

Foundation Strength for Fighters and Athletes



By Pavel

*POWER TO YOU!
PAVEL*

Foundation Strength for Fighters and Athletes

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“Why do we lift weights?” asks Marty Gallagher in his classic book *Coan: The Man, the Myth, the Method* and answers: “We lift to increase physical strength and muscle-size. No other answer is correct.”

Ed Coan continues, “I firmly believe that everyone should train basically the same regardless of age, sex, height, weight, degree of fitness, percentage of body-fat, etc... I have a method for developing strength and muscle... Why should you train different from me? Lighter certainly, but not differently.”

Powerlifting for the people? In this “enlightened” age of “sport-specific training” this view seems naïve and old-fashioned but only to those who have scanned their sports science textbooks instead of reading them. Sport specific strength training – or special strength preparation, if you prefer Russian terminology – must be built on a foundation of general strength training.

“America got into “sports specific” training 15-20 years ago and forgot the fundamentals,” laments sport-specific training expert Gray Cook who is trying to steer the “functional training” movement in the right direction. “This created throwing athletes without legs and running athletes who could not do a single push-up correctly. It created swimmers who could not control their body on dry land and cyclists who could not stand up straight.”

In the Russian methodology strength preparation is divided into *general* and *special*: GSP and SSP. A foundation of GSP is a must before one takes on specialized training. There are

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karatekas in Russia who can slowly extend a head level side kick – with a 32kg kettlebell hanging on the kicking foot! A powerful special exercise for control and rooting. But if you take it up before you can squat two times your bodyweight you will get nothing out of this drill but injuries and bad kicking technique. Skipping the hard and boring general strength training and going straight to the fun SPP is akin to going to college from grade school. It doesn't work.

Simply said, **before getting specifically strong you must get generally strong.**

Prof. Ozolin reminds us that “GPP contains the idea of all around physical development. Which is why the qualities developed by GPP may be called general as they express the ability of the organism and its psychological sphere to perform any physical work more or less successfully. Hence general endurance, general strength, general joint mobility, general coordination, general psychological preparedness.”

“Pay special attention to the development of general strength as it concentrates many components of physical preparedness,” advises Ozolin and gives the following general strength training recommendations:

General Strength Preparation—Ozolin (2006)

Main objective:

Development of the ability to express strength in various movements.

Concurrent objectives:

- a) development of the will power for expressing maximal efforts
- b) increasing the ability to concentrate attention and efforts
- c) increasing quickness of movements

Continued next page.

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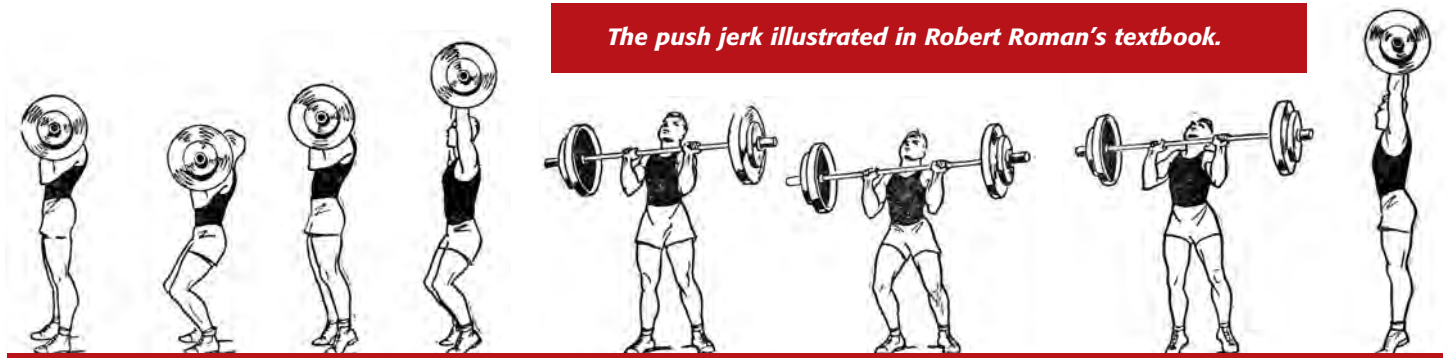


General Strength Preparation—Ozolin (2006)

Means:

- 1. Barbell exercises:** military press, jerk, snatch, deadlift, bench press, squat, etc.
 - 80-95% 1RM,
 - 2-3x1 (sets x reps)
 - 2-5min rest between sets
 - 2 times a week
- 2. Same barbell exercises.**
 - 70-80% 1RM
 - 2-4x2-4
 - 2-5min rest between sets
 - 2 times a week
- 3. Isometric exercises:** pressing, pulling, twisting, etc.
 - Maximal tension
 - 2-4x6-8sec
 - 1-2min rest between sets
 - 2 times a week
- 4. Goal oriented jump exercises:** touch a hanging object, jump up on a table, jump over an obstacle, cover 30m with jumps in the shortest time or fewest jumps possible, etc.
 - Maximal intensity
 - 30-60 jumps total
 - 2 times a week
- 5. Throws of 1-5kg (2-11lb.) objects:** medicine ball, stone, grenade, etc.
 - Maximal intensity
 - 20-30 throws total
 - 2 times a week

The push jerk illustrated in Robert Roman's textbook.



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If the athlete needs to build muscle mass, the following recommendations apply:

Training for Increasing Muscle Mass Ozolin (2006)

Main objective:
increasing muscle mass.

Concurrent objectives:

- a) increasing the ability to express strength
- b) increasing strength endurance
- c) increasing muscle elasticity and joint mobility
- d) fixing physique and posture defects

Means:

1. Exercises with barbells, kettlebells, and other types of resistance: military press, jerk, snatch, deadlift, bench press, squat, good morning, twist, etc.

- 50-70% 1RM
- 1-3x to significant fatigue
- 2-5min rest between sets
- 3 times a week

2. Bodyweight exercises: pushups, pullups, pistols, etc.

- 1-3x to significant fatigue
- 1-3min rest between sets
- 3-4 times a week during the morning recharge

3. Jump exercises with forward

- movement:** from foot to foot, on one foot, on both feet, etc.
- 1-2 x RM
 - 3-5 min rest between sets
 - 2-3 times a week

In other words, *[Power to the People!](#)*, *[Enter the Kettlebell!](#)*, and *[The Naked Warrior](#)* are your tools for general strength training.

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“Before getting specifically strong you must get generally strong.”



Of all athletes, fighters are among the most confused about general strength training. “Fighters can’t explain what they are looking for in strength preparation; strength guys don’t know what the fighters need,” observes Nikolay Vitkevich, a man uniquely qualified to speak out on strength training for martial arts. Vitkevich is a Russian style renaissance man. He is a karate black belt, an MMA competitor, a Master of Sports in powerlifting and a MSIC in the bench press, a CMS in a few sports, a regional GS champion. And an accomplished chess player (of course).

Vitkevich places powerlifting at the cornerstone of a fighter’s strength preparation. “You must clearly understand the difference between basic training and special physical preparation,” he stresses. “Special Physical Preparation is different for everybody; one beats up on a tire with a sledge hammer, another does figure eights with a kettlebell, and someone incline presses. Basic training is roughly the same in all sports and aims to increase general strength and muscle mass. Powerlifting was born as a competition in exercises everybody does.”

It bears repeating. “Powerlifting was born as a competition in exercises everybody does.” And if they don’t, they should.

Which does not mean that a fighter should blindly follow a powerlifter’s routine. For all his high achievements in a variety of sports, Nikolay Vitkevich could not have pulled them off all at once. He warns the wannabe multi-sport athlete: “No matter how fanatical you are, if you are training no fewer than three times a week in martial arts, it is impossible to survive a full blown practice of

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a second sport. The effects of these types of training differ in principle, often mutually exclusive and instead of progress you will end up with overtraining. It is pointless to completely duplicate training from a different sport because they only partly meet your goals. Besides, authors of most strength training books are silent about what restoration means for their students. Hence the conclusion: fighters should not practice pure powerlifting, weightlifting, girevoy sport, or bodybuilding – they must strength train following a plan specially developed for them that meets their goals and the goals of martial arts.”

The man states: “The #1 exercise which can revolutionize a fighter’s strength training is the deadlift, for the following reasons:

1. It has many variations and performance styles that can solve practically all of a fighter’s strength problems.
2. Deadlifts have an enormous (quite comparable with the squats) influence on the growth of strength and mass. At the same time the deadlift is free of such drawbacks, from the fighter’s point of view, as the excessive hypertrophy of the legs and hips... and excessive complexity in mastering the technique; [the deadlift] has lower odds of an injury and it can be done without spotters or special stiff shoes. The deadlift may be complemented with certain types of barbell pulls, as well as exercises such as the explosive triceps bench press [[see the Vol. 1, Issue 1 of PTPM](#)], and the push jerk.” (In the push jerk, as opposed to the classic jerk, the feet do not split or move sideways during the second dip.)

The Russian expert does not recommend sumo, belt, or straps. “The belt, contrary to the widely held opinion, does not protect from injuries (only the correct technique can guarantee against them),

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but only allows you to raise the intra-abdominal pressure at the start, which is not very important for fighters as they don't pull as much as lifters and do it for a different reason. Refusing the belt stimulates a rapid gain of extra muscle mass in the abdomen and back.”

The working weight should be “noticeable” – no less than 160-200% bodyweight for 220 pound athletes, more percentage wise for lighter athletes and less for heavier ones. “Arguments from those who can't lift this much are unacceptable.” Got to love Russian subtlety.

Vitkevich recommends 30-60min of general strength training once a week for wrestlers and grapplers and twice for strikers. With only one or two base exercises per workout. If you train twice a week and weight gain is not a problem squats may be added.

The Russian does not take kindly to pointless debates between powerlifters and weightlifters – whose sport is “stronger”? – and recommends variations of Olympic lifts as well. Specifically, push jerks and clean pulls. Why not get the best of both worlds? He advocates alternating DLs and clean pulls every other week and doing 4x6 (sets x reps) in both. (Some Russian research suggests that rotating the lifts every two weeks may be best. Two weeks of strength lifts and two weeks of quick lifts. Repeat until strong.)

The clean pull is a “tempo” exercise from weightlifting. Pull the bar high as you would for the clean but don't rack it. Get Dan John's DVD From the Ground Up from DaveDraper.com to learn how. The clean pull gives you the benefits of the power clean without racking the bar. Racking is a complex skill that demands professional instruction and time if you are to do it right and safely. Since you are not a weightlifter, opting for a simpler version of the lift is the right thing to do. Vitkevich recommends that a 220-pound athlete shoot for 120-140% of his bodyweight clean pulls, less for bigger guys and more for smaller ones. He stresses that hang clean pulls are especially valuable for wrestlers.

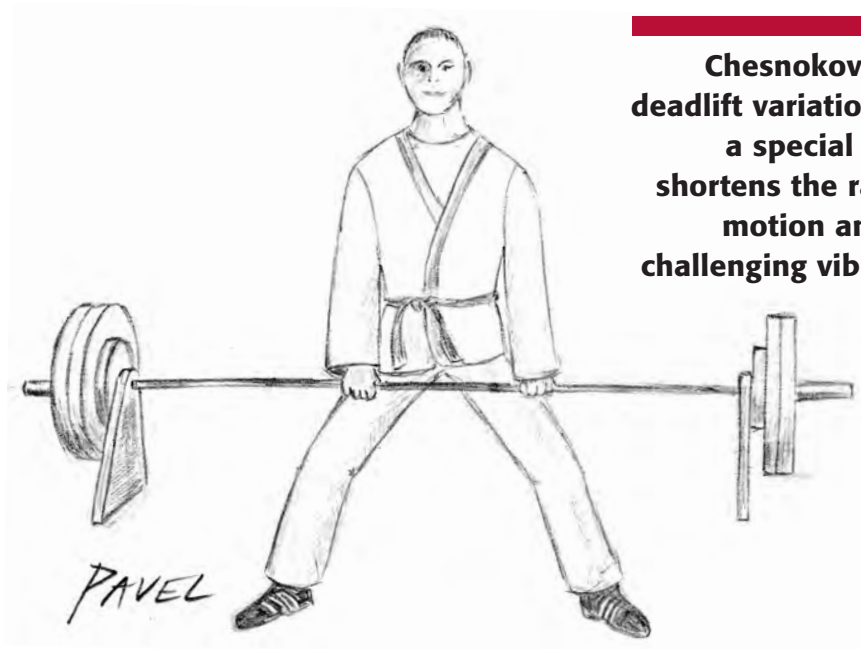
Explosive bench presses and push jerks are also alternated from week to week in Vitkevich's program. 5x10. He observes that while wrestlers tend to bench press with a more or less good technique, strikers often lower the bar too high on the chest. They are used to punching from the shoulder, so they do the same in the BP. The Russian powerlifting champion and full contact titlist warns that you must lower the bar to the bottom of the pecs or the sternum and keep your elbows in. There is a big difference between a punch and a bench press. In the former the shoulder girdle is not

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Chesnokov demos deadlift variations with a special rig that shortens the range of motion and adds challenging vibrations.

loaded when the fist is by the shoulder but only at the point of impact. In the latter the load stays on the shoulder throughout.

The push jerk demands instruction from a WL professional. Vitkevich warns that you will be walking around with bruised clavicles for six months anyway. I would simply use kettlebells. Or, if you are one big and strong dude who is not challenged by 5x10 with a pair of 106-pound “beasts”, get a strongman log. You will save your wrists, collarbones, and time.

Of course, this is not the only way to use PL, WL, and GS tools for a fighter’s or athlete’s foundational strength training. N. Vasiliev, a highly ranked combat jiu-jitsu practitioner, and A. Chesnokov, formerly a MSIC in powerlifting and a WPC/WPO bench press world champion and record holder, now a combat JJ player, have an interesting approach. They believe in starting a new fighter with kettlebells. The early standard is 20 long cycle C&Js with a pair of 24s. Ranked fighters are expected to be able to do 15-20 reps with 32s.

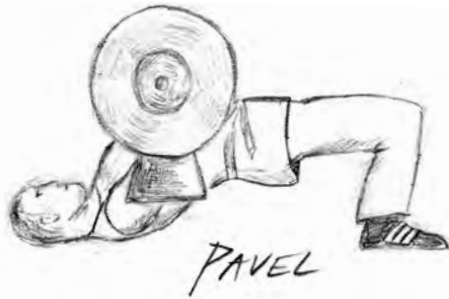
The second step is the barbell, powerlifting with a twist. Unlike Vitkevich, Comrades Vasiliev and Chesnokov prefer the sumo deadlift, and a partial one to boot. They also do partial bench presses in order to reduce the possibility of shoulder trauma. Fighters are expected to work up to at least 350-375 pounds in the following BP variation. Press on the floor from a shoulder bridge

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Chesnokov demos bench press variations with a special rig that shortens the range of motion and adds challenging vibrations.

and use a special rig with extra weights that displace the barbell's center of gravity downward and add challenging vibrations. Just wait till they learn of Louie Simmons hanging kettlebells on a bar with Jump Stretch™ bands.

Two types of loading are used:

- a) **The variable method: 4-5x5-6 followed by 2-3x10-15 done with maximal speed;**
- b) **Limit weights for 4-5 sets.**

Other general strength exercises on the Russian combat JJ players' list include full contact twists, two handed single kettlebell high pulls to the chin (straight up), barbell squats, dips, pullups, isometrics, shot putting. "Throwing a shot (7.25kg or 16 lbs.) is especially effective. One must throw at least 10-12m (33-39 feet). Experience shows that reaching this standard predicts a knock-out punch with a high degree of certainty... The shot weighs as much as a human head and effectively "builds" the punch."

Throwing a shot splits the difference between GSP and SSP. As a Russian athlete moves up the food chain, his general strength training inches towards his special strength training, becomes somewhat more specific to the sport and to the individual athlete. In Vasiliev and Chesnokov's stage three some of the above exercises may be dropped while others will be emphasized. They offer two examples.

A thirty-five year old fighter who wins with chokes and arm bars weighs 198 pounds. He builds

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up his press lockout to 530 pounds and his sumo deadlift lockout to a whopping 1,100 pounds. Given his specialty, static exercises such as these are stressed. (If you choose to practice heavy partial lifts to increase your martial power I highly recommend Bud Jeffries' materials from StrongerMan.com.)

The second fighter is twenty-eight years old and weights 181 pounds. He wins his fights by knocking his opponents out with a straight punch. He throws the shot 14.5 m (47.5 feet) and does bench lockouts with 395 pounds. He emphasizes the above three exercises plus weighted jumps, logical for a striker.

Vasiliev and Chesnokov recommend strength training three times a week for 45min and advise not to put out 100% as one gets tired from fighting and wrestling practice. Priorities.

Once you have reached a respectable level of general strength and earned the right to practice sport-specific strength training you have a decision to make. Either find a highly competent coach to prescribe the right drills. Or forget about them altogether and stick with general strength training. SSP is not for amateurs, poorly chosen sport-specific exercises could do worse than fail to improve your performance – they might mess up your skills. Basketball players who were given heavy basketballs had to learn that lesson the hard way.

Even professionals sometimes decide to pass on SPP. Recalls Geoff Neupert, a nationally ranked weightlifter and a college strength coach: “I have trained athletes using the SST methodology, i.e. sport movement mimicry, which became popular here in the US in the mid to late 90s. I had better success when I just stuck to the basics... For example, an in-season program I had my wife and her teammates on when she played volleyball at Rutgers looked something like the following: squat 70-90% x 2-5x 2 reps, twice a week, plus some upper body exercise, like military press or chins for a few sets of 2-3 reps, also twice a week.”

Until you are a national caliber contender you will do great on a limited diet of deadlifts and presses. *[Power to the People!](#)*

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1. Before getting specifically strong you must get generally strong.
2. Use the tested tools of strength sports – powerlifting, weightlifting, and girevoy sport – to build a foundation of general strength.
3. But don't blindly mimic the training of a lifter. Reduce the volume to stay fresh for your sport. Modify or eliminate certain exercises to better meet your sport's needs or for the sake of simplicity.
4. Don't stop general strength training even when you have reached a high level in your sport. Practice both GSP and SSP.
5. Only practice SSP under an expert coach. If you have no such coach skip SSP altogether and stick with GSP.
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ABOUT PAVEL

Pavel Tsatsouline, Master of Sports, is a former Soviet Special Forces physical training instructor who has been hailed as “the modern king of kettlebells” for his role in fomenting the Russian kettlebell revolution in the West.

In 1998 Pavel introduced the ancient Russian strength and conditioning tool to an unsuspecting American public in his subversive article, *Vodka, Pickle Juice, Kettlebell Lifting, and Other Russian Pastimes*. The article was published by MILO, a magazine for tough hombres who bend steel and lift rocks. When Pavel started getting mail from guys with busted noses, cauliflower ears, scars, or at least Hells Angels tattoos, his publisher took notice.

In 2001 Dragon Door published Pavel's breakthrough bestseller *The Russian Kettlebell Challenge* and forged the first US-made Russian-style cast iron kettlebell. RKC™, the first kettlebell instructor course on American soil, kicked off shortly thereafter.

Finally Pavel, kettlebell in his fist, was voted 'Hot Trainer of the Year' by *Rolling Stone*. As the kettlebell invasion gained momentum Pavel appeared in media ranging from *Pravda* to Fox News.



Given the kettlebell's harsh reputation, Pavel's early students looked like they came from the federal witness protection program. Today these hard living men have had to begrudgingly share the Russian kettlebell with Hollywood movie stars and other unlikely kettlebellers.

Fed up with the touchy-feely drivel that was passed as fitness advice, smart folks have gone hardcore. In 2004 Dr. Randall Strossen, one of the most respected names in the strength world, stated, "In our eyes, Pavel Tsatsouline will always reign as the modern king of kettlebells since it was he who popularized them to the point where you could almost find a country filled with his converts..."

Pavel is the author of numerous other bestselling titles that have helped change the face of exercise in America, including his seminal strength classics *Power to the People!*, *Beyond Bodybuilding* and *The Naked Warrior*.

To further develop your kettlebell knowledge and skills base and to possibly receive direct feedback from Pavel, visit Dragon Door's forum at RussianKettlebells.com.

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Foundation Strength for Fighters and Athletes is an excerpt from Pavel's private, subscription-only newsletter, *[Power to the People! Monthly](#)*—and this is the first time ever this information has been available to the general public.

So, if you enjoyed Pavel's ebook on **Foundation Strength for Fighters and Athletes** then you need to get *[Power to the People! Monthly](#)* subscription newsletter now! Because each issue is jampacked with one groundbreaking revelation after another.

What Do the Champions Do When They Crave Even Greater Strength and Power?

Pavel's *[Power to the People! Monthly](#)* newsletter explodes your strength and power with the most insightful, trenches-practical, results-inducing training secrets ever revealed!



Pavel's books *[Power to the People!](#)*, *[The Naked Warrior](#)* and *[Beyond Building](#)*, have been hailed by leading strength authorities as modern classics of their kind. World champion powerlifters, special forces, US Marines, high-level martial artists and a host of professional athletes have gone on record thanking Pavel for the advances they have made in their real-world training, as the result of these books and other information Pavel has shared with them, often in person.

And the great news is:

There's a whole lot more where *[Power to the People!](#)*, *[The Naked Warrior](#)* and *[Beyond Bodybuilding](#)* came from...





What Pavel has been communicating through his earlier work, plus his kettlebell courses and literature—while masterly for sure—is just the tip of the iceberg. And Pavel has agreed to plunder his own private goldmine and let you in on all this priceless training knowledge.

The result is Pavel's *[The Power to the People! Monthly](#)*—a subscription newsletter packed each issue with the very best training information you could ever hope to find on strength and power.

Is Pavel doing the right thing? And is this information really as valuable as we think it is?

We figured the best way to be sure, was to send his proposed first issue in advance to some of the **most respected names in the US strength community**. Here is what they wrote back after reading their advance copy of *[Pavel's Power to the People! Monthly](#)*:

“Your newsletter is terrific. This is the best description of good bench press technique I have ever seen. I am a big fan of your training ideas.” —**Dr. Thomas D. Fahey, Dept. of Kinesiology, California State University, Chico**

“Forget about pre-workout stimulants. What you really need is a pre-workout review of Pavel's articles. I read an issue of Power to the People before a recent deadlift workout, and with the info from Pavel's article I set a new personal best. Thanks to the warm-up Pavel recommended, I literally ripped the bar off the floor like it was only 135 pounds.

How much is a PR worth to you?

No serious strength and conditioning specialist should be without this newsletter. I guess if you're happy to just toe the party line, rest on your laurels, and cruise through the rest of your coaching career, then you don't need this, but if you're serious about helping your clients achieve maximum strength and power, or if

YOU want to get bigger, stronger, and more powerful, then you can't do without Pavel's newsletter.

I've ordered my two-year subscription today, but there is one downside... having to wait 4 weeks until the next issue!”

—**Craig Ballantyne, CSCS, MS, writer Men's Health**

“Newsletter looks great!! The information is up to date and concise, easy to read and implement into any program. I don't usually read everything in a newsletter, just scan for what I find interesting. Before I knew it, I had read the entire thing!! Get on the list!!” —**Marc Bartley, WPO Powerlifting World Record Total 2562@275lbs.**

“Pavel Tsatsouline's synergistic and methodical approach to training is so unique it's in a class of it's own. He strategically integrates strength, athleticism, power, energy, and flexibility into programs that garner huge results while still being easy to follow. Since incorporating Pavel's expertise, both the quality of my lifting and the longevity of my career are continuously increasing. I'm breaking through seemingly impossible strength plateaus, diminishing back injuries that have plagued me for years, and utilizing faster, more efficient systems to achieve my goals. Whether you're a professional athlete striving for peak performance or a reader

seeking overall wellness, vitality, and a body free of aches and pains, the road to success is best traveled with Pavel.” —Kara Bohigian, WPO Bench Press World Record Holder (402 @ 148)

“Outstanding information! Excellence can be duplicated, so try this system and see if it works for you. I believe and practice what Pavel has to say because he walks his talk and really knows what he's talking about...no b.s. or fluff!”

—Doug Dienelt, M.S., ACSM, CSCS, National USAPL and World Masters IPF Powerlifting Champion

“Pavel, thank you for bringing this fantastic training information to the public. I have always felt that getting stronger has a direct correlation with getting smarter. Trying something new, or adding in that missing element of training or form may be just what you need to push through those strength plateaus.”

—Brad Gillingham, 2 Time IPF SHW World Powerlifting Champion

“Pavel does a great job discussing the powerlifting training techniques of Eastern European athletes. His knowledge of powerlifting, especially when it comes to those athletes in his former neighborhood, and how to train for it is exceptional especially for someone who is

not a competitive powerlifter. If you want your bench press and deadlift to go up, listen to him. No argument here: it works and gets results!!”

—Dr. Michael Hartle, Chairman, USA Powerlifting Sports Medicine Committee, USAPL National Champion and IPF World Team Head Coach

“Lots of cutting edge stuff, these need to be read a few times. Pay attention to pulling from the hole, squatting close stance to build a conventional DL, lowering the BP bar fast leading with elbows, trying to touch the chest to the bar not the bar to the chest, and the pros and cons of elbow flare on the push. Even a few things that have me scratching my head. Which I won't go into in case a competitor of mine is reading this!”

—Jack Reape, USAPL Armed Forces Powerlifting Champion

“Pavel, with this newsletter you have taken 'Power to the People!' to the next level as you did with KB ballistics in 'Enter the Kettlebell!'. Truly state of the art information, tightly written as always, and immediately applicable to your next workout. Expanding upon the basics you are taking "practice deep skill" into the powerlifts. Can't wait for the next installment.”

—Mark Reifkind, former Head Coach IPF Powerlifting Team USA

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