

MYTHICAL STRENGTH'S
LITTLE BOOK OF BAD
IDEAS

INTRODUCTION

Greetings! I am the internet's "Mythical Strength", and if you are reading this you most likely know who I am, because this is a self-published free e-book in a shape that isn't really fit to call a "first draft", but just like my blog, I'm writing it for me and sharing it with you.

This is a book of bad ideas. You should not do anything in this book. I am VERY talented at coming up with bad ideas. It's honestly what I do in my free time. My mind will wander and start thinking about some awful way to get in a conditioning workout, or a giant set that just keeps smashing a muscle until it taps out, or how to take a pre-existing awful workout and turn it up to 11. And once the thought has formed, I'll go test it out and realize: yup, that was a bad idea.

I intend to share bad ideas as they relate to training main lifts along with conditioning workouts, along with just some random general bad ideas that relate to the subject of getting bigger and stronger. Many of them will be poorly explained, where I assume you're in my head and can understand exactly what I mean. If in doubt, wing it and see what happens. If REALLY in doubt, feel free to reach out to me. For the most part, it's hard to screw up a bad idea.

I mention certain weights I use to complete some exercises. I don't know what my 1 rep max is in any movement, so I don't know what percentage I'm using to be able to tell you what percentage YOU should use. Once again: wing it and find what works for you.

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SINGLE LIFTS

ZENO SQUATS

This is definitely an OG idea of mine that just plain works every time I use it. We're going to combine rest pausing with stripsets on the squat. It's named "Zeno" squats in reference to Zeno of Elea, an ancient Greek philosopher who, among other things, came up with several paradoxes to disprove commonly held ideas. One of these paradoxes was the idea that motion was impossible, for in order for an arrow to travel from the bow to its target, it would first need to travel half the distance between those objects, and to do that it would need to travel half the distance of THAT distance, repeat forever, indicating it would never actually reach the end point. You will feel much the same that this workout NEVER ends.

Whenever I'd start a training block with this workout, I'd take a weight I could squat for about 8 reps. I'd do 6 reps with it, take 12 VERY deep breaths into my belly (ala DoggCrapp), set up and squat 3 reps. 12 breaths, 2 reps, 12 breaths, 1 rep. We're doing half as many reps as the previous set, rounded up.

Once we got THAT done, I'd take some weight off. I preferred using Dan John's "25s and 45s" approach with this workout, so if I was squatting 405lbs, I'd take off a 45 and put on a 25 per side, meaning I'll be squatting 365. If I was squatting 455, I'd take off the 25s and squat 405. You get the point. From here, squat max reps. You SHOULD be able to match the reps you got on the first set. Ideally, you'll exceed it. Once that is done, 12 deep breaths, half as many reps, etc, going all the way to 1 again.

From HERE, you've got 2 choices: use the same weight strip method and just do it all over again OR do the weight strip method and just go for a set of max reps and call it good. Use your recovery ability to judge. Note that you're most likely going to walk like a toy soldier for 4 days after this workout.

For progression, next workout (done once a week), add ONE rep to the topset. You'll note this has a cascading effect. When we go from 6-7 reps, since we round up, we now do 7-4-2-1, which means we added 2 total reps on that first series, and then another 2 (minimum) on the next series. A little bit goes a long way.

For me, the magic number was 14 reps on the topset. Once I got there, I was ready to move on to the next plate with enough strength to continue progressing. I'd start again at 6 reps. It was honestly a relief, because even though it was a much heavier weight due to the dramatic jumps that the 245/45 method employs, it meant FAR fewer reps in total.

This program always got my squat strength up in a hurry, but I'd find it ultimately unsustainable after about 3-4 months. Usually it was more psychological than anything else: it's VERY tough. I've also used this with front squats during mass gaining phases as an ADDITIONAL workout on top of a normal squat workout, but at that point I wasn't running Zeno for both style of squats: it would be something more traditional for the squat and Zeno for the front squat. I've also adopted a similar approach with a traditional squat workout at one point in the week and Zeno's done after the deadlift workout later in the week.

FRONT SQUAT/SQUAT SUPERSET

I really hate the term “back squat” because it feels redundant to be, so if I write “squat” without a modifier, assume that’s what I’m talking about. This is a great burnout to do at the end of a leg focused workout. Load up the bar with a weight you can get a solid workset in with the front squat, get in that workset, then, immediately, transition to squats and go for max reps.

This is such a modular approach. You could rest pause and do it again if you wanted to, you could stripset it, take weight off and start over on the front squats. You could front squat into the squat and rest pause JUST the squats, etc. The benefit here is you make light weight heavy for your squat.

A safety squat bar works well here too. I know people like to get picky about SSB front squats, but whatever: they still train your legs. You can get REAL untechnical here too and just push and push as hard as possible. Always a plus when it comes to this sort of work.

Just do 1 huge set of these and call it. It should be pretty taxing.

+2 BONUS TO SQUATS

This was a nice alternative to Zeno squats when I still wanted to do a big burnout workout but with some heavier weights to start. I took a VERY heavy triple (did NOT have a 4th rep in me) that totaled out to 4 plates and a quarter per side. After that triple, I took off the 25s and did 5 reps with 4 plates. Took off a 45 and put back on the 25, did 7 reps. Kept it up until I had a plate per side.

If you're training solo, you get enough rest with the time it takes to change out plates. Feel free to employ rest pausing if needed though.

If 2 reps is too much, go for 1.

ROM PROGRESSION DEADLIFTS

This is what got me initially “internet famous” because no one else was doing it at the time. I made some of my best deadlift progress by using Range Of Motion (ROM) progression. Prior to that, I had injured my back significantly and couldn’t deadlift for about 3 years without re-injuring it. After a brief stint of partials during DoggCrapp, I came up with the following approach.

I went to the hardware store and bought 14 rubber patio pavers. I loaded up a barbell and placed 7 pavers under the plates on each side to elevate the starting height of the pull. I worked up to 1 big topset that ended up being 12 reps. Why 12? Because that’s how many I could pull with the amount I had loaded on the bar. Don’t try to overthink it. I think I had 405 total. I liked starting with good “plate math numbers”. I’d do this workout once a week.

Next week, I’d take a mat off each side and repeat. I’d try to match the previous rep total, if not beat it. Repeat until I got to 2 mats per side. After that, I’d go straight to the floor on the next week. Pulling with 1 mat per side never seemed worth it to me.

After the cycle was done, I’d take a 1 week deload and then start over with more weight per side. After the very first cycle, I was usually good for a 30lb jump, but for subsequent cycles it was usually 10-15lbs.

The first cycle would usually get me my best return, with me being able to keep the same amount of reps from start to finish, if not actually do MORE by the end. On subsequent cycles, it was typical to lose a rep or two from the start to finish, which meant starting the NEXT cycle with fewer reps. Continued long enough, once I got to a triple at the end of a cycle, I’d reset the weight by about 10% and start the whole process over.

As I got more experienced with this approach, I started including rest pauses. I’d pull that max rep set, rest pause, and try to get in a handful of more reps. As I got even MORE experienced, I’d do one MORE rest pause. Those workouts were absolutely BRUTAL. I frequently would blow out a bunch of blood vessels all over my upper body. This is why I came up with Zeno

squats in the first place: I only wanted to do “one” set of squats after this was done, so I had to find a way to make it a big set.

A real gamechanger with this approach is the use of chains. Deadlifting with chains makes it so that, as you pull the bar higher, the weight gets heavier. With ROM progression, you start the pull higher, so the “easier” weeks of the program actually have you lifting HEAVIER weight, while the longer ROM gives you a little bit of a break. It’s an interesting way to balance the equation.

This is a once a week workout. I never added much to it. Some abs, some reverse hyper, and then a big squat workout with dropsets and rest pauses would be more than enough.

This remains the most effective thing I’ve ever done for my deadlift. It’s how I pulled a 650lb single, 4x635, 585+chains for 8, and a bunch of other wackiness.

The inevitable question is “if this was so good for your deadlift, why didn’t you use it for your other lifts?” I have, and it didn’t work as well. For squats and bench, I’d suspend the bar in chains and try to go down 1 link a week. I hit a 350lb dead bench that way and some decent squats, but I couldn’t ever run the programs for more than a cycle or 2. It just wasn’t as sustainable for some reason.

DEFICIT DEADLIFT ROM DROPSET

I've done this with a trap bar, barbell and axle, and no matter what it sucks. Set up for deficit deadlifts. Make them a VERY high deficit. I do this by standing on 3-5 rubber patio pavers per side. You're gonna want something that's a little on the thin side in terms of diameter so you can stack a bunch of them on top of themselves. Knock out your set of deficit deads, immediately remove 1 layer of whatever it is you're standing on, and then keep doing. Repeat until you're pulling regular deads off the floor. If you're feeling particularly spicy, you could take the things you were standing on and put them under the plates from here and do partial pulls, but usually I'm pretty floored at this point. It's a great way to get in a bunch of reps quickly, which is awesome, because supplemental work is boring and I hate it.

I like this approach because as the workout gets harder, the lift gets easier. You're gonna be in a bad way when those floor pulls come, but it's also going to feel like you're cheating the reps because it's so "short" compared to how you started.

Feel free to employ rest pausing between level changes as needed.

ULTIMATE SHOULDER GIANT SET

This is the supplemental training protocol I used when I hit my lifetime best strict press PR of 266lbs with an axle. I've known a few other dudes that have used it and reported great results as well.

Ideally, you'll have 3 different implements. I used an axle, log and trap bar. If all you have is a barbell, consider doing strict presses and behind the neck presses. You just want SOME sort of variety.

You'll start this giant set by pressing one of the implements for a set of 10. IMMEDIATELY after that set is done, go to a set of parallel dip bars and dip as many dips as possible. You'll find that, even though you just finished pressing, you'll still have plenty of juice left for dips. They're pressing, but different enough from the pressing you just did that you can dip a little deeper. IMMEDIATELY after the dips, to do a set of 10-15 lateral raises. IMMEDIATELY after those raises, do a set of 20 band pull aparts. NOW we rest. 90 seconds would be ideal.

For the next set, use a different implement/behind the neck for the strict presses and repeat the rest of the above giant set. If you have a third implement, use it for the third set. After that third set, start over on the first implement and repeat it all the way through for 6 sets total.

Your whole upper body will be BLOWN up. Fantastic pump. This was done once a week.

SHRUGS AGAINST BANDS

Again, this is stupidly simple, but it gets overlooked. When you do shrugs, use bands rather than weights. Still use a bar or dumbbells, but instead of trying to load as many plates as possible, use bands.

For one, this keeps constant tension in your musculature and turns shrugs into something REALLY gnarly when done for high reps. But what I really like about this is you don't have to load a jillion plates on a bar and bend it in the rack for a short ROM movement: it's a MUCH quicker set up. I like using an axle in particular because it lacks knurling and won't shred your bands. I use straps with said axle, because I'm not doing this to train my grip.

I prefer going for really high rep single sets with shrugs, similar to Poundstone curls. As of my writing this, my current PR is 108 reps with an Ironmind axle against Elitefts light bands. I may add some weight to the bar on top of the bands at some point, but right now I'm just chasing after the pump.

GETTING TO 400 PUSH UPS IN ONE SET

My dad always told me a story about a guy he knew in the Air Force that was ripped and jacked and his “secret” was doing 200 push ups a night. For some reason, it’s always at night with these stories. But anyway, that stuck with me, so I made it my goal to be able to do 200 push ups in one set. I got there when I was 17...and wasn’t ripped and jacked. So I figured I probably needed to up the dose, so I decided to double that. ...still didn’t get ripped and jacked from it, but I could do 400 push ups in one set, so that’s cool. Here’s what I did.

Once a day, do 1 set of max push ups. The next day, do 1 more rep than the last time. ...and that’s it. Similar to the trap bar exercise, this eventually becomes a mental challenge rather than a physical one. You pretty much ALWAYS have one more rep in you: you just gotta find it.

Once I got to 200 reps, I got brave and went up 5 reps a day. Once I got up to 300, it was 10 reps. Once I got to 400, I realized this was really stupid and not value added, so I quit doing them. Funny thing is, I rarely do push ups these days, but can still crank out 100 on demand. I think all that time spent doing high rep push ups in my youth has built up a reserve that won’t ever go away, so that’s cool.

It's worth appreciating that, at a certain rep total, it’s really no longer a question of physicality but mentality. If you allow yourself to rest in the planked position, you’ll be able to get another rep if you want it. Super Squats operated off a similar premise with the resting at the top of the squat. That said, the push up is unique in that regard as far as bodyweight goes. Trying this with chins or dips doesn’t work in my experience.

GENERAL

CONDITIONING

CONDITIONING IN GENERAL

People really overthink conditioning. Most folks don't do ANY of it, preferring to just lift weight, such that, when it comes time to actually add conditioning to their programming, they get paralyzed. They're afraid it's somehow going to interfere with their ability to lift.

There's a chance that, with the addition of conditioning to your program, you MAY observe a very slight decrease in performance initially, but it will pass just as quickly AND you will soon observe the benefits. Strength takes a long time to build and a long time to lose. Conditioning, on the other hand, is quick in both regards. It pays off SO well SO quick that it's SO worth doing.

If in doubt, pick conditioning workouts that focus on muscles you had trained in your previous lifting session. This will have a restorative effect on healing muscles, as it will shuttle blood to that area. So, if you did a big squat workout, do a thruster based conditioning workout. If you did upperbody, do something press, snatch or burpee focused. If you did deadlifts, cleans or swings answer the mail.

If you're doing conditioning the same day as your lifting day, pick a shorter conditioning workout. If you have a separate day for conditioning, use a longer conditioning workout.

Eventually, you will find what works for you.

TOWER OF BABEL

In this workout, we're going to build up to a topset of front squats before working our way back down again. That's the "tower" part. It's "Tower of Babel" because you're going to get punished for your pride on this. Every set UP is going to have a corresponding set DOWN, and you're most likely going to feel so awesome on the way up that you end up hitting a really high amount of reps for that topset...and then you're gonna have to work back down under a LOT of fatigue as a result.

When I first ran this workout, I used a weight that I had managed 16 reps for on a topset, and worked up to 8 reps in the workout. Should give a frame of reference for how big an impact it is.

In between front squats, you'll be doing 5 burpees.

So in plain language, you'll do 1 front squat, 5 burpees, 2 front squats, 5 burpees, 3 front squats, etc etc, until you hit a front squat set wherein you cannot do more reps. Once you've arrived at that set, for your next set, do 1 rep fewer, then 1 rep fewer, etc etc, until you're back down to 1 again.

As far as progression goes, you can add weight and try to match reps, try to beat your previous time with the same weight, add another rep to the topset, or add more burpees in between the front squats. I only ever ran this once a week, so keep that in mind as you progress.

As it is the Tower of Babel, feel free to employ whatever blasphemy you need to get through this.

JUAREZ VALLEY FRONT SQUATS

I absolutely and unapologetically stole Juarez Valley from Josh Bryant's book "Jailhouse Strong". The way JV works is you hit a topset of max reps on a movement, and instead of working back down linearly (so say, going from 8 to 7 to 6, etc etc all the way to 1), you bounce to 1 rep, then back up to a fewer than the topset, then 2 reps, etc, until you meet in the middle. Using 8 reps again, you'd start with 8, then do 1, then 7, then 2, then 6, 3, 5 and 4.

In Jailhouse Strong, this was done with burpees. We will be doing it with front squats. In addition, in order to break up the sets so that you're not just simply doing all the reps in a row (because then...what's the point?), Jailhouse Strong talked about how inmates would pace to the other end of their cell to start the next set. For us, we'll be doing 5 burpees between sets.

Since I'm an awful front squatter, I've had several of these workouts where I had to rack the bar briefly as it was rolling off my shoulders. It's fine, so long as I still get in the rep total I need for that particular set.

You can progress on this by doing it faster, adding weight, or adding reps. I've found, once I get to 13+ reps on the topset, it's best to go down by TWO reps on the high rep side while still going up by 1 on the low. So, for example, if I hit 16 reps on the topset, it'd go 16-1-14-2-12-3-10-4-8-5-6-4. Feel free to be braver than me and NOT do that. I only ever ran this once a week, so keep that in mind as you progress.

CLIMB THE TOWER, ESCAPE THROUGH THE VALLEY

Alright, now combine the previous two ideas into one. You're going to start off like its Tower of Babel. 1 front squat, 5 burpees, 2 front squats, 5 burpees, etc. Once you reach a set of front squats where you can't go any higher, you're going to transition to Juarez Valley. So say you worked up to 9 front squats. Do your five burpees, then 1 front squat, 5 burpees, 8 front squats, 5 burpees, etc until you meet in the middle.

This is a good compromise on Tower of Babel and allows you to push a little harder without concern for being unable to complete the follow up sets.

BURPEE AND SNATCH LADDER

Came up with this when I was visiting my in-laws and didn't want to go to the gym or bring a lot of equipment. All I had was an 80lb weight vest and a 45lb kettlebell. I love having limited options like that, because it forces you to be creative. What I developed was the following.

Start with 1 burpee, then 1 snatch per side. Next do 2 burpees, 2 snatches. Repeat until you get to 5. That's 1 ladder. Start over at 1 rep. Try to do as many ladders as you can. When it gets to be unsustainable, shed the vest and then go for 10 reps total, once again starting at 1 and working up 1 rep each round.

I was in Denver CO at the time, so I legit felt like I was going to die from this. Maybe you will too!

“THE LAST CASTLE”: CARRIES AND KETTLEBELLS

There's a million different ways to do this so it's not worth detailing every single workout. The big thing is this: on either end of your carries, put a kettlebell there and do something with it when you get there. I'm a fan of alternating snatches with a lighter bell and swings with a heavier one. I did 20 rounds of carrying a keg, doing 6 alternating KB snatches, carrying the keg back to the start, doing 10 KB swings, and repeating. You could also replace the bells with things like Devil presses, burpees, thrusters, etc etc. You get the point: carry, put down, do something, pick up and carry again. It punctuates the carries and gives you a “rest” while still nuking your heart.

This is named after the Robert Redford prison movie. Fun fact: this was Steve Burton's only moment in cinema. He was the long time voice actor of Cloud in Final Fantasy VII and has played Jason Morgan on General Hospital for decades, a fact I am well aware of because I've become hooked on that soap opera after the Mrs has introduced me to it and we spend our evenings on the couch watching that day's episode. Anyway, in the film, Redford is given a punishment of moving rocks in the prison yard from one end of the yard to the other, from sun up to sundown. Redford is able to move the whole pile of rocks...before sundown, to which he is informed that it doesn't matter WHERE the rocks end up: the length of the punishment was until sundown. With that, he begins the task of moving the rocks BACK to where he started. You too will feel the agony of that scene.

THRUSTERS AND SNATCHES

For some reason, barbell thrusters and KB snatches play VERY nice together. Which is to say, they absolutely destroy you, but that's the goal here. My theory is that they both get weight overhead, but one is knee focused and the other is hip focused, so even though you're constantly moving your body through a very full ROM, you're technically "resting" one movement while doing the other.

There's a lot of different ways to take advantage of this. You could do tabata intervals alternating between a barbell thruster and a KB snatch. You can do Every Minute on the Minute (EMOM) workouts where you alternate between the two every other minute. You can do circuits where you do a set of 5-10 thrusters then 5-10 alternating snatches and repeat for time OR for a set amount of rounds. You could do the classic Crossfit 21-15-9 rep workout. Etc etc. Play around and find what works well for you. Just know your heart will feel like it's going to explode when you are done.

A workout I came up with on the fly that's gotten some traction is this: 10x5, 5x3, 5x1, for time. I used 95lbs for the thruster and 45lbs for the kettlebell when I did this. You'll do equal reps per side on the snatch (so you're doing a set of 5 thrusters, then a total of 10 snatches before moving onto the next set).

GRACE EVERYTHING

The Grace WOD from Crossfit is a classic: 30 clean and jerks with 135lbs for time. An absolute lungbreaker, and the perfect shell for just about anything.

Do Grace with all sorts of stuff. Grace with an axle. Grace with a log (for extra fun, do it with viper presses instead of clean and press). Stone to shoulder Grace. Keg clean and press Grace. Etc etc. Crossfit also has other permutations of the “Do 30 things for time”, to include snatches for time, so take a page from that as well. 30 thrusters for time has been an awesome workout for me, especially to recover from heavy squats. You could do 30 snatches with the KB. 30 Devil presses. Etc etc.

On the subject of Grace, something I took to doing once I was hitting a lot of sub 3 minute times was a thing I called “Grace Echo”. You’ll start off with the standard Grace WOD, then, once you get your 30 reps, rest 90 seconds, then go for 15 reps, rest 90 seconds, go for 7. Just a way to make things suck even more and get in a little more volume.

100 WEIGHTED VEST BURPEES

This one is simple, but still a good bad idea: do 100 burpees for time while wearing a weight vest. The 100 burpees for time is already a classic bad idea, but this absolutely turns it up a notch. Heavier vests can get a little bulky and might run into the floor during the push up portion, so try to keep a tight core.

My shoulders really bugged me when I did this, but in fairness, this was a workout I did when I was at my in-laws for a week with nothing but a weight vest and a kettlebell, so I was doing a LOT of burpees, push ups, snatches and presses. Still: watch for it.

Also, try to actually get some air when you jump. I did this with an 80lb vest on, took video, and could barely see any space between the floor and my shoes. Takes a bit to overcome.

ALL THINGS TABATA

Once again, this is taking from Dan John's gift of "tabata training", which is not the REAL tabata protocol, but it still can be a barn burner. 20 seconds on/10 seconds off, 8 rounds for a total of 4 minutes. This protocol plays VERY nice with a few movements.

A classic is burpees. This is great when you're traveling and have minimal equipment. Do the burpees FAST. Have zero gaps between start and end: make it fluid. The whole point is to burn yourself out here.

Next level burpees would be Devil presses. This is effectively burpees while holding dumbbells. Instead of jumping with your hands over your head at the end, you're going to take the dumbbells from the floor and essentially snatch them into place. Youtube the execution of this if in doubt. This is awesome if you're traveling and have access to a hotel fitness center with some dumbbells. A little can go a long way.

Stone to shoulder is great for this. Similar to the previously mentioned tabata carries, you gotta scramble to get the stone lapped and up within the time constraints. Don't watch the clock: always be moving on this. If you only get as far as lapping the stone, it's still moving.

KB snatches and swings are stupidly simple to put in here. If you only have 1 bell, something I like doing is snatches during the 20 seconds on and swings during the 10 seconds off.

For you combat sports types, there's always heavy bag tabata rounds or sprawl drills. Rope skipping works too.

And then what you can do is start taking these movements and slot them into different rounds of tabata, which allows for "recovery" from movements and, in turn, an ability to push really hard when you get there. If you JUST done stone to shoulder tabata, by round 6 you might just be too nuked to get anything done. Alternate between stone and burpees each round and you'll find you have some energy left when you get there. You can even push beyond 8 rounds as a result. I did a 41 round workout that was based around stone to shoulder, burpees, and

then swapping between chins, dips and reverse hypers. You can use a “Heavy-light-medium” approach with selecting movements.

On the above, when I was traveling and had my weight vest and kettlebell, I did a workout where round 1 was burpees, round 2 was air squats, round 3 was KB snatches, round 4 was 1 armed swings. You can see the movements jump back and forth in terms of difficulty, and you can “rest” a little during the easier ones. I did the first 24 rounds wearing the 80lb vest, then took off the vest and switched to just burpees and snatches (killer combo) for the 36 rounds

PROWLER IDEAS

Rather than make a new page for every single prowler idea, I'm just going to list out a bunch of them here. I'm always amazed at how much thought people want to put into an implement that was effectively built to MINIMIZE thought.

Rest pause prowler: push the prowler a set distance. Take 12 deep breaths. Push back to start. Repeat. Go for PR by rounds completed. I liked getting 8-12 rounds done.

Prowler distance PR: Pick a distance and push the prowler all that way. I've done so many variations of this. When I was rehabbing my ACL, pushing an unloaded prowler was big for me. I eventually worked up to pushing it a full mile. It was intense. Otherwise, I like loading it up, starting at one end of my street and pushing it to the other end. Best part about that: you have to get it BACK somehow. Yeah, you could just carry it, but backward dragging it is a MUCH better option.

Highs and lows: Low handle push the prowler one way, then high handle push it back the other before resting. Don't try to do it in the other order: pushing on the low handles sucks and will completely blow you away, giving you nothing left for the return trip. Rest 90-120 seconds and go again. 6-12 rounds is fine. You can do a very similar workout by pushing with the high handles and reverse dragging the prowler as well.

Prowler strip sets: load several plates on the prowler, push it, take some weight off and push it again. Keep going until you've taken all the weight off. You could also do pyramids by stacking the weights along the side of the route you're pushing and loading it on the way up and unloading on the way down. It's ideal to use a lot of lighter plates vs a few heavy ones.

Prowler with weight vest: This is an interesting balancing act. When you wear a weight vest, you can push a heavier prowler since you have more "bodyweight" behind you, but (on low handles especially) keeping your torso angle strong becomes much tougher and your breathing gets quite taxed. It's a great way to mix things up.

THE HILLS HAVE EYES

This one has a cute name because I'm riffing it off someone else's work. Tactical Barbell has a workout called "Meat Eater II" which is based around KB swings and burpees. I turned it into a horror movie. Here's how it went.

10 KB swings with a 40kg KB
10 Devil presses with 20lb dumbbells
30 seconds rest

For 25 rounds.

30 seconds is just long enough to not really catch your breath, so as the rounds creep up you're going to feel worse and worse. Feel free to go for more rounds if you want. This took me a little over 48 minutes the first time I did it.

COUNTDOWN

This is something I came up with one day on the spot on my way out the door for work. My barbell was loaded with 135lbs from a morning workout and I had a 45lb kettlebell, so I did this

10 thrusters w/135lbs
9 alternating arm KB snatches w/45lbs (9 per side)
8 burpees
7 alternating arm KB swings (7 per side)
6 power cleans w/135lbs
5 thrusters w/135lbs
4 alternating arm KB snatches
3 burpees
2 alternating arm KB swings
1 power clean w/135lbs

Took a little less than 5 minutes. It's just a quickie, but also an example of how you can make the most out of limited equipment. Note that pairing of thrusters and snatches right next to each other: it's still magic.

FAUST

Cute name on this one because you make your deal with the Devil...press.

Do 100 Devil presses with 50lb dumbbells
EMOM, do 5 chins (kipping is fine)

Get it done in as few rounds as possible.

Again: you make your deal with the Devil presses. The chins are fixed. You might strategize and try to hit a fixed number of presses each round, which means having to do more chins, or you might try to get it done as fast as possible and blow your lungs out. All sorts of ways to play.

This isn't a unique approach at all. The Kalsu WOD uses thrusters and burpees in a similar way, and I've done this with thrusters and KB swings. Substitute movements as needed.

DUELING PRESS LADDERS

You need 2 different kinds of implements to make this work. Axle and log, axle and barbell, barbell and log, circus dumbbell and keg, etc etc. It won't work with just 1 implement, nor will it work with 2 of the same.

Take your implements and load them to equal intensities. 70% of your 1rm for an axle press and 70% of your 1rm for a log, for example. You want them to be equal difficulties.

Clean and press one implement for 1 rep. Take 1 deep breath. Clean and press the other implement for 1. One deep breath. Go back to the first one and do it for 2. Clean each rep if you want to make this a real challenge, but there's no shame in only cleaning the first rep. 2 deep breaths. Go do 2 for the other implement. Keep going in this pattern until you fail a rep. Then start over again at 1. Repeat until you are floored.

If you want to extend this, after failing, you can take a slightly longer break to recharge. Once again though, there's some magic in picking things up off the floor and putting it over your head.

STRONGMAN STUFF

STRONGMAN MEDLEYS

(NOTE: Most of the below comes straight from a blog post I wrote, but it's got a LOT of good info that pertains to this book)

Since entering the sport of strongman, I've become a fan of medleys, and as such, I've become somewhat talented at developing some absolutely terrible ones that I wanted to share. Now, I'll clarify that I am of course not a fan of the medley itself, because anyone that has ever run a medley KNOWS that it's essentially Hell on earth, but that I am a fan of how effective medleys are at making you awesome. Medleys will of course tax you physically, but it is the mental strength they build that is truly amazing. I know the rest of the internet has a raging hardon for "farmer's walks" right now (performed with dumbbells of course), but a simple loaded carry is only the tip of the iceberg. To really get some training effect, you need to step things up.

BACKGROUND

Let's talk basics first. What the hell is a medley? When I use this term, it's in the sense of a strongman medley, wherein one will move objects from one point to another, with the goal to be to complete the medley as quick as possible. The key to a good medley is having at least 2 different implements to use. You can do more than that of course, but having less than 2 is just 1, and that makes it simply a loaded carry, and as we've observed, spazzy geeks on fitness forums do loaded carries.

The benefits of multiple objects are as such; it requires different skills with different objects, you can scale the weight to meet the demands of where your fatigue will be during the medley, and it tests your mental fortitude to put down one heavy object just to go voluntarily pick up another. If all you're doing is one long ass walk with farmer's, you can convince yourself to get in a few more steps here or there, but when you put down a heavy sandbag only to sprint back to a heavy keg and pick it back up and start over, you have to REALLY want to deal with how much it's going to suck to go through with it.

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

There really are no limits when it comes to what you use for a medley; you just want it to be something heavy that makes you miserable to carry/drag/push it. Leave the pink dumbbells at home for this one.

Some classic staples include

- Kegs
- Sandbags
- Fire hydrants (please use decommissioned ones)
- Big rocks/Atlas stones
- Stacks of bumper plates on a loading pin
- Yokes
- Farmer's handles
- Sleds (backwards and forward drag)
- Prowlers (backwards, forwards, high handle, low handle)
- Trucks/cars to push
- 100lb plates
- Manhole covers

You get the point. The biggest takeaway is don't be a martyr; ANYONE can do medleys, you have access to the equipment you need. Yeah, it'd be cool if you had a Rogue yoke and Ironmind sandbags and all that stuff, but you're bound to have SOMETHING heavy that you can carry.

PLAN FOR THE GUY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MEDLEY, NOT THE START

You gotta keep in mind when setting up your medley that the point is to greatly fatigue you while still pushing you under this fatigued state to move quickly. This means you need to drop your ego a touch when it comes to figuring out the weights for the later movements in your

medley. Yeah, you might be a beast with a 200lb sandbag when you're fresh, but after dragging a prowler and carrying a keg, you might suddenly find yourself moving at the speed of smell. That's not bad when it comes to teaching you how to endure misery, but it's not doing a whole lot for your footspeed, and your heart rate is going to slow down with your feet. Better to have a lighter implement in the middle that FEELS heavy because of how exhausted you are but still allows you to get to the finishline.

DISTANCE

There isn't a real hardset rule on distance, but again, you want to consider overall training effect here. If you decide to move for a mile, yeah, things are gonna suck, but you're gonna be moving some light weight to do it. That's a whole different kind of suckage than what we're going for here, equally valid, but different. However, if you are only hitting 5' out the gate, you're gonna be tempted to turn this into something at the Arnold, and end up waddling a 1200lb yoke a few steps. You'll feel like you accomplished something, but your heart will give you the same look that your love interest does when you finish in 4 seconds. I tend to use 50' as my general distance, with 20 meters being a longer run. This allows me to move some heavy weight, get my feet moving, get my heart racing, and still have the gas to go back and do it some more.

SAMPLE MEDLEYS

Alright alright, enough talk, let's get down to action. I'll be listing some medleys I've run and the implements used. You should of course scale/change based on your own availability of equipment and strength level.

SANDBAG AND KEG 1

- Run 200lb sandbag 50'
- Run back to starting line
- Run 100lb keg 50'

Real simple stuff. Scale weight as needed. Sandbag needs to be heavy, keg is about half as heavy. Move as fast as you can with each implement. It'll be over quick, but when the keg goes

down you'll know you had a workout. Do this 4-5 times, rest as little as possible to recover. Stop when you have to walk the keg from the start to the finishline. At that point, you're done.

SANDBAG AND KEG 2

- Run 200lb sandbag 50'
- Run back to starting line
- Run 100lb keg 50'
- Run 200lb sandbag back to start
- Run back to finish line
- Run 100lb keg back to start

Almost a double of the first medley. It's a pretty obvious change. You'll burn out much faster on this one, so try 2-3 to start with.

SANDBAG AND KEG LEAPFROG

- Run 200lb sandbag 25'
- Run back to start
- Run 100lb keg 50'
- Run back to sandbag
- Run sandbag to Keg
- Run keg 25' back toward starting line
- Run back to sandbag
- Run sandbag back to starting line
- Run back to keg
- Run keg back to starting line

Ok, so that looks a lot more complicated than it actually is. It's basically trying to combine a suicide sprint with a medley. I suggest drawing it out on a piece of paper first just to get your head straight, and make sure to mark off where 25' and 50' are so that you know where to drop stuff off. The first time you drop off at 25', you'll think that there's no way that distance can be

challenging, but about halfway through this you'll realize you bit off more than you can chew. Again, maybe 2-3 runs of this before you're just totally fried.

2 KEGS AND A SANDBAG

- Run 200lb sandbag 50'
- Back to start
- Run 180lb keg 50'
- Back to start
- Run 100lb keg 50'

Again, pretty obvious. That 180lb keg will pretty much take all the wind out of your sails, and then you're just holding on when you get to the 100lb keg. I like how challenging this is, but because the middle implements sucks so much, you aren't able to run it as long/fast. Try for 2-3 runs.

PROWLER, KEG AND BUMPERS: SPECIAL DELIVERY

- Backwards drag unloaded prowler 25'
- Run back to start
- Run 100lb keg and load it onto prowler
- Backwards drag prowler 25'
- Run back to start
- Run 100lb stack of bumper plates and load onto prowler
- High handle push prowler 25'
- Unload bumpers
- High handle push prowler 25'
- Unload keg

So this one is a medley with a mini loading even thrown in. It's important to start with the backwards drag and end with the high handle push, because you'll simply be stronger with high handles than you will backwards dragging. This one is good for 2-3 runs.

SPECIAL DELIVERY EXPANDED

Start with an unloaded prowler and a keg. Have the keg 50' away from the prowler. At the start, carry the keg to the prowler, load it onto the prowler, push back to where the keg started, then take the keg and carry it to where the prowler started. You could always drag the prowler backwards too: great way to blow up the quads.

You can make this really fun by having multiple kegs along the way. And then you can even combine all of the above. Space the kegs 25' apart. Run to the first keg, load it on the prowler, push it 25', run to the second keg, load it on the prowler, push it 25', reverse drag the prowler 25', unload a keg, reverse drag the prowler 25', then die.

PROWLER AND KEG

- High handle push prowler loaded w/100lb keg 50'
- Run Keg back to starting line
- Run back to prowler
- Backwards drag prowler 50'

Whereas before I mentioned to start with the backward drag, here we finish with it because the prowler's weight matches our fatigue level. The backwards drag will be murder towards the end as your legs will simply not have any gas left, but just keep walking until it's over. This one is pretty light on recovery, so try 4-6 rounds.

YOKE AND SANDBAG

- 500lb-600lb yoke run 50'
- Run back to start

- Run 200lb sandbag to yoke
- Load sandbag over the yoke crossbar

So again, combining some events on this one. By making this a bag over yoke event, you have to be strategic with the yoke height. Too high and it's impossible to get the sandbag over the crossbar, too low and you gotta pick the yoke up real far. Definitely start with the yoke first; you don't want to rush the set-up on the yoke to make up for speed. Take it from someone that blew out their ACL on a rushed yoke set-up.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

-Focus on moving quickly BETWEEN implements along with moving WITH the implements. A lot of folks lose time because they just casually jog between implements. What they're really doing is trying to recover between implements by taking a long time from one to the other, which is nice on your heart and lungs, but sucks on your time and is really just making you less awesome. Sprint as fast as you can between implements, and if you can't, it means you need to get in better shape.

-The pick up is part of the medley! You want to train yourself to be able to quickly pick up the implements and go. Sandbags are especially notorious for being difficult to pick up quickly, and this is where a lot of competitors lose time. Do a few rounds of your medley where the implements are set up poorly and you have to compensate. Put the sandbag on its side, have the handles of the keg facing the wrong way, make the farmer's handles uneven, have the bumpers on the loading pin be a little loose, etc. You get better by training when things are worse.

-Try to have your medley end in the same configuration as it started. You don't want to have to reset everything before you begin each round. Alternatively, you can just run different medleys each round based off the starting position of your equipment.

-Be a good neighbor; if you're doing this at home, try not to do it at the crack of dawn or when people are trying to sleep. Be an ambassador for your sport.

TABATA CARRIES

I understand that tabata relates to a VERY specific protocol that applies to reaching a very specific heart rate range and etc etc, so the science nerds can back off on this. I use “tabata” to mean “20 seconds on/10 seconds off for 8 rounds/4 minutes” ala Dan John, because it’s one of those “common language” sorta things. That’s the protocol we will use here.

This workout is stupidly simple: pick up and carry your implement using tabata intervals. When time starts, pick up and carry the implement. When 20 seconds ends, drop the implement. When 10 seconds of rest ends, pick up and start again. I “developed” this when I was living in Montana, where winter would prevent me from doing long distance carries, so I’d set up inside my garage and do this.

For this workout, I’d use sandbags and/or kegs. Both suck in unique ways. Picking up a sandbag is tough, and having to do it “on the timer” adds an extra element of pressure to it. You ESPECIALLY start feeling it around round 6, because your lungs will be on fire and your lower back will be massively pumped and picking up that damn sandbag suddenly becomes a significant issue.

The keg is the opposite: it’s REALLY easy to pick up a keg...which makes it SUCK because you pick it up quick and now you have to carry this damn thing for the full 20 seconds. Because the keg is easier, I took to doing back to back tabata workouts, starting with the sandbag and ending with the keg. It was MISERABLE. A good way to get your heart rate up and hammer the entire body in limited space and time.

Could you do this with other carries, like a yoke or farmer’s walk? Yeah, sure, I suppose...but why?

DEATH CARRY

This is stupid simple but sometimes we forget the simple stuff. Pick up something heavy, like a stone, keg or sandbag, and carry it for as long as you can...and that's it. Don't worry about footspeed, don't make it a strongman event, just keep going until you absolutely physically cannot. If you can, stop and lap the implement to take breaks without actually setting it all the way down. Go for max agony on this.

What's great is you can do this when you have limited space to work with. I would do these in my garage in the winter in Montana when it was too icy to carry stuff outside. When I'd hit one wall, I'd just turn around and lumber back.

If you can do more than 1 round, you didn't do the 1 round hard enough. I liked doing this at the end of a back day workout to just completely blow the back away.

MY BEST DEADLIFT/BAR GRIP BUILDER

Everyone wants to do farmer's walks for grip strength and it's just such a low return investment on effort. Farmers are a pain to set up and walking with them is a different stress than just plain old grip work. I've had the most success just doing static barbell holds with the following strategy.

On your deadlift day, once you are done with all of your worksets, take some weight off the bar and pull a double overhand rep. Hold it at lockout for time. Once you can hit 90 seconds, add more weight and do it again.

It's only one set. That's all you need. Stupidly simple to get done, and the bar was already loaded for you. I've done this with an axle as well, and it was absolutely brutal and required even LESS loading.

I ALWAYS use straps when I deadlift, and also for most of my backwork in the gym. I am NOT one of those dudes trying to build my grip while I build my back. That said, by employing this technique, I've been able to pull 600+lbs with a mixed grip without any prior mixed grip training. Just went straight from straps in training to mixed grip in competition. It's going to have some of the best direct carryover to holding a bar in your hand.

HOW TO WIN THE CRUCIFIX HOLD

The crucifix hold is probably the most boring and awful event in a strongman competition, but it is frequently featured because it requires minimal equipment. Just have competitors hold something heavy in outstretched arms until they can't. I have always won this event and have beaten dudes much stronger than me on it. It's not a strength event: it's a pain/boredom tolerance event. You can win it too.

As far as training for it goes, if you want to do that, you can just slap it onto your shoulder training. I do a lateral raise stripset that ends with me holding my empty hands out at the side with a goal of setting time PRs. You can hold plates, dumbbells, just anything that's heavy. If it's a front hold you're training for, then hold it out in front of you. 1 set is enough: don't leave anything behind.

As far as when the event shows up, it's simply about tolerating more pain than everyone else. Distraction is VERY helpful in that regard. What I've found useful is to have a mantra or song lyric that I repeat to myself over and over again. Not only does it take my mind off the situation, but it allows me to mark time without actually counting time passing. My go to comes from Nine Inch Nails "Ruiner", with the lyrics of "You didn't hurt me/nothing can hurt me/you didn't hurt me/nothing can stop me now", repeated over and over again.

Don't SAY these words out loud. It can compromise your stability and cause your hands to fall. Just run it through your mind. Focus on something OTHER than the pain in your body.

FARMER'S WALKS WITH STRAPS

I bring up this idea because people are stupid about farmer's walks. If you're trying to get better at the actual farmer's walk event, do some workouts with straps. Take your grip out of the equation so you can go heavier or longer and focus on improving your footspeed and torso strength. The thing to watch out for is you lose your ability to bail quickly here, so be cautious about where your feet are and where you're walking. If you trip and fall, you're going to eat some concrete.

If you've read my blog, you know my thoughts on farmer's walks, but to reiterate: you use farmer's walk implements, not dumbbells. Dumbbells were not made for farmer's walks, and they turn the movement into something terrible. Farmer's are heavy, short distance (about 50') and FAST. If you're strolling with 40lbs in each hand for 400', you're not doing a farmer's walk: you're sealing dumbbells.

CONTINENTAL CRASH COURSE

I stole this workout from a Brian Shaw interview in Mark Bell's "Power Magazine", back when that was a thing. Brian talked about how he improved his log clean by taking 80% of his max and doing triples of it EMOM for 10 minutes. I used this same approach to teach myself how to do a continental with an axle, because I was in the embarrassing predicament where I could press more than I could get to my chest from the floor. I went from not being able to get 245 to my chest to getting 300lbs to the rack position double overhand with this protocol.

Just like it's outlined above: do triples of a continental, every minute, on the minute. You can do this workout 1-3 times a week, depending on how heavy you load it. The thing is, if you screw up a continental, it will pinch the hell out of your stomach and be quite painful, and doing this under a state of fatigue (like the later minutes) pretty much guarantees it will happen, so you may end up taking days off just because your stomach hurts. If you want to make it harder, do it for more than 10 minutes, or try to get in 4 or more reps per round, or just use heavier weights.

Since this was originally done with a log, you could always do that too. Or stone of steel to shoulder/over a bar. Or set up a course and do a circuit where you rotate through the implements. I've also used this approach with circus dumbbell clean and press for some success as well.

MISCELLANEOUS

THE 1000 PUSH UPS WORKOUT

The name gives this one away, but it's something I've done several times and it's always a pleaser. This is an EMOM workout. Every minute, on the minute, do 20 push ups. In 50 minutes, you'll have done 1000.

This is a long, slow death of a workout, and much like Super Squats, it's really those last reps that matter the most. It's not going to feel all that significant for about the first 38 rounds, and then suddenly your world will end and it's gonna be a fight.

If 20 per round is too much, do fewer reps. If you're a bigger man than me and this isn't challenging enough, do it in fewer rounds. Either way, you will get a serious chest pump from doing 1000 push ups. I'm a big fan of this workout when I'm traveling. Get something soft for your knees to rest on between rounds: I've done this on hotel carpet before and got shredded up skin from it, which is just gonna get infected from those nasty floors.

REST PAUSE, PYRAMIDS AND **SLINGSHOTS/BANDS: MAKING THE** **MOST OF LIMITED EQUIPMENT**

This is a great way to maximize a limited selection of weights. I'm going to use an example of dumbbells and an adjustable bench, but you can extrapolate pretty easily.

Let's say you've got just one set of dumbbells and an adjustable bench. If you want to make the most of it, set the incline as high as you can for the weight you have to be able to get a decent amount of reps. Once the set is done, you can rest pause (do the DoggCrapp method of 12-15 deep belly breaths) 1-2 times in order to eek out some more reps OR you can reduce the incline by 1-2 notches and try to get out some more reps. If you go with the incline change method, you can keep on doing that until you get all the way to a flat bench. You can ALSO mix the two, and reduce the incline AND use rest pause each time. And then, if you want to absolutely nuke yourself, when it's all done you can do some push ups too.

What if the dumbbells you have aren't particularly heavy? Well if you have several dumbbells leading up to that topset (like something in a hotel fitness center), start with the light dumbbells and do a set of 8-10, then move up to the next heaviest and do the same, and repeat until you get to the heaviest set of dumbbells. Only rest as long as it takes to grab the next pair of dumbbells. Once you get to the top, max out on reps. Now you can work your way back down the ladder OR use the above method with the topset of dumbbells.

If you happen to have a slingshot from Mark Bell or a similar product (Titan Ram, Metal Catapult, etc), you can use this in conjunction with rest pausing to eek out more reps. Max out reps without the slingshot, then rest pause until you're tapped out, then put on the slingshot and eek out even MORE reps with rest pause. And then you can play around with the incline again AND use the slingshot on the push ups at the end too.

If you have a resistance band, you go the other way: start out with the band in your hands wrapped around your back, press the bells until you can't, drop the band and get in even more reps.

The big takeaway from all of this is that you can make a little bit of resistance go a LONG way if you're willing to get creative. You don't need super heavy weight to push yourself.

HOTEL ROOM WORKOUTS

The below was originally a blogpost I did reporting my experience of coming up with new workouts everyday while effectively trapped in a hotel room. Not all of them were amazing, but there is at least a lot of variety.

WORKOUT 1: 500 BURPEE EMOM workout

ChongLordUno over at t-nation put the idea in my head to do 500 burpees, and I typically like to start a “week off” with a really stupid intense workout so I can spend the rest of my week healing, so this seemed like a great idea. Stupidly simple: do 10 burpees, every minute, on the minute, for 50 minutes. You may recognize this same strategy from my “1000 push ups” workout. I’ll say the burpees have a MUCH more significant training effect compared to the push ups, and I definitely prefer this for a total buttkicker of a workout. 10 burpees averaged about 30 seconds of work on my end, so this was a standard 30 on/30 off workout. Great interval. The fatigue sneaks up on you. You’ll think it’s a poor choice for crushing yourself early in, but once I hit the 40 minute mark I knew this was a “good bad idea”.

Overall, I rate this on an 8/10. I wasn’t obliterated at the end, but solidly fatigued and spent the day feeling quite accomplished.

WORKOUT 2: Cumulative Upkeep

Why yes, I AM naming this one after something from Magic the Gathering, and you’ll appreciate it just as much when you’re done. Start out with 1 push-up, 2 burpees, and 3 squats (I did prisoner squats, with my hands behind my head, but you may prefer air squats or hindu squats: just squat). Once that is done, add a rep to all sets (so 2 push-ups, 3 burpees, 4 squats). Keep going for 50 minutes.

The “dirty tricky” to this workout is that you get up from the push-up just to get back down again for the burpee, so it’s like adding an extra burpee to everything. Otherwise, this was genuinely something I came up with more to have a bit of a break for the previous burpee

workout. Because it's not set to a specific interval, you can pace yourself a bit, and, in turn, there are opportunities to dog it. This feels a bit more like LISS than high intensity work, and it just an old fashioned circuit workout with a numbering gimmick to make it a LITTLE more interesting than just doing sets on top of sets. I find I need gimmicks, hooks, tricks and the like when it comes to bodyweight WODs. I can't stand the ones that are just "do sets of 10 until time runs out". If you're like me, you may prefer this approach.

I rate this one a 5/10. When it was over, I knew I worked out, but felt like I coulda used the time doing something else instead. My quads were getting tender toward the end, and I got up to 21 push ups, which meant something to the effect of 230+ push ups, 250+ burpees and 270+ squats performed in 50 minutes, so that's something at least.

WORKOUT 3: Tabata Everything

I know I'm going to upset a lot of purists out there that need it to be known that Tabata refers to a VERY specific protocol involving hitting a certain percentage heart rate and typically can only be done on an indoor cycle, so allow me to say I don't care and you can bite me. For the adults in the room, we get that "Tabata" is just how we say 20 seconds on/10 seconds off for 8 rounds. I made this a 50 minute workout by doing 11 Tabata workouts with 30ish seconds rest in between. 5 different movements and cycled through them twice, and then on the 11th I did a "greatest hits" workout where 4 of those 5 were repeated twice over the span of 8 rounds.

If that's confusing, this is exactly what I did.

Tabata workout 1: Prisoner squats

Tabata workout 2: Burpees

Tabata workout 3: Thrusters with an end table in my room (gotta get creative)

Tabata workout 4: Mountain climbers

Tabata workout 5: Jumping jacks

Repeat whole circuit

Tabata workout 11:

Round 1: Squats

Round 2: Burpees

Round 3: Thrusters

Round 4: Mountain climbers

Repeat

A properly done Tabata workout will redline you quick, so there's a bit of play here in choosing movements that don't overlap significantly. I biffed it putting the thrusters after burpees, because my shoulders felt like they were going to fall off, but otherwise there was enough recovery programmed in to be able to keep coasting through this.

I rate this one a 6/10. It's hard to get a real solid training effect doing tabata bodyweight stuff compared to adding an external load, and those thrusters proved it, as just adding that table made them the hardest part of the circuit, but I appreciated being on the clock more than just going it on my own as I did with the upkeep workout. This kept me a bit more honest. Still, you need to make sure you're REALLY pushing on those 20 seconds on to get your most out of this.

WORKOUT 4: (r)Evolution of Man

There was a lip above the door of my bathroom in my hotel room that I could do pull-ups off of. I used this to do my daily 50 chins, but for THIS particular workout, I started from the bathroom, bear crawled to the far corner of my room, bear crawled back, did a pull ups, and repeated. This ended up being 62 rounds of work in 50 minutes. Were I not in a hotel room, I'd consider more aggressive animal crawls, jumps, bounds, etc, but in order to not be a jerk I kept it at bear crawls.

Around the 46th round, my shoulders were toast, and my whole upper body was pretty lit up. It's an interesting training effect though, because I'd get to the pull up spot and FEEL awful, but as soon as the pull up was done I didn't really feel like I had done any actual work. Then I'd repeat, and same thing: I'd be exhausted getting to the bar, and then "too refreshed" when it was over.

This is a high 6/low 7, and it ultimately depends on what you want from your workouts. This was great for just pure suffering, and it absolutely lit up my whole upperbody, but my cardiovascular system didn't really seem to care too much about it. A bizarre combination of LISS for the heart and lungs and high intensity for the muscles. Also, it involves walking on your

hands on hotel room carpet, which is skeezy and tore up my hands pretty decent after 62 rounds. But hey, it was certainly different.

WORKOUT 5: 400 thrusters isn't enough

This one runs for 51 minutes, but whatever. It's an EMOM workout. First 17 minutes, do a burpee and then 8 thrusters. Next 17, 2 burpees and 8 thrusters. Next 17, 3 burpees and 8 thrusters.

I like the skeleton of this. I much prefer workouts where they get HARDER as time goes on rather than easier. Far better to train the ability to come through during the tough times vs teaching the body to ease up in times of stress. At the same time, when you start out too tough, you blow out too early, and with these intending to be 50 minute long workouts, it's good to have those early buffers. I realize not everyone will have something they do can thrusters with in their hotel room, but you can still steal this idea of having one unchanging movement and one gradually increasing movement. For the first 17 minutes, I was averaging 30 seconds of work, for the next 17 it was about 38 seconds, and the final 17 was about 45 seconds. Those short rest times at the end make themselves known.

This one is a high 7/10. If I had to do it over, I'd start with 2 burpees and finish with 4.

WORKOUT 6: Boxing Match

3 minute rounds of burpees with 1 minute rest, done for 12 rounds total. At the end, do a "sudden death" round of 1 minute of unbroken burpees.

I did this because I wanted to recreate my wrestling/martial arts days and remember what it was like to go all out, get a short rest, and do it all over again. It's a fantastic training effect and hits close to home for the over the hill ex-combat sports athlete. You'll feel those middle rounds just like you would a fight, and when the 12th round hits you go for a knockout, only to come back and REALLY drill it home in sudden death.

Comes in at an 8/10 again. Big fan of those one and will be a regular feature in my bodyweight training.

WORKOUT 7: Eat Your Vegetables

Do 50 burpees, rest 90 seconds, repeat for 10 total rounds. Do as many unbroken burpees as you can each round. I've named it "Eat Your Vegetables" in honor of parents that make their kids stay at the table until the vegetables get eaten, because this is SIMILAR to boxing match in that you are doing rounds of burpees with a set rest, but different enough in that you do NOT get that rest until you hit your 50 burpees. With boxing match, it's too easy to just dog it until the round is over, but here, the only chance you get your rest is by hitting your rep total. And if you want this done in 50 minutes, you gotta move fast. The first round took me right around 3:00, which is how I settled in on 90 second rests: half as long as it took to get it done. Final round took 4:11, so this ran a LITTLE longer than 50 minutes, but with it being my last day I was willing to let that happen.

9/10 on this one. Definitely the "gold" of the group. I got to redline every round, but recovered enough that I could do it all over again. Unbroken burpees are just a different animal vs leisurely paced ones, and going for a high number just works magic with the heart and lungs. Another way to get to 500, and between this and the EMOM, this worked me over way more.

HIGH HANDLE TRAP BAR DEATHSET

Another blatantly simple idea, but sometimes those are the best. I did these around the Thanksgiving timeframe, and it was a great way to get in a “quick” workout that was going to put all the holiday food for good use.

Load up a trap bar with a light weight. I had a total of 135lbs, because of course. Now pull for max reps. Use straps and rest in the “up” position. Pull touch and go. When I say max reps, I mean MAX reps. Go until you physically cannot. My all time record as of writing this is 301 reps.

Rest as long as you need at the top to get in another rep or two. The trap bar is unique in that it very evenly distributes the load across your body, so you can rest pretty easily on this position with straps. However, you’re still keeping your body VERY stressed in this resting position. The whole workout is super anabolic.

As much as this is a physical test, it’s also very much a psychological one. Most likely, your mind will quit before your body, because the ROM on a high handle pull is pretty short, and touch and go allows for some “bounce and go” toward the later rounds, which means you’ll almost ALWAYS have at least ONE more rep in you...so it’s on you if you quit. But no worries there: just beat your previous record next week.

I did this once a week. Doing it more than that would probably go poorly.

DAILY WORK

This is something that I've taken to including every time I do some sort of mass gaining phase because it always works out well.

On top of all my other training, I'll pick some bodyweight movements that I do every day. Dips and chins are classic choices and will hit almost all of the upper body. My most recent run had me including GHRs, standing ab wheel, reverse hyper and then band pull aparts and band pushdowns. Bands break the letter of the law but not the spirit: it's something that's easy to do, requires no set up, and doesn't load up the body much.

Once I have these movements picked out, I'll pick a rep total goal that is WELL below my threshold for recovery, to include impact to connective tissue, for each movement. Once that is settled, I will do that many reps EVERY day (7 days a week). If I feel comfortable, I'll up the reps by a SMALL amount and then monitor for a few weeks to see how I respond. If in doubt, I keep the reps low.

This is just a fantastic way to get in a little more volume during a training phase where you're trying to put on more muscle and eating enough to recovery from a lot of work. In my most recent mass gain phase, I was doing

50 chins
50 dips
50 band pull aparts
40 bodyweight reverse hypers
30 GHRs
25 band pushdowns
20 standing ab wheels

Every day for 8 months.

If I'm running a program that has some of these movements included in the training day (say, I was doing 50 dips on my press day as part of the program), I'd cut the movement out of the daily work, rather than duplicate it. Otherwise, the whole body was getting trained every day.

There's no wrong way to get in the reps. If you want to just knock them out in a row, have at it. Make it a circuit workout? Sure. Crossfit WOD? You got it. Throw it into your main lifting work? That's fine. Just get the minimum reps in. Along with that, you don't have to get them in all at once. I'll frequently have days where I just keep a running tally in my head of how much I've done, starting first thing in the morning with a set of 5 chins and getting the 50th sometime in the evening.

Hey, ya know what, I'm not going to make a new entry for this: I've already written about band pull aparts here. I've dislocated my right shoulder 6 times, subluxed it a few dozen times, torn the labrum in it and had surgery on it that failed. I do a jillion band pull aparts because it makes my shoulder feel real good. Spend the \$4 on a decent resistance band and do them in between sets of EVERYTHING you do in the weight room and you won't regret it.

GRIPPERS

I've been using Captains of Crush grippers since about 2008. I go through phases where I'm super into them and then I just completely abandon them. I've closed a 2.5 for reps on either hand but never got to the 3. I found that dedicating myself to getting after that 3 was taking away from my other training. That said, once again, people want programming when it comes to these things, so here's what I like to do.

Let's say you were cheap and only got 1 gripper. I was and I did. Close it for 5x5. If you can't do a full 5x5 with it but are close, take as many sets as you need to get the full 25 reps, then do it in fewer sets until you can do 5x5. Or use your other hand for assistance until you don't need to. If it's just way far out of reach, get a lighter gripper.

Alright, once you can do 5x5, do 5x5 for your next workout, but hold the last rep of the last set for as long as possible. Once you can do this for 30 seconds, hold the last rep of every set for 5 seconds and THEN hold the last rep of the final set for max time. Once you can hit 30 seconds on that final rep, hold EVERY rep of EVERY set closed for 5 seconds. Once you can do that, hold the final rep of the final set closed for time as well. When you can hit 30 second there, you will be more than ready for the next level of gripper.

You got 2 grippers? You could always run through the above twice: start with the heaviest and then do it again with the lighter one. Or you can tag the lighter one onto the end of sets with the heavier one (so hold the heavier one closed for 30 seconds, then switch immediately to the lighter one and try to do the same). I also like rep burnout dropsets, where I'll close a gripper for as many reps as possible and then switch to the lighter one and try to repeat. Fries out the forearms.

People talk about how closing grippers doesn't do much for grip strength outside of closing grippers, but HOLDING them closed absolutely does. Well worth picking up.

“I’M STUCK AT X WEIGHT/REPS. WHAT DO I DO?!”

Alright, so in general, you should NEVER allow yourself to plateau. And that’s the thing: it’s something you ALLOW yourself to do. You make a choice when you go to the gym and do the exact same reps and sets with the same weight and then just go home. You could have done another set at ANY point and gotten in SOME more reps to at least do SOMETHING different that day. That said, here’s an actual protocol you can follow if you’re even wondering what to do.

Let’s say you’re supposed to do 4x8 with bench press. You go and do 2 sets of 8, 1 set of 6 and a set of 5. You were supposed to do 32 total reps, but only managed 27. You owe 5 reps: go get them. Take as many sets as you need to get those 5 reps on the bench. Say you end up doing a set of 3 and a set of 2: that’s a total of 6 sets done. Next workout, try to get it done in 5 sets. If you can’t, try to at LEAST get more reps done within those first 4 sets.

Once you can get the weight in 4x8, up the weight and repeat.

If you have a fixed weight objective (like bodyweight chins), you can still do something similar. If you can get 4x15 done with chins and you want to be able to do more in 4 sets, pick a rep goal and try to get it done in as few sets as possible. We’re looking at 60 total reps, so try for 80. Once you can get 4x20, up the total reps again.

CALCULATING TOUCH AND GO

DEADLIFT 1RM

People like to say that touch and go deads are easier than deadstop, and the issue is that they program the movements like they're identical when they're not. Yeah, if you pull the same WEIGHT on the two lifts deadstop will be harder, but if you pull with the same percentage of 1rm on each lift touch and gos will be MUCH harder because you have to maintain tension the whole time. What this means is that we need to have a way to have a max touch and go, and since you can't pull a touch and go single (no, top down deadlifts don't count, because they're a circus act), this means you're gonna need to pull a few reps touch and go and plug those into a 1rm calculator. Trying to calculate training percentages for touch and go programming based off your best deadlift single is going to result in you using too light of weight.

There are a ton of 1rm calculators out there. I like Jim Wendler's, just because I like 5/3/1. "Weight lifted X Reps X .0333 + Weight lifted = 1rm". Will it be your REAL 1rm? Who cares: just use it to program your training.

SQUATTING WITH A BORKED

HAMSTRING

One winter in very northern North Dakota, it was -60 outside with windchill and I was squatting in my uninsulated garaged. For some reason, I had it in my head that I wanted a faster eccentric in my squat, because I thought it would mean a faster concentric. The very cold weather combined with me trying to bounce out of the hole resulted in my snapping my hamstring like a cold overstretched rubber band. For about 8 months, every time I tried to squat, it hurt and my hamstring felt like it was going to explode again. Eventually, I realize it was SPECIFICALLY the action of REVERSING the squat that was causing me pain, so I came up with the following approach.

For my main work squat, I did Anderson Squats. These are squats starting from the bottom of the ROM, with the bar suspended in chains. I did these concentric only, starting from the bottom of the ROM, squatting the weight up, and letting it rest on the chains before starting the next rep. This allowed me to work heavy weight through the full ROM without pain. I'd do 1-3 heavy sets.

For supplemental work, I did reverse band squats, 5x10-20, with no lockout. Again: reversing the weight was causing me pain, so reverse bands made it so that the weight was the lightest at the most "dangerous" part of the ROM for me, and would be heavy where I was strongest. This helped me rebuild my ability to reverse the weight without having to have a heavy load on the taxed muscles.

Using this approach, I was able to heal in time to hit a lifetime PR 502lb squat in a powerlifting meet: a weight I had missed twice before and, subsequently, the exact weight I needed to hit in order to win "best lifter" by a 100th of a point based on coefficient.

I've been able to extrapolate this approach with other tweaks and injuries. I'll find a partial ROM movement that has me lifting where the pain ISN'T happening, and then use reverse bands to get me good at moving through the pain spot.

MISCELLANEOUS BAD IDEAS

These aren't original or worth a whole post of their own, but are still helpful.

WEIGHT VESTS: Get one of these and wear it whenever you're doing activity around the house. They're primo for mowing the lawn, raking leaves and shoveling snow if you live in northern climates (shoveling snow is just awesome activity in general). Going for walks with them is always keen as well.

BLACKJACK: I originally learned of this protocol with dips and chins, but you can do it with about any 2 movements. Start with 20 chins, then 1 dip (adds up to 21. Blackjack: you get it?!). Then 19 chins and 2 dips. Continue in that trend until you flip the numbers. Just a simple protocol to get in some conditioning. And Blackjack is just a cute way to do it: you can pick any numbers and make this work. 1 and 10 is popular as well.

21-15-9: Straight outta Crossfit. Pick 2 movements, do the first one for 21 reps, then the second for 21 reps, then 15, then 9. "Fran" is the poster child for this, using thrusters and pull ups, but you can do KB swings and burpees, stone to shoulder and Devil press, etc. Full body movements are key. I actually like adding a set of 5 at the end, just because that makes it 50 reps and I'm a slave to a base 10 system.

EMOM BUY-INS: A great way to sneak in extra volume on one movement and keep your heart rate sky high during EMOM work is using "buy ins". This is a set movement that is done at the start of the round for an EMOM. I like picking something like a KB swing, KB snatch, thruster or burpee. Only 1-5 reps necessary, since you wanna have some time left in the round to actually get the REAL work done, but if you make it that you HAVE to get in 4 swings before you start a round of chins, you'll get in a bunch of swings on top of those chins and your heart rate will be blitzed.

INJURY MOVEMENT ROTATION: When I get injured/am recovering from an injury, I stop using the movements I was using before I got injured and switch to new movements/implements. It doesn't have to be crazy. I can go from a barbell to an axle on bench, or bring my stance in on squats, but the point is I make things different so that I'm not tempted to compare "old

numbers” during the healing process. Additionally, since I’m training a new movement, I’ll improve at it rapidly just as a result of getting more proficient at the movement, which will make the healing process all the more enjoyable, since I’ll still feel like I’m getting stronger the whole time. Much better than beating my head against a wall and watching myself regress.

MODIFYING PRE-EXISTING WODS

I've already shown my hand a bit on this in some previous entries, but I'm a fan of taking pre-existing WODs and changing them to be more strongman-ish or just plain more difficult in general.

Strongman implements: I like using the log (as in the strongman implement, not a logbook) on WODs that use thrusters or some manner of floor to overhead. The viper press, in particular, is a fantastic full body movement. I've done "strongman Fran" by doing log vipers and strict chins: it's a lung breaker. The axle makes a real easy 1 for 1 swap for most barbell lifts, although I'd avoid it for things like snatches. Stone to shoulder is "Deva fantastic "floor to overhead" substitute that will absolutely light you up. For kegs, try to do 1 motion floor to overheads with them as well. Something to keep in mind is that these implements DON'T want to be picked up off the floor like a barbell does, so it's going to physically beat up your body more. Expect bruises.

Devil Press: Any time you can do burpees, you could do Devil press instead. These are effectively burpees while holding dumbbells or kettlebells. You won't do a jump at the end, but that's ok: these will still suck. Up the weight of the bells as needed to make things suck more.

Weighted vests: Stupidly simple, but just anytime you're doing a bodyweight WOD, you can vest up and add to it.

Exceed Minimums: Never be afraid to add weight, extra rounds, reduce rest periods, include more movements, etc etc. WODs are ultimately good ideas, which means they're ripe to get turned into bad ideas. I recently did something I called "Gut check and a half". The Gut Check WOD is 30 Devil Presses with 50lbs, then 60 thrusters, then 90 burpees. I did all that, then switched to 25lb DBs and re-ran the whole thing (I made the burpees "half" by cutting out the push up). I implemented a 40 minute time cap, just because it was before work and I couldn't run too late, but it was still a total ballbuster.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Hopefully you found this enjoyable. I enjoyed writing it. If you remember any bad ideas I forgot to include in here, feel free to send them my way and I'll update this at some point. Otherwise, thanks for reading.