



19-Inch Guns!

X-Caliber Triceps Training to Put
Some New Freak on Your Physique

by Steve Holman and Jonathan Lawson
Photography by Michael Neveux

After you've been training for a while—we've got 40 years between us—adding more and more mass can be an uphill battle, especially when you're drug-free. Every once in a while, however, you run across something that triggers a sudden burst of muscle size that sends your measurements into eye-popping territory. In this case what we found turned our uphill battle into a successful mountain climb: A few key exercise tweaks and a handful of quick, intense workouts led to a 19 1/4-inch arm measurement. Let's start with triceps, the meat of the upper arm.

One thing we want to get across right up-front is that no matter who you are, you can always learn new things. Sometimes what you learn, or relearn, can trigger immediate size increases. For example, we'd been doing decline extensions—skull crushers performed on a decline bench—as our initial triceps exercise for a while, but our results had slowed. Obviously, we needed a change. We thought that to save time, and add mass, we'd use dumbbells and switch to a compound movement, close-grip dumbbell bench presses. No need to load a bar; this would be much more efficient. We just knew an immediate mass increase was only a few workouts away.

Wrong! New mass didn't happen. In fact, our triceps started flattening out. That's the equivalent of a six-game losing streak in a team sport—depressing and deflating. We refused to believe it at first and kept plugging away. After all, so many experienced bodybuilders

say that the close-grip bench press is a big-time triceps developer. Finally we snapped out of our trance.

We started analyzing our workout. Maybe we need to use a bar. Nah, that wasn't it. That torqued our shoulders and added even more setup time. (Now for a "D'oh!" moment.) In our own e-book *The Ultimate Mass Workout*, we classify close-grip bench presses as the Ultimate Exercise for triceps but—here's the key—done on a decline! We were doing them flat (you should now picture our palms smacking our foreheads—D'oh!). We were neglecting that critical tweak.

Then we recalled that on **Jay Cutler's DVD "Ripped to Shreds,"** one of his favorite triceps moves is elbows-flared pushdowns, which is the cable version of close-grip decline—don't forget the decline!—bench presses. We decided to follow Jay's lead and adopt the elbows-flared pushdowns as our initial triceps move (no setup necessary).

Results: New triceps sweep immediately; shirt-sleeves got tighter, with apparent mass increases after every workout. In fact, after only a few weeks Jonathan's arms taped 19 1/4 inches—bigger than they'd ever been (and if you look at the photo on page 172, you can see that we missed the apex of his triceps, so they actually were even larger)! That's with only four to five sets for biceps and triceps. The switch to a decline triceps movement in our program was key, but there were other reasons, too, as we'll explain. First, here's the triceps program we used:

X-Caliber Triceps Programs

Workout A (midrange and contracted positions)

Elbows-flared pushdowns (drop set; X Reps) 2 x 10(6)

Superset

Kickbacks 1 x 10
Bench dips (X Reps) 1 x 8
One-arm pushdowns (X Reps) 1 x 10

Workout B (midrange and stretch positions)

Elbows-flared pushdowns (drop set; X Reps) 2 x 10(6)

Cable pushouts (drop set; X Reps) 1 x 10(6)

Overhead dumbbell extensions (X Reps) 2 x 10

Drop set: Do one set to exhaustion, reduce the weight and immediately do a second set to exhaustion.

X Reps: Do a set to exhaustion, move the resistance to the semi-stretched position, to where the target muscle is somewhat elongated, such as near the bottom of an overhead extension, and do pistonlike partial-rep pulses up and down through an eight-inch range.



Lawson's 19 1/4-inch arm measurement.

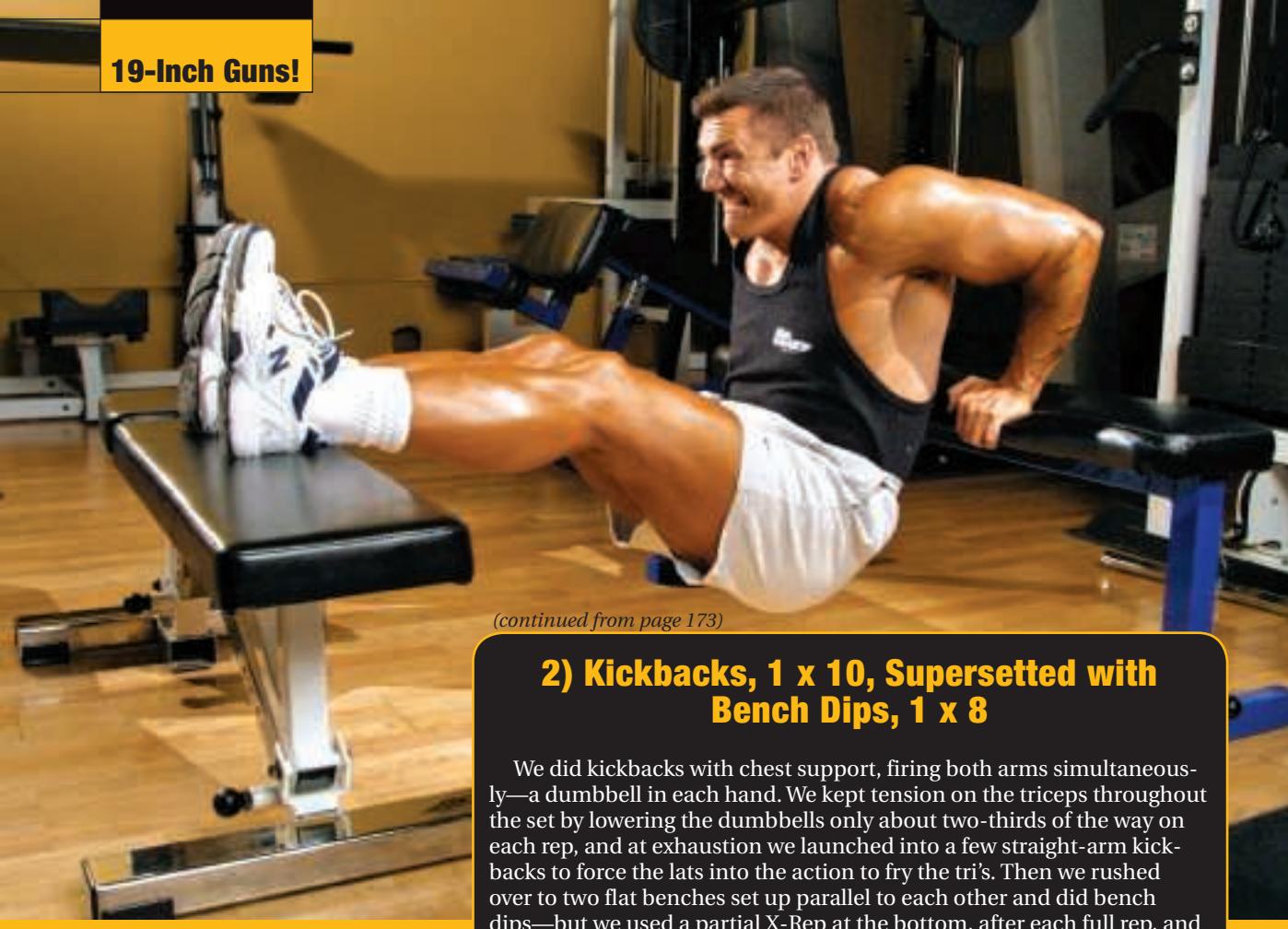
Editor's note: For more on X Reps, occlusion, stretch overload and Positions of Flexion, visit www.X-Rep.com.

1) Elbows-Flared Pushdowns (Mimics Close-Grip Decline-Bench Presses), 2 x 10(6)

We did a set to exhaustion—around 10 reps—with some X-Rep partials near the top, semistretched position, then immediately reduced the weight and cranked out another set to exhaustion, with more X Reps or an X Spot static hold. We rested about three minutes and did a second round, or we did a drop set of decline lying extensions instead of a second round of pushdowns. *(continued on page 178)*



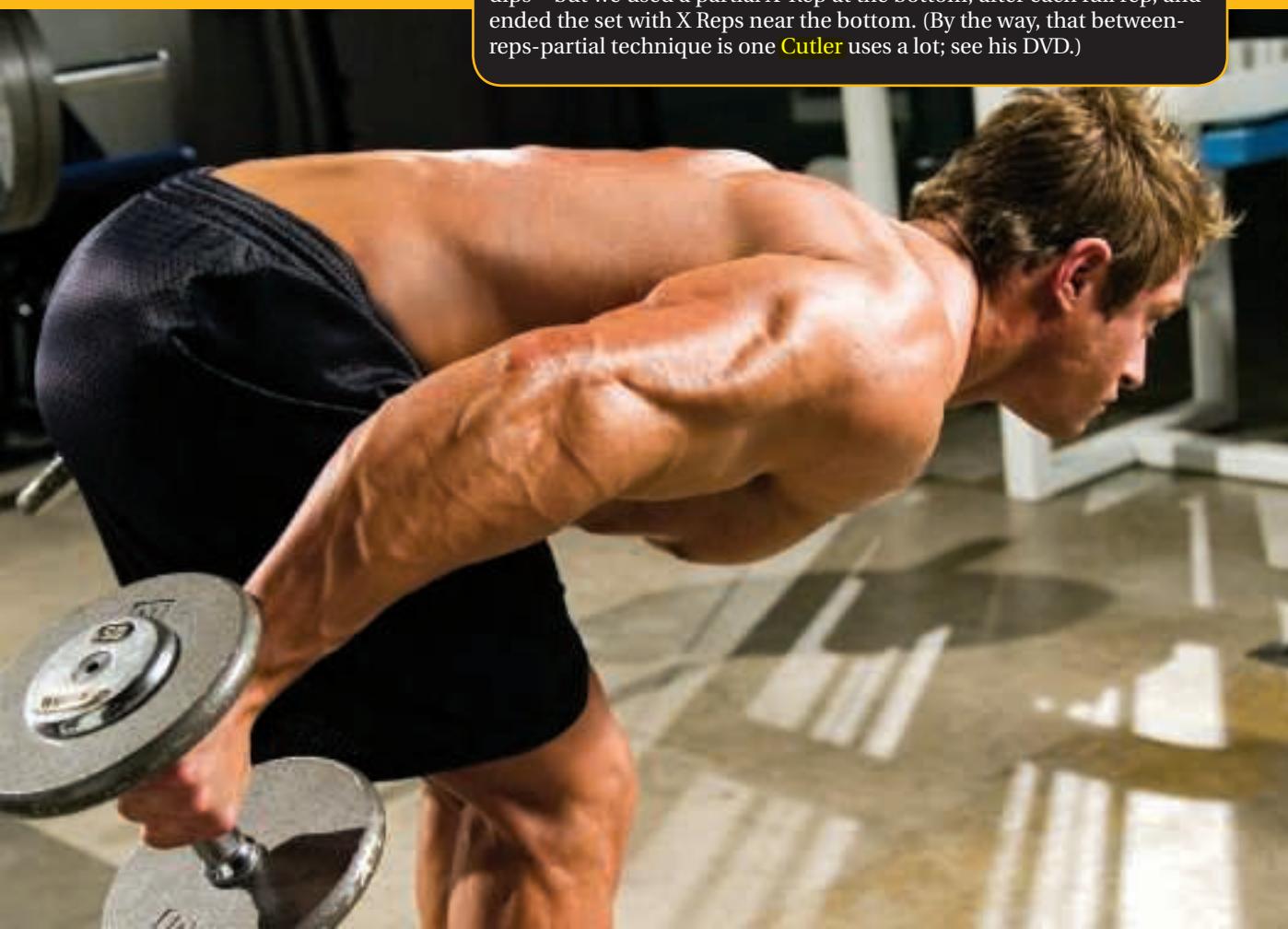
Model: Jay Cutler \ "Ripped to Shreds" ©2006 Misuro Okabe Co.



(continued from page 173)

2) Kickbacks, 1 x 10, Supersetted with Bench Dips, 1 x 8

We did kickbacks with chest support, firing both arms simultaneously—a dumbbell in each hand. We kept tension on the triceps throughout the set by lowering the dumbbells only about two-thirds of the way on each rep, and at exhaustion we launched into a few straight-arm kickbacks to force the lats into the action to fry the tri's. Then we rushed over to two flat benches set up parallel to each other and did bench dips—but we used a partial X-Rep at the bottom, after each full rep, and ended the set with X Reps near the bottom. (By the way, that between-reps-partial technique is one **Cutler** uses a lot; see his DVD.)





3) One-Arm Push-Downs, 1 x 10

We did these at one side of the cable crossover machine, turned sideways with our nonworking arm facing the weight stack. Sometimes we used a palm-up grip; other times it was standard palm-down. When full reps were impossible, we fired out X Reps near the top, semi-stretched point, of the stroke.

Remember those "other details" we mentioned? Here's the first: Our initial exercise, elbows-flared pushdowns, remained constant at every workout, but the rest of the triceps routine changed at every other session, as follows:

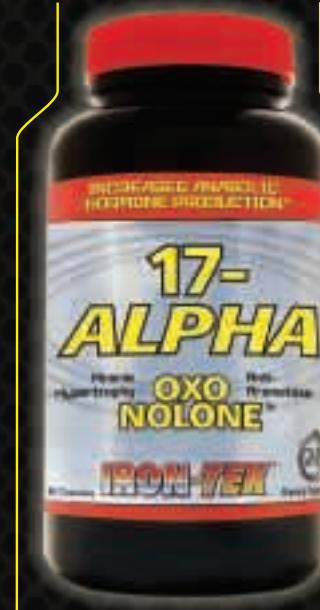
2) Cable Pushouts, 1 x 10(6)

We did these using a rope attachment on a high cable—we faced away from the weight stack, lunged forward and did extensions behind our heads, extending our arms on each rep till they were parallel to the ground. We did X Reps or X holds at the semistretched point (hands behind the head), reduced the poundage and fired out about six more reps, with X Reps at the end or an X hold. (That drop-set technique is a key mass builder, as we'll explain in a moment.)

Model: Danyl Cree

Model: George Farah

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3) Overhead Dumbbell Extensions, 2 x 10

We did these with a dumbbell in each hand, simultaneously extending them. We did two sets, each ending with X Reps near the stretched position (close to the bottom of the stroke).

Why did we switch the last part of the routine, the more isolated exercises, at every other workout? So that one workout stressed arm-down contracted-position work (kickbacks, bench dips), and then at the next workout we did arm-up stretched-position work (overhead extensions, cable pushouts). Both of those positions have special mass-building qualities, and by alternating them, we kept the stress on the triceps fresh and trained the muscle's full arc of flexion.

We won't go into Positions-of-Flexion mass-training protocol, as we've had lots of articles on it in past issues (it's also explained in the book *Train, Eat, Grow*; see page 86). We will say that the stretch-position overload has been shown to increase anabolic-hormone production in muscle and to activate more muscle fibers via the myotatic reflex. And it has been linked to hyperplasia, or fiber splitting—one animal study achieved a 300 percent increase in muscle mass in 30 days. Very powerful stuff.

Contracted-position exercises are best for occlusion, or blockage of blood flow to the muscle. There have been some amazing recent studies on the impact of that phenomenon on muscle size and strength (see the *Beyond X-Rep Muscle Building* e-book, available at www.BeyondX-Rep.com, for more on occlusion and stretch-overload studies and analysis).

With either routine that's only about five sets, but aside from our using a decline exercise at every workout and then alternating between contracted- and stretch-position exercises, we think there are some other reasons our quick triceps mass blast is so effective.



Model: Marvin Montoya

X Reps

The end-of-set X-Rep partials at the semistretched spot on the stroke help activate an enormous number of fibers. That's verified by the size principle of fiber recruitment: In any set you activate the low-threshold motor units first, the mediums second and the high-threshold motor units last, during the most difficult reps. The high-threshold motor units are key because that's when you're blasting the fast-twitch fibers with the most growth potential. If you extend a set with X Reps right at the max-force point on the stroke, you stimulate many more fibers.

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Drop Sets

Doing two or three sets back to back helps develop the endurance components of the 2A fast-twitch fibers (like the mitochondria and capillary beds), which can add considerable size to a muscle. Research indicates that the 2As are key for bodybuilders because they have both anaerobic and endurance capabilities. That means you can get a double-layered size effect in them—if you use the right training to beef up both components. The right training includes tension times that are long enough, usually around 30 seconds per set (10-rep sets done with X Reps and/or drop sets or supersets, with each phase being five to eight reps, fill the bill). Longer tension times force the fast-twitch 2As to develop both anaerobic and endurance characteristics, which results in a much bigger muscle cell. That's the reason low-rep sets are considered better for strength—they stress only one aspect of the 2As, the anaerobic component, leaving the endurance capability relatively untapped. If you're a bodybuilder looking to max out muscle size, you want to hit the anaerobic *and* endurance components of the fast-twitch fibers.

So while the decline angle on the initial movement was the primary new-size-on-the-tri's catalyst, the secondary details were very important in amplifying the growth effect. As far as the decline goes, it's interesting to note that in MRI studies decline extensions light up much more triceps mass than the flat version. Interesting! That's a clue that the decline version of the close-grip bench press is a better choice than the flat-bench version for building arm mass. (It certainly is in our cases!) We think it's due to ergonomics and the leverage factors we discuss in *The Ultimate Mass Workout* e-book. (We apparently need to reread our own stuff more often; it's available at www.X-Rep.com.)

We'll show you how we applied many of the same growth tactics to our biceps training in a future feature in *IRON MAN*. Till then, pack some new size on your tri's with this quick-hit multi-angled attack—and don't forget the decline.

Editor's note: For more on X-Rep mass-building concepts, visit www.X-Rep.com. **IM**

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“I am seeing X-tremely insane results! What an awesome program. I’ve been using the Ultimate Direct/Indirect workout [from *The Ultimate Mass Workout*] for a couple of months, and I’ve experienced an incredible 10-pound gain in ripped mass.”

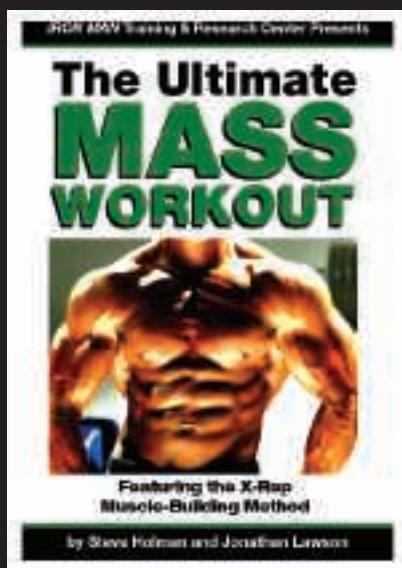
**—Ryan Waddell
Virginia Beach, VA**

“I’ve been using X Reps for only six weeks, and the results have been spectacular! Easily the best I’ve ever had (both visually and strength). People I see regularly have all said, ‘Man, what are you doing?!’”

**—Bill Walters
via Internet**

“I’m a natural competitor, and I used to train for two hours per workout—but X Reps changed that. Now my longest workout is about an hour, with better pumps and more size and definition. I’ve made better gains in four months than I have in four years—and I’m 48 years old. I finally look like I’m a lifter with or without clothes on.”

**—Gal Schmidt
Naperville, IL**



“X Reps are the single most important muscle-building concept to come along in years.”

**—John Balik
IM, February 2005**

“I put X Reps to the test at the gym, and I’ve never pumped up so big in all my life. I finally found what I’ve been looking for after eight years. Already my arms are thicker and bigger than ever. Thank you!”

**—Tony Kemp
via Internet**

“I recently [read *The Ultimate Mass Workout*] and WOW!! After only a few workouts my wife of 15 years asked me, “What are you taking?””

**—Neal Ferguson
via Internet**

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