

“I Watched Arnold Train”

The Bodybuilding Philosophy of Arnold Schwarzenegger

Story and
photography
by John Balik

Balik

This feature appeared in the July 1975 *Iron Man*. Although my friendship with Arnold Schwarzenegger stretches back to his first months in this country, these observations are based on the 12 months of training leading to the '74 Mr. Olympia. During that time I made four business trips to Los Angeles at approximate three-month intervals. On

two of the trips I availed myself of Arnold's hospitality and stayed at his home, a very informal setting that allowed me to observe Arnold's diet and training routines.

The date is December 1, 1973. Arnold is in stage one of his preparation for the Mr. Olympia of 1974. Let's call this the basic building stage. At this point in his training he is using relatively few exercises but working them very hard.

Arnold Schwarzenegger

In general, those key basic exercises work the major muscle groups and are the foundation for long-term progress. Quality muscle growth is the result of using heavy weights in good form on the basic exercises. What is a heavy weight? According to Arnold, it's a weight that allows him to just complete a repetition goal. If he can surpass his rep goal, he does so.

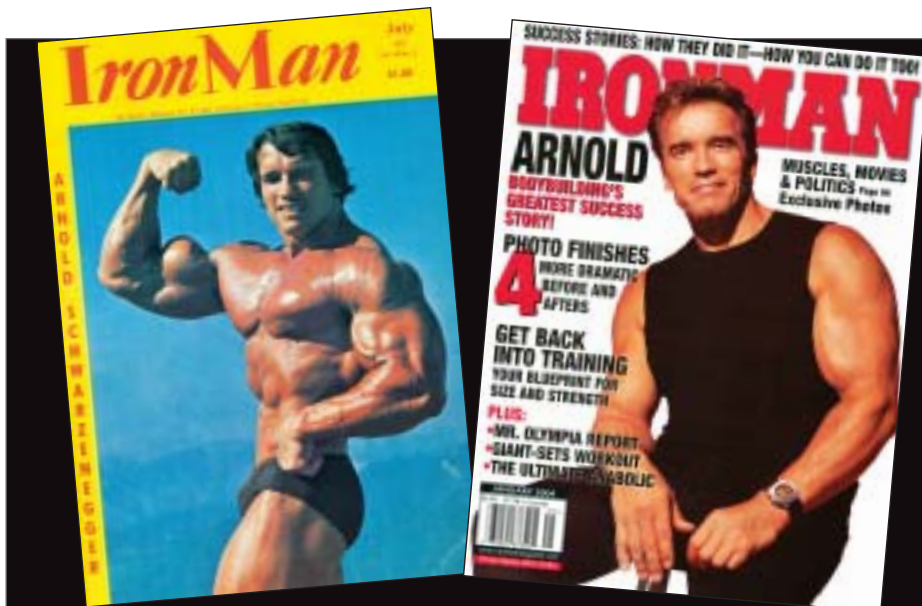
A repetition goal should be just that: a goal, not a set number that you do and quit. Many times I have seen Arnold grind out what appeared to be his final rep, yet somehow, impossibly, he would get another rep or two. In short, every set is *the* set; 100 percent effort is a must. The only exception to that is the first set, which he prefers to do at 70 to 80 percent of maximum. He feels a warm muscle performs better and is less likely to be injured.

The basic building stage demands a dietary approach much different from the precontest regimen. The type of exercise and system of performance create a situation where growth and muscle weight gain are possible if the diet is correct. To quote Arnold, “It is my opinion that diet is the basis of all muscle gains. It is impossible to build massive size and gain muscular weight if your diet is inadequate. The diet must be just as well planned as the training program if you want maximum progress.”

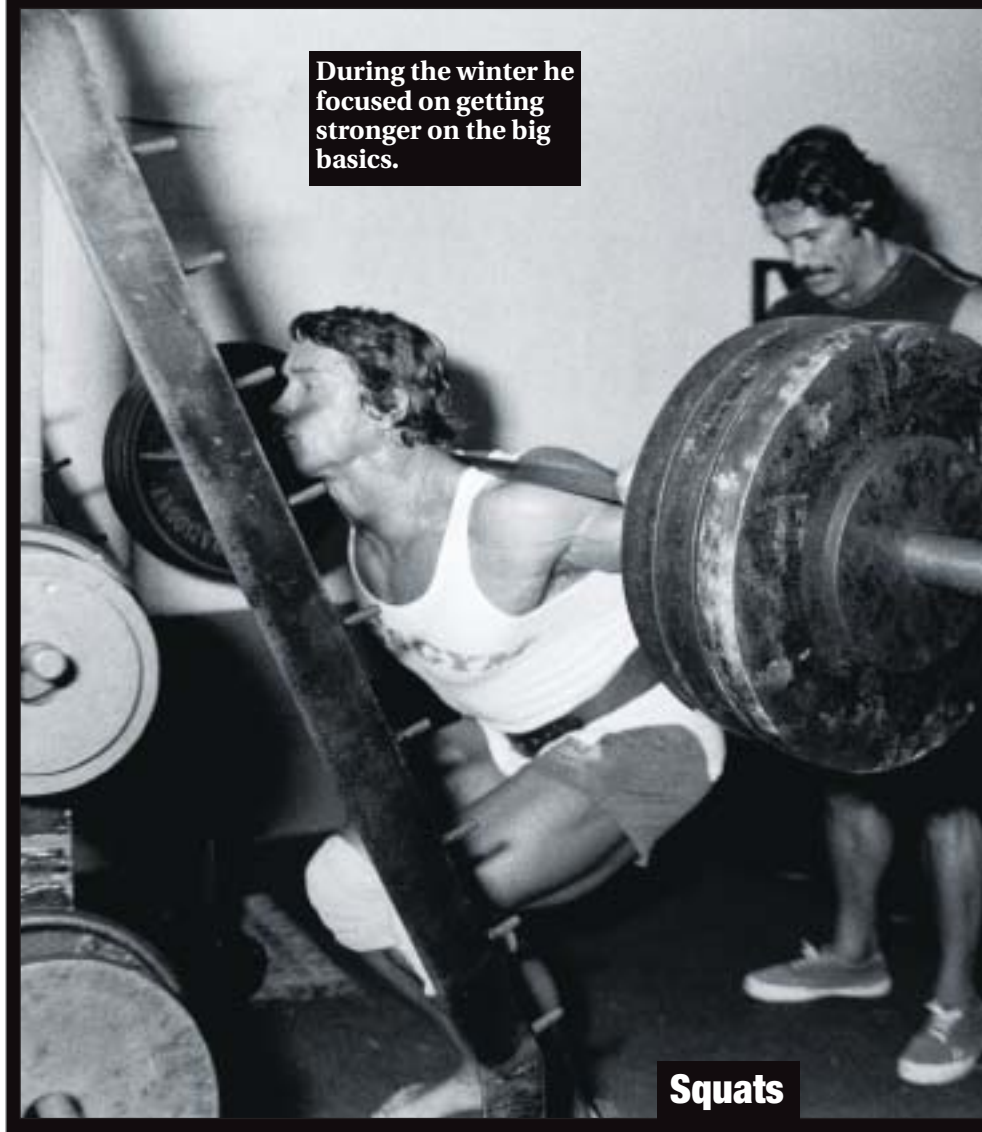
Even though Arnold is in the building stage, he does not allow himself to get fat. The goal here is to gain muscle size, not just weight. Now, don't get me wrong; he does not stay in rock-hard contest shape year-around—that would be impossible for someone with his metabolism and would inhibit his growth in stage one. As his early photos show, he is not the natural muscular type like Franco Columbu, so his problem is to gain size without smoothing out too much. That takes a lot of dietary discipline.

As a general rule, Arnold's diet revolves around natural food. As much as possible the foods are fresh and unprocessed. Food supplements are definitely secondary in his overall approach to diet.

Protein supplements are used as much for convenience as anything



July '75 cover vs. January '04.
The man has still got it!



During the winter he focused on getting stronger on the big basics.

Squats

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Arnold often picked out a weak bodypart and specialized on it for up to five months to bring up its development.

Wrist Curls

Arnold Schwarzenegger

Arnold's Mr. Olympia Arm Workout

Dumbbell curls	6 x 8
Incline curls	6 x 8
Concentration curls	6 x 10
Close-grip bench presses	6 x 8
Pushdowns	6 x 10
French presses	6 x 8
One-arm extensions	6 x 10

else. He spaces his meals and seldom gorges, relying on more frequent smaller meals. He uses **protein** as the basis for every meal, with fat second and carbohydrates a distant third. The only real restriction at this point is on carbohydrates, which are kept at approximately 125 grams per day from fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Some of you may have heard of Arnold's prodigious appetite for pie, cake and ice cream. The incidences of these carbohydrate insanities are relatively infrequent and the exception rather than the rule. As Arnold's knowledge of his body has matured, he has come to acknowledge the fact that these dietary excursions are incompatible with his overall goals, and he has relegated them to the area of celebration.

Arnold uses no steroids during the building stage. He feels their usefulness is limited to just before—six to eight weeks—the big contest. He uses them not to add but only to retain size gained in stage one while stripping his body of all fat.

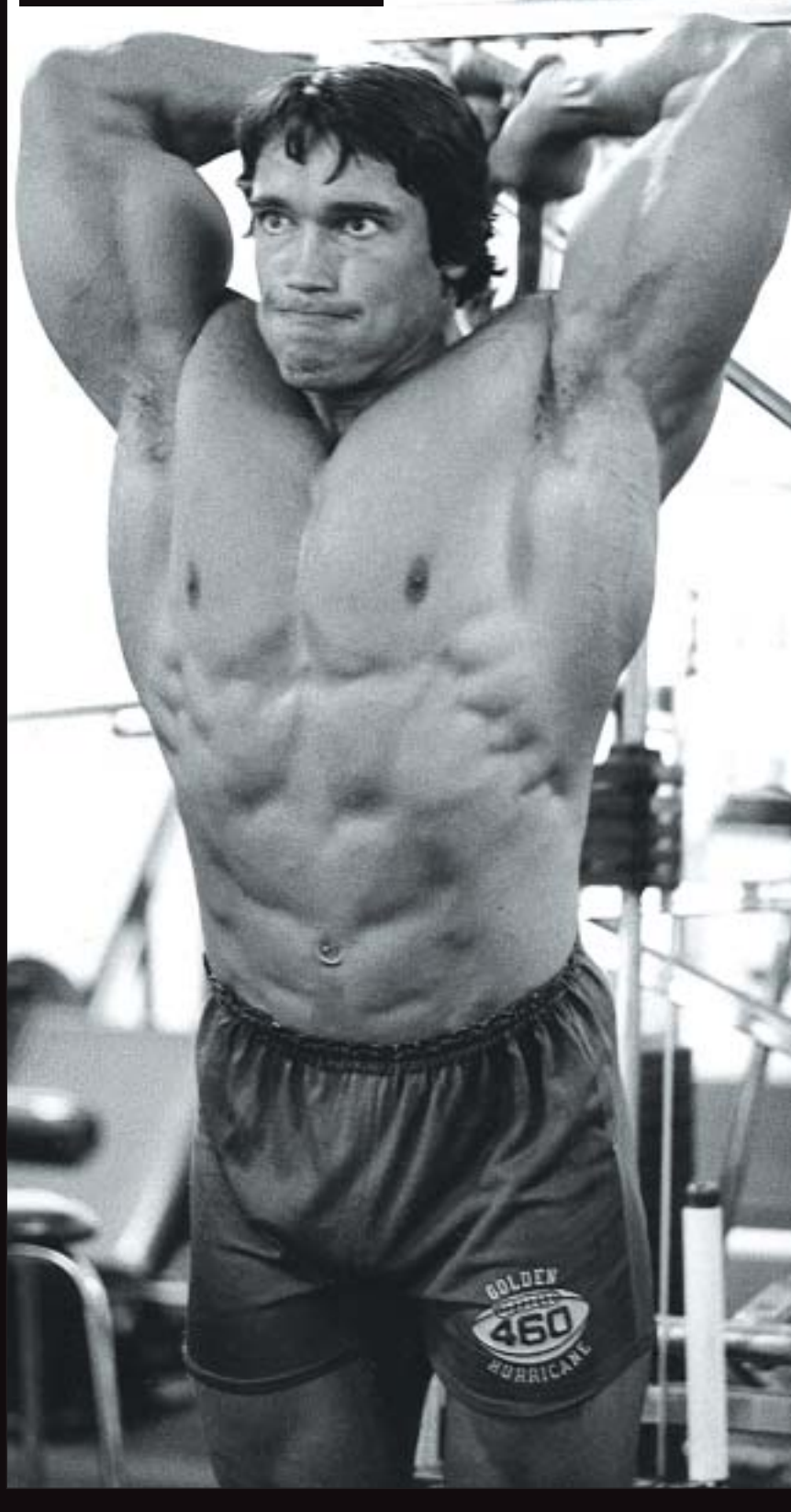
Stage one actually lasts five months (November through March) and has two levels of training intensity; however, this article covers the first three months: November, December and January. The workouts

Arnold's Mr. Olympia Shoulder Workout

Seated machine front presses	6 x 8-10
Lateral raises	6 x 10
Dumbbell presses	6 x 8
Bent-over laterals	5 x 10
Cable laterals	5 x 12

Arnold knew that biceps impress, but triceps make up most of the upper-arm mass.

Overhead Extensions



Arnold Schwarzenegger

Arnold's Mr. Olympia Calves and Forearms Workout

Machine calf raises	10 x 10
Seated calf raises	8 x 15
One-leg calf raises	6 x 12
Wrist roller	4 x max
Reverse curls	4 x 8
Wrist curls	4 x 10

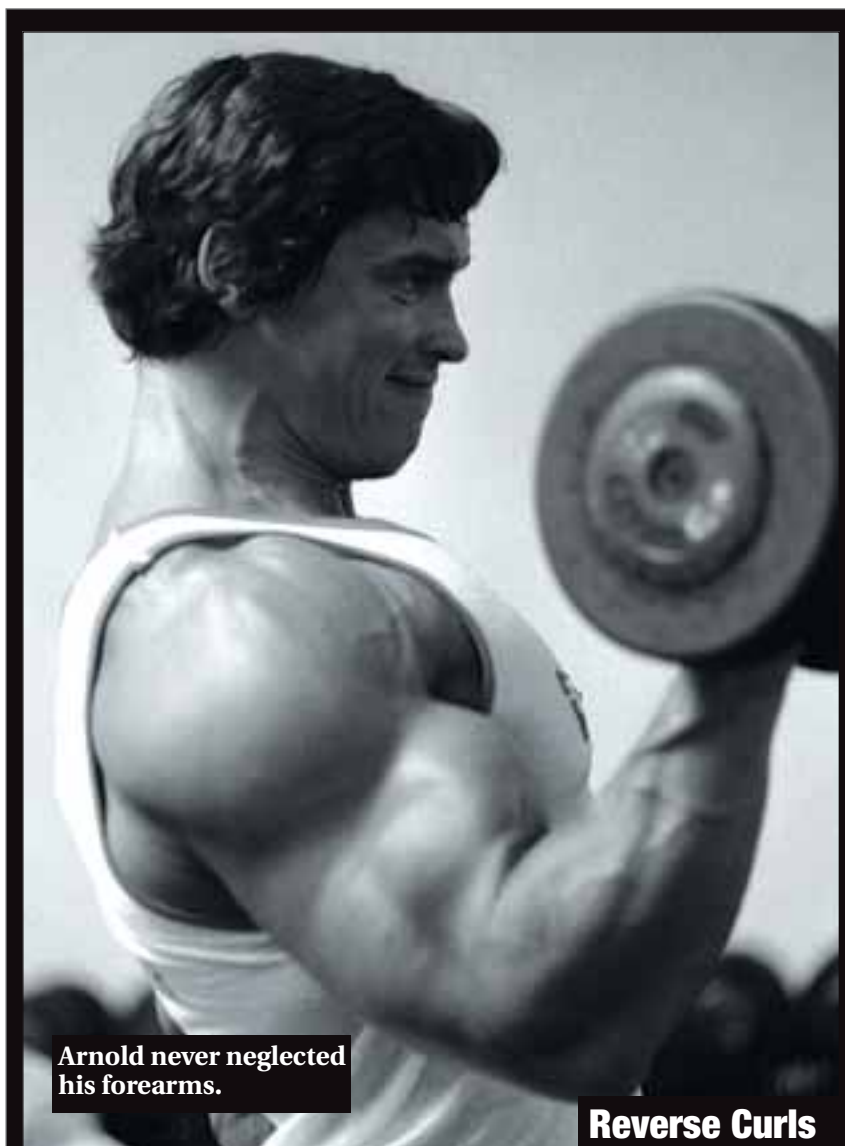
are split so that he works each bodypart twice per week. Arnold feels he needs the recuperation time to grow. Many bodybuilders work out too long but not hard enough. Arnold always uses maximum effort—forced reps—and trains almost without rest. As he says, “If you do one set of an exercise and five sets of yacking, don't expect gains.”

The Monday and Thursday workout consists of **bench presses** supersetted with wide-grip chins and dumbbell flies supersetted with low-cable rows. I asked Arnold why he supersetted **bench presses** and wide chins, whereas most trainers would probably superset **bench presses** and flies. He feels that by working a pulling muscle immediately after a pushing movement, he gets fuller overall development of the areas. It also allows him to work very fast, which he feels is essential to progress. Arnold seems to have his own special way of doing every exercise; little changes of hand position or arc of movement that personalize the exercises and apparently make them much more productive. Not only is Arnold a champion bodybuilder, but he also knows how he got there. He has refined bodybuilding with knowledge, logic and instinct.

Arnold does the **bench presses**

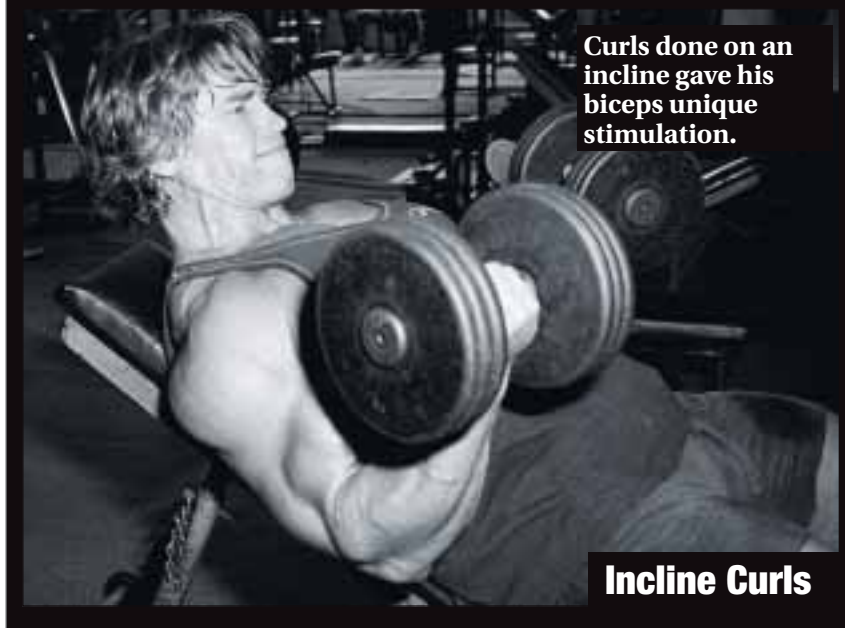
Arnold's Mr. Olympia Back Workout

Wide-grip chins	6 x max
T-bar rows	5 x 8
Cable rows	6 x 8
Bent-over rows	6 x 12
Deadlifts (on box)	6 x 15
One-arm dumbbell rows	5 x 8



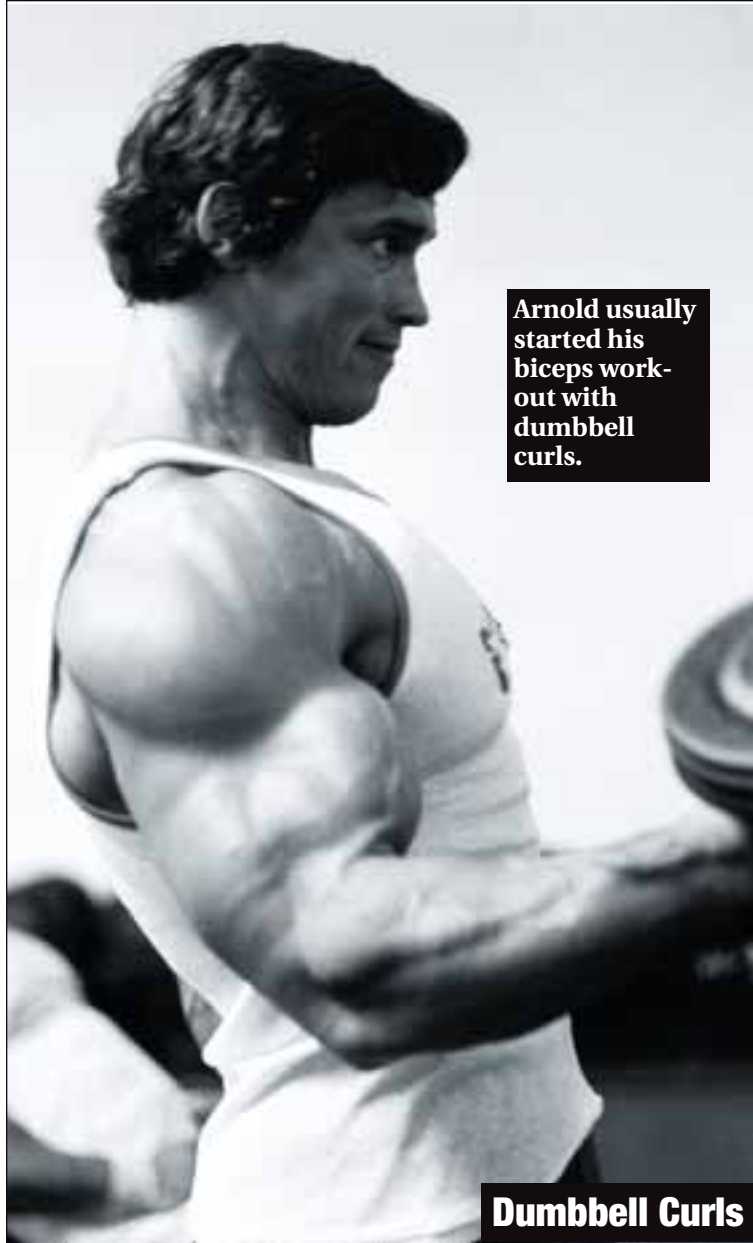
Arnold never neglected his forearms.

Reverse Curls



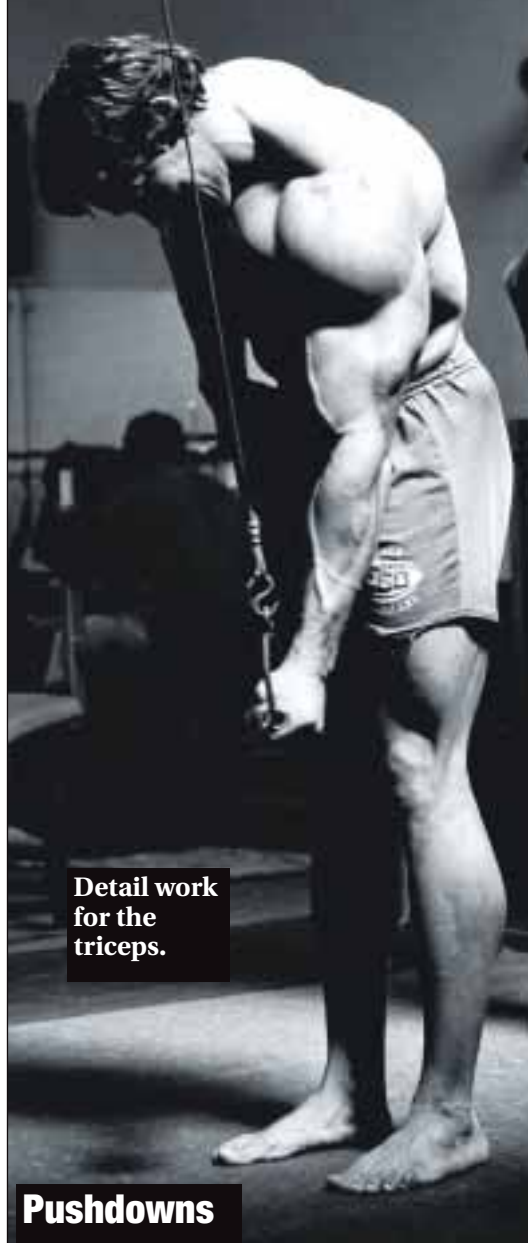
Curls done on an incline gave his biceps unique stimulation.

Incline Curls



Arnold usually started his biceps workout with dumbbell curls.

Dumbbell Curls



Detail work for the triceps.

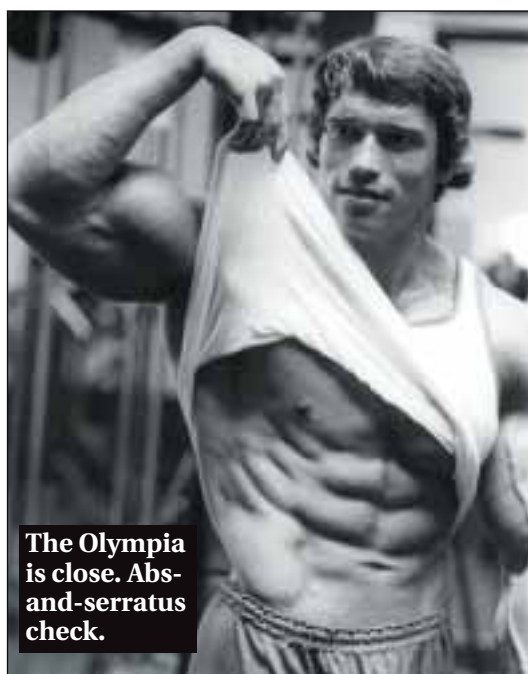
Pushdowns

smoothly but only about three-fourths of the way to lockout, therefore placing constant tension on the pectorals. He does the wide chins smoothly from the extreme stretch to where his chest touches the bar. He does this superset for five sets, with 10 to 12 reps as the goal. He does the flyes and seated pulley rows with the same five su-

persets of 10 to 12 reps as the goal. The flyes are very strict, with his arms slightly bent and his elbows well back toward his ears so that he feels the tension diagonally across his pecs. Again, there's no lockout; he does only the bottom two-thirds of the movement so he gets constant tension.

Another secret of great pec development is to keep your chest high and your back arched throughout the movement. Don't let your rib cage collapse at any time. You can breathe with your chest expanded, and you should during all chest movements.

On Tuesday and Friday Arnold's workout covers shoulders and arms. He



The Olympia is close. Abs-and-serratus check.

Arnold's Mr. Olympia Chest Workout

Bench presses	5 x 8-10
Flat-bench flyes	5 x 8
Machine incline presses	6 x 8-10
Parallel-bar dips (bodyweight)	5 x max
Cable crossovers	6 x 12
Dumbbell pullovers	5 x 10

John Balik (right) focuses on the big man, circa 1974.



alternates seated presses behind the neck with single-pulley delt raises—both with rep goals of 10 to 12—for five supersets.

Arnold does not superset biceps with triceps but prefers to do biceps first, starting with dumbbell curls. He likes to curl with dumbbells because they allow him to rotate his hand as he raises them, thereby more closely approximating the actual function of the arm. The exercise starts with the dumbbells at the sides of the thighs. As the dumbbells clear the thighs, he rotates them outward until they're at the top position. If he does that correctly, the low biceps—brachialis—will be intensely worked, as well as the biceps in the exercise's fully contracted position. It's a great variation on the dumb-

bell curl. The rep goal here is eight to 10 for five sets. Next is Larry Scott's favorite, barbell preacher bench curls. Eight reps is the goal, with four additional half movements at the top for peak. Arnold does five sets.

He works triceps in the same style as he works the bench press; that is, no lockout for constant tension. He does the standing French press with a barbell for five sets with a rep goal of 12 to 15 and uses the same combination for triceps pushdowns on the lat machine.

Forearms are next, and he uses reverse barbell curls on the preacher bench supersets with barbell wrist curls with his palms up. He does five of these supersets, with a rep goal of 12 to 15.

The Wednesday and Saturday workout starts with leg extensions for five sets of 15 reps followed by five sets of full squats, starting with 225 pounds for approximately 20 reps and then sets of 12 reps. When he gets to 405 pounds, where he usually can get only eight reps, he has his workout partners take off some weight so he can grind out the four reps to get to his goal of 12.

He also did five sets of leg curls for 12 to 15 reps and a variety of calf work on the day I observed him.

During this five-month period Arnold also picks out one bodypart that he feels needs extra work. He feels that by specializing for five months on a single bodypart, he doesn't have to worry about his asymmetrical muscle group in final preparation for the Mr. Olympia. He's specializing on abs during this period. The work consists of crunch situps alternated with leg raises, and he does a total of 300 to 400 reps after each of his six workouts per week. In the past he has specialized on calves, deltoids and, in 1975, forearms.

Trying to fully analyze every movement Arnold does would take a book. My aim here has been to give some insight into a few of the many refinements of training Arnold has evolved.

Editor's note: The bodypart routines that appear in boxes in this feature are samples of how Arnold trained for the 10 to 12 weeks leading up to an Olympia competition. The rest of the year his bodypart routines consisted of much less volume. **IM**

Arnold's Mr. Olympia Leg Workout

Parallel squats	6 x 10-12
Leg extensions	6 x 15
Leg presses	6 x 8-10
Leg curls	6 x 12
Barbell lunges	5 x 15