the 12-15" range. Some folks who are much shorter might need to be at 11" - so modify accordingly. Using the aerobic steps at gyms can be helpful in this regard. Basically, you just want to be at parallel. I want you to pause on the box, but not rock back. Your spine should remain in neutral.

12. At what height should the pins be set for the rack pulls? Knee height?

Just below the kneecap will be perfect.



13. Some of us are too flat out weak to do Towel Pullups. Is there a suitable alternative? How about Towel Inverted Rows?

A regular neutral grip pull-up is fine. Or, if you'd like to keep the towel, you can try towel inverted rows. Or, as a third option, you could jump up and just lower yourself under control (3-5s) on the eccentric component of each rep.

14. Do we have to do the dynamic warm-up sequence in the exact order listed?

It's ideal, but not absolutely necessary. I structure it so that you do all the ground-based movements first, and then progress to stationary-standing, and then moving-standing.

15. I know you recommended using your ending weight on week 1 for the starting weight on week 2. I basically just added weight until I reached the "rep max" for the day, but included the challenging sets as work sets. For instance with Alternating DB bench presses...warm-ip: 35x8, 45x6, then work sets: 55x5, 65x5, 70x5, 75x5, 70x5 (75 is my 5 rep max). Is that an okay approach?

This seems like a lot of warm-up sets. I probably wouldn't have counted the 55x5, but hindsight is 20/20! If it feels easy, don't count it.

16. If we're on the 3x/week plan, can we train Mon, Thu, Sat? Or, do you strictly want it to be every other day weight training?

Mon-Thu-Sat is just fine. Just try to avoid back-to-back weight training days on the 3x/week set-up whenever possible.

17. What is your stance on using straps?

As noted above, snatch grip rack pulls are about the only exercise where I encourage folks to use straps. If you aren't doing a snatch grip rack pull, don't use them.



18. My wife is participating in this program (we just finished the 3x/week phase 1) and her goal is to lose 8-10 lbs of fat. She has been slowly increasing her weights in most exercises, but is having some problems with weight loss. She started the program weighing 149 lbs and 4 weeks later she is at 151. Her major complaint is that she is constantly hungry due to the high demands of this plan. Most of the foods are very clean with only 2-3 cheats per week. We are on Option 2 of the plan and she is constantly moving during the day (she's a massage therapist).

What do you recommend at this point? Her feeling is that if she eats less, her performance will suffer, but if she continues in the same manner, she may gain a few more pounds.

I wouldn't drop calories too much if she is already noticing that she's hungry. My suggestion would be to monitor her weight over the course of the next month and see how much fluctuation there is during those four weeks. A lot of women will see some significant weight shifts (and mood swings....ha!) throughout the month. At the same time, monitor how her clothes are fitting, and even snap some new pictures to compare against the original ones at the end of this month. Eight weeks is a good time period from which to start tinkering.

That said, start looking closely at the quality of calories she's consuming. If she's always hungry, but not losing weight, I have to wonder if she's eating a lot of simple carbohydrates that are getting in and out of her system quickly and leaving her with "rebound hunger." Upping the protein, healthy fats, vegetables, and fiber in place of some of the carbohydrates could make a huge difference. Also, 2-3 cheats per week is essentially every other day – and while you can get away with it if you want to maintain your weight, you don't have that luxury if you want to drop fat fast.

19. Do you recommend using a weight belt for the heavier deadlift work?

You shouldn't need it, but if you feel like you must, go ahead.



20. With the DB push presses, how much leg drive? As in, are we using max weights getting them up by any means possible, or just enough leg drive to get them moving and doing most of the work with our upper body?

It is just enough to get the dumbbells moving so that your upper body can do the rest of the work. So, don't go overboard!

21. I like to do my non-lifting day work at home so that I don't get in the way doing circuits in the gym. I can do everything in the circuit except for the face pulls. Can I use a band to replicate that exercise some way?

Sure, that's fine. Two bands simultaneously would probably work better, though.

22. Concerning the heavy singles on speed days: do all the prescribed speed sets, then ramp up w/ singles to a heavy single?

Yes, exactly.

23. Would it be okay to add some external load to the t-push-ups (weighted vest)?

Sure, that's fine. Or, you can do it with light DBs in your hands (as if you were doing push-ups off dumbbells).

24. During the "eccentric" of the speed bench press, what "tempo" would you suggest?

I would lower to a count of 2-3 seconds. That's what I would call a "normal" tempo - just what I want you to use throughout the program unless I specify otherwise.



25. I've moved gyms and no longer have a chest-support row machine, can I just use the seated row machine instead?

You can either do them with a regular incline bench and dumbbells, or go with a seated or bent-over row variation.

26. For the rack pulls, would you suggest adjusting the pins near our sticking point?

No; the kneecap or slightly below is fine. Honestly, the carryover from rack pulls to overcoming a specific sticking point isn't that good, in my experience.

Phase 3

1. Due to mobility (hips/thoracic spine) concerns in a lot of us, the barbell overhead squat may present a problem with depth (excessive trunk inclination). How deep would you like us to go (if we start to have excessive flexion) before it's a good idea to come back up through extension?

Stop at the point where you have any lumbar flexion or the heels come up off the ground. And, make sure you are very thorough with your warm-up.

2. For the "thick grip" neutral grip pull-ups, would you like us to wrap towels around the grip? Is there another alternative with regards to "increasing" the thickness of the grip?

I prefer two overlapping (four total) Lynx grips (<http://www.lynxpt.com>) – and they are also a great option for females who want to avoid calluses. Small hand towels work, but you will slide a little bit unless you're really meticulous about setting it up on each set. Worst case scenario, you just don't do the "thick grip" part of it.



3. Close grip floor press: by nature of its design, my squat rack doesn't allow the spotting pins bars to go low enough where I could take it off of there. Is there potentially a replacement for these?

You can just do close-grip board presses instead, or even just plug in dumbbell floor presses. I've included both in the "Exercise Modifications" video database.

4. The dumbbells at my gym are round rubberized ones, so they don't line up too well for the close-grip dumbbell bench presses. Can you provide a substitute?

You can just do regular neutral grip dumbbell bench presses with the elbows tucked to the sides.

5. In week 3 of this phase, there is a possibility I may only be able to get one session (or maybe two if I'm lucky) in, as I'll be traveling around a lot where there's no gym. Which two sessions would you consider the most important to do, or does it not really matter? I'm doing the three days a week plan.

Don't skip any lifts; just push things back and pick up where you left off.

6. The "Stir the Pot" exercise is a ton harder than I expected it to be! Should I just do prone bridges on the stability ball instead, or would you recommend another exercise?

I would actually just encourage you to start with smaller circles on the ball, and gradually make them larger as you get more proficient with the exercise. Make sure to brace the core tightly, tuck the chin, lock the shoulder blades down and back, and squeeze the glutes together; if you get these three cues in order, I think you'll find that the exercise gets substantially easier.



7. I'm just finally starting to get good at push-ups, but I'm not ready to be able to do clap push-ups yet. What should I do instead?

You can just stick with the regular push-ups and add a bit of external load with either a weight vest or a band wrapped around your back.

Phase 4

1. On the 4x1, 1x4, can you explain what this means?

In week 1, what you're actually doing is four sets of 1 at greater than 90% of your 1RM, and then one "backoff" set of four. In week 2, it's 3x1 at greater than 90%, then one set of four. In week 3, it's just eight sets of one at greater than 90%.

The weeks where the last set is four reps are NOT meant to be drop sets. In other words, don't race to complete a set of four reps after your last heavy single. Your last "regular" set just happens to have more reps – but the rest before it is just the same..

2. Day 1, exercise B, week 1 says we should use 65% of our 1RM. In week 2, this increases by 3% to 68%. Odd number; is this correct?

Yes. If you're a 600 pound deadlifter, 3% is a noticeable 18-pound increase. With speed work, the adjustments should be subtle; bar speed is key.

3. For the Turkish get-up, do you recommend doing all reps of one side then switching? Or alternating left and right?

Do all on one side, then all on the other. Otherwise, you'll need to be switching hands with the dumbbell overhead.



4. How do you recommend handling sickness? I had a stomach virus for a few days; should I jump right back in as soon as I'm feeling reasonably well, or wait until I'm sure I've recovered? Should I repeat a week or just forge ahead?

I would prefer that you not miss training sessions. As long as you are organized and able to keep track of where you stand, you'll be fine. So, take your time in getting healthy, and when you're feeling better, just pick up where you left off.

5. What grip is preferred in the Barbell Reverse Lunges - Front or Back?

In this month, it's the back squat set-up.

6. When performing sets of one rep, is the target the CNS?

It's definitely predominantly neural (which you'll get to some degree with any training), but you will still get some true muscular impact as well. Plus, the heavier loads make the subsequent lighter loads feel even lighter, meaning you can get in more volume on those back-off sets to induce hypertrophy. Just don't count anything below 90% toward your singles count; 85% won't cut it.

7. With the sets where it says to do 1 x >90% and then 1x4 reps, how much rest do you recommend in between the first rep and the next 4? And, by how much should the load decrease?

I assume this question is based on the assumption that it's a drop set, which isn't the case. That said, about 2.5-3 minutes between sets should suffice.

8. I noticed that the volume fluctuations here in phase 4 are different than in previous months. What's the scoop?

A: That's definitely intentional. The plan in phase 4 is to really load up the volume in the last week of the month so that you can take a full 5-7 days



of rest upon completing the program. After this “deload” period, you can get back in the gym and retest whatever you tested at pre-testing.

9. If we don't have a dedicated decline bench, how many risers should we put under the end of the bench? I'm guessing just one?

Yes, one will be plenty. It should be clarified by the video that we uploaded.



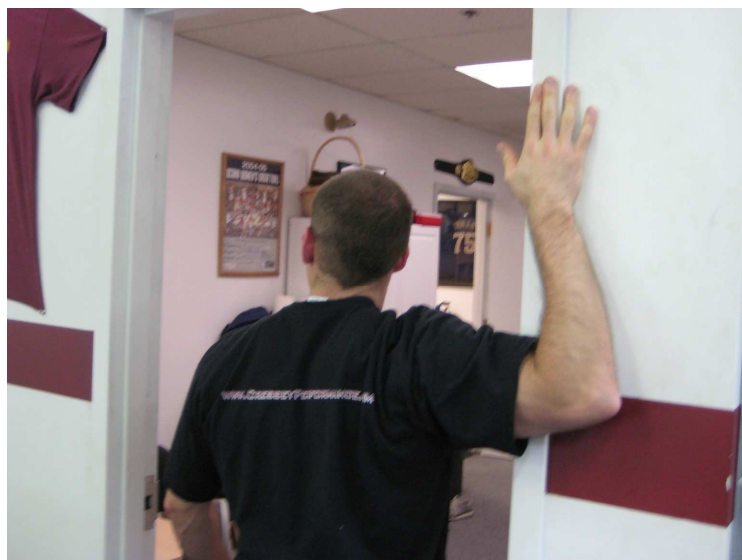
Chapter 4: Static Stretches

Featured below are the twelve static stretches you'll see featured throughout the four phases of the *Show and Go* program. For specific recommendations on set duration, check the program itself. If one of these stretches reveals a particular limitation for you, feel free to increase the frequency of the stretch throughout the day with multiple bouts.

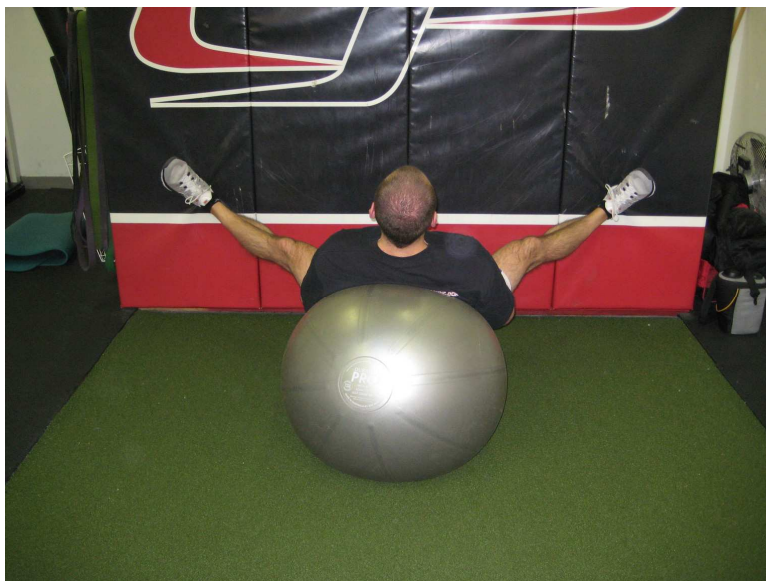
Split-Stance Kneeling Adductor Stretch – Forward Position



1-arm Doorway Pec Stretch



Stability Ball Adductor Stretch on Wall



Kneeling Heel to Butt Stretch



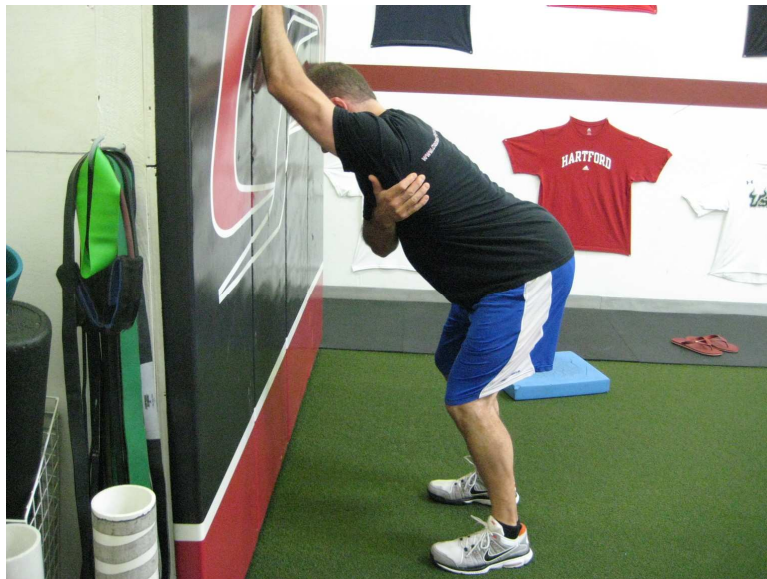
3-way Band Hamstrings Stretch



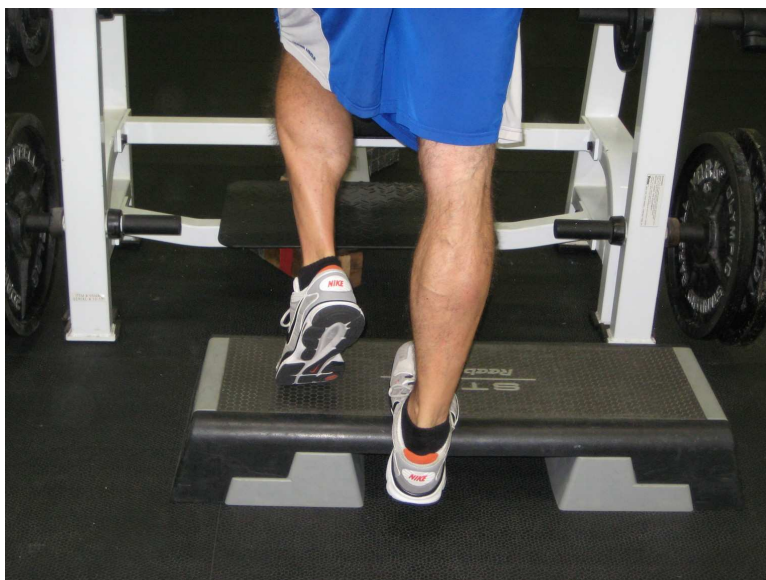
Elbow/Wrist Flexors Stretch



Wall Lat Stretch w/Stabilization



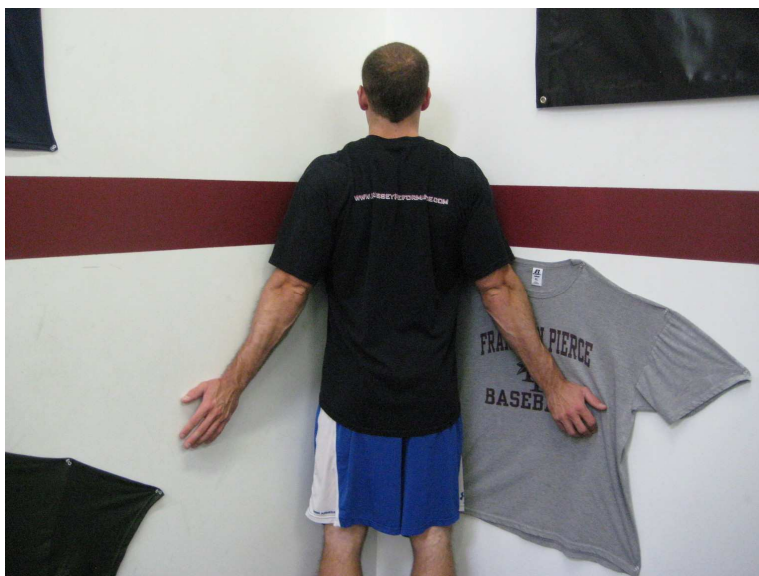
Static Calf Stretch off Step



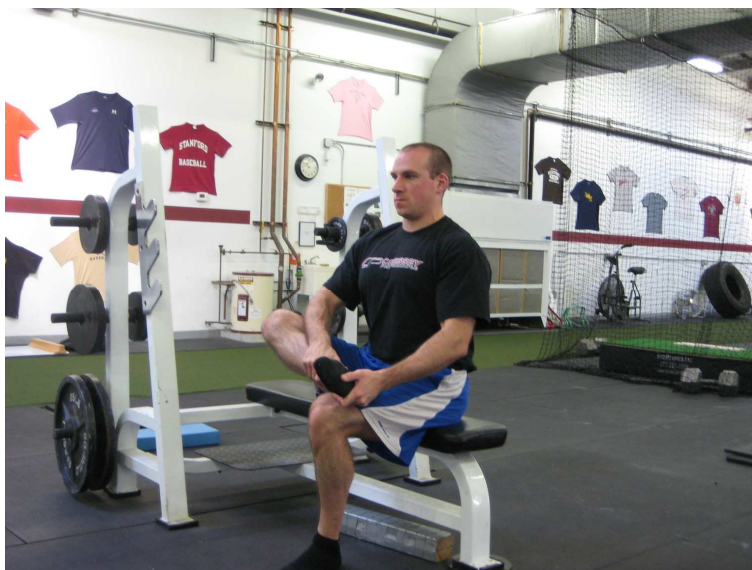
Lying Knee to Knee Stretch



Corner Pec Minor Stretch



Seated 90/90 Stretch



Stability Ball Pec Stretch





Chapter 5: Exercise Modifications



As I noted earlier, it's ideal to have a reasonably well-equipped commercial gym (or better) at your disposal to complete this program in an optimal fashion.

However, I recognize that life gets in the way sometimes, and it's easier to have a home gym to keep things convenient. Or, maybe the only gym within 30 minutes of your house simply isn't very well equipped for anything other than jumping jacks and stretching.

Moreover, I also understand that many of you may have mobility limitations or a history of injuries that limit your ability to perform an exercise correctly and, in some cases, pain-free. My first and most important message to you is that **this program should not hurt...ever.**

If something hurts, stop doing it and find something that will allow you to maintain a training effect while you work with a qualified medical professional to address whatever underlying issue is present. While the *Show and Go* program was intended to (among other things) help people to move more efficiently and prevent injuries, it was never intended to be a rehabilitation program. So, you need to throw it out the window (at least temporarily) in the presence of symptoms.

Now that that's out of the way, let's consider some of the common equipment and mobility limitations that mandate modifications for this program. Any videos I suggest that are not included in the "normal" program will be featured in the "Exercise Modifications" video folder, which can be located at:

URL: <http://vimeo.com/album/272028>

Password: exmodec

Limitation #1: I don't have a power rack.

This is a common limitation that is surprisingly easy to work around in your training. To be honest, the only components you'll miss are squatting, barbell overhead pressing (and push presses), and barbell



incline pressing (this, of course, assumes that you have a flat bench press set-up).

You might be surprised to know that we actually have quite a few athletes who we don't allow to squat because of functional (e.g., poor thoracic spine mobility, short hip flexors) and structural (e.g., rigid ankle anatomy, femoroacetabular impingement) mobility limitations or injury histories. These athletes rely predominantly on extra deadlifting variations and plenty of extra single-leg work. My personal favorites for replacing squatting variations are barbell lunge and split-squat variations because they provide the benefits of axial loading, but you can also use variations where dumbbells are held at the sides and still get appreciable loading. You'll find several example of both within the "normal" program.

With respect to barbell overhead pressing, simply replace it with dumbbell overhead pressing, or have two training partners hand the bar up to you so that you can receive it in the "rack" position. Incline pressing can be replaced with either dumbbell pressing from this position or a flat bench press variation.

Limitation #2: I don't have access to a cable column.

This equipment shortcoming is a bit more problematic, as cables are very versatile implements that allow lifters to train a wide variety of movements in different planes of motion.

My first suggestion to folks in this situation is to think about purchasing a TRX Suspension Training implement. While it won't do everything a cable column will do, it does expand your exercise pool substantially and give you more options for upper body and core exercises (and, to a lesser degree, lower body exercises). For the versatility it provides, it is a tremendous value. You can find out more information and watch a ton of sample training videos at [the TRX website](http://www.trxtraining.com).

Moving on, below, I've listed every exercise in the four-phase program that is going to need to be modified if you don't have access to a



cable column. In many cases, these exercises can be performed with a resistance band instead of a cable, but that may interfere with optimal loading for the movement. As such, when a band isn't sufficient (or available at all), check out the list below. The suggested replacement exercise is noted after the arrow. Unless otherwise noted, the set and rep scheme doesn't change from the original program.

Pallof Press Iso Hold → Off-Bench Oblique Hold (20s/side)

Crossover Reverse Fly → Bent-Over Trap Raises

Seated Cable Row – Pronated Grip → Bent-over Barbell Rows

Split-Stance Cable Lift → 1-leg Side Bridge (15s/side)

Standing 1-arm Cable Row → 1-arm DB Rows

Seated Cable Row – Neutral Grip → Head-Supported DB Rows

Cable External Rotation at 90 Degrees → Elbow-Supported DB External Rotation

Cable Woodchops → Side Bridge Wall Slides

Face Pull → Pronated Grip Inverted Row

Cable External Rotation at 90° – Scapular Plane → Elbow-Supported DB External Rotation

1-arm Cable Rotational Row → 2-point DB Row

Tall Kneeling Cable Lift → DB Suitcase Deadlifts

Half-Kneeling Anti-Rotation Press → Landmines

Cable External Rotation – Arm Adducted → Side-Lying External Rotation – Arm Propped at 30° Abduction



Tall Kneeling Pallof Press → Off-Bench Oblique Hold (30s/side)

Face Pull w/External Rotation → Supinated Grip Inverted Row

Limitation #3: I don't have the mobility to squat deep.

This is a very common issue, but the solution is very simple – and it was outlined in the “I don't have access to a power rack” response a bit earlier. Very simply, ditch the squatting and plug in extra deadlifting and single-leg exercises. Eventually, as your mobility improves, you can integrate some box squatting variations and work your way down to “depth” over time.

Limitation #4: I don't have the mobility to deadlift from the floor.

The solution to this dilemma is actually a multi-faceted one. First, if you aren't deadlifting barefoot or in flat-soled sneakers, start; it'll make a big difference in your ability to get down to the bar.

Second, if you're basing your frustrations on your conventional deadlift mobility, try sumo deadlifts to see if things improve. I've found that many individuals with longer femurs can sumo deadlift without a problem, but conventional deadlifts give them fits. For these folks, we use rack pull, trap bar, and sumo deadlift variations – but never conventional deadlifting from the floor.

Third, if moving to a different deadlift variation doesn't help, simply elevate the bar on risers or plates to the point where you can position yourself in the bottom position without a rounded back. Work on building up your strength from this position and attack your mobility warm-ups with consistency, and you'll find that you'll be able to work your way down to the floor eventually.



Limitation #5: I don't have a place to sprint inside in the weather.

If this is the case, you've got two options.

1. You can simply perform one of the other supplemental training options.
2. You can take up some kind of sport – basketball, indoor soccer, or volleyball – that is played indoors in the winter and requires some sprinting, jumping, and change of direction work.

Limitation #6: I don't have a spotter.

I prefer that you always have a training partner not only for safety, but also for motivational reasons. However, I know that this isn't always feasible for folks, so we have to be open to modifications.

Within this program, the only times when you'll really want a spotter are bench pressing, squatting, and single-leg barbell exercises. To be honest, though, all three of these exercises can be performed inside a power rack. Thus, if you make sure to set the spotting pins at the right positions, you should be able to "dump" the bar if you get into trouble on any of these exercises.

Most importantly, if you're lifting by yourself, you need to make sure that you're conservative with your weight selection. Don't ever put yourself in a position where you could fail and get hurt; play it safe. The difference between 90% effort and 101% effort (failing) is trivial in terms of results, but huge in terms of safety.

Limitation #7: I can't do a chin-up/pull-up.

You'll often see folks using a band to assist them as they work to learn to do pull-ups, but I actually look at this as a third option only. Before resorting to the band, I prefer that lifters use the following approaches instead:



Preferred: Partner-assisted concentric phase (lifting) with the lifter controlling a prolonged eccentric phase (lowering)

Next-Best Thing: Lifter jumps up and then lowers under control with a prolonged eccentric phase.

In each case, you'll likely need to do fewer reps than I prescribed in the program, but you'll make up for it with a longer eccentric component.

Limitation #8: I don't have access to a chest-supported row.

Don't sweat it. You can perform the movement with dumbbells by going face-down on an incline bench. Check out the exercise modifications video database for a demonstration.

Or, if you'd prefer, feel free to go with a bent-over barbell row. This exercise, too, is featured in the exercise modifications video database. Be sure to keep it strict and not use the lower back to lift the weight.

Limitation #9: I don't have access to an ab wheel.

This shouldn't be a problem at all; all you really need is a barbell with a five-pound plate on each end. You can hold it in the middle, and it'll roll just like an ab wheel would.

Limitation #10: I don't have anywhere that I can do a natural glute-ham raise.

If that's the case, you can substitute in a 1-leg DB RDL. You'll want to go just a bit higher on the reps with eight per set, though.



Chapter 6:

Five Traits of Successful Athletes



Having been around the literary world a bit myself in the past few years, I can tell you that in most non-fiction books that aren't textbooks, the last chapter is pretty much useless. Usually, the author has said absolutely everything that needed to be said, but you can't just end with a chapter that focuses solely on applicable content.

I mean, let's be honest: would *Show and Go* have been a memorable book if I had wrapped it up talking about how to make exercise substitutions if you don't have access to an ab wheel? Probably not.

Then again, as I outlined in the introduction and first chapter, this isn't a traditional book for a ton of reasons. For starters, if it had been, I wouldn't have broken it up into several different PDFs! More importantly, though, from the get-go, I have been a lot more interested in providing an extremely versatile and useful resource, not just an entertaining one. It's about the meat and potatoes, not the ambience of the restaurant.

All this in mind, as I sit here to write up this last chapter, it's important for me to actually make it into something useful for you. To that end, I thought back to the most accomplished athletes and lifters with whom I've interacted over the years to brainstorm up some traits that typify almost all of them. What words do I think of when considering these individuals?

Consistency – Their outstanding results are never about just a 16-week program, finding a magic pill, or taking shortcuts. They don't skip out on 2-3 months here and there because work gets busy. They never let minor aches and pains sidetrack them because they find ways to train around these issues and rehabilitate them in the process. They can't fathom taking 19 weeks to complete a 16-week program. Training is an integral part of their lives, so they do it with more consistency than their less-accomplished peers. In the grand scheme of things, the programming, technique, and training environment are important – but just **showing up is the single-most important thing.**



Focus – When it's time to train, the cell phone goes off. There's no talking about the boozing that went on at the bars the weekend before, or complaining about problems with the new girlfriend. When these successful trainees are in the gym, they are there for one reason: to lift heavy stuff and get better.

Training Partners/Environment – Successful individuals realize that they'll never be as well off alone as they will be with the help of the individuals around them, so they surround themselves with the right people. The end result is constant, detailed feedback; handoffs and spots whenever they're needed; accountability to ensure the aforementioned consistency; and camaraderie that improves results exponentially.

Realistic Expectations – My best deadlift is 660 pounds, but to be honest, on about 363 days of the year, I don't think I could come within 20 pounds of it. It just isn't possible to be at your best for every training session – and it gets even harder to be close to that "peak" feeling as you get more experienced and accomplished. Push too hard when you aren't feeling it, and you'll set yourself back. The most accomplished powerlifters, bodybuilders, and strength sport athletes out there know when to push and when to hold back to take deloading periods; they have realistic expectations of themselves and listen to their bodies.

Insatiable Desire to Improve – Some of the best athletes I've ever met and worked with have also been the most inquisitive and open-minded to suggestions. They are constantly looking for new ways to improve, and appreciate that the field of strength and conditioning is a very dynamic one in which new research emerges almost daily. They recognize that there is more than one way to skin a cat, so they borrow bits and pieces from many different philosophies to find what works best for them.

It's my hope that in reading *Show and Go* and completing the accompanying program, you've had a chance to appreciate some of my philosophy on training (at least as it exists in 2010). While I don't claim to have all the answers, and my approaches may markedly change in the months and years to come, I can guarantee that many of the principles



demonstrated in this program are themes that will endure for centuries to come.

Be consistent with applying them, focus intently, surround yourself with those who can help you reach your goals, and set realistic goals that you pursue with unyielding passion. It's worked for a lot of people who have come before you, and they didn't have the luxury of having a program all mapped out in front of them like you do now. Take advantage of this opportunity – and be sure to email me with your results at the end of the four months. Best of luck!



About Eric Cressey



Eric Cressey, MA, CSCS is president and co-founder of [Cressey Performance](http://www.EricCressey.com), a facility located just west of Boston, MA. A highly sought-after coach for healthy and injured athletes alike, Eric has helped athletes at all levels - from youth sports to the professional and Olympic ranks - achieve their highest levels of performance in a variety of sports. Behind Eric's expertise,

Cressey Performance has rapidly established itself as a go-to high performance facility among Boston athletes - and those that come from across the country and abroad to experience CP's cutting-edge methods. Eric is perhaps best known for his extensive work with baseball players.

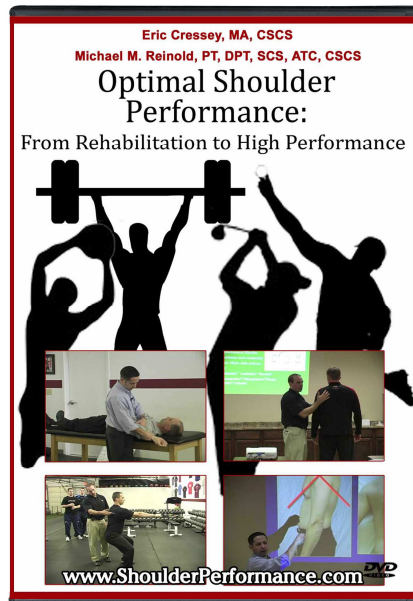
Cressey received his Master's Degree in Kinesiology with a concentration in Exercise Science through the University of Connecticut Department of Kinesiology, the #1 ranked kinesiology graduate program in the nation. At UCONN, Eric was involved in varsity strength and conditioning and research in the human performance laboratory.

Eric holds several state, national, and world powerlifting records. Formerly a mainstay in the *Powerlifting USA* Top 100 lifts the 165-pound weight class, Cressey has competition bests of 540 squat, 402 bench, 650 deadlift, and 1532 total. He is a coach who can jump, sprint, and lift alongside his best athletes to push them to higher levels - and keep them healthy in the process.

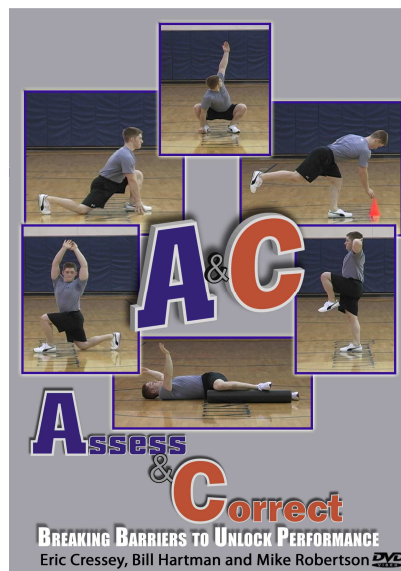
An accomplished author, Cressey has authored hundreds of articles, five books and co-created four DVD sets that have been sold in over 50 countries around the world. Eric's writing and his work with athletes have been featured in such local and national publications as *Men's Health*, *Men's Fitness*, *ESPN*, *T-Muscle*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Boston Herald*, *Baseball America*, *Perform Better*, *Oxygen*, *Experience Life*, *Triathlete Magazine*, *Collegiate Baseball*, *Active.com*, and *EliteFTS*. As a guest speaker, Eric has lectured in four countries and more than 15 U.S. states.

Cressey publishes a free daily blog and weekly newsletter at www.EricCressey.com.

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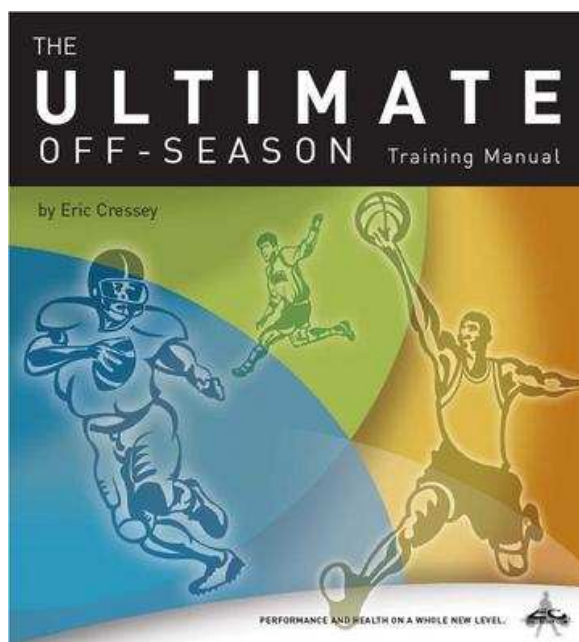
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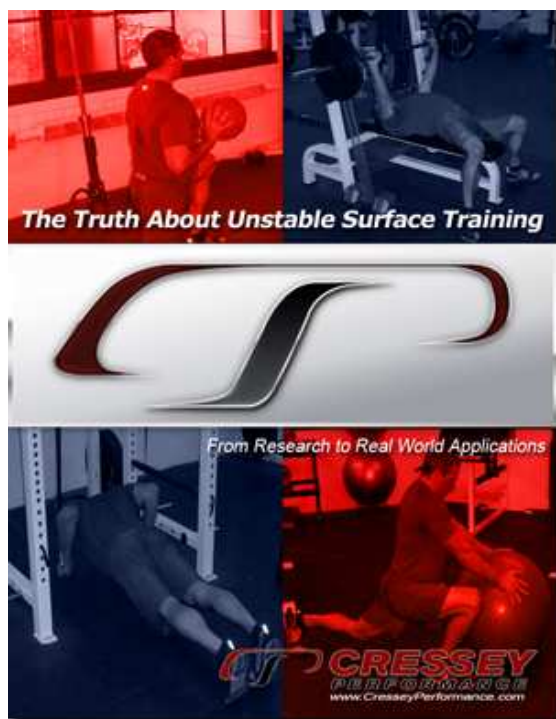
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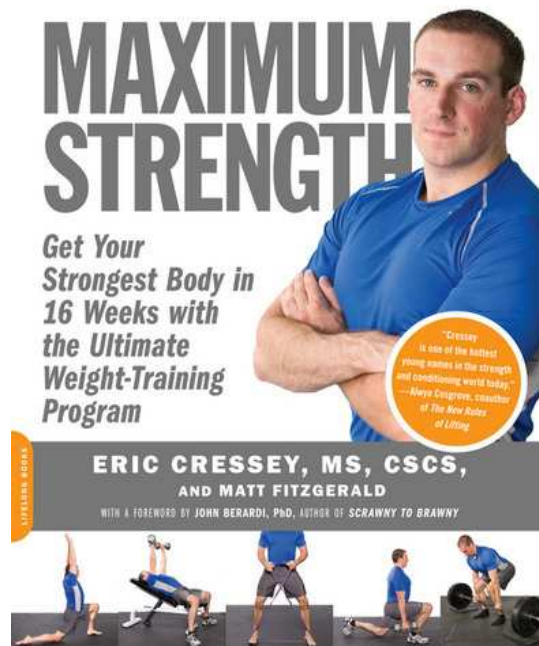
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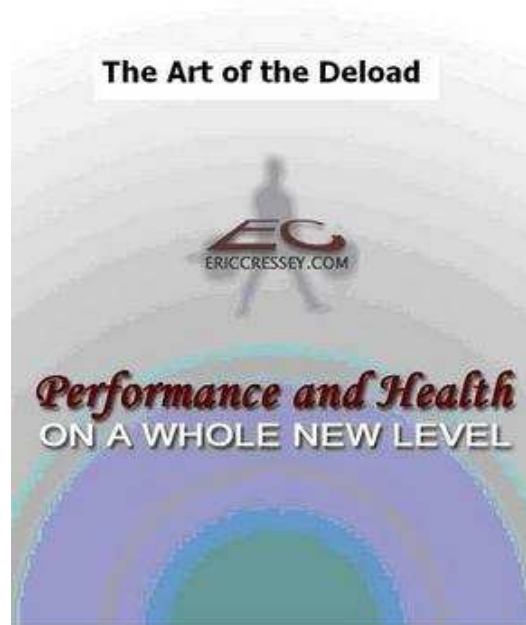
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