

## STRETCHING YOUR LIMITS

by Joseph McAuliffe, BS, MA, CSCS

I have been powerlifting for eleven years and I have come across so many expert opinions and theories on training and nutrition. I have developed an eclectic philosophy on training and I am still learning. However, until recently, I did not imagine the results I would get by consistently doing intense stretching for my upper body. (Three days per week for three months)

Stretching is the lost component of Powerlifting. It enhances performance and rehabilitates and prevents injuries. For a few years, I thought I was "stretching." It was not until I started doing it with a partner on a daily basis that I began to see the results. Being a Personal Trainer, I stretch people all day because I know how much it benefits each one of them. Now that I have several professionals on my staff, I make sure I schedule myself for fifteen minutes of torture per day.

Last year I did not have a great year on the Bench — 479lb. at Nationals was unacceptable for me. I was told I needed surgery because of a calcium deposit on my right shoulder. I was unable to train without pain or the aid of a shirt. I said no to surgery—I knew I would come back without it. It has been painful but it's worth it. I feel like a kid again who knows what I can do now. Having a Certified Personal Trainer as a partner for these stretches was helpful. However, you can do it if you have a friend you train with three days a week. Just keep it simple and you will see remarkable results if you do it consistently three days per week for two to three months.

Stretching will also make it easier to set up on the squat for those of you who are tight. If you are tight, it is easier to lose the groove and easier to get injured. You need to wake up; stretching will change your lifting career. With the strictness of IPF judging, you should certainly have the flexibility to sink your Squat in the hole.

Lie on the Bench in a good position with feet on the floor and the shoulder muscles contracted. Then rotate your arms to about 90 degrees (this may vary at first because of injuries, scar tissue build-up and genetic factors). Have your partner sit or stand behind you and grab your wrists, then let him slowly apply pressure until you feel tension; hold it there for 30 seconds; relax, deep breathe, then have your partner push down on your arms with even pressure and go to the maximum non-injury stretch that you can tolerate. I must reiterate that if you do not have a Fitness Professional doing your stretching, you must not be too aggressive, especially in the beginning. An injury can slow your progress. Once you have achieved the most tolerable pain-stretch position possible, breathe deep and try to relax and hold it for two minutes or more. This is very important because of the neurological factors involved. Each week, try to improve your range of motion. This is one of many partner stretches that you can do. Educate yourself and read as much as you can on the subject.

I have put forty-five lbs. back on my Bench Press recently at the New Jersey States and lifted 524 lbs. compared to lifting 479 lbs. at the Nationals. I attribute my progress to the intense stretching sessions that I have been doing for the past several months. Thanks, Katie!

**. Good Luck! Good Lifting! Good Time!**