



## WEEKLY

By Dr. Mike T. Nelson

# Old School Total Body Training

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I've always been told I look at things differently. When it comes to exercise this is a good thing, but it not a good thing trying to fit into the "this is how we do things around here" mentality.

This obsession led me on a journey through countless anatomy and physiology classes, complete with cadaver dissections of all types. If you ever get the chance, go for it; but pick a lean cadaver otherwise you will spend hours picking out fat from everywhere. It is not as pretty as the textbooks leave you to believe; trust me on this one.

I will skip right to the part where I can help you as my journey ended with a MS in Mechanical Engineering and many years later I am finishing up a PhD in Exercise Physiology (Kinesiology if you are an uber geek—virtual high five me). Ever since I've been fascinated by how the body moves in both mechanical and biologic terms. None of this is to pump sunshine up my own behind, but to present to you some unique exercises to bullet proof those weak points and add muscle and strength as quickly as possible.

In this article, I have compiled six unique exercises that will directly target your weak points in record time. While a few may look odd, you really have to take just a few minutes and try them out. You will probably curse my name when you get out of bed the next day with the weirdest muscle soreness of your life, but then praise my name once you add a few more pounds of muscle and blow past your old sticking points like a Ginsu knife through a fresh tomato.

### Old School Is In

The old school lifters of our past did not have fancy equipment, new supplements or much for even painkillers if they got hurt (other than the occasion post training ale). Yet they built very impressive physiques that not only looked strong, but WERE strong. I attribute most of this to their ability to stress

the body from unique and high effective angles. I took many of their favorites and tossed in a bit of engineering boo-ya in regards to joints angles and kinematics for a new twist on the old classics.



*The plate curl*

### **1. Plate curl**

**Problem:** weak spindle wrists and hands which affects any lift that you have to hold to, especially any type of curl and deadlift. Curls and deadlifts are great, but the pussitis in your hands and wrists may be holding you back!

**Solution:** A common weakness I see is in the wrist and hands when they are in an extended position. Turn your palm up and spread your fingers apart, this is an extended position and a new position to apply some stress via weight training. From this new position, the plate curl places much more stress on the wrist and hands.

**How to do them:** Start with a 10 pound plate or if you are really crazy two 10 pound plates on top of each stacked liked pancakes. Hmmm, pancakes..... Ok, back on track. I know this seems light, but very few people can do even 1 clean rep with a 25 pound plate. Have no fear since within a few weeks you

*Train like an animal. Think like a human.*

will be cranking out clean reps with a quarter in no time.

Place the plate in your open hand so that it sits between your index finger and your thumb. It should fit nicely there unless you have some weird duck webbing like Aqua-man. Wrap your thumb over the top to hold on to the weight. Curl it as you normally would, but make sure to keep the hand, wrist and forearm in a straight line when viewed from the side. No broken looking wrists allowed. Curse my name for making you feel like a pussy.

## 2. Bent over plate rows

Problem: Looking for a new way to spread your wings and amp up your hands and guns at the same time? This is the perfect exercise for you.

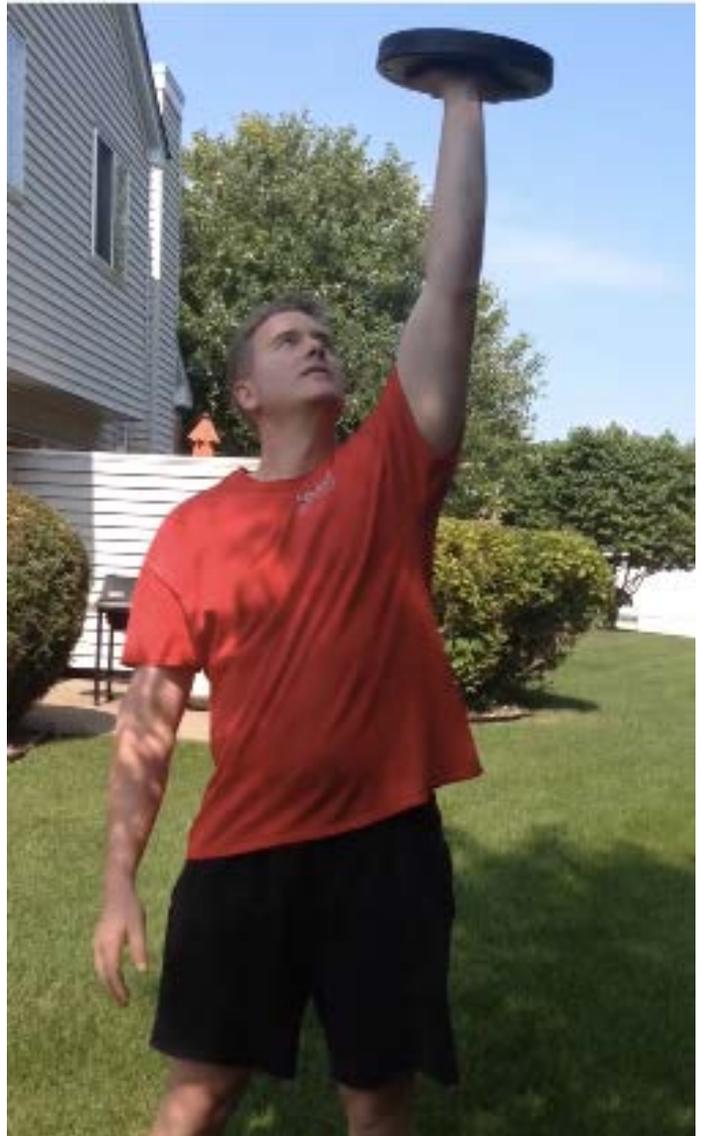
Solution: Bent over rows done with plates is a great because it stresses the latissimus dorsi muscle (lats for the cool gym rats) from a unique angle.

The origin of the lats is on the inferior angle of scapula and the spinous processes of thoracic T7-L5 and via the thoracolumbar fascia down to the iliac crest. Take your open hand and put it on your low back with the pinky at the top of your pelvis and your fingers will be pretty close to the origin.

The lat then extends up through the back and into the front side of the top of the humerus. Its main action is adduction, bringing the arm towards the body but also extends the upper arm behind the body and can internally rotate it too. The bent over plate row opens a big can of Whoop ass on the lat since the arm is partially rotated in (palms face each other), and the movement is to bring the weight toward the body (extension) while the arm is moved



*The bent over plate row*



*Dr. Nelson demonstrating the overhead plate press*

to the side (adduction). The bicep gets some new stress here too while the hands are taxed to the max since they are held in a bent position without the help of the thumb.

Start with only a 45 pound plate and work to move the weight fast. Start slow as the stress on the bicep and lats is new and you still want to brush your teeth the next day. Women don't like guys with dragon breath.

## 3. Overhead Plate Press aka "the anti-computer guy" exercise

Problem: You spend too much time in front of the computer and your hand is starting to look like a computer mouse while Quassi Moto is calling YOU names for your piss poor posture. Your nose is

creeping lower and has never been that close to your bellybutton every before. Time for a change my internet warrior friend!

You may not know it, but this position is also telling your brain that you have a problem and limiting your performance in the gym and your appearance at the bar on Friday night.



*The Jefferson Deadlift*

How? In order to protect your arm from possible damage, your uber smart brain will limit how much stress you can put through it if it thinks there is a problem. This is commonly called the “arthrokinetic reflex.”

If I bust up my wrist punching a guy out, I will not be able to lift much weight with that arm since my brain is protecting my messed up wrist. This can happen also on a much smaller scale. A weakness in the wrist will automatically limit how much stress you can put through it.

Solution: It’s time to get the hand back into normal function again by working on the opposite position and straighten out that Ethel like posture.

While stretching and other modalities may help, the fastest way to simultaneously address both the form and function of the hand is by some specific loading, this time in a palm up position.

Start with a 10-25 lb plate and set it on top your hand like a waiter would a large tray. Place your hand so that it rests just above your shoulder. Make sure there is no wrist pain however. Press the weight up overhead.

*Note: you are pressing a weight over your head while balancing it in your hand, so be careful.* Another tip is to look up at the weight and

think about leaning back a bit from your upper back (thoracic extension). This will work to transform the tissue in that area back to a normal position. Just like bending a comb a bit beyond where it was bent in the opposite direction, we are working to add some stress and function in the opposite way of the computer guy position in the upper spine and hand for a 2-for-1 blow to Quassi Moto-it is.

#### **4. Jefferson Deadlift**

Problem: You love to pick up heavy stuff and set it down, but lately your deadlift is as stuck as any debate in Congress and has not increased since a Bush was in the White House. Your lower back is also as pissed as Brad Pitt for dumping Jennifer Aniston.

Solution: Time for the big guns. The Jefferson Deadlift invented by Thomas Jefferson himself. Rumor has it he was looking for some new ways to lift things and one day tripped over the deadlift bar he had set up. While he caught himself before falling, his foot was over the bar and he figured he might as well just lift the bar up; and thus the Jefferson Deadlift was born. Ok, maybe not, but it is still worth doing.

You will always be limited by any weakness. The old saying that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link is still true. If doing conventional deadlifts had cured your weakness, you would not still be stuck. The Jefferson allows you to still work up to some heavy weights without having to go play with pink dumbbells on BOSU balls and hang your nut sack on the coat rack next to them.

The big difference on the Jefferson deadlift is one of your legs is IN FRONT of the bar instead of having both behind the bar as in a conventional or sumo deadlift. Step over the bar and place one hand outside your leg on the right and the other one behind you to grab the bar evenly. Stand up.

You may need to play around with your stance a bit to find what is comfortable and most will have both of their feet turned out a bit (externally rotated). Even if you are a deadlift super star and show up in Andy Bolton’s dreams, start slow since this is some new stress to your body.

## 5. Suitcase deadlift

**Problem:** Your core is on vacation and you like to keep your nut sack intact and avoid all BOSU balls (why are they always blue anyway?). The suitcase deadlift will challenge you in a unique way by moving the weight to your side instead of in front. This causes your opposite side to work double time to prevent you from doing a leaning tour of Pisa into the floor.

**How to do it:** Stand next to a bar that is loaded and bent down to pick it up like a loaded suitcase (hence the name). Grab the bar in the middle and stand up. When viewed from the front, your upper torso should look exactly like a normal deadlift and no leaning towards.

If the bar tips forward or back, adjust your hand a bit to even it out. This will tax your grip too.

*Bonus: Walk with the weight as in a one side loaded farmers walk and you can use a kettlebell or dumbbell if needed. Since the body is now in motion, it is even harder to stay upright as your core goes bonkers trying to keep you upright while moving. This will bullet proof your body from head to toe in record time.*



*The Suitcase Deadlift*

## 6. Reverse Bench Press

**Problem:** Your triceps are weak at lockout and your shirt sleeves have plenty of room for some new size.

Everyone does bench press and for good reason—it can be a great exercise, but here is a literal twist for more tricep growth rarely seen.

Instead of grabbing the bar with a pronated grip (palms down), I want you to grab it with a palms UP grip. This will feel quite odd and you may have to

move your grip out wider or start with dumbbells and work up to a straight bar. Perform like a standard bench press, but since your palms are now facing up, the last few inches are lockout really tax the triceps in a new way.

Anthony Clark was one of the best benchers from the mid to late 90s and he was found of this technique and could do more with a reverse grip than a standard grip. Unfortunately, many tried to match his achievements and did too much weight too soon and paid the price. There is more stress in unique ways with this one, which is not bad, but keep the ego at home and start very light. Use dumbbells which allow some rotation and you are not locked into position as with a straight bar.



*Anthony Clark utilizing the reverse grip bench press*

## About the Author

*Dr. Nelson has spent more than a decade of his life learning how the human body works, specifically focusing on how to properly condition it to burn fat and become stronger, more flexible, and healthier. He has a PhD in Exercise Physiology, holds a BA in Natural Science, and an MS in Mechanical Engineering (Biomechanics). He currently teaches*



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