

Great Guns in 12 Weeks - Phase 3

by Ian King | Fri, Jul 14, 2000

Great Guns in Twelve Weeks, Phase III Weeks 7-9 by Ian King If you've been following Phase I and Phase II of Ian's Great Guns program yo...

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Weeks 7-9

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If you've been following **Phase I** and **Phase II** of Ian's Great Guns program you may be saying to yourself right now, "Yeeeeeeouch!" Don't worry, you're halfway finished. If you haven't started the program yet, then you're missing out! In fact, we've received letters from some readers saying they can already see a difference in the size of their guns. So, how much bigger will your arms be 12 weeks from now? Get with the program and find out!

By now, you're probably getting accustomed to the heavier weights and exhausting 6/1/6/1 sets that made up Phase II. After three weeks, you should have the hang of it. Well, we can't have that, now can we?

Phase I involved slower speeds and higher reps. You used a higher volume approach and incorporated movements that involved a greater range of joint angles. Biceps and triceps were trained on the same day (a mixed push and pull program.) Biceps received a slight prioritization via the sequence.

In Phase II you used lower reps, a lower volume, and incorporated exercises that used a lesser range of joint angles. You used a split push and pull program, meaning that the bi's and tri's were trained on separate days. Notice the all-important contrast in training methods between the first two phases.

Now you're ready to get started on Phase III, which goes back to a mixed push and pull program using slower speeds, higher reps, a higher volume, and a greater range of joint angles. Although this looks a little like Phase I, it's slightly closer to the neural end of metabolic training (on the neural-metabolic continuum.) Regardless, this phase provides another opportunity to pump those guns from the metabolic end, meaning we'll be using higher reps and a higher set duration, with a few little surprises thrown in, of course!

This is the third of four phases and by now the pattern will be forming. You might even think you can start guessing what Phase IV will look like. Maybe you'll be right, maybe you won't! You'll just have to wait and see.

One question I often get asked is this: "Is it okay to do the lower body 'Limping' program with the upper body 'Chest and Back' program?" (Both are 12 week programs I posted over the last year here at *T-mag*). The answer is yes. They can work together, provided that you're up to doing a four day split, which most of you are. But do not mix those two programs with this arm program! In fact, do not do this arm program with *either* of those programs! *Great*

Guns is a high-volume, specialization program. I recommend low volume, high intensity maintenance training on all other muscles and that's it.

If you're only training three times a week (and two of those are taken up by this arm program) I advise you to train all the remaining muscle groups on the third day. If you're training four times a week (with two of those days taken up by this arm program), I recommend spreading the remainder of the body between these two days, e.g. one day lower body, the other day upper body (but not arms).

Don't forget, each phase has two arm workouts (A and B), one to be performed early in the week and another to be performed a few days later when you are able to wipe your own arse again. Also remember that you can extend each phase to four weeks or shorten it to two weeks if you'd like. Three weeks is usually best for most people.

Enough talk, let's do it!

Workout A

You've survived Phase I and II, so I don't need to prepare you for what you may experience. 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 feel free to give it all you've got and then some!

You know the rest of the drill. Shut up, follow the program, push it when it's appropriate to push it and get ready to buy the next size up in shirts!

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

Forearm Extension and Flexion: Before you get started I want you to make the bar fatter, at least double the circumference in the area you grip. You can use your wrist wraps or a small towel to achieve this. Then kneel down in front of a bench with your wrists supported across it, hands just off the side. Grip the bar around this fattened section.

In flexion (palms up), allow the bar to roll to your finger tips. Note that extension (palms down) will probably require a lighter load. If you feel too much strain on your wrists try using the EZ-curl bar. If the lightest bar in the gym causes you fatigue in the warm-up set, just call it the work-set and move on to the next exercise. Use a full range and terminate the reps if range is lost.

As for the fat bar, you'll know if it was effective if you found it more difficult to get the required reps compared to sets performed with a normal circumference grip.

Biceps Tri-Set: After a warm-up, you'll use three variations of the incline dumbbell biceps curl, going from strong position to weak (as influenced by the forearm position). Additionally, there'll be residual fatigue from the first set on. Be prepared to lift heavier on the first arm position and reduce the load in each of the two subsequent forearm positions.

I recommend you have the three pairs of dumbbells you want to use set out in front of you so you don't get held up during the tri-set. In all the incline biceps variations, keep the forearm (the direction the palm is facing) and elbow position (which should be behind the body) constant throughout the lift. Work either both hands together or alternate.

Here's what the biceps tri-set will look like:

1) Incline Hammer Curl: Sitting on a 45 degree incline bench, allow your hands to hang down, a dumbbell in each, with your palms facing inwards. Maintain this forearm position throughout the flexion/extension. Keep the elbow still and behind the body. After 10 reps rest no more than 10 seconds while grabbing a lighter dumbbell. Then move to the next grip position.

2) Incline Curl, Palms Up: As in the above, keep the elbow and forearm position constant throughout the lift. Do 10 reps, then pick up a lighter dumbbell and perform the next exercise, again with no more than 10 seconds rest.

3) Incline Curls, Palms Down: Don't go totally prone in the hand position if you feel it's too weak. You can have the thumb side sitting a bit higher than the little finger side.

Note: Ian would prefer you to go through the biceps and triceps tri-sets once as a warm up in superset fashion, then do them again for a work set.

Triceps Tri-Set: Just as above, we're going to use three variations of the triceps pressdown, going from strong position to weak. This, combined with the residual fatigue, will dictate a reduced load in subsequent grip variations. As most will be doing this on a pin select machine, there won't be a need to "hunt, gather and protect" your dumbbells as there was in the biceps tri-set! In all these variations, keep the elbows beside the body and motionless, which means restricting how high you go during the eccentric phase.

Here's what your triceps tri-set will look like:

1) Triceps Pressdown, Very Close Prone Grip: Basically, you should grip the bar on either side of the cable (palms down). After 10 reps and with no more than 10 seconds rest, lower the weight and move to the next variation.

2) Triceps Pressdown, Medium Prone Grip: The grip here should be in line with or just inside the width of the shoulders. Following 10 reps of this and with no more than 10 seconds rest, go to the last exercise in the tri-set (after lightening the load).

3) Triceps Pressdown, Supine Medium Width Grip: Same rules as above, but you'll be using a palms-up, medium grip.

Preacher Curl, Very Wide Supine Grip: Now with the preacher bench at about 45 degrees, take a very wide palms up grip on the EZ-curl bar. The top of the bench should be firmly snug in your armpits and the full length of your upper arms should be on the bench. Lower the bar all the way down until your arms are fully extended. On the concentric portion stop just before the vertical gravity line, or just before you feel the tension come off the biceps.

The tempo will be 613. This means the load will be less, so really exaggerate the contraction at the top of the eccentric phase in the first half of the reps, or until you peter out.

In the warm up set there's no need to keep a strict 613 tempo; you may use a 311. Just be strict in the work set.

Dips or Bench Dips: If you can manage dips for 8-10 reps at 613, use bodyweight. If you find this too easy (and don't bother answering this until you've actually done the set!) you can add external load. If you can't do a minimum of four reps of bodyweight dips, use bench dips as an alternative. Either way, use the bench dips as the warm-up set and remember, you don't have to use the exaggerated slow speed until you get to the work set.

The speed of movement in the work set will be 613. I don't think many of you will need to use that "peak contraction" technique described in the above biceps curl, but you can if you want to. In reality, I prefer not to go to full extension in the dips, instead stop just short of full lockout (you know, Weider Principle No. 909332843209843251)

How deep should you dip? I like to see the shoulder joint just lower than the elbow joint at the bottom position. Most importantly, I want to see the range remain consistent i.e. don't reduce the range as you get tired. Either maintain the range or terminate.

If you have any history of shoulder problems, you need to review whether you should be dipping at all. An alternative may be the close-grip bench press. If in doubt, and you cannot obtain an opinion from a person whom you respect in the area of injury prevention, don't do dips!

Just to ram my point home, one of Australia's highest paid athletes was out for about six months following shoulder surgery during 1999. How did the injury occur? Dipping! *Should* he have been dipping? We can all be wise in hindsight, but he had had previous major shoulder surgery. If he was going to do dips he needed to be in great shape and closely supervised to be doing it, not going up and down like he might at a Geisha house!

Enough said. Be smart about it and use bench dips if you're unsure!

Seated Dumbbell Curl with Twist: This is going to be a strip set so gather your dumbbells! Sit on the end of a prone bench with your palms facing in (neutral) and a dumbbell in each hand. Keeping the elbows still and by the side, flex and rotate the hands outwards progressively such that the thumb side of the hand is as externally rotated as it can be at the top of the curl. Reverse this during the lowering.

This is going to be a "low-to-high rep" strip set, so you'll need your heaviest dumbbells up front. Use lighter ones in each subsequent set. In the work set, I want fatigue achieved with 6-8 reps. Take up to 10 seconds rest and then go to fatigue between 8-10 reps. Rest up to 10 seconds and go with a load that causes fatigue in 10-12 reps. Whether you're going to muscle fatigue or failure should be influenced by which week you are in of this program. (In week three of a three week cycle, I'd want you to go very close to muscle failure, but not in the first two weeks.)

Lying Triceps Extension, Medium Grip: This is going to be a strip set so have your plates worked out. Ideally set the bar up with a number of smaller plates so you need only to take

plates off, not put them back on. Take a medium grip (at or just inside shoulder width) on the EZ-curl bar, where the grip allows for the palms to be slightly externally rotated. The grip is with palms facing away from the head. If you want, you can do this exercise on a straight bar. You'll probably need to be injury free in the wrist, forearm and elbow for this option.

Lie on a prone bench with your head just off the end. Start with the arms holding the bar at an angle of just less than 90 degrees from the body, i.e. just off vertical, towards the head side. Keeping the elbows still, lower the bar to the forehead. (You'll have your head just off the bench so the range will be greater.) Make sure that your elbows are totally still during the entire movement. They'll remain equal distance apart from each other and at a constant distance from the head.

Again, this is going to be a "low-to-high reps" ascending strip set, so you'll need your heaviest weight up front. I want fatigue achieved with 6-8 reps. Take up to 10 seconds rest and then go to fatigue between 8-10 reps. Again, rest up to 10 seconds and go with a load that causes fatigue in 10-12 reps. Wait for the wave of nausea to pass and go get a drink of water. Workout A is finally over.

Here's a summary of the first guns workout in Phase III:

Forearm Extensions with Padded Bar

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Kneel on ground, palms up, forearms supported on bench, using fattened bar	1x15	1x15	311	None, superset with forearm flexion

Forearm Flexions with Padded Bar

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Kneel on ground, palms up, forearms supported on bench, using fattened bar	1x15	1x15	311	None, superset with forearm flexion

Biceps Tri-Set

- 1) Incline hammer curl — neutral grip
- 2) Incline dumbbell curl — palms up grip
- 3) Incline dumbbell curl — palms down grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
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See descriptions in text	1x10 on each exercise	1x10 on each exercise	311	10 seconds between exercises within the tri-set
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Triceps Tri-Set

- 1) Triceps Pressdown — very close, palms down grip
- 2) Triceps Pressdown — medium width, palms down grip
- 3) Triceps Pressdown — medium width, palms up grip

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
See descriptions in text	1x10 on each exercise	1x10 on each exercise	311	10 seconds between exercises within the tri-set

Biceps Curl on Preacher Bench

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Palms up, very wide grip, preacher bench at 45 degrees, use EZ-curl bar	1x8 at normal range and speed	1x8-10	613	Just long enough to move to the next exercise

Dips (or bench dips)

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Palms facing in, just outside body	1x8 at normal range and speed using the bench dip	1x8-10	613	Just long enough to set up the next exercise

Seated Dumbbell Curl with Twist

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Hammer grip start, external rotation of forearm during concentric phase	1x8-10 at normal range and speed	3 strip sets of ascending reps as outlined in text	311	10 seconds between exercises within the strip set

Lying Triceps Extension

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Supine medium grip, lying on bench	1x8-10 at normal range and speed	3 strip sets of ascending reps as outlined in text	311	10 seconds between exercises within the strip set

with head hanging range and speed outlined in text
off

within the strip set

Workout B

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

Forearm Flexion and Extension: Same as Workout A, but use dumbbells instead of the bar. Use the fat bar technique on this day also.

Triceps Tri-Set: We're going to use three variations of the lying triceps extension, going from strong position to weak as influenced by the forearm and elbow position. Just as on the Workout A exercises, this will dictate a reduced load in subsequent grip variations.

All variations will be performed with you lying on your back on a bench, head just off the end of the bench and knees bent so that feet are flat on the bench. In all these variations, keep the elbows beside the body and try to prevent them from wandering, which means restricting how much weight you can use during the eccentric phase.

Here's what this tri-set will look like:

1) Lying Triceps Extension to Forehead: Take a medium grip (at or just inside shoulder width) on the EZ-curl bar. Your palms will be facing away from your head. Lower the bar down to the forehead. After 10 reps and with a maximum of 10 seconds rest, lighten the load and move on to the next exercise.

2) Lying Triceps Extension to Chin: The only thing that changes here is that you're going to lower the bar to your chin. Be very precise here as this can be quite stressful on the elbow. After 10 reps and with a maximum of 10 seconds rest, lighten the load and move on to the last exercise in the tri-set.

3) Lying Triceps Extension, Palms Facing Head: The thing that changes here is your grip. Grip the bar so that your palms are now facing your head. Lower the bar to your forehead very carefully as gaping head wounds are really out of fashion this year.

Note: Ian would prefer you do a warm-up using each position in the tri-set, then move on to the work set.

Biceps Tri-Set: Here we're using three variations of the standing biceps curl. Use a straight bar or an EZ-curl bar, depending on what your forearms can tolerate. The grip will be standard throughout--medium or just outside shoulder-width. The range of movement and joint involvement will be varied. I expect you'll be going from heavy to light in the weight, but you may be able to keep the weight constant. Some may even get stronger as the variations progress.

Here's what this tri-set will look like:

1) Standing Curl, Shoulder-Width Grip, Elbows Going Backward: As you lift the bar allow your elbows to drift backwards slightly. This action will limit how high you can curl the bar. As you reverse the action, allow the elbows to drift back to the side of the body. Do 10 reps, rest no more than 10 seconds and move on to the next action.

2) Standing Curl to Forehead, Shoulder-Width Grip: As you curl, allow the elbows to drift forward and finish the curl with the bar on the forehead. After 10 reps and a maximum of 10 seconds rest, perform the last variation in the tri-set.

3) Standing Cheat Curl: In this one, you're allowed to let the trunk extend and the elbows to drift forward, basically you'll be cheating a little to curl the bar. This allowance may mean you don't need to reduce the weight on this set. Again, you'll do 10 reps.

One-Arm Triceps Kickback Using Rope: Face a low to medium pulley. (If it's an adjustable pulley, experiment with the height.) Using the rope fitting, bend forwards towards the pulley and then extend your elbow in the opposite direction. Keep the elbow still and beside the body throughout.

The speed of movement in the work set will be 613. This will mean the load will be less, so really exaggerate the contraction at the top of the eccentric phase, at least in the first half of the reps or until you peter out. Remember to do the weaker arm first!

In the warm-up set there's no need to do a strict 613. You may use a 311. Just be strict in the work set with the speed.

Lying Biceps Curl Using Lat Pulldown: Lie on a bench facing upwards with your head under the lat pulldown. Grip the pulldown bar with a supine grip (palms facing your head). Now pull the bar down to the forehead.

As in the triceps exercise above, the speed of movement in the work set will be 613. Again, really exaggerate the contraction at the top of the eccentric phase (where the bar is closest to the forehead).

Overhead Dumbbell Triceps Extension: This is going to be another strip set so gather your dumbbells. Sit on the end of a flat bench with one hand holding a dumbbell straight up in the air. Your elbow will be near your ear. Keeping the elbow still and in, lower the dumbbell down until it touches your upper back.

As this is done one arm at a time, apply the weak side rule. Train the weak side first and use no more weight or reps on the strong side than the weak side could handle. This is going to be a "low-to-high reps" ascending strip set, so you'll need your heaviest dumbbell up front and a lighter one each subsequent set. In the work set I want fatigue achieved with 6-8 reps. Take up to 10 seconds rest and then go to fatigue between 8-10 reps. Again, rest up to 10 seconds and go with a load that causes fatigue in 10-12 reps.

Low pulley biceps curl on preacher bench: This is also going to be a strip set but since you'll likely be using a pin select machine the death toll in the gym will be lower! Move a preacher bench over by a low pulley. You'll perform your reps using the single grip handle with your palm facing upwards.

This will also be a "low-to-high reps" strip set. In the work set I want fatigue achieved with 6-8 reps. Take up to 10 seconds rest and then go to fatigue between 8-10 reps. Rest up to 10 seconds and go with a load that causes fatigue in 10-12 reps.

Here's a summary of the second guns workout in Phase III:

Forearm Flexions Using Dumbbells

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Kneel on ground, palms up, forearms supported on bench, using fattened bar	1x15	1x15	311	None, superset with forearm extension

Forearm Extensions Using Dumbbells

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Kneel on ground, palms down, forearms supported on bench, using fattened dumbbells	1x15	1x15	311	None, superset with forearm extension

Triceps Tri-Set

- 1) Lying triceps extension — palms up grip, to forehead
- 2) Lying triceps extension — palms up grip, to chin
- 3) Lying triceps extension — palms down grip, to forehead

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
See descriptions in text	1x10 on each exercise	1x10 on each exercise	311	10 seconds between exercises within the tri-set

Biceps Tri-Set

- 1) Standing curl — medium grip, elbows back
- 2) Standing curl — medium grip, to forehead
- 3) Standing curl — medium grip with cheat

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
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See descriptions in text	1x10 on each exercise	1x10 on each exercise	311	10 seconds between exercises within the tri-set
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One-Arm Triceps Kickback Using Rope

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Neutral grip, bent forward at waist	1x8 at normal range and speed	1x8-10	613	Rest just long enough to move to the next exercise

Lying Biceps Curl Using Lat Pulldown

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Lie on back on bench, head under lat pulldown, supine grip on pulldown bar	1x8 at normal range and speed	1x8-10	613	Rest just long enough to move to the next exercise

Overhead Dumbbell Triceps Extension

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Seated, elbow up beside ear, one arm at a time	1x8 at normal range and speed	3 strip sets of ascending reps as outlined in text	311	10 seconds between exercises within the tri-set

Low Pulley Biceps Curl on Preacher Bench

Position	Warm-up	Work sets	Tempo	Rest
Set preacher bench up facing low pulley, one arm at a time	1x8 at normal range and speed	3 strip sets of ascending reps as outlined in text	311	10 seconds between exercises within the tri-set

Conclusion

The exercises in this phase may seem strange to you during the first week, but you'll soon adjust. Of course, by the time you do, I'll hit you with the fourth and final phase of the program! So don't get too comfortable, tough guy. The best is yet to come.

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

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