

Documenting Your Performance In The Weight Room

By Matt Brzycki



Many athletes believe that they do not need to use a workout card because they can remember their resistance and repetitions. In all likelihood, they have probably been lifting the same resistance and doing the same repetitions for so long that the numbers have become firmly entrenched in their long-term memories. The fact of the matter is that it is absolutely critical to keep written records that are accurate and detailed if strength training is to be as productive as possible.

Why? For one thing, records document the history of what you accomplished during each and every exercise of each and every strength session. Moreover, maintaining records is an extremely valuable tool to monitor your progress and make your workouts more meaningful. Records can also be used to identify exercises in which you have reached a plateau. In the unfortunate event of an injury, you can also gauge the effectiveness of your rehabilitative training if you have a record of your pre-injury levels of strength.

A workout card can have an infinite number of appearances and need not be elaborate. However, you should be able to

record your bodyweight, the date of each workout, the resistance used for each exercise, the number of repetitions performed for each exercise, the order in which the exercises were completed and any necessary seat adjustments.

Some of the more common exercises can be listed on the workout card (such as the leg extension, bench press and bicep curl). Or, the workout card can contain blank spaces so that you can fill in your own menu of exercises. The recommended repetition ranges should also be given for each exercise.

RECORDING DATA

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the correct way for you to record your data on a workout card – as well as to understand the application of the double-progressive technique – is to detail several imaginary workouts. In the upcoming discussion, please refer to Figure 1 where data from four workouts (using single-set training) have been recorded for the period of September 22 - October 1. Due to space constraints, the data for our fictional athlete – named Ryan Wrestler – have been

limited to details of the first eight exercises in his total-body workout.

September 22: Ryan started his workout by performing lateral neck flexion (to the right and left). He was able to do 10 repetitions with 105 pounds in both exercises. After training his neck, he performed the leg press as his hip exercise. Note that he used 275 pounds and managed 18 repetitions. He then did 15 repetitions on the prone leg curl with 100 pounds. Using 160 pounds on the leg extension, he performed 10 repetitions. Ryan's third and final leg exercise (his sixth overall) was the seated calf raise. In this movement, he did 17 repetitions with 120 pounds. In the bench press, he managed 8 repetitions with 180 pounds. As a second chest exercise (his eighth overall), the athlete chose the bent-arm fly. Here, he performed 8 repetitions with a pair of 40-pound dumbbells.

September 24: Two days later during his second workout of the week, Ryan again began with his neck exercises. This time, however, he elected to perform two different exercises: neck flexion and neck extension (using manual resistance or "MR"). After completing these two exercises, the athlete moved to the leg press. Because he was not able to do the maximal number of repetitions during his previous workout, note that he used the same resistance. On this date, however, he performed 20 repetitions with 275 pounds – an improvement of 2 repetitions. In his previous workout, he was able to do the maximal number of repetitions on the prone leg curl, so he increased the resistance by 2.5 pounds – from 100 to 102.5. The athlete managed 14 repetitions with the new resistance. During the leg extension, he again used 160 pounds but was able to do 11 repetitions – one more than the last time. Since Ryan exceeded the maximal number of repetitions on the seated calf raise in his previous workout, he increased the resist-



Harold Nichol's Open. 125 lb. championship. Ropp, Wartburg, decisioned Sundell, Iowa State, 7-6. Photo by John C. Johnson.

ance from 120 to 122.5 pounds and did 16 repetitions with it. In the bench press, he repeated 180 pounds and managed 9 repetitions – an improvement of one repetition compared to his preceding workout. During the bent-arm fly, the athlete again used 40-pound dumbbells and improved his repetitions from 8 to 9.

September 26: Ryan started off his third and final workout of the week by doing lateral neck flexion (again to the right and left). Since he did not do the maximal number of repetitions the last time that he performed those two exercises, he used the same resistance but was able to do 11 repetitions. His next exercise was the leg press in which he increased the resistance by 5 pounds – from 275 to 280 – and did 19 repetitions. For the second consecutive workout, the athlete managed 14 repetitions with 102.5 pounds on the prone leg curl. On the leg extension, he used the same resistance as the previous workout – 160 pounds – but was able to do one more repetition. He increased the resistance on the seated calf raise from 122.5 to 125 pounds and performed 15 repetitions. The athlete again used 180 pounds on the bench press and was able to perform 10 repetitions – one more than his previous workout. In the bent-arm fly, he used 40-pound dumbbells again and did the same number of repetitions as the last time.

September 29: During his first workout of the second week, Ryan began his workout with neck flexion and neck extension (using manual resistance). On this date, he decided to change his hip exercise from the leg press to the deadlift (with a trap bar) and was able to do 20 repetitions with 205 pounds. Next, he moved to the prone leg curl and performed 15 repetitions with 102.5 pounds – an improvement of one repetition compared to his previous workout. Using 160 pounds on the leg extension, he again did 12 repetitions. Ryan completed his lower-body exercises by doing 14 repetitions on the seated calf raise with an increased resistance of 127.5 pounds. In

the bench press, he again did 10 repetitions with 180 pounds. And in the bent-arm fly, he performed 10 repetitions – one more than in his last workout – with the 40-pound dumbbells.

October 1: The resistance for each exercise has been recorded for this workout based upon Ryan’s performance in his prior workout. Note that the resistance was increased on lateral neck flexion (right and left) as well as the deadlift and prone leg curl because he performed the maximal number of repetitions during his previous workout. The resistance remained the same on the leg extension, bench press and bent-arm fly. Finally, the athlete chose to perform dorsi flexion (with manual resistance) as his lower-leg exercise instead of the seated calf raise.

The bottom line: Do not underestimate the importance of using a workout card in making your strength training more productive and more meaningful.

Matt Brzycki has been involved in the strength and conditioning of collegiate wrestlers for more than 20 years. Since 1986, he has authored more than 60 articles for Wrestling USA Magazine. Reprints of 42 of these articles have been updated and adapted into book form (Wrestling Strength: The Competitive Edge and Wrestling Strength: Prepare to Win) and are available through Cardinal Publishers Group (800-296-0481). He is also the author of A Practical Approach to Strength Training and the editor of Maximize Your Training, a 455-page book that features chapters written by more than 30 strength and fitness professionals.



NAME: Ryan Wrestler		DATE	Mon 09-22	Wed 09-24	Fri 09-26	Mon 09-29	Wed 10-01	
		BW	162	162	161	162		
EXERCISE		REPS	SEAT	wt reps	wt reps	wt reps	wt reps	
Neck (2-4)	Neck Lateral Flexion/R	8-12	5	105 11		105 12		107.5
	Neck Lateral Flexion/L	8-12	5	105 11		105 12		107.5
	Neck Flexion	8-12	5		MR 12		MR 12	
	Neck Extension	8-12	5		MR 12		MR 12	
Hips (1)	Leg Press	15-20	7	275 18	275 20	280 19		
	Deadlift	15-20					205 20	207.5
Upper Legs (2)	Prone Leg Curl	10-15		100 15	102.5 14	102.5 14	102.5 15	105
	Leg Extension	10-15	3	160 10	160 11	160 12	160 12	160
Lower Legs (1)	Seated Calf Raise	10-15		120 17	122.5 16	125 15	127.5 14	
	Dorsi Flexion	10-15						MR
Chest (2)	Bench Press	6-12		180 8	180 9	180 10	180 10	180
	Bent-Arm Fly	6-12		40 8	40 9	40 9	40 10	40

Figure 1: Recording workout Data (Single-Set Training)