

# SAVAGE GRIP

A man with a beard and a red t-shirt is shown from the chest up. He is holding a small, dark, curved object in his right hand, which is engulfed in bright orange and yellow flames. The background is dark and textured, with some faint, illegible text visible. The overall tone is gritty and intense.

JIM SMITH





# SAVAGE GRIP

Jim Smith, CSCS

Copyright © 2006-2009 by Jim Smith

The Diesel Crew, LLC



All rights reserved. No part of this special report e-book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the expressed written permission from Jim Smith. We have unique tracking codes embedded, designed to detect illegal distribution of this special report e-book and the download links. Each download is recorded. Fines start at \$150,000 and include a possible prison sentence upon conviction.



## ***Savage Grip***

### ***The Essential Grip Training Exercises***

Copyright © 2006-2009, The Diesel Crew, LLC  
All Rights Reserved.

**Published in the United States by:**

**The Diesel Crew, LLC**

P.O. Box 806, Wyalusing, PA 18853

Tel: 607.857.8997

**Email:**

[smitty.diesel@gmail.com](mailto:smitty.diesel@gmail.com)

**Websites:**

[www.DieselCrew.com](http://www.DieselCrew.com)

[www.AcceleratedMuscularDevelopment.com](http://www.AcceleratedMuscularDevelopment.com)

[www.CombatCoreStrength.com](http://www.CombatCoreStrength.com)

**Author: Jim Smith**, *CSCS, CFT, USAW*

*Manufactured in the United States*

*First Edition: October 2009*



## **Disclaimer:**

You must get your physician's approval before beginning this exercise program. These recommendations are not medical guidelines but are for educational purposes only. You must consult your physician prior to starting this program or if you have any medical condition or injury that contraindicates physical activity. This program is designed for healthy individuals 18 years and older only.

The information in this manual is meant to supplement, not replace, proper exercise training. All forms of exercise pose some inherent risks. The editors and publishers advise readers to take full responsibility for their safety and know their limits. Before practicing the exercises in this manual, be sure that your equipment is well-maintained, and do not take risks beyond your level of experience, aptitude, training and fitness. The exercises and dietary programs in this book are not intended as a substitute for any exercise routine or treatment or dietary regimen that may have been prescribed by your physician.

See your physician before starting any exercise or nutrition program. If you are taking any medications, you must talk to your physician before starting any exercise program, including Accelerated Muscular Development. If you experience any lightheadedness, dizziness, or shortness of breath while exercising, stop the movement and consult a physician.

Don't perform any exercise unless you have been shown the proper technique by a certified personal trainer or certified strength and conditioning specialist. Always ask for instruction and assistance when lifting. Don't perform any exercise without proper instruction. Always do a warm-up prior to strength training and interval training.



You must have a complete physical examination if you are sedentary, if you have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, if you are overweight, or if you are over 30 years old. Please discuss all nutritional changes with your physician or a registered dietician. If your physician recommends that you don't use Savage Grip, please follow your doctor's orders.

Copyright © 2006-2009 The Diesel Crew, LLC

## **Waiver and Release of Liability:**

*(READ CAREFULLY BEFORE PERFORMING ANY EXERCISES IN THIS MANUAL)*

I UNDERSTAND AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERE ARE RISKS INVOLVED IN PARTICIPATING IN ANY EXERCISE PROGRAM AND / OR ANY EXERCISES CONTAINED WITHIN THIS MANUAL IN CONSIDERATION FOR BEING ALLOWED TO UTILIZE THE INFORMATION IN THIS MANUAL, I AGREE THAT I WILL ASSUME THE RISK AND FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DETERMINING THE NEED FOR MEDICAL CLEARANCE FROM MY PHYSICIAN AND OBTAINING SUCH CLEARANCE, THE SAFETY AND/OR EFFICACY OF ANY EXERCISE PROGRAM RECOMMENDED TO ME, AND ANY AND ALL INJURIES, LOSSES, OR DAMAGES, WHICH MIGHT OCCUR TO ME AND / OR TO MY FAMILY WHILE UTILIZING THE INFORMATION IN THIS MANUAL AND TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW I AGREE TO WAIVE AND RELEASE ANY AND ALL CLAIMS, SUITS, OR RELATED CAUSES OF ACTION AGAINST THE DIESEL CREW, LLC, JIM SMITH AND JEDD JOHNSON, THEIR EMPLOYEES, OR AFFILIATES (COLLECTIVELY THE DIESEL CREW, LLC), FOR INJURY, LOSS, DEATH, COSTS OR OTHER DAMAGES TO ME, MY HEIRS OR ASSIGNS, WHILE UTILIZING ALL THE INFORMATION OR PARTAKING IN THE EXERCISES CONTAINED WITHIN THIS MANUAL. I FURTHER AGREE TO RELEASE, INDEMNIFY AND HOLD THE DIESEL CREW, LLC FROM ANY LIABILITY WHATSOEVER FOR FUTURE CLAIMS PRESENTED BY MY CHILDREN FOR ANY INJURIES, LOSSES OR DAMAGES.



## Preface

Grip training has recently become mainstream in the strength and conditioning community as the popularity of strongman training has risen.

Grip strength is the true “forgotten element of functional training”. Many years ago when Jedd Johnson and I presented at the NSCA PA State Clinic, no one was doing grip. In fact, the Athletic Director from the Navel Academy came up to us after the presentation and asked us tons of questions about how he could implement grip training for his teams. It was a very amazing and innovative time.

It must be known that the end point of the kinetic chain is the hands. It is through the hands where the power that is generated, accumulated and transferred from the body is expressed. It stands to reason that if you strengthen your grip, you will become stronger. You become more efficient at creating tension.

It is that simple.

You must also understand that your hands are your bodies' indicator of the current state of your CNS. This knowledge can be a powerful tool. Are your hands red before you start training? Do the weights feel cold in your hands? You are more likely overtrained. As you are training (or if you are a strength coach training athletes), you can make real-time adjustments in your program according to your current state of recovery. Look to the hands!

The final point of discovery is tension. It has been called co-contraction or even irradiation. If we learn to create tension in our hands, our forearms tighten, our



biceps and triceps tighten, our shoulders tighten and our back and chest tighten. Your body is a single unit and acts as a single unit. Stuart McGill, world renowned back rehab specialist, describes how the simple fact of engaging the lats and grip during a normal back squat increases the percentage load that you are able to utilize by up to 30 lbs.

More tension equals more strength.

For all endeavors including sports and strength training you will begin to realize how important the development of your hands is and make it a priority in your training.

Jim Smith, CSCS



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Preface.....</i>                           | <i>6</i>  |
| <i>Introduction.....</i>                      | <i>9</i>  |
| <i>Grip Strength Categories .....</i>         | <i>10</i> |
| <i>Chalk.....</i>                             | <i>14</i> |
| <i>How to Incorporate a Grip Program.....</i> | <i>15</i> |
| <i>Sample Grip Strength Program .....</i>     | <i>19</i> |

## ***SECTION II: GRIP EXERCISE INDEX***

|                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>Crush .....</i>           | <i>26</i> |
| <i>Pinch.....</i>            | <i>34</i> |
| <i>Support .....</i>         | <i>44</i> |
| <i>Wrist Postures.....</i>   | <i>54</i> |
| <i>Hand Health.....</i>      | <i>59</i> |
| <i>Crazy Exercises .....</i> | <i>65</i> |

## ***SECTION III: GRIP STRENGTH WORKOUTS***

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Frequently Asked Questions .....</i>    | <i>77</i> |
| <i>Other Products from Jim Smith .....</i> | <i>88</i> |





## Savage Grip

Savage Grip means building a grip and the upper body strength to hold a mini-gun. Why do you want to hold a mini-gun? Because Jesse "the Body" looks bad ass!

As you will see with most of the exercises in this manual, when building grip strength you must always consider the entire body.



What good is a high level of "isolated" grip strength if you can't display strength and power with full body, compound movements in the weight room or crushing your opponent on the field?

And don't forget, nothing says someone has put some work in the gym, like a sick set of forearms. But no one trains forearms and when they do, it is at the end of the workout and all they do is just throw in a few sets of wrists curls.



You will now have the knowledge to start incorporating more grip into your workouts. And maybe you'll be able handle the sword like Conan.



# GRIP STRENGTH CATEGORIES



| GRIP           | CATEGORIES   |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Crush</b>   | <p><b>Crush</b> – shortening the distance between the fingers and the palm</p> <p><b>Exercises include:</b> grippers, towel training*, sandbag training*</p> <p><b>* Dynamic Crush</b></p> <p><b>Volume – typical volume (set x rep) schemes</b><br/>Maximal effort (ME) attempts (6-8 sets x 1 rep)<br/>Strength – 4-5 sets x 6-8 reps<br/>Endurance – 3 sets x 10-20 reps</p>  |
| <b>Pinch</b>   | <p><b>Pinch</b> – static position where the thumb opposes the fingers</p> <p><b>Exercises include:</b> two hand pinch (2HP), one hand pinch, blockweight training, blob training</p> <p><b>Volume – typical volume (set x rep) schemes</b><br/>Maximal effort (ME) attempts (6-8 sets x 1-3 reps)<br/>Endurance – 3-4 sets x held ALAP**</p> <p><b>**ALAP – As Long As Possible</b></p>  |
| <b>Support</b> | <p><b>Support</b> – static position where the fingers oppose the thumb</p> <p><b>Exercises include:</b> barbell rack holds, deadlifts, farmers walks, power ropes*, kettlebell training*, axle training</p> <p><b>* Dynamic Support</b></p> <p><b>Volume – typical volume (set x rep) schemes</b><br/>Maximal effort (ME) attempts (6-8 sets x 1-8 reps)<br/>Maximal effort (ME) attempts – held ALAP**<br/>Endurance – 3-4 sets x held ALAP**<br/><b>**ALAP – As Long As Possible</b></p> |



|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Wrist Postures</b> | <p><b>Wrist Postures</b> - Ulnar / Radial Deviation, Supination / Pronation, all postural movements</p> <p><b><i>Levering</i></b></p> <p>Sledgehammer Training – Unilateral / Bilateral, Plate Wrist Curls, Reverse Wrist Curls, Kettlebell Training, Clubbell Training, Stone Padlocks, Thick Bar Training</p> <p><b><i>Bending</i></b></p> <p>Short / Long (scrolling), Braced or Un-Braced, Double Overhand, Reverse, Double Underhand Styles of Bending, Wrenches, Screwdrivers, Rerod, Pliers</p> <p><b><i>Tearing</i></b></p> <p>Wide or Narrow, Braced or Un-Braced; Cards, Phone Books</p> |
| <b>Hand Health</b>    | <p><b><i>Hand Health</i></b> – includes extensor, dexterity, stretching, contrast bathes, traction and massage work.</p> <p><b><i>Extensor</i></b></p> <p>Extensor Jar, Rubberband, Sand / Rice Bucket, Sledgehammer – Finger Walking, Outer Loops</p> <p><b><i>Dexterity</i></b></p> <p>Shot, Tennis Balls, Golf Balls, Dexterity Balls Rotations, Hand Health Dexterity Exercises</p> <p><b><i>Stretching</i></b></p> <p>Various Postures</p> <p><b><i>Contrast Baths</i></b></p>  |





|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>Hot / Cold Baths</p> <p><b><i>Traction</i></b></p> <p>Elastic Band Traction</p> <p><b><i>Massage / Trigger Point Therapy</i></b></p> <p>SMR; ART, Foam Rollers, the Stick, Tennis Balls, Golf Balls, LAX balls</p> <p><b>Volume – typical volume (set x rep) schemes</b></p> <p>Repetitive Efforts (RE) – 4-5 sets of 12-15 reps</p> |
|--|---|



## Chalk

A lot of grip purists don't use chalk in the weight room. Their case is that if you don't use chalk, lifting the implements is harder, which develops more grip strength; which is the goal in the first place.

That is a good point.

But, I've seen many injuries because lifters didn't use chalk. Hand injuries and other catastrophic injuries from not using chalk when the bar slipped because the lifter's hands were sweaty.

I allow all of my lifters to use chalk and I recommend chalk. It allows more weight to be lifted and the chance for injury greatly decreases.





# SAVAGE GRIP

*How to Incorporate Grip Into  
Your Strength Routine*



## **How to Incorporate Grip Into Your Strength Routine**

The simple answer is, grip training should be done whenever and wherever you can fit it in. The complex answer deals with targeting weaknesses and not affecting your "primary" training sessions.

The hands recover very quickly and are also very indicative of the stage of recovery the athlete is currently in. Ever come into the gym and grab a weight and it felt "cold"? You looked at your hands and they were really red? Your central nervous system (CNS) was telling you that you were overtrained. It could be that your last training session was so intense, you didn't get enough sleep the night before or even your nutrition has been lacking recently. Regardless of "why", you were overtrained, you can take this information and use it to real-time alter your workout that day and do more recovery stuff. More mobility, more stretching, drink lots of water and just flush each body part with blood to further increase recovery.

## **So, When Can You Implement Grip Training?**

Grip training can be implemented during the primary training sessions or during an extra workout.

There are three (3) techniques you should utilize:

### **Prior to the Workout**

Engage your hands and lower arm musculature to prepare for upcoming demands of the workout. This is your activation for the workout. Grip exercises





can be used with your foam roller work and your warm-up to get ready for the big movements such as squats, deadlifts, bench press or power cleans.

## **During the Workout**

If you are going to implement exercises to improve your grip strength *during* the workouts there are two ways to do it. You can perform isolated exercises (grippers, plate pinch or levering) in between your primary worksets.

For example:

If you are doing 3 sets of 10 reps deadlifts, you can do the following:

Set 1: Deadlifts, 10 reps

Sledgehammer Levering, 8-10 reps

Set 2: Deadlifts, 10 reps

Sledgehammer Levering, 8-10 reps

Set 3: Deadlifts, 10 reps

Sledgehammer Levering, 8-10 reps

The key is to not perform any grip exercises that would compromise the execution of the primary lift. You don't want to perform heavy rack holds with a barbell in between sets of the deadlift.

The second way to incorporate grip strength during the workout is to substitute grip specific implements in place of conventional implements. Replace a barbell with an axle for deadlifts or bench presses. Or you could incorporate towels into



your pull-ups or cable rows. This is the easiest way to kill two birds with one stone and you will quickly develop a high level of grip strength. This is the kind of grip strength you want where you are utilizing your grip AND incorporating your full body during the movement. This is integrated training and will benefit you greatly in all your strength and sporting endeavors.

## **After the Workout**

The last way to incorporate grip is after the workout. This is primetime during your cool down and stretching to perform grip related strength training. You could target weaknesses or current injuries.

Lots of extensor work should be done frequently along with any facet of grip strength.



# **SAVAGE GRIP**

## *Sample Grip Strength Program*



## Sample Grip Strength Program

Here is a sample grip strength program dedicated to developing a comprehensive strength profile. All components of grip are factored into the program and it is structured on a 7 day routine. I suggest focusing on two aspects of grip plus some form of restoration or hand health means, for 3 week cycles. This will give you a solid 9 training sessions to develop these qualities. If the focus is too broad, meaning you are doing every aspect of grip each week, you might have a tendency to overtrain and not adapt to your potential. You will develop a level of overall hand strength, but I found focusing on one or two aspects to be more beneficial in the long run.

### **Weeks 1-3**

*Focus*

Pinch / Crush

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### **Weeks 4-6**

*Focus*

Crush / Support

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### **Weeks 7-9**

*Focus*

Support / Levering

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### **Weeks 10-12**

*Focus*

Levering / Pinch

Some Restoration/Hand Health





## **Weeks 1-3**

### *Focus*

Pinch / Crush

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### *Routine*

#### **Day 1:**

Blockweight (or Plate Pinch) Training – 4 sets x ALAP each hand

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions each hand

#### **Day 2: REST**

#### **Day 3:**

Grippers – 4 sets x 10 reps each hand

Towel Pull-ups – 4 sets x 8 reps

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 4: REST**

#### **Day 5:**

Grippers – 6 sets x 1 rep (heaviest gripper you can close, hold each close for 5 seconds) each hand

Two Hand Plate Pinch – 6 sets of 3 reps to lockout

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions each hand

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 6: REST**

#### **Day 7: REST**



## **Weeks 4-6**

### *Focus*

Crush / Support

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### *Routine*

#### **Day 1:**

Grippers – 4 sets x 20 reps each hand

Support Game – 3 sets x ALAP

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions

#### **Day 2: REST**

#### **Day 3:**

Heavy DB Shrugs – 4 sets x 10 reps

Plate Crushes – 4 sets x 20 reps

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 4: REST**

#### **Day 5:**

Grippers – 5 sets x 1 rep (hold each rep closed for 10 seconds) each hand

Rack Holds with Barbell – 2 sets x ALAP with 90% of 1RM for your deadlift

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions each hand

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 6: REST**

#### **Day 7: REST**



## **Weeks 7-9**

### *Focus*

Support / Levering

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### *Routine*

#### **Day 1:**

Grippers – 4 sets x 20 reps each hand

Support Game – 3 sets x ALAP

Two Hand Power Cage Pin (or Sledgehammer) – 3 sets x 10 reps

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions each hand

#### **Day 2: REST**

#### **Day 3:**

Towel Curls - 4 sets x 10 reps

Axle (or Barbell plus towel) Shrugs - 4 sets x 20 reps

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 4: REST**

#### **Day 5:**

Two Hand Power Cage Pin (or Sledgehammer) – 3 sets x 10 reps

Support Game – 3 sets x ALAP each hand

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 6: REST**

#### **Day 7: REST**



## **Weeks 10-12**

### *Focus*

Levering / Pinch

Some Restoration/Hand Health

### *Routine*

#### **Day 1:**

One Hand Plate Pinch (whole hand) – 4 sets x ALAP

2HP – 4 sets x 5 reps to lockout

Two Arm Power Cage Pin (or Sledgehammer) Levering – 4 sets x 10 reps

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions

#### **Day 2: REST**

#### **Day 3:**

2 HP – work up to 6 heavy single attempts

One Arm Levering - 3 sets x 15 reps

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 4: REST**

#### **Day 5:**

Grippers – 3 sets x 20 reps each hand

One Hand Plate Pinch (first two fingers) – 5 attempts x ALAP each hand

Rubberband Extensors – 3 sets x 50 extensions each hand

Contrast Bathes – 30 seconds hot / 30 seconds cold x Repeat 4 times

#### **Day 6: REST**

#### **Day 7: REST**





# **SAVAGE GRIP**

## *Exercise Index*



# **SAVAGE GRIP**

## *Crush Strength*



## Grippers

Grippers are the most basic implements used to develop *crushing* grip strength.

It is typically recommended to hit grippers through a full range of motion (no set) and for multiple reps. But many lifters and athletes move to a set when heavier grippers are used.



A set means, the gripper is closed with assistance from the opposite hand to various positions. Various training techniques are used with grippers to either improve the sweep, the set or the close.

### A gripper set can be:

- Set to parallel
- Set to a credit card width
- Deep set (within an inch)

### How Else Can Grippers Be Used?

- *Set Closes* – as a gripper strength increases, a set is typically incorporated to gain an advantageous position in the closing hand and to help with the sweep
- *No Set Closes* – just put it in your hand and squeeze



- *Beyond the Range* – one handle is shaved down to allow the handles to be closed beyond the normal range. This helps progress to a heavier gripper. This movement should be done for reps.
- *Strap Holds* – a metal strap (or lifting strap) is threaded around an Olympic plate and the other end of the strap is held between the gripper handles while they are closed. This is done for time.
- *Overcrushes* – this is where a lighter gripper is closed and the lifter will squeeze harder than is required to close the gripper. This movement improves the close and is held for time.
- *High Repetitions* – just like all training, the muscles of the hands and lower arm respond to training of various tensions (loads) and various volumes (sets x reps). Training grippers for high reps will improve your grip strength endurance.
- *Maximal Effort / Supramaximal Effort* – a heavier than your maximum strength level gripper is used to prepare the CNS and muscles for the demands of your goal gripper. If you are able to close a CoC #2, you can do maximal effort closes, assisting with the other hand, on the CoC #3.
- *Finger Closes* – instead of using your whole hand to close the gripper, you can close it with 1, 2 or 3 fingers. This is used to train weaknesses or rehab and injury.



## No Set Gripper Closes

A gripper is placed in the lifter's hand and closed without a set. This incorporates the widest possible sweep and toughest way to close a gripper.







## BTR Gripper Closes

Here you can see the gripper handle is shaved to increase the range of motion for the close. Also, for this sequence a no set is used to further increase the benefits of the exercise.





## Towel Pull-ups (Dynamic Crush)

Towel training is very versatile and should be incorporated frequently if you want to develop a world class grip. Here the lifter is performing towel pull-ups with the additional resistance of chains. Towel training is a form of dynamic crush because as the exercise is done, the grip “shifts” and the lifter must adjust as this happens.





## Dumbbell Crushes

Let the dumbbell roll down to the end of your fingers and then crush your hand closed. Perform for multiple reps.

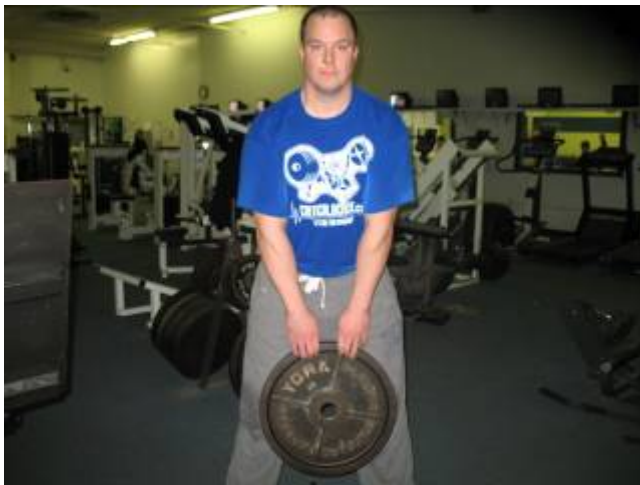






## Plate Crushes

Take an Olympic plate and face it away from you. Hook your fingers under the lip of the plate and let them extend all the way out. Crush your fingers down and the plate will go into your palm. Repeat for high reps.



## Towel Shrug with Dumbbells

For this movement you wrap a towel around a dumbbell and hold onto each end while you perform shrugs. This is a form of dynamic crush and is serious. Your grip will be dominated after this movement.





# SAVAGE GRIP

## *Pinch Strength*



## Two Hand Pinch (2HP)

You perform the two hand pinch lift (2HP) by putting two 45 lb plates facing each other with the smooth side outward. Put a pipe (2" outside diameter) through the two 45's. You stand over the apparatus and place your hands double overhand on the 45's, pinch and lift until your legs are locked out. You can perform maximal attempts on the 2HP or you can lift for multiple reps, locking out each one.







## Two Hand Pinch (2HP) Lift

Here is Jedd performing a 2HP lift in competition. You would perform it the same way. To see the lift in action, copy and paste this link into your browser and watch the video from my YouTube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/smittydiesel>

### Two Hand Pinch Lift (and other pinch training):

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi6qsnbJ\\_bA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi6qsnbJ_bA)





## One Hand Pinch

This is the one hand pinch lift. It is done the same way. Take two Olympic plates, 25 lb, 35 lb or 45 lb plates and put them smooth side outward. Pinch in one hand and lift to lockout.



## One Hand Pinch (with Multiple Plates)

Here is the one hand pinch done with multiple (greater than 2) plates. Here I am doing the pinch lift with 4 each x 10 lb plates.





## Blockweights / Blobs

Blockweights and blobs can also be used to train pinch grip strength.

Blockweights – ½ of a hex head dumbbell that has been broken or cut off of the handle

Blobs – ½ of a York dumbbell that has been broken or cut off of the handle

Blobs are typically harder than blockweights because the sides slope outward and require a greater commitment from your grip.

With that being said, blockweights and blobs vary depending upon where they were manufactured or what batch they were in. Some blockweights are wider or with a longer bevel on the sides and some are taller and narrower. Some blobs, original York's, are wider and with a steeper outward slope.



**York Blob**

**Blockweight**



## Blockweight Training (Whole Hand)

Lifting a blockweight with all four fingers and the thumb is lifting it with the whole hand. Lifting the blockweight to lockout constitutes a full repetition.



## Blockweight Training (One Finger)

Blockweight training can be used to improve weaknesses and rehab an injury. By training individual fingers you can accomplish both of these goals.







## Blockweight Training (Two Fingers)



## Blockweight Training (Three Fingers)



## Blockweight Training (Four Fingers)





## Blockweight Training (By the Face)

You can also lift a blockweight or a blob “by the face”. This means laying the weight on its side and lifting it from the top. This is typically the hardest feat you can perform with the blockweight or blob. Within grip athletics, lifting a 50 lb York blob by the face is considered a milestone in pinch grip.



## Blob Training (By the Face)







## Hub Pinching

Hub pinching is done by laying an Olympic plate face up and lifting it by the center hub. This is a very difficult movement and will not only improve your finger and palm strength but also toughen the fingers.



## Homemade Hub Pinching (utilizing a hockey puck)

Here is another way to cheaply create a hub pinching implement. Take an eye hook and screw it into a hockey puck. Then attached a loading pin with weight stacked on it. Lift to lockout. Serious finger strength is developed.





## Hex Head Holds

Another way to train your pinch quickly in the gym is to utilize the hex head dumbbells found in most gyms. Grabbing them on the end of the weight you can lift them and hold for time. This will build mental toughness and can be used as a competition pitting training partners or teammates against each other. Put them facing each other and who ever drops the weight first loses. The time you are able to hold the weights can be extended if you flex your back, shoulders and biceps. Remember, the body is one kinetic chain and works as a single unit. Creating more tension will always increase your strength.





# SAVAGE GRIP

## *Support Strength*



## Barbell Rack Holds

Barbell rack holds are done to improve your support grip strength endurance. You setup a barbell in a rack near lockout and lift the weight, typically with a double overhand (pronated) grip. Hold for time. You can also increase the difficulty of this lift by utilizing an axle or holding onto towels wrapped around the bar.





## Thick Axle Holds

The same movement as above but utilizing an axle. This is a very difficult variation for rack holds and will require every muscle and ounce of strength you have to hold the weight for as long as you can.







## Axle Deadlifts

Here is an example of how to incorporate grip *during* (Version 2 in the main manual) your workout. Version 2 involves substituting a grip dependent implement instead of a barbell for a compound movement. As you can see, the athlete is really focused on his grip and has to create a ton of tension through his lower arms and upper back just to hold the weight.





## Axle Shrugs

Performing shrugs with an axle is another way to get your grip stronger.







## Homemade Thick Wrist Roller

Instead of using a wimpy, little wrist roller that you hold in front of you and twist, we made our own; and you can too.

This is one of the best wrist developing movements we have ever used during the last 15 years of training.

### Equipment needed:

- loading pin
- carabineer
- rope
- 4" x 4' PVC pipe

### Setup & Execution:

Setup apparatus at shoulder level and perform wrist extension and flexion to move the loading pin up to the pipe. Make sure you work both ways; forward and backwards. Make sure you regulate your breathing and forcibly engage the lats and upper back. Perform for a set number of reps and sets, or for a set length of time, specific to your needs.





## Axle Clean & Press

Here we are performing an axle clean & press for reps during for our primary movement.



## Axle Curls

Performing conventional barbell bicep curls but with an axle.





## Rolling Thunder

This device is an Ironmind Rolling Thunder. It is a thick bar implement that revolves which is the key to its difficulty. The Rolling Thunder is attached to a loading pin that has Olympic weights stacked on it. The lifter will get close to the weight with their arm straight and drive to lockout with the legs. This movement is deceptively hard because again, the bar revolves.



## Towel Curls (Dynamic Support)

Take a towel and wrap it around the handle of a dumbbell and you instantly get a thick implement, great for developing grip strength.







## Rope Climbing

If you want to get serious full body strength as well as a vice grip, you have to perform some movements with a thick rope. Here the lifter is performing rope climbs with the rope attached to the top pull-up bar of a power cage. This is a great movement as it doesn't require the normal rope climbing setup, which attaches the rope to the ceiling.





## The Support Game

Take an Olympic bar and load it up with weight on a power cage or half rack below waist height. Go to the end of the bar, on the thick revolving end and grab it. Lift up and hold for time. The setup can be done quickly and will have huge carryover to all of your lifts.





# **SAVAGE GRIP**

## *Wrist Exercises*





## Plate Wrist Curls

This movement is performed with an Olympic plate. You grab the plate on the edge, face up, with your thumb hooked on the lip of the plate. Contracting the wrist and keeping your lower arm fixed at 90 degrees, move the plate to full flexion. Lower the weight back down and flex it back up. You will notice that it will develop your finger strength as well as your wrist strength.







## Plate Curls

Grabbing multiple plates and facing them with the smooth side out on the outside plates, you will perform typical curls. Keep your wrist statically contracted and fixed while you perform the movement. In this picture I am performing plate curls with three 10 lb plates.





## Dumbbell Wrist Curls

With your lower arm resting on a bench and your wrist hanging off, perform wrist curls with a dumbbell.





## Hammer Curl Bar Levering

No need for a sledgehammer, you can perform levering in the gym with a hammer curl bar. Grab the bar at the end and fix your shoulders and arms parallel to the ground. Lever the bar downward toward your head. Switch your hands after each set. Start with your left hand at the bottom for one set and switch to your right hand at the bottom for the next set. You can also use an EZ curl bar for this movement.





# **SAVAGE GRIP**

## *Hand Health*





## Hand Walking on Foam

If you get a chance to get some foam, take it to the gym. It is an amazing tool to use for rehab and recovery. Here I am using it for hand walking. You setup on the foam in a push-up position and walk your hands all over the foam in every direction. This will open up your fingers, wrist, elbows and shoulders all at once. If you can't get foam, get an old couch cushion!





## Shot Rotations

If you get a chance to pick up some steel shot somewhere, I would suggest it. We use these to improve our finger dexterity as well as help our hands recover from a strenuous workout. You can also use golf balls, tennis balls and lacrosse balls. Place them in your hands and rotate them clock-wise and counter clock-wise for tons of reps.







## Sledgehammer Rotations

Sledgehammer rotations involve rotating the lower arm back and forth while it is fixed at 90 degrees. These rotations are called supinations (palm up) and pronations (palm down). Start with your hand close to the weighted end of the sledgehammer and as you get stronger, move your hand further down the handle. This is an amazing recovery means for your elbow and I've used it for years with all my athletes. If you don't have a sledgehammer, use a pin from a power cage at the gym.





## Sledgehammer Walking

Grab the sledgehammer (or power cage pin) in one hand at the end of the handle. Keeping your hand at your side, walk your fingers down the handle and progress toward the weighted end. This is very hard and will immediately build up lactic acid in your forearms. As you get stronger you can sledge 10 lb plates over the handle and perform the movement against more weight. Once you reach the bottom, start over.





## Golf Ball Rotations / Contrast Bath Combination

Here we are performing two awesome recovery means for the hands and lower arm. We are rotating the golf ball in our hands while switching between hot and cold water buckets. This should be done frequently after high intensity workouts and during off days in preparation for the next training session.





# SAVAGE GRIP

## *Crazy Exercises*





## Lacrosse / Tennis Ball Pull-ups

While performing pull-ups, hold lacrosse balls in your hands. This requires an insane amount of focus, finger and wrist strength. Make sure to hit singles until you become proficient at this exercise.







## Towel Pull-ups (Dynamic Support)

To make the bar "thicker" we wrap a towel around the bar. This is different than typical pull-ups with towels where you have the towels hanging down. With this version we are actually wrapping the towel around the bar itself. This is hard as hell and you have to be ready for a battle.





## Rolling Axle Pull-ups

This exercise is ridiculously hard. Make no mistake. Take an axle and put it ON TOP OF your power cage. Now perform pull-ups. There are two things working against you: the fact that the axle is thicker; and that the axle is able to roll freely over the top of the cage. This is amazingly difficult and will require a high level of grip strength.



## Combat Push-ups Version 1

Here is a version of push-ups focusing on finger and wrist strength. Take two 5 lb plates and pinch them together while you perform push-ups.





## Combat Push-ups Version 2

Focusing now on ulnar and radial deviation strength, we are now utilizing a dowel rod. You have to squeeze extremely hard to keep your knuckles off the ground during the movement.



## Combat Push-ups Version 3

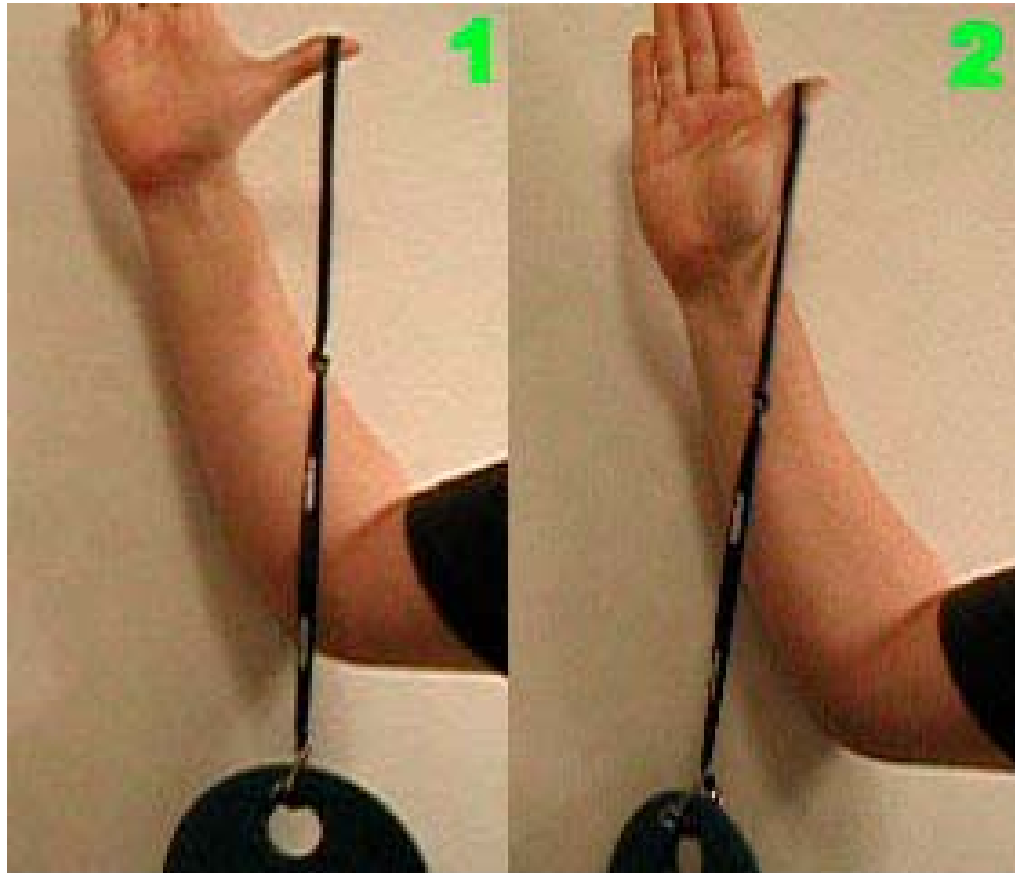
We switch the dowels around in the hands and focus on the other side of the wrist. Stay tight and focus on the tension from the back to the hands.





## Thumb Training

Many athletes and lifters who participate in sports at sometime injure their fingers and especially the thumb. This exercise, using a simple key chain lanyard, is a way to target the injury and focus on the strengthening the area. With all rehab exercises, lots of volume should be utilized.







## KYAO (Knock Yo Ass Out)

This exercise I created about 5 years ago when I started working with MMA athletes. It works finger adduction strength which is NEVER targeted with any training. But, it is so important for creating great tension with a fist and protecting the hands and wrists when punching. Take an Ironmind Eagle Loop strap and tie it around a dumbbell handle. Then place each strap BETWEEN the fingers. Make a tight fist and lift the dumbbell and hold for time.







## Towel Pronate and Curl

Thread a towel through a carabineer at the bottom of a cable stack and hold it tight to your side. Internally rotate your hand (pronate) and then curl the weight. The towel adds a thicker implement to grip and the cable keeps constant tension throughout the movement.





## Crush Curls

By gripping the dumbbell on the ends, you not only create a great amount of tension, you engage more of the chest and upper back. You can perform this movement on the preacher bench or standing. Your fingers will also be getting a great workout when doing this exercise.





## Towel Barbell Curls

Loop two towels around the barbell and grip them while you perform curls. After performing this exercise for several workouts you'll notice an incredible increase in strength when you go back to just utilizing the barbell without the towels.







## Around the Worlds

Perform a two hand pinch with plates and when the weight is locked out start walking your hands around the outside of the plates. Walk your hands around both CW and CCW. This develops serious dynamic pinch grip strength.





## Blockweight Curls (By the Face)

Pinch a blockweight by the face and perform reverse curls with it. You'll notice you'll have to fight to keep the blockweight in your grasp throughout the movement because the weight will be shifting.







# SAVAGE GRIP

## *Questions & Answers*



## Questions & Answers

### *Question 1:*

I have having trouble holding onto the bar when I hit deadlifts and rack pulls. How can I increase my grip strength for these movements? I'm strong enough to hit the weight, but my grip always fails. I don't want to throw straps on and get my grip weaker!

### *Answer:*

In recent past I would have said that rack lockout holds, farmers implement holds or kettlebell holds for time - would have been my answer.

But, after recent information and anecdotal evidence suggests, high rep movements that provide agitation, deceleration and long time under tension has been found to have the most carryover to static support grip strength.

### **So, I would suggest:**

- high rep farmers implement shrugs
- high rep kettlebell swings
- high rep db side pulls



*Question 2:*

What are your top 3 grip exercises for improving your hand strength for the deadlift?

*Answer:*

Have trouble opening jars? Your hands look someone who got smashed by a house in the Wizard of Oz? You've got problems. Well, fortunately you are doing something about it. You are accessing a wealth of knowledge, on the greatest Powerlifting site on the web – [www.EliteFTS.com](http://www.EliteFTS.com). To increase your bench, dead and squat, one essential aspect everyone forgets – is strengthening your grip. Gripping the bar with the strongest / tightest grip possible is essential for locking your body into a solid, weight bearing structure. There are many different types of grip strength; supporting, pinch, crush, levering, bending and tearing – for instance. For this article we will focus on supporting strength as it pertains to your deadlift.

**Here are 3 quick, simple exercises that will help increase your deadlift grip.**

**1. Double – Over-Hand Deadlifts (double pronated)**

This simple adjustment to your normal alternated grip, will provide huge gains in your supporting strength during competition and training. Take your normal deadlift stance, conventional or sumo, load down into the bar, and grasp the bar with a double over-hand grip. You will be quickly humbled by the amount of weight you can pull. Typically, a person who has never done this will only be able to pull around only 60-70% of your 1RM, especially if you are loading with



bands. The weight will roll right out of your hands! During your normal training day, use this grip until you cannot hold the bar anymore, then switch to your normal alternated grip, and finish your workout.

## **2. Thick Bar Lifting**

Go to the junkyard and get an 8' pipe, anything close to 2" OD (outside diameter). Take a 2 ½ lb plate with you to make sure it will fit on the pipe with the least amount of free space. Use this bar everyday; for cleans, deads (double over-hand, or alternating), military press, bent-over rows, bench or any exercise you can use a regular bar for... The finger / wrist strength you will gain from incorporating thick bar work will transfer your grip strength over to new PR's.

## **3. Wide Pinch**

Working your grip in this outstretched position will tax the endpoints on your fingers and teach you to flex the palm of your hand. This is one of the key components to overall hand strength. How do you work wide pinch in a typical gym? Grab 3 x 25's and place them all together, with outer 2 – 25's smooth side out. Grasp the 3 x 25's with a double over-hand grip (fingers on the outside of the stack of weights) and pick them up. Hold them for time. Not too hard? Try this: 3 x 35's! Pick them up and hold for time. Hope you don't plan on using utensils when you eat next, because you won't be able to hold a fork...! For a variation, grab the 3 x 25's or 3 x 35's with a double under-hand grip (supinated, thumbs on the outside of the stack of weights).

Cycle these 3 tips into your training and your deadlift grip will be solid as a vise. Always throw them in at the end of your workout because you don't want your



grip to be a limiting factor for your core exercises. Believe me - your hands will be destroyed!

---

*Question 3:*

Okay Smitty, I know the man to go to when I have a grip question. My problem is that I'm not seeing any progress from one week to the next. I did a 230 farmers for 130 feet last week (after being a head case about it for the first two sets) but then, this week, I could only get 235 lb for 70 feet on my best run. Other than farmers the only grip work I do during the week is the Kroc Rows, and my lats give out way before my grip does on those, so I cant possibly be overtraining my grip, right? What do you do/how do you evaluate any grip problems you have and determine the solution for yourself? I'm not sure whether to add in holds, wrist roller, crusher, sledgehammer wrist work (whaddyacallit, inversion/eversion or something?) or what. I don't want to overcomplicate it but what I'm doing isn't working.

I know it's tough to figure something like this out over the internet, and I'm not asking for a quick-fix magical solution with Nats less than 6 weeks away (although any direct exercise suggestions would be appreciated) but how do you and the rest of the Diesel Crew approach fixing a grip problem? More work, different exercises, or something else altogether?





*Answer:*

I do have a few unique suggestions for you.

The most obvious points are:

1. Walk quickly – cover as much distance as you can before the lactic acid builds up and the strength goes...
2. Regulate your breathing – learn how to breathe while under load and bracing
3. Strength – heavy rack, short ROM lockouts held for time build the support grip strength endurance that has solid carryover. You can actually set up the farmers on a high pin, usually about 4-6 inches from lockout, or use 2 Olympic bars.

With that being said, here are the suggestions:

### **Suggestion 1**

Start keeping a training log when you do farmers and note distances.

For example:

Attempt 1: 230 lb Farmers – 50'

Attempt 2: 230 lb Farmers – 100'

Attempt 3: 230 lb Farmers – 150'

Attempt 4: 230 lb Farmers – 90'

Attempt 5: 230 lb Farmers – 75'



As you can see by this simple example, your physiological state peaked on your 3rd attempt. If you monitor this closely, it can become very important at Nationals and will determine intensity and duration of your warm-ups. This example would dictate that your farmers attempt should be preceded by a certain amount of attempts and at a certain intensity. Obviously this also changes determinant upon which event the farmers event falls, meaning less warm-up will be needed if the farmers events is 2nd, 3rd and so on...

### **Suggestion 2**

Also, closely monitor the frequency, intensity and recovery throughout the next 6 weeks. Subsequent intense training sessions should not occur as you have to vary the intensity to allow for recovery and compensation. Your training state and ability to recover is also dependent upon rest, nutrition, and balance of strength training movements.

### **Suggestion 3**

Utilize your wrists! Cocking your wrist when lifting and initiating the farmers walk will not only engage the musculature that cross the wrists but also force the wrists to initially take the load slowly transitioning to the fingers as time elapses.

### **Suggestion 4**

Use the lats. Flexing your lats hard when lifting the load and continuously throughout the event, will pull in the upper back and shoulders into the movement - giving you greater strength and a further distance.



## **Suggestion 5**

Offset your grip 1" toward to the back from center shifting the COG and mass of the farmers to your stronger fingers; i.e. the pointer and middle fingers. This one will be very beneficial.

## **Suggestion 6**

Remember to chalk the back of your pointer fingers as they are the anchor point for your thumb!

---

### *Question 4:*

I can currently close the COC #2 for 2-3 consecutive reps. I am looking to get certified on closing the COC #3. However, I am lacking a solid training program specifically for grippers. Could you suggest a solid routine that I could follow in order to bridge the gap between the COC #2 and the #3? Also, based on where I am now, how long would you estimate on average would it take for me to get to the COC#3? (I know there are many variables that influence it, but just a ball park). Thank you very much in advance for your help!

### *Answer:*

It really depends. What kind of set are you using to close the #2? Can you credit card set it?

Have you tried the 2.5?



There really is a huge difference between the #2 and the #3.

I would suggest first trying the #2 with a CC set. Then try it with a 2.5.

Then I would take the #2 and shave down one of the handles to start doing beyond the range closes. I would also do nothing but no set closes with this shaved #2.

Finally, you have to add blockweights in training not only the whole hand, but the last two fingers which are essential to the sweep and close.

**You could try this sample routine:**

**Day 1:** No set holds for time with shaved #2 - close and hold for 10-15 seconds x 5 each hand, blockweight lifts from bench, pause at lockout, 4x10 each hand

**Day 2:** Rest, Recovery

**Day 3:** No set closes with shaved #2, 4x5, assist with the opposite hand when needed; blockweights hold for time, 4xALAP each hand (As Long As Possible)

**Day 4:** Rest, Recovery

**Day 5:** Repeat Day 1 or Day 3

**Day 6:** Rest, Recovery

**Day 7:** Rest, Recovery



*Question 5:*

I sprained my thumb about a month ago and it's not 100% but it's getting there. My strength and ROM are down in it and it just hurts to hold a heavy bar no matter the exercise. Any tips on making this better? I do have some grip equipment: hub attachment, titan telegraph, fat grips and some blocks and stuff. Thanks.

*Answer:*

I've had success with golf ball rotations in a contrast bath and rice digs. Rehab is slow with the thumb and I've found exercises that induce agitation are better than static holds with various implements.

See the rotations here:

<http://www.elitefts.com/documents/pony.pdf>





*Question 6:*

Would you recommend the "[pinch grip strength fundamentals](#)" for someone wanting to improve their grip for the deadlift? I am in desperate need in improving my grip as this is by far my biggest weakness on the deadlift even with straps it is my grip that fails before anything else. Any help or suggestions would be appreciated.

*Answer:*

I would offer several additions to my previous answers:

- Endurance KB work
- Timed rack holds
- Towel Training
- Double Overhand Pulling - until it gives out, then switch to an alternated grip
- Sledgehammer training
- Sandbag Training
- and many more...

Incorporating any of these supplemental means will have carryover to your general grip strength levels.

Sometimes, the answer is to actually just squeeze the hell out of the bar...

If you like pain and have had some previous bicep issues, you could switch to a double overhand hook grip...



# SAVAGE GRIP

*Other Products from Jim Smith*



## ABOUT JIM SMITH



Jim Smith, CSCS, CFT, USAW is the co-founding member of the Diesel Crew. Jim is certified through the *National Strength and Conditioning Association* (NSCA) as a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS), the *International Sports Sciences Association* (ISSA) as a Certified Fitness Training (CFT) and USA Weightlifting (USAW) as a Club Coach.

He dedicates himself to studying, developing and enhancing athletic performance through the utilization of conventional, non-conventional strength training protocols. Helping athletes of all skills levels attain their goals and “Achieve Beyond Potential”, Jim is also a lecturer, author and member of the EliteFTS Q&A Staff. Jim is an expert contributor for *Men’s Fitness* and is a member of the *Elite Fitness Q/A* staff.

To learn more about Jim, visit his website at [www.DieselCrew.com](http://www.DieselCrew.com)

## OTHER PRODUCTS FROM JIM SMITH



### COMBAT CORE

By Jim Smith, cscs  
[www.CombatCoreStrength.com](http://www.CombatCoreStrength.com)

The manual is the essential core training reference for all strength coaches and fitness professionals. Combat Core demonstrates advanced torso training strategies for elite athletes and the manual provides the science and anatomy that the exercises are based upon.



### ACCELERATED MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT

By Jim Smith, cscs  
[www.AcceleratedMuscularDevelopment.com](http://www.AcceleratedMuscularDevelopment.com)

Accelerated Muscular Development (AMD) is the ONLY complete muscle building system. AMD provides a step-by-step, easy-to-follow protocol that “teaches” you how to not only build slabs of muscle, but also how to structure your own programs.



### CHAOS TRAINING

By Jim Smith  
<http://www.dieselcrew.com/manuals.php>

Bridging the gap from typical strength training means to sporting execution. This monster manual is over 670 pages of innovation. Chaos Training is the essential, all encompassing reference for all athletic trainers and strength coaches.



### BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA

By Jim Smith  
<http://www.dieselcrew.com/mma-manual-re-released>

The ESSENTIAL reference for training combat athletes. If you are a MMA fighter, you train fighters or you WANT to train like a fighter, BFT is a must have. Weighing in at over 800 pages, it has everything you need to get stronger, more explosive and obtain an elite level of conditioning.



[www.dieselcrew.com](http://www.dieselcrew.com)

*"Achieving Beyond Potential"*