

# **STRENGTH**

Barbell Training Essentials

Technical Mastery for Developing Super Strength

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ISBN: 978-1-938579-69-1

Printed in the United States of America.

Published by Diesel Strength, LLC. and DeFrancos Training, LLC. First Edition, 2013

This book is intended as a reference volume only, not as a medical manual. The information given here is designed to help you make informed decisions about implementing strength training into your fitness and athletic development programs. It is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. As with all exercise programs, you should seek your doctor's approval before you begin.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Paul Moser, Brad Martin, Keith Williams, Kareem Huggins, and Cameron Josse for their participation in the creation of STRENGTH. Without your hard work, patience, and knowledge, STRENGTH would not have been possible.

Special thanks to Tony Gentilcore, Dean Somerset, and Josh Bryant for their expertise, assistance, and contributions editing the STRENGTH manual. We are honored and humbled by your friendship.

Special thanks to Steve Maxwell, Jim Wendler, Josh Bryant, Bret Contreras, Mark Divine, Kelly Starrett, and Brad Shoefeld for their amazing contributions to the STRENGTH system. Your work continues to push the boundaries of athletic performance and inspire us to be better coaches every day.

Special thanks to Paul Levesque for providing the Foreword for STRENGTH.

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## FOREWORD

Strength training has always been a huge part of my life. It helped take me to the top of the sports entertainment industry and is still deeply integrated into every aspect of my life.

My goal was always to get as big and lean as possible and I loved training hard in order to reach that goal. My bodybuilding-style workouts did the trick, but years of relentless travel and in-ring pounding eventually took its toll. My body was racked with injuries and it was getting worse. I realized I needed to make a change.

I needed to be functional so I sought out one of the best coaches in the world, Joe DeFranco, and he quickly opened my eyes to a completely different style of training. I immediately switched from bodybuilding to athletic workouts,

designed to not only get me stronger, but also help me feel and move better. Becoming more agile and mobile didn't only help me in the ring; it helped me to be pain free in my everyday life.

The transformation wasn't easy. I had to completely start over and learn how to move again. Through Joe, I found that once I trained all the little stuff - along with improving my mobility - I didn't have to be in pain when I trained and I wasn't in pain in my regular life, either.

I wish a book like STRENGTH was available to me when I first started training because it would have added years to my career. A book like this would have enabled me to get the most out of my workouts, while minimizing the aches and pains that I mistakenly thought were part of the training process. I definitely would have placed a greater emphasis on warming up properly and strengthening the smaller support muscles that make the entire chain stronger. This would have helped bulletproof my body, while minimizing the injuries that I sustained during my career.

The lifetime of knowledge and research in this book will help any athlete or lifter reach their strength and athletic potential, while keeping them as injury-free as possible.

Because I believe this system can take anyone to a new level of athleticism, I have built our programs at the WWE Performance Center around the STRENGTH methodology and teaching model.

The reason I believe in this system so much is because I've done it and experienced the benefits first-hand.

— PAUL LEVESQUE - 'AKA' TRIPLE H  
WWE Executive Vice President, Talent and Live Events  
13-time WWE World Champion

# INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest mistakes most coaches make in the weight room is worrying about developing a program or trying to improve performance, before ever focusing on mastering the basic barbell lifts. Without a firm grasp on the fundamentals, the program will never be successful and their athletes will never be able to reach their full potential.

It is critical to develop proficiency in movement and constantly drill precise technique when performing barbell lifts if the goals are to develop strength, power, improve the athlete's potential performance on the field, and keep them injury-free.

The same rigor, consistency, and intensity that elite athletes devote to mastering the position-specific skills to help them dominate on the field have to also be applied in the weight room during every repetition of every set. In fact, even elite powerlifters who have achieved amazing totals for the 'Big 3' lifts still get coached on every single repetition in the gym.

Think about this, if we put 1000 strength coaches in a room and told them they had to agree on the single best program, it would be impossible. In fact, we would probably get 1000 different opinions.

Yet, we doubt any of them would argue that compound barbell movements – specifically the bench press, deadlift, and squat – are some of the best methods for developing the foundational strength - including absolute strength, strength-speed, and starting strength - required to take an athlete to the next level.

Unfortunately, when athletes begin to integrate compound movements into their programs, they find that they either don't have the mobility to perform the exercise with proper positioning or they can't move with stability and control through the full range of motion of the lift.

Our goal with *STRENGTH* is to provide a clear roadmap and proven strategies to help each athlete overcome their individual movement dysfunctions and achieve the functional mobility they need to get into better positions for the bench press, squat, and deadlift. This will allow them to train harder, train smarter, and ultimately, develop more strength and power.

Achieving the proper mobility for each phase and position of the these three essential barbell lifts is critical for proper execution and will allow every athlete to get their joints in the right positions and have the right muscle groups firing at the right times.

Once the athlete is able to get into the right positions, then they must establish stability in these positions to be able to maintain control through all phases of the lift. This will allow them to perform each exercise through a full range of motion - with the optimal positioning and stability - to achieve their greatest strength potential.

In *STRENGTH*, we are going to share our most effective coaching cues, teach our proven set-ups for each exercise, and show how to master the technique for each lift specific to every athlete's individual restrictions and weaknesses. We also provide step-by-step training progressions to move the athlete from the fundamental movement patterns to loaded barbell training. We will begin by discussing how even simple things like learning how to breathe correctly, the importance of regressing an exercise, and getting into the right positions before the lift even begins, are critical for setting the athlete up for success in the weight room.

Every athlete is unique and comes with their own unique movement restrictions, learning styles, strength and performance goals, weaknesses, and body-types – which is why it is so important to have progressions and regressions for each primary lift so that their program can evolve as they adapt and progress.

The athlete will be required to 'earn the right' to advance from the basics of movement and position to engaging in loaded barbell training by developing a bulletproof foundation and acquiring technical mastery of the fundamental movement patterns.

*STRENGTH* will show that there are no shortcuts, and like all things in life of great value, that success is forged with long-term consistency, hard work, and sticking to the basics.