

WESTSIDE FOR SKINNY BASTARDS A modified lifting program for "Hardgainers"



by Joe DeFranco

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I'm a personal trainer. My lab is the weight room and my lab rats are my athletes. Many of these "lab rats" are doing the program you're about to read. My experiments have proven one thing: this program works. Below I've provided four real-world success stories to prove it.

These four athletes represent only a fraction of the amazing results I've seen with this program. Below you'll see examples of normal high school kids who swore it was "impossible" for them to gain weight. Well, I look at them now. These kids have packed on slabs of muscle mass using this program and good nutrition - and they're still growing! As a bonus, every one of these "hardgainers" has the strength to match their newfound muscle! See for yourself:

Success Stories of Former Skinny Bastards

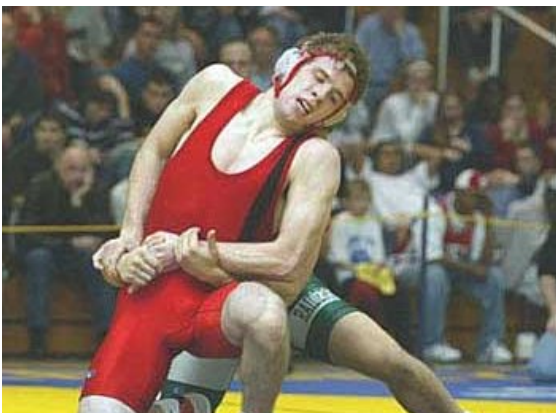


John Iannuzzi, 18-year-old high school basketball player. John went from 171 to 186 pounds in 15 weeks. He can perform strict single-leg squats holding 100-pound dumbbells. John also possesses a jaw-dropping 37" and a half-inch vertical jump!





Brian Cushing, 17-years-old, #2 ranked high school linebacker in his nation. Brian went from 130 to 231 pounds in 16 weeks. He can perform front squats of 850 lbs strict glute-ham raises and one arm pull ups. He has a hammy bandstrapped around his neck! Brian also ran an official 45 second 40-yard dash at a major high school combine!





Nick Brandeth, 17-year-old high school wrestler. Nick gained 12 pounds this off-season on this modified Westside program. He was also able to maintain his newfound muscle throughout the season. He holds the record for career wins at his high school and was undefeated (31-0) in the county and region this year. Nick has performed 77 consecutive suspended chin-up push-ups on his repetition upper body day!



Jim Ray, 17-years-old, one of the most highly recruited tight ends in the nation. Jim went from 208 to 232 pounds in just 13 weeks. He also improved his 185-pound bench press rep test from 10 to 18 reps while on this program.

The Method and the Madness

Many of my programs are based on the principles popularized by Louie Simmons and the Westside Barbell Club. Through my extensive research and experience, I've found that this system produces the best results. I've also found that, like any other system, you must manipulate it to suit your specific needs.

We're all well aware that the Westside Barbell Club is the home to some of the strongest, most lifted powerlifters in the world. The result of this system has produced speaks for itself. The problem is, I don't train powerlifters. In fact, most of the younger athletes who come to me aren't physically prepared to jump into such a demanding program.

My clientele consists mainly of football players, wrestlers, baseball players, hockey players, basketball players, and track & field athletes. These athletes range from high school kids to professionals. Through my experience of working with these different athletes, I'm constantly manipulating the system to better suit an athlete's specific sport and training level.



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Now, there can be about a dozen different templates I designed for the different athletes and skill levels, this would be better than the "one size fits all" of training at a gym. I don't think anyone wants to sit at the computer for a couple of hours reading a novel. (My ass hurts just thinking about it!)

Instead of writing a novel about how I manipulate the Westside Barbell system or all of the different athletes I work with, I've decided to do something much more practical for T-Nation readers. I've decided to appeal to the masses!

Let me explain. You see, I get flooded with phone calls and emails every day as king bigger and stronger. These phone calls range from high school athletes to 40-year-old people are dying to know the "secrets" of getting bigger and stronger. These guys are usually sound as if they've been training their entire lives and they've tried every training method known to man. They call me in desperation and in need of a quick fix.

The funny thing is, after getting more info about these people, I find they have no right to be desperate and in need of super-advanced techniques! This is because they usually have three things in common:

#1 - They lack muscle mass.

#2 - They're weak.

#3 - They're inexperienced.

This is where my modified program comes in. And don't be fooled by the name, either. This program isn't just for skinny bastards; you can be a fat bastard and benefit from it as well! Seriously, I've used this program for a wide variety of athletes and "normal" people and it's worked wonders. Simply put, if you're interested in packing on muscle mass and having the strength to back it up, this program is for you.

Westside for SkimyBastards: The Program

Below you'll find my basic training template for this program. Notice that I provide lots of variety for your exercise selection and rep schemes. I don't like turning people into robots by having them less variety over the program. Choose the exercises and rep schemes you feel work the best for your body. Add some of your own exercises if you'd like. And if you're not familiar with that exercise, just use the search engine here at T-nation.

After I lay out the basic program, I'll provide some more detail about the end of the article.

+++++Max Effort Upper Body (Monday) +++++

A. MAX-EFFORT LIFT - Work up to a max set of 3-5 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Thick bar or regular barbell bench press
- » Barbell floor press
- » Rack lockouts
- » Board presses
- » Incline barbell bench
- » Close-grip bench press (index finger on smooth part of bar)
- » Decline bench press
- » Weighted dips



B. SUPPLEMENTAL LIFT - Perform 3-4 sets of 6-10 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Flat dumbbell bench press (palms in or palms forward)

- » Incline dumbbell bench press
- » Decline dumbbell bench press

C. HORIZONTAL ROW - Perform 4 sets of 10-15 reps.

- » Choose one of the following exercises:
- » Chest supported rows
- » Bent-over dumbbell or barbell rows



- » Seated cable rows (various bars)

D. REAR DELT / UPPER BACK - Perform 2-3 sets of 12-15 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Seated rear delt machine
- » Seated dumbbell "power cleans"
- » Bent-over cable flies (single arm)
- » Standing face pulls
- » Rope pulls to throat
- » Bent-over dumbbell rear delt flys
- » Cable "scarecrows" (shown below)



E. WEIGHTED ABDOMINAL EXERCISE - 3-4 sets of 8-15 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Barbell Russian twists
- » Low cable pulldowns
- » Hanging leg raises
- » Barbell or dumbbell side bends
- » Weighted Swiss ball crunches
- » Low pulley Swiss ball crunches (shown below)





+++++ LOWER BODY - (Wednesday) +++++

A. MAX-EFFORT LIFT - Work up to a max set of 5 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Trap bar deadlift
- » Boxsquats
- » Rack pulls (partial deadlift)
- » Front squats
- » High bar Olympic squats
- » Straight bar deadlifts (various grips)



B. UNILATERAL MOVEMENT - Perform 3-4 sets of 8-15 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Single leg squats, back elevated
- » Barbell step-ups with knee lift
- » Barbell reverse lunges
- » Barbell reverse lunges, front foot elevated
- » Barbell reverse lunges, front foot elevated (with knee lift)
- » Low pulley split squats, front foot elevated
- » Walking lunges
- » "Speed-skater" squats (1 and a half rep single leg squats)
- » Barbell step-ups





C. HAMSTRING / POSTERIOR CHAIN MOVEMENT - Perform 3-4 sets of 6-10 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Leg curls
- » Glute-ham raises (various resistance, isolated, negatives)
- » Romanian deadlifts
- » Seated or standing good mornings
- » Stability ball hamstring lifts
- » Pull-throughs
- » Reverse hypers



D. GRIP TRAINING - Perform 3 sets of timed sets.

- » Choose one of the following exercises:
- » Thick bar or heavy dumbbell holds
- » Plate pinching
- » Captains of Crush gripper - 3 sets of max reps each hand.
- » Wrist roller



+++++ REPETITION UPPER BODY - (Friday) +++++

A. REPETITION LIFT - Work up to 3 sets of max reps, rest 60 seconds between sets.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Barbell bench press (max reps on 95lbs., 135lbs., 185lbs. or 225lbs.)
- » Regular push-ups, bar push-ups or suspended chain push-ups
- » Bodyweight dips
- » Dumbbell bends on Swissball, flat bench or incline bench

**B. SUPPLEMENTAL LIFT (triceps)** Perform 3-4 sets of 5-10 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Dumbbell triceps extensions (flat, incline or decline bench)
- » Dumbbell floor presses
- » Rolling triceps extensions
- » Rope pushdowns
- » Skull crushers (EZ bar or straight bar)

**C. VERTICAL PULLING** - Perform 3 sets of 8-12 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- » Lat pulldown (various bars)
- » Chin-ups or Pull-ups





D. MIDL DELT or TRAP EXERCISE - Perform 3 sets of 10-15 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- >> Dumbbell shoulder press (seated or standing)
- >> Dumbbell shoulder press (seated or standing)
- >> Lateral raises (dumbbell or cable)
- >> Barbell or dumbbell shrugs
- >> Bradford presses (shown below)



E. ELBOW FLEXION EXERCISE - Perform 3 sets of 8-10 reps.

Choose one of the following exercises:

- >> The classic curls
- >> Preacher curls (EZ bar or straight bar)
- >> Regular barbell curls
- >> Hammer curls
- >> Alternatedumbbell curls (standing or seated incline)



F. ABDOMINAL CIRCUIT TRAINING

Just pick up the ab wheel and perform them in circuit fashion with no rest

between exercises

Just prior to the set, athletes are given 10-15 minutes of rest between exercises.

between exercises.



NOTE: Athletes who are approaching their season and want to incorporate running/conditioning/GP work into their program can break up the weeks as follows:

- » MONDAY (A.M.)-MAX EFFORT Upper Body lift
- » MONDAY (P.M.)-Sprint work, conditioning, GPP or skill training
- » TUESDAY- OFF or Restoration techniques
- » WEDNESDAY- Sprint work, conditioning, GPP or skill training
- » THURSDAY - REPETITION Upper Body lift
- » FRIDAY - Sprint work, conditioning, GPP or skill training
- » SATURDAY - Lower Body lift
- » SUNDAY - OFF or Restoration techniques

Major Modifications

Now, before all of the hardcore Westside "disciples" start grumbling, remember that this program is not intended for advanced powerlifters. It's intended for athletes and regular people looking to get in shape without being a show-off. No go.

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Below we've provided descriptions of how the key components of this program have been modified from the traditional Westside template.

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Max Effort Upper Body Day - The max effort method is the best method for developing maximal strength. In my opinion, max effort work should be the "nuts and bolts" of any strength training program. If you're weak, you're dead!

Remember that most athletic qualities (sprinting speed, jumping power, etc.) rely heavily on your foundation of maximal strength. This is because maximal strength builds the foundation for all other athletic qualities such as speed-strength and strength-endurance.

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Your first exercise this day will be your max-effort exercise. Traditionally, most advanced lifters will warm up to a one-rep max on this exercise. This is very neurologically demanding on your system and it takes great coordination. Because most beginner and intermediate lifters are less neurologically efficient, we'll shoot for a 3-5 rep max on our max-effort lift in this modified program. This allows the lifter to train with maximal loads, but it's much safer than going for a one-rep max. The extra reps also increase the time under tension, which can lead to greater hypertrophy (size) gains.

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I recommend not doing your max-effort exercise every two to three weeks to prevent your nervous system from getting burned out. Whether you shoot for a 3-rep max or a 5-rep max, the goal is to break your previous record every week!

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Lower Body Day - Unlike the traditional Westside template, you'll notice there's only one major lower body day in this modified program. There's a reason for this: most beginner/intermediate athletes could not recover from two lower body days a week in conjunction with their running and conditioning work. Their legs would never fully

only one major lower body day in this modified program. There's a reason for this: most beginner/intermediate athletes could not recover from two lower body days a week in conjunction with their running and conditioning work. Their legs would never fully

recover and it would take away from their speed and conditioning work outs. One day has worked out much better for many of my athletes.

(If you're not an athlete or you only play one sport and it's your off-season, check out the "Extra Workouts, GPP, Conditioning Days" description below for adding another day to your already training.)

The first exercise on your lower body day will be a heavy squat lift. You'll work up to a set of five reps in this lift. This lift will be rotated very slowly to three weeks as well.

On this modified program you'll always follow our max effort exercises with a lateral exercise. This is one of the major differences between his program and a traditional Westside template.

Incorporate uni-lateral movements for many reasons. First of all, most athletes develop muscular imbalances between limbs. Uni-lateral exercises are a great way to overcome these imbalances. They also improve flexibility, balance and overall conditioning.

The uni-lateral exercises I prescribe are mostly quad-dominant exercises. Yes, I said the quads have gotten a bad rap lately, while the "posterior chain" has taken center stage. We must remember quads are very active when an athlete accelerates into a sprint due to their forward body lean. The quad muscle on the inside of your knee (vastus medialis) also plays a major role in stabilizing the knee.

Finally, one of the most overlooked aspects in all of training is grip and hand strength. Improving your grip and hand strength will help with numerous athletic activities. We usually do our grip training with a few extra exercises. You'll see some of my favorite grip exercises in the training template.

Repetition Upper Body Day - I've substituted dynamic effort days with repetition days for the upper body. This maybe the biggest change from the traditional Westside template. I've also found to be one of the keys to successful muscular growth in my younger athletes. Simply put, dynamic days just aren't that productive for weak, skinny bastards!

Remember that this modified program was put together for athletes who lack muscular mass. Well, the repetition method is an incredible way to elicit muscular hypertrophy. Compared to a mass lift, a bigger muscle has a better chance of becoming a stronger muscle. Packing on some muscle mass by means of the repetition method lays a great foundation for future advanced dynamic days to come.

Even substituted dynamic days with repetition days for my NFL football players during the initial stages of the off-season. This is because repetition works easier on the joints following a grueling season and it's a great way to pack on any muscle that was lost during the season.

Extra Workouts, GPP, Conditioning Days - Remember that my entire clientele consists of athletes. That's the reason why there's "only" three lifting days on my template. I don't use this program for bodybuilders or physique-geeks. I must leave room for conditioning workouts, GPP (general physical preparedness) and skill training.

If you're a non-athlete just looking to pack on some size and strength, you can incorporate "extra workouts" on non-workout days. Since Wednesday's your only leg day, I recommend a body sled dragging workout on Saturday. This is just one example.

There's a lot of room for variety in this training template. That's what I love about it. Get creative and find out what works for you!

About the Author

Joe DeFranco's training techniques have become a hot topic worldwide. This did not happen by accident. The training programs I develop and the athletes produce speak for themselves. You can learn more about Joe, his athletes, and his techniques at <http://www.defrancostraining.com/>



