

The Rutgers Files



Rapid Fat Loss Barbell Complexes!

Geoff Neupert

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by Geoff Neupert, CSCS, Master SFG

I first learned about complexes as an underpaid Division 1 Strength and Conditioning Coach at Rutgers University, where I worked from 1997 to 2000. One of the athletes had left a copy of *Muscle and Fiction* - uh, I mean, *Muscle and Fitness* on my desk.

Since I was between teams, I decided to skim it.

I found an interesting article by a Romanian weightlifting coach, Istvan Javorek, who interestingly enough, was the coach to the Head Coach of USA Weightlifting at the time. So I figured it was of some value.

What I read changed my life forever - it was that powerful.

The article was on how to increase strength, muscular size, and conditioning while decreasing body fat using complexes.

Much has been written since then on complexes for fat loss, with very few people giving Coach Javorek the credit for introducing most of us to this amazing training idea.

A Complex is a series of compound exercises performed sequentially with the same weight and without rest. All the reps for one exercise are completed before moving on to the next exercise in the sequence.

For example:

5 Snatches, then 5 Presses, then 5 Cleans, then 5 Squats.

And they're brutal.

So after reading the article, I tried the complex Coach Javorek wrote about with "only" 135lbs on the bar.

Holy. Cow.

I thought I was in good shape because I was training as a competitive Olympic Weightlifter at the time.

Was I ever wrong.

I was huffing and puffing like a steam engine! And I was warm and sweaty for about 30-60 minutes later. I knew I was on to something. And that was it. My mind was made up. I had my wrestlers coming in later that day, and while most of the team was on the standard plan, I had a few guys who I'd taken under my wing for specialized training. When they came in, I introduced them to my new discovery.

And they hated me for it, in the most respectful kind of way.

Here are some of the complexes I used with them. Each was performed on a different day, with a different emphasis, over the course of a couple of seasons.

Pre-season they were performed three times per week. In-season twice per week.

And they all used a barbell. Most of the guys started out with between 65 and 95lbs. A couple of them worked up to about 205lbs and we were doing sets of 2 to 3 in the complexes.

You might be wondering if they're good for more than just conditioning wrestlers. And how well they work for stripping off body fat. Well, all the wrestlers I worked with (except JJ, the heavyweight) needed to make weight. And none of them ever had a hard time making weight. They were always well within "striking distance."

So yeah, they work really well. If you're not sure, reserve your judgment until you've done a few of them.

#1.

Clean	x5
Press	x5
Front Squat	x5
Push Press	x5
Bent Over Row	x5

#2.

Clean Grip Upright Row	x6
Hang Clean	x6
Press	x6

Back Squat	x6
Push Press	x6

#3.

Clean Grip Upright Row	x6
Hang Clean	x6
Press	x6
Back Squat	x6
RDLs	x6
Bent Over Rows	x6

#4.

Clean Grip Upright Row	x6
Hang Clean	x6
Back Squat + Push Press	x6
Good Morning	x6
Bent over Rows	x6

#5.

Clean Grip Upright Rows	x6
Hang Clean + Press	x6
Front Squat	x6
RDL	x6
Bent Over Rows	x6

#6.

Hang Clean	x5
Front Squat	x5
Press	x5
Back Squat + Push Press*	x5
RDL	x5

#7.

Hang Clean	x5
Press	x5
Good Morning	x5
Back Squat	x5
RDL	x5
Bent Over Rows	x5

#8.

Upright Row	x6
Hang Clean	x6
Press	x6
Good Morning	x6
Back Squat	x6
Bent Over Rows	x6

#9.

Hang Clean + Press *	x5
Front Squat	x5
RDL	x5
Bent Over Rows	x5

#10.

Hang Clean	x5
Press	x5
Back Squat + Push Press*	x5
Good Morning	x5
Bent Over Rows	x5
RDL	x5

*Performed as chains - one rep of each exercise, repeated for the prescribed number of reps. Back Squat, Push Press, Back Squat, Push Press...

I didn't do much fancy cycling back then so these cycles looked like this:

Accumulation Phase:

- Building work capacity

Week 1: 3-5 sets of 5-6

Week 2: 3-5 sets of 4-5

Week 3: 3-5 sets of 3-4

Intensification Phase:

- Building strength

Week 4: 2-3 sets of 4-5

Week 5: 2-3 sets of 3-4

Week 5: 2-3 sets of 2-3

And I'd alternate back and forth between these types of macrocycles. Three times through a complex with only 2 reps each sounds pretty easy, until you try to do it with a weight approaching your own bodyweight. Give that a shot. I guarantee you it'll be way tougher than you imagined.

Work:Rest periods always started at 1:3 in the preseason (believe it or not) and we'd work down to 1:2 during the season. I never went 1:1, I just added more weight to the bar. (Wrestlers need to be able to tolerate lactic acid - to make their bodies' buffer lactate - to turn it into a fuel source. And remember, growth hormone is released in the presence of lactate, which then signals fat burning to occur. (Now you know one of the reasons wrestlers are so lean.)

And that was it.

For a small select group, this, neck work, and towel chins were it for their strength training.

Conclusion:

These complexes all look "easy" until you do them. They're designed to use moderately heavy loads, which I've found is great for burning fat. Much better than the longer set, longer exercise complexes. Give these a shot for 6 weeks and see how you get on. I'm sure you'll be pleasantly surprised.