

SMS: A Year In Review

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I initially wrote this program solely for my own use after having read “5/3/1” by Jim Wendler. I wanted to put my own spin on it, however, so I messed with the rep ranges and tweaked what I felt was unnecessary. After having spent the summer working in at Fitness Quest 10, I was in the mindset of doing total body lifts each strength session. I wrote that into SMS 1, and while it definitely served its purpose to build a base, I quickly realized that I much preferred a more traditional upper/lower/push/pull-type split.

I brought that split out in SMS 2, going with a lower, push, pull, arm split. In SMS 3 I got rid of the arms day and instead put half of Day 2 and Day 4 together and made one of those wholes the new Day 2 and the other the new Day 4. This was the split that was followed through SMS 6. With the start of the second half of Year 1, I made the switch from prescribed sets to timed sets. This brought a whole new intensity to the SMS series, with workout volume often doubling. With SMS 9 and SMS 10 came complexes to the core lifts each day (squat, bench, deadlift, and standing military). I also added isometrics to SMS 10. Those were tough. Then in SMS 11 and SMS 12 I cut back on the volume by removing the second pair of supplemental lifts. After going through a year of this training I have learned a lot in regards to programming.

The number one thing I learned from writing the SMS series is just how important having a deload week is to the overall progression of the program and of the athlete. (Just as a side note, I refer to anybody who does the SMS training series as an athlete.) Up until this point, I hadn’t ever taken a deload week in my training. At the start of the program I was questioning why I was doing it, as I was not feeling the need at all to lighten the weights. But as the year progressed, I looked forward to those weeks more and more. If you are interested in learning more of the science and theory behind the deload week, read my article “Deload To Reload” at <http://selfmadefitness.com/selfmadearticles>.

The second important thing I learned from SMS is how powerful auto-regulation is. I hadn’t ever done timed sets before this program, and I must say, I don’t know if I will ever go back to doing prescribed sets again. As I mentioned above, the volume of my workouts increased significantly, especially for the working sets of my core lifts. The feeling I had after completing the workouts during the first week of SMS 7 was very similar to how I was feeling after I would complete a Cratos workout. For more information on both timed sets and Cratos training, visit the above link and read the articles “Timed Sets for Auto-Regulation” and “Cratos Training”.

The third important thing I learned from SMS is to cut back on the supplemental lifts and keep those to one pair. After I did that in SMS 11, I was able to attack the first pair of supplemental lifts so much harder because I knew that I only had hips and abs after that. It also allowed my lifts to be completed in under an hour, which was a huge psychological boost knowing that I was getting stronger in

less time. I didn't feel that I lost any gains by cutting out that second pair. On the contrary, I felt as though I was getting stronger than before because I was able to lift harder during the single pair and recover faster as well.

Some questions that I still have to answer about SMS are: If I am switching up deadlift and squatting styles, why I am not switching up bench or military press styles? How beneficial is the military press day? Is there a way to mix the old and the new—the Russian conjugate periodization with the new way I learned to train athletes at FQ10? Where do Olympic lifts and kettlebells come into play in SMS, if at all? These are all questions that need to be answered before I write and release SMS², but suffice it to say, if I learn as much about programming during this next year as I did during this last, we could be dealing with something very big. If you aren't on this program, do yourself a favor and get on it. SMS² coming at you in the next year.

Get big or die tryin'.

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