

“That Chart”

The Old-School, Old-Style Strength Training Sets/Reps/Weight Chart of Yesteryear

By Coach Rick Karboviak

There are some things that just stick in your memory as a student in high school & college, especially if you're an athlete. One of my first memories of entering the world of strength training as a kid happened probably around my junior high years. I found out there was this thing called “open gym” times in the summer in the mornings, and a few of my friends wanted to try it out. I joined the gang and went in a few mornings, only to really be intimidated by the much bigger, stronger high school guys, who looked like they could snap me like a twig if they wanted to.

Nonetheless, my first entry into strength training revolved around this one unique chart, which was used to find your weights & reps & sets to do for the day. This chart happened to come from, I believe, a former college football guy who was from our school, and took the program from his days at North Dakota State University in the late 80's, when they had a superb, national championship power team in football. (That's what the legend was about this program, anyway.) One of the first things we tried to do, surprisingly without killing ourselves, was to find our Maxes in the Bench Press, and later, the Squat. Most everyone seemed obsessed with the Bench more than anything. (The more things change, the more they stay the same!)

I'll be honest with you, my time spent on this program wasn't long at all. I got really intimidated in a hurry, got tired of the weakling comments that came my way, and soon, I would try my hand at lifting with a few other friends at our buddy's home, where he had an Olympic set that his dad used. We basically shot from the hip, going off of NO charts whatsoever, and I can't even remember if we kept a training log on what we lifted. This was entirely a hit & miss workout routine. Later on in high school, I became pretty busy after school with my sports commitments as a student manager & trainer for fall & spring seasons, ceasing most workout stuff during the winter when basketball came. I ended up training myself in the mornings after my sophomore season ended in basketball, still not doing much on strength training, other than some bench press with those cement-filled weights and maybe some squats with light weight. Of course, curls were the finisher of the workout.

Fast forward into college, and now my sports career has hit a halt: no more basketball, other than intramural league ball in the winter, but I took on more of a habit of using the weight room. I'd train with my friends Jim & Tim, pretty much 4-5 days a week up there. "That Chart" from my junior high days in the weight room once again re-surfaced. Turns out NDSU wasn't the only one using this time-tested chart...honestly, I don't know its origins at all. I'd love to know that, maybe that's a future show for "MysteryQuest" on the History Channel.

We'd use it for our bench & squat workouts, and shoot from the hip on most anything else. I spent 2 years at Mayville State, and then transferred to Southwest State for 2 more years. "That Chart" once again showed up in the corners of the weight room by the squat racks & benches. I wasn't really worried about it, because at that time at SSU, I was more into the Muscle Media magazines, and the Bill Phillips Body for Life workouts. I decided to come back to Mayville State to finish out my 5th year of school, and my internship as a student strength coach once again showed me "That Chart", as we used it pretty extensively within the contexts of all the team trainings we conducted. There must be something unique about this chart, since I have seen it just about everywhere I've been. It doesn't die. It keeps on surviving. It must be eternal or something. Just recently, while digging through my training collections of workouts & books, "That Chart" showed up once again. I told you, this thing just doesn't die...

Anyway, I have decided to write out the percentages and sets/reps from this chart, because if you have a calculator, I think you can do the math just fine and figure out your weights, based on your 1 Rep Maximum. I assume this chart is based on a 3 cycle phase operation, over the course of 8 weeks, from what I have on the chart itself. It has break-in weeks and progressive routines over the course of the 8 weeks. Workout frequency could range from 2-3 times a week. I recommend twice a week for the big lifts, such as bench press, deadlift, and squats. I will give some sample structures at the end of this article.

“That Chart” Workout Program

Use % of 1 Rep Maximum

PHASE I – 4 weeks

Week 1: 2 sets of 10	1 st 65%	2 nd 70%		
Week 2: 3 sets of 10	1 st 65%	2 nd 70%	3 rd 75%	
Week 3: 3 sets of 5	1 st 70%	2 nd 75%	3 rd 80%	
Week 4: 4 sets of 5	1 st 70%	2 nd 75%	3 rd 80%	4 th 85%

PHASE II – 2 Weeks

Week 5: 4 sets: 10/8/6/4	1 st 55%	2 nd 65%	3 rd 75%	4 th 85%		
Week 6: 6 sets: 10/8/6/4/3/2	1 st 55%	2 nd 65%	3 rd 75%	4 th 85%	5 th 90%	6 th 90%

Phase III – 2 Weeks

Week 7 has different reps for Upper Body & Lower Body lifts.

Week 7:	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Upper Body 8/6/4/3/2/1/4	60%	70%	70%	80%	80%	90%	70%
Lower Body 10/8/6/4/2/1/6	60%	70%	70%	80%	80%	90%	70%
Week 8: 5 sets of 3:	1 st 80%	2 nd 85%	3 rd 90%	4 th 95%	5 th 90%		

Sample Routines

Note: use "The ASAP Way" workout guide for exercise ideas to fill in your choices of the Pull and Bend movements. Instructions for Bench Press, Deadlifts, and Front Squats are there as well. The Deadlift is recommended in these suggested samples.

<http://asapworkouts.com/asapway.pdf>

2 Days/Week

Mon-Thurs, Tues-Fri, Wed-Sat as suggestions.

Total Body Routine each day, rest 2-3 days between workouts as you desire.

Deadlifts

Bench Press

Pull Exercise: 2-3 sets x 8-12

Bend Exercise: 2-3 sets x 8-12

3 Days/Week

M-W-F or Tues-Thurs-Sat

Perform Lower Body one day, Upper Body next, then Total Body on the third day.

Lower Body Day:

Deadlift

Bend Exercise 2-3 sets x 8-12

Upper Body Day:

Bench Press

Pull Exercise 2-3 sets of 8-12

Total Body Day:

Deadlift

Bench Press

Pull Exercise: 2-3 sets x 8-12

Bend Exercise: 2-3 sets x 8-12

4 Days/Week:

Mon-Tues-Thurs-Fri

Follow the Upper, Lower, Upper, Lower Pattern.

Use the 3-Day Upper Routine & Lower Routine as your formats.

If you feel like doing more sets on the Pull & Bend exercises, feel free to do so. 2 to 3 sets of 8 to 12 reps/set is just a suggested starting point for you. Each person is different and can do as they desire.

Closing:

I honestly don't know what this program promises or delivers on average, all I know is that back in the college days, many guys & gals would see good increases in their strength levels and muscle mass. It's a simple percentage-based program that progressively works all ranges of muscle mass building & strength building. This program was the 'core' of the workouts given daily, and the rest were on-your-own, at-your-own-will things to do, such is how I have it structured. I feel if you focus on the deadlift & bench press exercises, you will see solid results, but you must supplement them with the other actions of pulling & bending. Lunging actions & Twisting actions can also be added in, if so desired, in the same sets/reps ranges given. Enjoy the next 2 months of training, delivered by the famous "That Chart"!

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