

Great Guns in 12 Weeks - Phase 2

by Ian King | Fri, Jun 23, 2000

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Weeks 4-6

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If you started **Phase I** of this arm specialization program a few weeks ago, then we commend you for having enough sack to try something new and challenging. If you haven't started it yet, then you either A) have big 19-inch guns already, B) are already using one of Ian's killer 12-week programs for another muscle group or C) you're afraid you'll overtrain 'cause you've started that intense "*Sweatin' to the Oldies IV*" program. If your answer is "C" then you are hereby ejected from the Testosterone brotherhood and must turn in your T-shirt and secret decoder ring immediately.

What follows is the second phase of a four part program that's guaranteed to put some bang in your biceps and some TNT in your triceps.



After completing the first week of this program, you probably found yourself wearing a hat every day due to the fact that you weren't able to brush your hair because of the exquisite soreness in your guns. After the second and third week, things probably improved and you were able to put the "Got Beer?" cap back into the closet.

Well, don't get too comfortable, mate! It's time for Phase II! The first thing you'll notice is that this phase is very different than the first. What can I say? Never look at one program and assume that's how I'll train you forever. Just when you thought you had it all figured out, it changes. Now, this isn't change for the sake of change, but change with a plan to make a difference, a *big* difference!

Before we get into it, here are a few reminders and a bit of housekeeping:

- I've designed each of the four phases to last about three weeks. However, if you feel a particular phase is losing its effectiveness, you can shorten it to two weeks. You may also extend a phase to four weeks if you'd like, although three should be about right for the average person.

- Each phase has two arm workouts, one to be performed early in the week and another to be performed a few days later when your guns have stopped smoking.
- I don't recommend you do this program concurrently with my 'Limping' and 'Chest and Back' programs posted earlier! This is a priority arm program and because the volume is relatively high you should be doing "maintenance" on the remainder of the body on your other training days, be that one or two others (or for some three) in the week.

Phase I involved: A mixture of push and pull (biceps and triceps) movements on both days, slower speeds, higher reps, and higher volume. It also incorporated a greater range of joint angles. Biceps received a slight prioritization via the sequence. In Phase II you'll train the biceps on one day and the triceps on another. This time, you'll use lower reps, lower volume, and movements with a lesser range of joint angles. Biceps still receive prioritization via sequence.

A Few Explanations

What are the pros and cons of mixing or splitting biceps and triceps training (or any pushing and pulling exercises)? The advantages of combining biceps and triceps training in one day include:

1. It usually increases the chance of balance (i.e. it reminds the program designer to do one of each!)
2. It provides an opportunity to reverse the sequence order (i.e. which comes first on any day – pushing or pulling.)
3. It increases the frequency of exposure (in this case 2/wk) which will be optimized if the intensity is lower.
4. It provides an opportunity to use twice the amount of variety in joint/muscle line and angle overload (i.e. point of flexion etc.)

The disadvantages of mixing pushing and pulling in the same day include:

1. It may lead to increased frequency or volume and this may not suit higher intensity training due to the inverse relationship of these two training variables.
2. I don't recommend this mixed style for more neural phases (strength phases) where additional recovery may be required.

The slow and varied speeds provided in Phase I gave you a rare opportunity to isolate the muscle in a way that our egos rarely allow. You probably found yourself on the "girl" end of the dumbbell rack considering the loading compromise that's associated with these methods. That's okay, though. Sometimes you need to forget about trying to impress the other people in the gym by lifting heavy weights. Instead think more about whom you'll impress the remainder of the day with the kind of body that's built with smarter training methods. (Tattoo *that* on your arse!)

Lucky for you, the humility lesson is now finished as Phase II returns to "normal" speeds and more conventional loading – but don't throw away the improved technique you learned in Phase I!

Alternating between greater joint angle exploitation and specialization in a given movement is also important. First, using a greater variety of joint angles provides a greater overload and offers different patterns of muscle recruitment. This method was exploited in Phase I and has been a mainstay in modern bodybuilding. The arms really do benefit from this because of the impact on elbow flexors and extensors with varied upper arm and forearm positions relative to the body. All of this affects which muscle is recruited in absolute and relative terms.

Second, specializing in one line and angle of movement provides the opportunity to develop higher levels of strength in that exercise through rehearsal of the line. Simply put, you get stronger and this increased strength, alternated with exposure to a variety of joint angles and lines, gives you the best of both worlds.

You may be asking why I've retained a slight prioritization of biceps over triceps through sequencing despite varying most other things? I do this on the assumption that your biceps are lagging behind your triceps. (If this isn't true for you, reverse the order in this stage: Do Workout B first in the week and Workout A second.) The loading potential in most people is greater in pushing than pulling; therefore, many have triceps development that exceeds biceps development.

Also, people typically perform two pushing movements for every one pulling movement. In other words, they'll bench press and do shoulder presses (both pushing exercises), but will only perform one pulling exercise, such as lat pulldowns. Another factor is that the triceps are more involved in pulling movements (e.g. chins) than biceps are in pushing movements. Put all that together and you'll find you're probably hitting the tri's more than the bi's over a long period of time. This program takes care of that problem.

So by now you have figured it out – Workout A in Phase II is all about the biceps and Workout B focuses on the triceps. You'll be using lower reps, a higher load and a more conventional speed on both days.

Enough chit chat. Let's do it!

Workout A

Finally, back to heavier weights! Just remember to take it easy in the first week so you can feel out the techniques and establish the appropriate load. Go a little harder during week two and in the third week wear a T-shirt that says, "Stand Back. Heavy Construction in Progress!"

Warm-up: Perform 10 minutes of light aerobics (optional) and 15 minutes of upper body stretching (compulsory).

Biceps Curl on Preacher Bench: Use an EZ-curl bar with an underhand (palms up), shoulder-width grip. Get the armpits into the top of the bench and have the bench on as steep an angle as possible. Keep the upper arms in contact with the bench at all times and stop the lift (concentric phase) before you feel the tension come off the muscle i.e. well before the

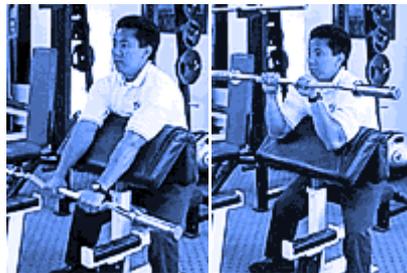
vertical position. Make sure you pause and contract at the top and pause and stretch out (but don't relax totally) at the bottom of the movement. I'd also suggest you use two or even three warm-up sets since we'll be going heavier here.

We're going to use the "6/1/6/1/eccentric 6 method", similar to Poliquin's 1/6/1 Training method. In short, you'll do one set of six reps, add weight, and then do one heavy rep etc. To make it work, I recommend going a bit lighter in the first "6 and 1" than you know you can. Then make sure the second 6 and 1 are respectively heavier. The third set of six is dedicated to doing an eccentric-only set. If you have less than a year of training experience, pass on this. If you don't have excellent spotters, pass also.

For those still with me, you'll add 15-20% more than your previous set of six. You may be able to do a rep or so here all on your own, but don't. Do a long, slow, five second controlled eccentric (at a constant speed) and have your spotter do all the work on the lifting portion (just don't let go of the bar.) Have the spotter hold his hands under the bar but not in direct contact. Let him know the dangerous or "high alert" part is the bottom half. If he isn't watching here and you fatigue completely, he may be picking your lower arm up off the floor and looking to reattach it at the elbow. At the first sign of lack of control (i.e. if the speed of lowering accelerates at all) discontinue the set.

If you're a person that really can handle a higher volume of training you may consider throwing in a high rep "back off set" between 10-20 reps. Sensational effect, but pass on this if you're in an average recovery situation.

Reverse Curls on Preacher Bench: With the same EZ-curl bar, change the angle of the preacher bench to 45 degrees and take an overhand (palms down), medium grip. The same rules apply regarding the reverse curl: top of the bench in the armpits, upper arms stay glued to the bench, stop the concentric phase before you get into a lower degree of muscle tension i.e. not full range into flexion. Remember when gripping an EZ-curl bar with a prone grip, the palms should be angled inwards and downwards at 45 degrees. Adjust your grip or roll the bar around until you achieve this.



I want a warm-up set of 10 reps and then one or two work sets of 10 reps at a 311 tempo.* This is slightly more controlled in the eccentric than the first exercise, but they're both to be done with attempted acceleration in the concentric phase. Pause at both ends of the movement for one second. In the first week one set should be enough. Only add the second set if and when you feel you will benefit from doing so. This advice is aimed more at those under normal recovery circumstances.

Incline Dumbbell Curls with Twist: Set the incline bench to about 45 degrees or slightly steeper. Hold a dumbbell in each hand with your arms hanging straight down (elbows behind body) and palms facing inward. As you lift, the upper arm stays in the same line (totally vertical, with elbow staying still). The forearm is rotated externally progressively and maximally through lift. At the top position you'll have the thumb on the outside of the body. Reverse this progressively during the lowering portion.



Warm-up for a light set of six reps and then perform one *ascending strip set*. This means you'll do a set of 6-8 reps, strip off some weight, do another set of 8-10 reps, strip off some more weight, and perform a final round of 10-12 reps. Don't take more than 10 seconds between sets in the strip set. If necessary, you may then vomit for one long eccentric rep! Seriously, don't panic about getting exactly within these rep brackets. Rather, work to fatigue (not total failure) with the weight you chose, record the effort in your training diary and next week either get more reps or adjust the weight in the respective set.

Forearm Flexion: Kneeling on the ground holding a bar with your forearms fixed across a bench and your palms up, do one light warm-up set of 10 reps and then one or two work sets of about 10 reps.



Summary of Workout A

Preacher Bench Curls

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Vertical or steep preacher bench, palms up, medium grip on EZ-curl bar	1x10, 1x8	1x6/1x1/1x6/1x1/1x6 eccentric-only (an additional back-off set of 10-20 reps is optional)	211 except last 1x6 which is done using a 500 tempo	2-3 minutes

45-Degree Reverse Curls on Preacher Bench

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
45 degree preacher bench, palms down, medium grip on EZ-curl bar	1x10	1-2x10	311	2 minutes
Incline Dumbbell Curl with Twist				
Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
45 degree incline bench, palms facing in, finish thumbs out	1x6	ascending strip set- 1x6-8, 1x8-10, 1x10-12	321	0-10 seconds rest between sets within the strip set
Forearm Flexion				
Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Kneel on ground, palms up, forearms supported on bench, using bar	1x10	1-2x10	311	1-2 minutes

Workout B

Warm-up: Perform 10 minutes of light aerobics (optional) and 15 minutes of upper body stretching (compulsory).

Close Grip Bench Press: Take a shoulder-width grip on the bar in the bench press position with your feet down. (Check out my ***15 Secrets to a Bigger Bench*** article for additional tips here.) Make sure you pause at the top but avoiding full lock-out. Pause and stretch out (but don't relax totally) at the bottom of the movement.



Just as you did in the preacher curl exercise in Workout A, you'll use the "6/1/6/1/eccentric 6 method." You'll be performing six reps, adding weight, and then doing one heavy rep etc. You'll end with six slow, eccentric-only reps. Be sure you have a trustworthy spotter whom you don't owe money! Again, at the first sign of lack of control (i.e. if the speed of lowering accelerates at all) discontinue the set. Once again, if you're up for it, you may add a high rep "back off" set of 10-20 reps.

Note: Don't do eccentric benches if you have a shoulder injury.

Parallel Bar Dips: After a warm-up using bench dips, proceed to the parallel bar dip stand. Use a range of movement where the shoulder joint is lower than the elbow, but do so with control i.e. no bouncing! Avoid full lockout and prevent body sway. I like to bend the knees and cross the ankles. If you're going to attach weight, do a warm-up set using your bodyweight first.



Perform one or two work sets of 10 reps at 311 speed. This is slightly more controlled in the eccentric than the first exercise, but they are both to be done with attempted acceleration in the concentric phase. Pause at both ends for one second. In the first week one set should be enough. In the second and third week, you may add another set if and when you feel you will benefit from doing so.

Lying Triceps Extension (Skull Crushers) or Pressdown: You have a choice here because I recognize that some of you may have elbow conditions that aren't favourable to the lying triceps extension. Keep the elbows still, and in the case of the lying triceps extension, have an upper arm position which is static but slightly lower (towards the head) than vertical. I like to put my head off the end of the bench a bit to increase range.



Use a light warm-up of about 6 reps and then perform one *ascending strip set*. Just as you did with the incline dumbbell curls in Workout A, you'll do a set of 6-8 reps, strip off some plates, do another set of 8-10 reps, strip off a few more plates, and finally do a third set of 10-12 reps. Don't take more than 10 seconds between sets within the strip set. Again, don't panic about getting exactly within these rep brackets. Write down how you did in your training log and adjust as necessary the following week.

Forearm Extension: Perform these just as you did the forearm flexions above, but this time you'll be using a palms-down grip. Do a warm-up set of 10 reps using about half the weight you'd use for the work sets. Then do one or two work sets of 10 reps.

Summary of Workout B

Close Grip Bench

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Shoulder width grip, feet down	1x10, 1x8	1x6/1x1/1x6/1x1/1x6 eccentric-only (an additional back-off set of 10 to 20 reps is optional)	211 except last 1x6, which is done using a 500 tempo	2-3 minutes

Dips

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Parallel bar dips, grip width just outside shoulders, palms-in grip	Bench dips, 1x10	1-2x10 (you may add external weight if needed)	311	2 minutes

Lying Triceps Extension (Skull Crushers) or Pressdown

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Shoulder width prone grip, elbows still	1x6	Ascending strip set- 1x6-8, 1x8-10, 1x10-12	321	0-10 seconds rest between sets within the strip set

Forearm Extension

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Kneel on ground, palms down, forearms supported on bench, using bar	1x10	1-2x10	311	1-2 minutes

Conclusion

If you've shown the patience and determination to apply Phase I as suggested, you can expect great strength and size gains in Phase II, and we're just getting started! Remember, treat the shoulder and elbow joint with respect (especially in the pulling movements) as I don't want

any injuries. Don't rush the loading up, and never compromise technique for load. Have the confidence that you can add weight from workout to workout and stay focused on the goal of this program, namely big, bad-ass guns!

Check our new **FAQ** section if you aren't familiar with tempo prescriptions.

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