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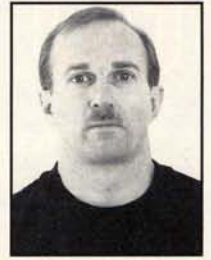
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MATT BRZYCKI
EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION
1 DAYNA LN
LAWRENCEVILLE NJ 08648-1583

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Dumbbell Training

By Matt Brzycki

A dumbbell is essentially a shorter version of a barbell that is intended for use with one hand. There are two main advantages of using dumbbells in your training.

One advantage is that dumbbells can provide variety to your routine. Since every exercise that can be performed with a barbell can also be performed with dumbbells, every barbell exercise has a dumbbell counterpart that can be used as an alternative movement. In addition, you have the added option of being able to use a different grip with dumbbells. For example, you can do a seated press with dumbbells using a traditional grip (similar to that which would be used with a barbell) as well as a "parallel grip" (with your palms facing each other).

Another advantage of using dumbbells is that each of your limbs must work independently of the other. Most individuals are often stronger (and more flexible) on one side of their body than the other. Usually, this is not a significant difference. But when there is a gross difference in the strength between limbs, the use of dumbbells is highly recommended. This is also an important consideration for rehabilitative strength training. In this case, an individual may even have to work one limb at a time while using a lighter weight for the weaker limb.

In short, the advantages of dumbbells are pure and simple: variety and an independent workload.

BODYPARTS AND EXERCISES

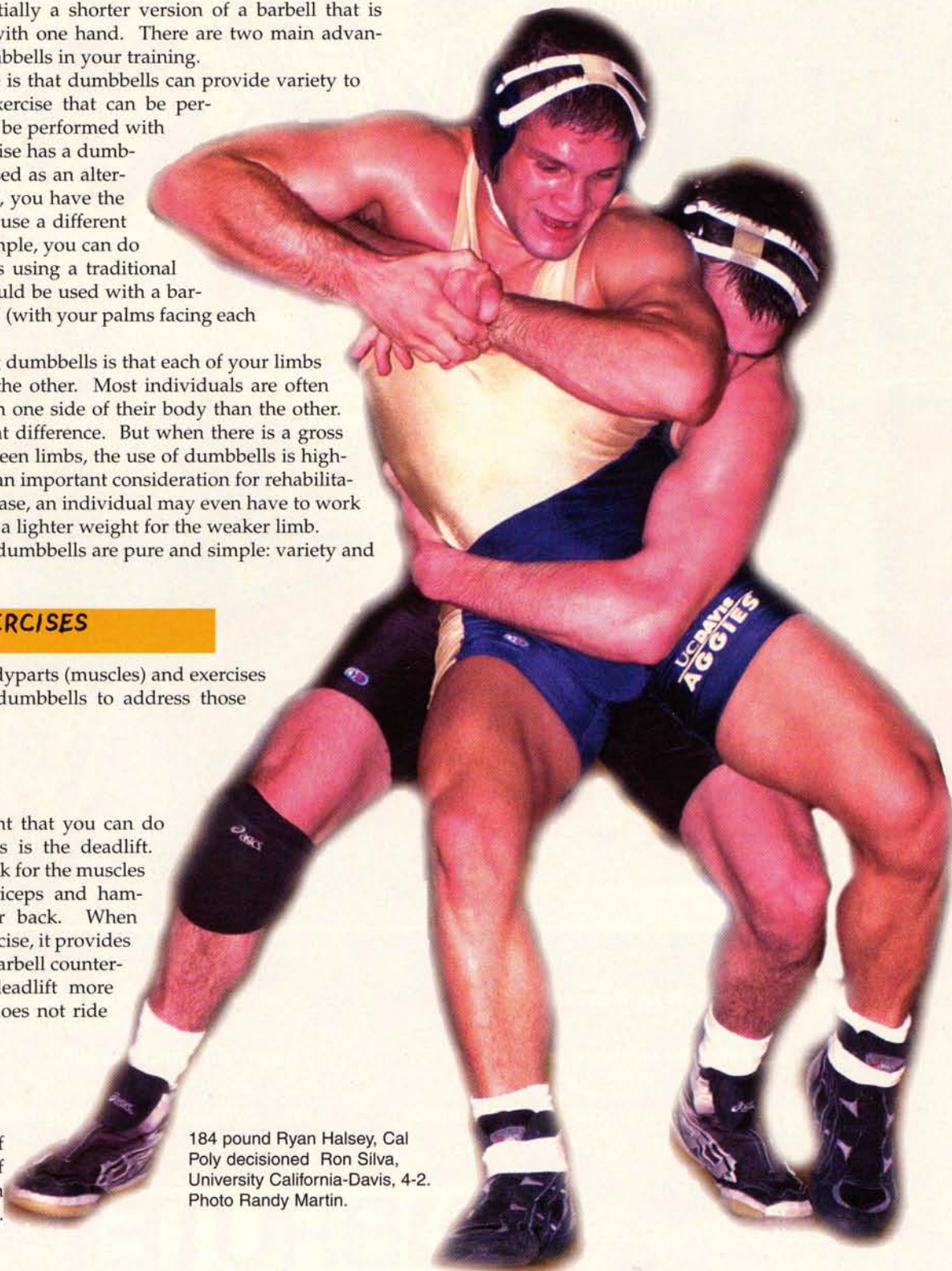
The following is a list of bodyparts (muscles) and exercises that can be performed with dumbbells to address those areas:

Hips

A multiple-joint movement that you can do with dumbbells for your hips is the deadlift. This exercise also provides work for the muscles of the upper legs (the quadriceps and hamstrings) as well as the lower back. When dumbbells are used in this exercise, it provides one major advantage over its barbell counterpart: You can perform the deadlift more comfortably because the bar does not ride up and down your shins.

Calves

You can address the backs of your lower legs by doing a calf raise in a standing position using a dumbbell for resistance.



184 pound Ryan Halsey, Cal Poly decisioned Ron Silva, University California-Davis, 4-2. Photo Randy Martin.

Here is a brief description of this exercise: Hold the dumbbell in one hand and stand on something that is solid and at least several inches high. Hold onto a piece of equipment with your other hand to maintain your balance and position your legs so that the balls of your feet are on the edge. To do the exercise, keep your legs straight and rise up onto your toes as high as possible. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your ankles extended) and then lower the weight under control to the starting position (your heels near the floor) to ensure a proper stretch. If you find that this is too easy, simply do the exercise with one leg at a time.

Chest

There are three multiple-joint movements that you can perform with dumbbells to emphasize different parts of your chest: the bench press (middle part), decline press (lower part) and incline press (upper part). These dumbbell exercises can be executed with a traditional bench-press grip or with a "parallel grip." Multiple-joint movements for the chest also provide indirect work for your anterior deltoids (on the front part of your shoulders) and triceps. The bent-arm fly with dumbbells - a single-joint movement - can be used to target your chest and anterior deltoids without involving your triceps. Also keep in mind that you can perform the bent-arm fly with dumbbells on supine (flat), decline and incline benches to work different parts of your chest.

Upper Back

Unfortunately, dumbbell exercises for the upper back (the "lats") are not very plentiful. As a matter of fact, there are only two worthwhile exercises: the bent-over row and pullover. The bent-over row is a multiple-joint movement that works your lats, biceps and forearms. You will be able to perform the bent-over row more comfortably and with better technique if you do it with one arm at a time. The pullover with dumbbells - a single-joint movement - allows you to isolate your lats without involving your biceps and forearms.

Shoulders

There are a multitude of exercises that you can do with dumbbells for your shoulders. This is good news, since your shoulders are made up of 11 different muscles. The seated press is a multiple-joint movement that involves your anterior deltoids and triceps. The three parts of the deltoids - the anterior (on the front), middle (on the side) and posterior (on the back) - can be isolated with dumbbells by doing the front, lateral and bent-over raises, respectively. Two dumbbell exercises are particularly useful for targeting your trapezius (or "traps"): the upright row and shoulder shrug. The upright row is a multiple-joint movement that also involves your biceps and forearms; the shoulder shrug is a single-joint movement that allows you to isolate your trapezius. Finally, you can do internal and external rotation with dumbbells to exercise the deep muscles of your shoulder: the "internal rotators" (subscapularis and teres major) and "external rotators" (infraspinatus and teres minor).

Biceps

A generic term for exercises that target the biceps is the "bicep curl." You can do this exercise with dumbbells either standing upright or seated as well as on a "preacher-curl" bench.

BODYPART	EXERCISE
Hips	Deadlift
Calves	Calf Raise
Chest	Bench Press Decline Press Incline Press Bent-Arm Fly
Upper Back	Bent-Over Row Pullover
Shoulders	Seated Press Shoulder Shrug Upright Row Bent-Over Raise Front Raise Lateral Raise External Rotation Internal Rotation
Biceps Bicep	Curl
Triceps	Tricep Extension
Forearms	Wrist Extension Wrist Flexion Finger Flexion
Abdominals	Side Bend
Lower Back	Stiff-Leg Deadlift
FIGURE 1: SUMMARY OF DUMBBELL EXERCISES	

Triceps

A generic term for exercises that target the triceps is the "tricep extension." You can do this exercise with dumbbells either standing upright or seated (a "French curl") as well as lying supine on a flat bench.

Forearms

Two basic exercises that you can perform with dumbbells for your forearms (or lower arms) are wrist flexion and wrist extension. Wrist flexion works the anterior (or front) portion of your forearms; wrist extension works the posterior (or back) portion of your forearms. A third exercise for your forearms that can be done with dumbbells is finger flexion. This is a simple yet highly effective exercise that targets your finger flexors - highly important muscles that relatively few individuals work directly. Here is a brief description of the exercise: Grasp a dumbbell in each hand. Hold the dumbbells at the sides of your body with your palms facing your legs and spread your feet about shoulder-width apart. Allow the dumbbells to roll down your hands to your fingertips. To do the exercise, keep your arms fairly straight and pull the dumbbells up to your thumbs. Pause briefly in this mid-range position (your fingers flexed) and then lower the dumbbells under control to the starting position (your fingers extended) to ensure an adequate stretch.

Abdominals

The side bend with a dumbbell is a very good exercise for training the obliques (the muscles on the sides of your abdomen). This exercise - which also targets the muscles of your lower back - involves lateral flexion of your torso.

Lower Back

An exercise that you can do with dumbbells to address your lower back is the stiff-leg deadlift. The execution is similar to that of a regular deadlift but - as the name suggests - the exercise is done with your legs "stiff" or almost straight. By not involving your legs during the exercise, you will limit the contribution of your quadriceps (although you may notice that your hips and hamstrings are still used to some degree). In terms of execution, you should hold the dumbbells in front of your body in roughly the same position as if you were using a barbell.

DON'T BE A DUMBBELL

Figure 1 (page 7) is a summary of the dumbbell exercises that have been discussed. You can do an entire workout using dumbbells or simply intermingle them with other exercises. Regardless, using dumbbells offers several advantages and a large inventory of exercise options.

Matt Brzycki has been involved in the strength and conditioning of collegiate wrestlers for more than 20 years. Since 1986, he has authored more than 70 articles for *Wrestling USA Magazine*. Reprints of 42 of these articles have been updated and adapted into two books (*Wrestling Strength: The Competitive Edge* and *Wrestling Strength: Prepare to Win*). A third book in this series (*Wrestling Strength: Dare to Excel*) will contain reprints of another 21 articles and be published in the spring of 2004. All books are available through Cardinal Publishers Group (800-296-0481).

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