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The Upper Body Squat

In general it has long been believed by most bodybuilders that the legs respond fastest to training. After a year of regular workouts, most trainees would display a far greater degree of muscular development in their legs than in their other body parts, assuming that a well-rounded weight training program was being followed; so there was at least some evidence to support the theory that the legs were the easiest body part to develop.

But regardless of such evidence, the theory itself is totally groundless, and the real experts in the field of weight training have known this for at least thirty years; however, simple awareness of a problem, while an essential prerequisite to its solution, is not enough in itself, nor is even a clear understanding of the problem of much assistance when the problem itself appears to demand the application of impossible principles for its solution.

Similar situations have existed throughout history, in any field you can think of; a problem existed, people were aware of it, some people even know what was required for its solution, but the state of the art had not yet reached a point where the needed principles were available. Then, suddenly, sometimes after thousands of years of effort to reach a solution – "breakthrough"; a simple solution to a seemingly insolvable problem would be discovered, and in almost all such cases, the solution would be based upon a previously unknown principle.

And in many such cases, when the answer was provided, it was immediately obvious that the answer came from the problem itself; "that the answer existed within the problem." For that very reason, we frequently are forced to ask ourselves, "Why didn't I think of that?"

For example, the full squat. For at least twenty years the editor of this magazine, Mr. Peary Rader, has been pointing out that no other single exercise, or combination of other exercises, could produce anything even approaching the results possible from the proper application of this one exercise. He, among others also noted that such results were not limited to the legs; that overall gains in both size and strength would result from full squats – in the chest, in the back, and even in the arms.

But after all, since the squat is a direct leg exercise, it should not have been surprising that the greatest degree of results would be in the legs; nor should it have been surprising that the upper body did not respond to any sort of training as fast as the legs did to squats because there was no direct upper body exercise that could even begin to approach squats insofar as "intensity of effort" is concerned. Additionally, there was no upper body exercise that directly worked the largest muscle masses in the upper body and this "direct working of the largest muscular masses in the areas being worked" was the primary factor behind the success of squats.

That much, at least, was clearly understood years ago; but no obvious solution presented itself, because the largest muscular mass in the upper body, the latissimus muscles, could not be worked directly. In order to work the lats, it was also necessary to work the arms, and the arms were the weak link in the chain, being smaller and weaker than the lats, they became exhausted long before the lats had been worked hard enough for much in the way of growth stimulation.

The potential size of the lats is literally enormous, far beyond anything that has been seen up to now; but such potential will never be realized until it becomes possible to work the lats directly, and very hard. Second, such direct work for the lats will also cause as a "side effect" great increases in both size and strength throughout the entire body, even in the legs.

Guesswork? Theory? Wishful thinking? No, none of these, because an exactly similar effect has already been observed in connection with every other muscular mass in the body; growth in any muscle mass causes growth in the body, even if they receive no direct exercise of any kind. This effect is most obvious as a result of squats, simply because the thighs, being so large, exert a proportionately large growth stimulation upon the other muscles.

And while their function is completely different from that of the thighs, the lats occupy a similar position in the upper body simply because of their size.

But even though this is true, since it is impossible to work the lats directly, and thus impossible to work them hard enough for maximum possible results, of what value is this information? Or at least that was the position as recently as two years ago; but then "breakthrough", a new principle was discovered.

A new principle that will literally revolutionize almost all sorts of physical training within the next three or four years; lats clear out past your elbows when you are standing with your hands on your hips – arms that are actually as big as some bodybuilders now claim – the ultimate degree of muscular size and strength in less than two years of training? Why not? Such is at least now possible.

But at least this much I can say with no slightest reservation: within two years we will see a degree of muscular development, both insofar as size and strength are concerned, that will be far beyond anything even dreamed of in the past. The "upper-body squat" now exists, and it will do for the upper body just what squats have long done for the thighs.

More than that, the exact same principle that finally made it possible to work the lats directly can be applied to any sort of exercise for any part of the body and with very similar results.

Some new "gimmick?" An unproven theory? Think what you like, but we built one test subject's lats to a point that would normally have required at least two full years of training, in less than six weeks, on a program of three weekly workouts of exactly forty-eight minutes each. During the same period he gained over fifteen pounds of muscular body weight, increased his arms almost exactly two inches, and increased his strength enormously.

No drugs, no special diet, no marathon workouts; just a simple routine of three sets of four very basic exercises; full squats, standing presses, barbell curls, and movements on our new lat machine. No chinning movements of any kind, no rowing motions, no "pulldowns," absolutely nothing for the lats except our new lat machine, and only nine weekly sets on that.

A fluke? A rare individual that would have shown similar results on any sort of program? I think not; but since anything is possible, we are making quite sure – for that reason we have placed the entire football squad of a major Florida high school on an exactly similar test program.

Results? Final results won't be available for another three months, but after the first four weeks of introductory "break-in" training our average results were already far ahead of a somewhat similar program that was conducted by a large university in their attempt to determine the best methods of weight training, even though their program ran for eight weeks.

And when our final results are available they will be published and certified by both the coach in charge of the program and the principle of the school involved; and it is already obvious that the results will far surpass any results ever obtained in the past – no matter what the method of training was.

Later, as we learn more about the best possible utilization of the new principles involved, it is probable that an even higher degree of results will be produced; but these final answers will come only after a large number of experiments have been conducted with several thousand test subjects. However, in the meantime, it is at least possible to make use of some of the knowledge we have gathered, and part of this can be applied to almost any sort of weight training without the use of any special equipment.