THE BARBELL CLEAN & PRESS

A FORGOTTEN EXERCISE!

By

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Introduction

Many decades ago the Olympic barbell clean & press overhead was recognized as one of three standard international lifts (the other two are the snatch and the clean & jerk) that was performed in competitions. For quite a few years this lift was performed in a meritorious style (erect stance, nearer shoulder width grip, elbows consciously held in etc.) then an odd development begin to manifest itself through a liberalization of the rules, due in part to the influence of the Russian and Asiatic lifters. It got to a point where many of the officials were not able to keep to a strict interpretation of the rules governing this lift and gradually the rules became so lenient that the press was often called the “odd ball” lift.

It was a joke to see a lifter pressing nearly as much or more as he could jerk overhead, an example being in a 1972 competition where the great Soviet Olympic lifter Vasiily Alexeev “pressed” 518.1 pounds but only clean & jerked 507.1 pounds. Judging the Olympic barbell clean & press overhead continued to become such a monumental problem (obvious slumped upper body/hyper-extended back, knee-kicks, and sudden jolts in the starting drive of the press) that it was finally abolished as one of the official international lifts in the early 1970s.

During its hey day as one of three standard tests of combined strength and athletic ability in weight lifting the Olympic barbell clean & press was the most basic of all exercises, especially for the development of the shoulders. Sadly though because of its abolishment the Olympic barbell clean & press (along with the Continental and Military press) quickly faded in popularity and became an almost forgotten exercise for Olympic style-lifters, power-bodybuilders, powerlifters and strength athletes alike. However as time has gone on many of these iron game veterans have began to S-L-O-W-L-Y return to a more isolated and traditional form of the barbell clean & press, from decades past, as a core exercise of choice for the development of a strong overhead kinetic structural support accompanied with HUGE deltoids and traps.

If this eReport was directed toward these veterans who hoist the heavy iron I would simple describe the performance of the barbell clean and press as follows: “Chalk your hands and then take a sure and determined step up to the bar . . . initiate a powerful pull to the shoulders and press the weight strongly overhead.” However I realize that many of you may be reading about this exercise for the first time so a brief description will not suffice.

What I am going to do is share with you an encapsulated overview of 10 of the most important tracking patterns (mechanics) of the barbell clean & press (which is basically a combining of the best elements of the Olympic, Continental and Military clean & press).
1. Load the bar to an appropriate poundage and then without the slightest bit of hesitation or doubt step forward to the middle of it and with your shins touching the bar assume one of the two following foot positions, which ever one seems the most natural.

   Position A: The heels should be approximately ten to twelve inches apart and the front of the feet slightly rotated outward from parallel.

   Position B: The heels are sixteen to eighteen apart and the feet are pointed straight ahead and parallel to each other.

   Crouch down (flexing your knees and hips so that the top of your thighs are almost parallel to the floor) as you would for setting up for a conventional deadlift and take a firm, strong overhand and/or hook grip (lock the thumbs under the bar with the index and middle fingers) on the bar with the thumbs slightly outside shoulder width. Your shoulders should be well in front of the bar. The back is flat or even arched in and the chest held high. The arms are straight, taut and on the outside of the knees. Trapezius muscles are taut. Body balance is on the balls of the feet but the heels still remain in contact with the floor.

2. The art of separating the barbell from the floor inert resistance position to the frontal deltoids is successfully accomplished with a two part upward pulling action. Here's an encapsulated summary of each pull.

   **INITIAL PULL:** Breath in voluminously and in a single non-stop motion, begin to strongly pull on the bar (Don’t “yank” on it) while keeping it as close to the body as possible throughout the two part pulling action. As the bar begins to move upward (vertically) off the floor the arms remain straight and taut, your legs...
will begin extend (straighten) just slightly and the chest & shoulders begin to ascend.

**SECOND PULL:** When the bar passes the knees and gets to mid-thigh level the following actions should simultaneously take place...

**Analysis Box**

- **EXPLODE THE HIPS FORWARD.**
- **EXTEND (straighten) THE LEGS FULLY.**
- **INITIATE A STRONG SHRUGGING MOTION WITH THE TRAPIZIUS MUSCLES.**
  1. Arms are still straight and taut.
- **MOMENTARILY RISE UP ON YOUR TOES (like doing a heel raise).**
  1. This will add boost to the pulling motion.
- **CHEST & SHOULDERS ASCEND UPWARD AND BACK.**
- **LEADING WITH YOUR ELBOWS BEGIN TO BEND THE ARMS.**
  1. Keep an upward pulling pressure on the bar.
  2. Keep the bar close to the body at all times.
- **PULL THE BAR TO THE LOWER STERNUM OF THE CHEST.**
  1. This will be similar to doing a Barbell Upright Rowing motion.
  2. Your wrists will flex (bend) toward the upper torso.
- **RE-BEND THE KNEES AND HIPS.**
  1. Dip the body in a slingshot-like drop fashion, just like you are going to sit in a chair.
  2. The tops of the thighs should be just a bit higher than parallel to the floor.
- **QUICKLY THRUST THE ELBOWS DOWN AND FORWARD OF THE BAR AND EXTEND THE WRISTS BACK.**
  1. These two simultaneous actions will allow you to catch or “shoulder cradle” the bar level across the frontal deltoids and clavicular pec’s.
  2. The back of the forearms will be folded or supported against the biceps.

3. Conquer the shoulder cradle resistance field active mode by (keep the elbows parallel to the floor) IMMEDIATELY arising up (leading with your chest) from the semi-squat to an erect position. Initiate a hip-lock and extend the legs fully tensing the thighs so your balance is secure. Keep the chest high, back flat and hips lined up with the back. Exhale.
4. Tense the abdominal muscles isometrically as you incline ever so slightly backwards (back is not hyper-extended as in the Olympic or “slump” press). Tensing the abs will keep a great deal of the pressure from shifting to the spinal column.

5. The elbows/forearms orientation and grip you employ prior to the movement performance of the press can greatly influence its success or failure. **Elbows/Forearms Orientation:** Drop the elbows down from their position (#3 above) so that there is a downward and inward angle or inclination to the forearms, with the triceps of the upper arm supported on the outer aspect of the latissimus dorsi muscles.

6. Throughout the forthcoming overhead pressing performance hold your head so that the line of vision is at approximately a forty-five degree angle upwards. Avoid any tendency to look up at the bar because your back may hyperextend if you do.

7. Hold the preparatory set positions (#3,4,5,6 above) rigidly.
8. Keep your body rigid and with a full cooperation and quick muscular reflex of the upper clavicular pectorals and deltoids concentrate (thinking SPEED) on driving the bar off the shoulders straight up (upper arms begin moving an arc towards the sides of the head), as rapidly as possible. Time a sharp inhalation of air to coincide with the starting drive so as to be pressing on full lungs. Rapidly driving the barbell up through any phase of the pressing zone is not a license to cheat by throwing the hips or legs into the lift (called the “dip and thrust motion”). Tilt your head slightly back to avoid contact with the bar as it passes in front of your face.

9. As the bar begins to reach arms length over the head, exhale and with a very strong & powerful triceps contraction lock-out the elbows (the upper arms should be aligned with the ears, elbows directly under the wrists).

10. RETURN PHASE: Lower the bar while in total control of its decent (lowering the bar to quickly could cause you to jam you lower back) back down to the front deltoids/clavicular pecs area and then down to the floor. Repeat the ten tracking patterns for the required number of repetitions.

As you can see from walking through the ten tracking patterns I have not gone into explicitly calculated detail with regard to each one. Explored individually each one could comprise an article of its own. Instead I have presented them in what I feel is a quick, easy-to-absorb reading-ready to use format.

When the Olympic clean & press was in vogue many lifters were dependent entirely on the trick of performance, forgetting they had to still use some power, no matter how cute they got! If you don’t have the arm, shoulder and back strength to handle limit weights through the complete exercise range of motion of the press overhead, you’ll be in trouble.

It has been said that to improve in the press overhead all that’s necessary – is just practice the lift. To some degree this advice is well taken for it may be enough for a novice lifter to just practice exclusively on the press overhead and he WILL steadily develop more strength as he goes along. The advanced athletic community of lifters who have doggedly continued to use the clean and press in their workouts, have refined their techniques and years of lifting have given them a high level of power. It will take a great deal of work to jar their strength into new growth. Their only hope of further improvement is to systematically work to
develop more pressing power. Doing this through “assistance” exercises (which strengthen specific muscle groups used in the press overhead) can give them all the edge they needs to expand their gains in strength.

I am not suggesting limiting the practice of the clean & press. With style as vital as it is, I suggest MORE drilling on the mechanics (re-read #1-10 above) – it is impossible to polish them too much. Pile up those practice reps on the press overhead and the following assistance exercises, continually correcting flaws as you do them. Here’s FIVE assistance strategies worth considering.

**The Power Rack Attack**

One of the most important aids in assistance exercises for refining or SMASHING through a sticking point in the Press overhead is the power rack. With it, a lifter can work through each inch of his normal pressing range. Best of all, he can vary the weights to agree with his strong or weak points as he goes. As the muscles are forced to handle more weigh in each area than his limit press, it is obvious he will eventually toy with that poundage. Do not “short change” a power rack attack by using only one or two positions. Measure out your stops so you will be covering the entire exercise range of motion but perhaps not on the same training day.

In the Press overhead for example, the “low” position is from the shoulders to six inches above the shoulders; the “middle” from eye level or forehead to six inches from lockout and “high” is six inches from lockout to the lockout resistance position. Generally a lifter will work each limited range (working in order from the most difficult to the least difficult) by doing only one MAXIMUM TRIPLE REP SET with a 6-second Isometric Overload “Hold” on the third rep of each.

As an example let’s assume that the middle range (from eye level or forehead to six inches from lockout) is the most difficult. Insert one set of steel rods into the power rack at eye or forehead level. Support a bar on the steel rods and load it to a poundage that is approximately 70 percent of a MAXIMUM SINGLE EFFORT. Insert a second set of steel rods into the power rack at six inches from lockout. Now press the weight off the steel support rods that support it in the rack, pressing the bar up till it makes contact with the second set of steel rods. Lower the weight back down without bouncing it off the steel support rods. Pause for one second and then do a second rep in the manner described. Now do a third and final rep but with one important difference. Instead of lowering the bar, the instant it touches the second set of steel rods, forcefully push and hold it against the rods for a 6-second isometric hold. Next then take two seconds to gradually release the tension as you lower the barbell down to the steel support rods on this third and final rep.
Some lifters used to ramp this system of training up to another level by doing what they called; The 40 SECOND WORKOUT. Rather than do 3 reps in the manner just described they would do 4 reps with a 10-second Isometric Hold in the “middle” position. This adds up to a 40 second workout for this position and is repeated in the same manner for each of the other two position on separate training days. Only increase the weight on the bar by 5-10 pounds when the 4 reps with the 10-second Isometric Hold is relatively easy to do.

This system is to be done only once per week for each limited range of movement involved. To give you a comparison of how much the poundage can vary in each range, Bill March a national mid-heavyweight weightlifting champion back in the 1960s held the world’s press record at 390 pounds. During this era he did a system of overloading in the power rack to improve his overhead press. Some of the top poundage he used in each position were; Low Press-525 pounds, Middle Press-380 pounds and Top Press-825 pounds. Suffice it to say that after time power rack training can and will make deep inroads into a persons ability to recover, both at the localized muscle and central nervous system level. With this in mind it would be advisable to include power rack training within a 30-45 day time frame at most and then rotate it out of your training protocol for a few weeks.

If you are interested in learning more about the comprehensive system of power rack training I suggest you consider ordering Power Rack Training: The Dinosaur Training Video Tape Library Vol. No.3 by Brooks D. Kubik. Log onto: http://brookskubik.com/powerracktraining.html

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The Dual-Purpose Bench
For
Overhead Pressing Power

Almost as valuable as the power rack are dual-purpose (flat to upright) exercise benches...believe it or not! On the flat bench, an advanced lifter might handle a hundred pounds more in the barbell bench press than in a standing press overhead while using the exact same hands spacing on the bar for both. Despite this different position, can you deny that the upper pectorals, arms and front deltoids, MUST develop proportionately greater power.

Ted Arcidi, the first power-bodybuilder to officially bench press 705 pounds back in 1985, developed incredible pressing strength (not only in the bench press but the Standing barbell press behind the neck, doing 400+ pounds for a triple) by doing extremely heavy poundage (375-pounds for reps) in the EZ-bar triceps extensions while lying on a flat bench. Most lifters wouldn’t dream of that one but working the triceps in this manner will eliminate many weak spots in just about any type of pressing movement overhead. Another alternative is the close grip (hands shoulder width apart) bench press. This combines the extension effect with a regular pushing action and is most effective.
The Olympic clean & press overhead, as mentioned, allowed for a great deal of backbend and in fact looked like a standing incline bench press when viewed from the side. This excessive back bend took stress off the deltoids and brought more of the upper pectorals into play than does the more isolated traditional clean & press overhead. The upper pectorals indirectly contribute to a higher level of one’s pressing strength overhead.

An assistance movement that is very beneficial for taking the traditional clean & press to another level is the heavy incline barbell press. The “immortal” Tommy Kono (a U.S. world champion in Olympic-style lifting who back in the 50s & 60s who beat the Russians 13 times in 3 different weight classes) was a great believer in the incline barbell press, as a way to beef up the press overhead, and used it regularly in his workouts. A reason the incline press works well is that it accustoms the deltoids, triceps and upper pectorals to the constant handling of poundage close to or over a limit poundage in the press overhead. It is important to use the same hand-spacing on the bar of the incline press as in the standing press overhead.

90 Day Graduated Incline Press System

One way that some lifters increase their press overhead is by using a 90 Day Graduated Incline Press System. They will begin the press overhead by a doing a 3-2-1 Rep Method (a challenging 21-reps is aimed for per workout and no more) in the flat barbell press.

Here is this particular rep method works. After a muscle specific warm-up begin with a poundage you can do for 3 sets of 3 reps each. Do the first set of 3 reps, rack the weight, and take 10 deep breaths. If possible have a spotter give you a lift off and do a second set of three 3 more reps, rack the weight, take 10 deep breaths etc. Repeat for a third and final set of three 3 reps. Next increase the poundage so that you can accomplish 3 sets of 2 reps each, taking 10 deep breaths between sets. Upon completion of these sets again add poundage and conclude the workout with 6 blast-singles. (Remember to take 10 deep breaths between single attempts).

Be sure to use the same hand-spacing as in the standing barbell press. while steadily inclining the bench a bit at a time every few workouts during the 90 day time period until you are doing presses not flat or even inclined but in an almost erect position. In theory here is how this works.

Hypothetically let’s say you can do a standing barbell press with 225 pounds for a maximum single effort and your goal is 250 pounds. Let’s also assume that you can currently do 260 pounds for a maximum single effort in the flat barbell bench press. Using the 260 pounds and start out with a flat bench press rep scheme of 3’s, 2’s and 1’s. During the next 90 days very gradually incline the bench 5-10 degrees at a time (stay at each incline for an equal number of
workouts). When you are finally pressing the 260 pounds on a 75 degree incline; a standing press of 250 pounds will now be child’s play. Actually, it never works out that perfectly but the system will rapidly increase your ability to handle heavier weights and give you a new confidence physically and mentally to move heavier weights in the standing clean and press overhead. The frequency of this workout is once and no more than twice per week on non-consecutive training days.

**A Special “Push-Press” Technique**

The old reliable “push-press” (also called the heave or power press) is another basic assistance movement that is valuable when properly used. There is a subtle difference in the performance of the “push-press” as compared to the more isolated pressing modality and it is this. To initiate movement in the “push-press” bend the knees about 6 inches and then with a dynamic thrust extend the legs while simultaneously pushing or heaving the bar straight up to just short of lockout resistance position overhead.

A Special “Push-Press” Technique to conquer an ascending sticking point (for many this begins at the line of the mouth to the middle of the forehead) that some lifters use is to take a weight that is in excess of their best strict press overhead. They will take this weight off an adjustable squat rack and/or power rack (that is adjusted to standing chest height) and from the shoulders they will “push-press” the weight up to just short of lockout then S-L-O-W-L-Y lower the bar down to the sticking point and do an isometric hold for a 6 second count. The bar is then returned to the squat rack and 6 second rest-pause is taken. Then another “push-press”; 6 second isometric hold; 6 second rest-pause etc., until 6 reps have been completed in the described manner.

The “late immortal” Paul Anderson (The Strongest Man of the 20th-century)…

…once did a “push-press” of 550 pounds off a set of squat stands. The “push-press” is a confidence builder because it allows you to handle heavier poundage than you normally press through an identical range of performance. Needless to
say the “push-press” is such a confidence builder that you will almost have contempt for weights in the traditional press that used to be a limit.

**Dumbbell & P-Bar Assistance Exercises**

For the average iron tosser, the assistance exercises I have already discussed should be enough but there ARE others. Some lifters have used seated, strict military (heels touching, no back bending or jerking), and behind the neck pressing movements. Many of the strongman competitors in the United States and abroad do Log Pressing in a variety of ways (Log Clean & Press, Seated Log Press and Log “Push-Press”) as a means to dramatically increase their strength & overall structural support and put them over the top in their sport. For information on Log Pressing log onto: [http://strongerman.com/odd_objects/logs.html](http://strongerman.com/odd_objects/logs.html)

Another “late immortal” Douglas Ivan Hepburn of Canada (Olympic-style weightlifting champion in the 50s and renowned strongman) was a firm believer in super heavy dumbbell presses overhead (150-pounds in each hand for 10 consecutive reps) and it certainly worked for him! He could do a barbell press overhead with 300 pounds for ten reps, and once, walked into the weight room at the University of Vancouver, dressed in street attire, and smoking a cigar. Without a warm-up he took a 400 pound barbell off a height adjustable squat rack (height was set at 3-4 inches below where the bar would rest on the frontal deltoids) and pressed it FOUR TIMES overhead!

![Doug pressing 420 lbs. from the racks while weighing 280. He made 440 in this manner.](image)

Doug felt that dumbbell presses overhead was a tremendous assistance movement for increasing one’s overhead pressing power with a barbell. If weak shoulders (deltoids) are a problem you might want to consider pressing a pair of
dumbbells simultaneously for several sets of three to five repetitions. For example if your maximum single effort in the press overhead is 200-pounds you might use 70 percent of that weight and press a pair of dumbbells, weighting 70 pounds each, four sets of five; or perhaps 75-pound dumbbells, five sets of four repetitions or even 80-pound dumbbells, six sets of three repetitions.

Heavy dips on the P-bars is another good assistance exercise. I recommend these additional exercises and feel they are necessary in most cases so by all means, put them in your schedule appropriately but only if you are an advanced lifter. My brief encapsulated commentary regarding assistance exercises is only directed to the action of the press overhead and NOT toward an inadequate initial and second pull of the barbell off the floor (tracking patterns #1 & #2).

For those of you who may only have a conventional barbell to train with and lack access to a power rack & dumbbells etc., by which to work on the assistance movements I offer you three workable “blue print” workout systems (A,B,C), using ONE EXERCISE ONLY, for developing overhead pressing strength & shoulder size.

**Workout “A”**

Load a barbell to within 60 percent of your current un-fatigued maximum single effort in the Barbell clean & press overhead. For example if your best Barbell clean and press overhead is 200-pounds, use a 120-pound barbell. 

\[200 \times 0.60 = 120\]

Now take an overhand grip on the bar which is 12-inches wider than you normally use.

Begin by cleaning the barbell to your shoulders and then perform 5 ‘**wide grip**’ presses overhead slowly. The barbell is lowered slowly only to the front deltoids/clavicular pecs each rep and not to the floor. Upon lowering the bar to the (shoulder/clavicle area) on the 5\(^{th}\) rep “rock” the bar in such a way that you can shift each hand inward to your normal handspacing and perform another 5 reps but in ‘**behind the neck**’ style. At the conclusion of these five reps (which will be your 10\(^{th}\) consecutive rep), again shift your hand position inward until your thumbs are only 9-inches apart. Perform five more ‘**very close grip**’ presses in front. This completes one series of 15 repetitions. Perform two more series, resting 1.5-2 minutes between each series.

Upon completion of the three series (45 reps), REDUCE the original starting poundage so that it represents 40-45 percent of your limit Barbell press overhead. Using the hypothetical poundage example above:

\[200 \times 0.40 = 80\text{-pounds}/200 \times 0.45 = 90\text{-pounds}\]

After a suitable rest perform an additional three series as described above. Don’t let the seemingly insignificant nature of the poundage’s fool you. Even if
your muscles are acclimated for pressing, the program will prove to be brutally tough especially in the behind the neck segment. The objective of this unique press overhead workout is to keep the deltoids under continuous contraction and tension for as long as possible in order to promote maximum muscular growth and strength.

It is not written in stone that the order of procedure need always follow:

‘WIDE GRIP’ > ‘BEHIND THE NECK’ > ‘VERY CLOSE GRIP’

The order can be reversed or you can commence with behind the neck position and then finish up with the wide or very close grip. Personally my weak link is the ‘behind neck’ so I will begin with it first while my delts and triceps have fresh starting strength.

Workout “B”

Load a barbell to the heaviest poundage that can be handled properly. Now begin the workout by doing the Barbell press overhead while seated. Perform five SLOW, ISOLATED reps.

Upon lowering the bar to your shoulders on the fifth rep, STAND UP and continue pressing the barbell for ten fast reps, cheating slightly if necessary. Again upon lowering the bar to your front deltoids/clavicular pecs on the tenth rep (while standing) SIT DOWN again.

Have two training partners assist you, one at each end of the bar (or one person from behind if there aren’t two) by accelerating the barbell up as fast as possible to arms length overhead. This is called the Manual Over-speed technique. Now under your own strength lower the bar slowly (5 seconds minimum) to the shoulders. This completes one rep. Perform a total of 10 reps in the manner described.

Upon completion of the 10 rep, while still seated, press the barbell (no involvement of a training partner in this phase) up from the shoulders to the top of your head. Do a total of 5 half/reps. When you have completed the 5 half/reps begin doing the triple finish partial rep technique, by pressing the bar upward (4-6 inches) from the shoulders for 3 partial reps. When you have finished the 3 partial reps put the barbell down and grab an unloaded exercise bar (Olympic bars weigh 45 pounds etc.) and while standing do five speed reps to ease the lactic acid burn from all of the previous reps. ALL of the above is ONE SET, performed without any rest pauses what-so-ever.

Now do about two minutes worth of some type of physical restorative modalities (such as self-stretching, post workout massage etc.) for the deltoids to
restore hyper-circulation. I explain physical restorative modalities in more detail in my PDF Special Big Arms Report. See ad copy (eReport #2) at: http://www.dennisbweis.com/19-MASTER_DATA_AD.html

Next rest four more minutes before doing your next set. The number of sets you do will vary depending upon: Your Existing Strength Levels, Your Enthusiasm for the Workout Session and Your Willingness to Tolerate Pain Barriers.

For most Iron Heads I would suggest doing between one and three sets of this fast-paced exercise. I have personally found 10 sets to be the ideal number to force my deltoids into fresh new growth. I would only do this on a once a week frequency for a total of 3 to 4 weeks at most.

The objective of the above two ONE EXERCISE ONLY “blue print” workouts (“A” & “B”) are to keep the entire pressing structure of the deltoids and triceps under continuous tension and contraction for as long as possible to promote maximum strength and size.

Workout “C”

This select solid, bold and mighty “blue print” workout is one that the “late immortal” Doug Hepburn used exclusively back in the 50s to obtain a giant reserve of strength and power and take his overhead pressing strengths to a the world class level. The workout consists of two parts.

Part One
One-Rep System

Begin by loading a bar to starting weight you can press overhead for five consecutive repetitions for a specific warm-up (use a weight you can do comfortable without straining).

Next implement power points #1 through #7. Perform five consecutive repetitions in the press overhead (lowering the bar ONLY to the front deltoids/calvicular pecs each rep). Upon completion of the fifth consecutive repetition lower the bar to the floor. Rest-pause from 3 to 5 minutes. From here you advance onto single repetitions. Perform 3 sub-maximum SINGLE repetitions (rest-pause 3-5 minutes between each single repetition) while increasing the weight of each proceeding sub-single so that a near limit weight that can be performed for the third and final sub-maximum single. Generally this will be about 30 pounds less than you can press overhead for a maximum single effort. Take this poundage and do One maximum single repetition. Consider this to be workout number one. Build up the numbers by striving to add ONE additional maximum single repetition each proceeding workout until you are doing EIGHT maximum SINGLE repetitions.
When the EIGHT maximum SINGLE repetitions can be accomplished increase the specific warm-up, sub-maximum, and maximum single repetition weights by at least 5-pounds and no more than 10-pounds. IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not increase the poundage until the EIGHT maximum SINGLE repetitions can be performed otherwise you may create an environment of over-training of both the localized skeletal muscle and central nervous systems.

Part Two  
Maxi-Rep Sets

Upon completion of part one of the workout number one decrease the weight so that FOUR sets of THREE CONSECUTIVE REPETITIONS with the most weight involved can be performed. Rest-pause 3-5 minutes between each maxi rep set. Each proceeding workout add One additional repetition in the following manner until FOUR sets of FIVE CONSECUTIVE REPETITIONS can be performed.

Workout #1  
4 sets/3 reps

Workout #2  
1 set/4 reps  
3 sets/3 reps

Workout #3  
1 set/5 reps  
3 sets/3 reps

Workout #4  
1 set/5 reps  
1 set/4 reps  
2 sets/3 reps

Workout #5  
2 sets/5 reps  
2 sets/3 reps

Workout #6  
2 sets/5 reps  
1 set/4 reps  
1 set/3 reps

Workout #7  
3 sets/5 reps  
1 set/3 reps
Workout #8
3 sets/5 reps
1 set/4 reps

Workout #9
4 sets/5 reps

When you can do prescribed FOUR sets of FIVE CONSECUTIVE REPETITIONS increase the weights on all four sets by at 5-pounds and no more and begin a new series of FOUR sets of THREE CONSECUTIVE REPETITIONS, following the above outline (Workouts #1 through #9). A 5-pound increase may not seem like much but remember that the press overhead is a low poundage lift, when compared to many other major lifts, with a low poundage improvement.

If at anytime you can’t seem to make the required ONE REP GAIN for two consecutive workouts (most generally this happens within the grid of the single rep sets) you may be experiencing a mild onset of the over training syndrome. If this is the case temporarily eliminate part one (Single-Rep Sets) from the next 3 or 4 proceeding workouts but continue part two (Maxi-Rep Sets) doing SIX sets instead of FOUR. When you once again add part one (Single-Rep Sets) back into the program (beginning at where you left off previously) decrease the number of Maxi-Rep Sets back to four. You will have to recalculate parts one and two so that the progressive ONE REP GAIN, in both, once again increase somewhat proportionately.

This [Overhead Pressing for Poundage] workout seems to garner the most productive cumulative results in muscular bulk and strength when it is performed on a frequency of every 3rd or 4th training day. In some severe cases of over training I would suggest decreasing the frequency to once every 7th day.

Blue Print Workout Summary

For the sake of variety I suggest alternating program, I and II from week-to-week. If you are using program III do not combine it with the other two in any shape or manner as you will be inviting a huge case of over training and possible injury. As always prior to the beginning of any workout (when you first walk into the gym) do 5-10 minutes of “high octane” aerobic work (to break a sweat). Then do some rotator cuff stretching and then go on and do one to two specific warm-up sets, 3-5 reps with half of the maximum poundage you will be using in workouts “A” & “B”. The ‘blue print’ workout “C” has its own specific warm-up protocol.
“How strong is strong?” when it comes to testing your basic strength in the Barbell press overhead. The answer to this is the following classifications:

#1. A maximum single repetition with 90 percent of bodyweight is attainable for most novice lifters.

#2. If you can press your bodyweight overhead for a single isolated rep (after an adequate specific warm-up) you would be classified as “superior”.

#3. Fifty-pounds over bodyweight is classified as “unusual”.

#4. One hundred-pounds over bodyweight would classify you as a “champion”.

**Final Comments**

In summary, I can only remind you that the best pressers today are men who combine an ultimate in technique with a liberal supply of brute force. The science will come with practice, of course. Just as surely, your raw pressing power will steadily improve if you’ll work on the diverse assistance movements and workouts I’ve suggested here.

It has been said that “massive shoulder are the distinction of a man” so with a little luck of a good genetic draw and the application of any of the three “blueprint” workouts, you will be well rewarded not only with an increase in raw overhead pressing power but a newfound massive and muscular development in your deltoids which will be the visual testament to the effectiveness of The Barbell Clean & Press.
HIGHLY RECOMMEND READING

Weightlifting, Olympic-style
by Tommy Kono, a 270-page instructional book on the technique of the snatch and the clean and jerk. $30 + $5.00 S&H USA ($10.00 Canada, $20.00 all others). Illus/photos. Send check/MO payable to Tommy Kono, to Hawaii Kono Company, PO Box 2192, Aiea, HI, 96701. Will autograph copy on request.