

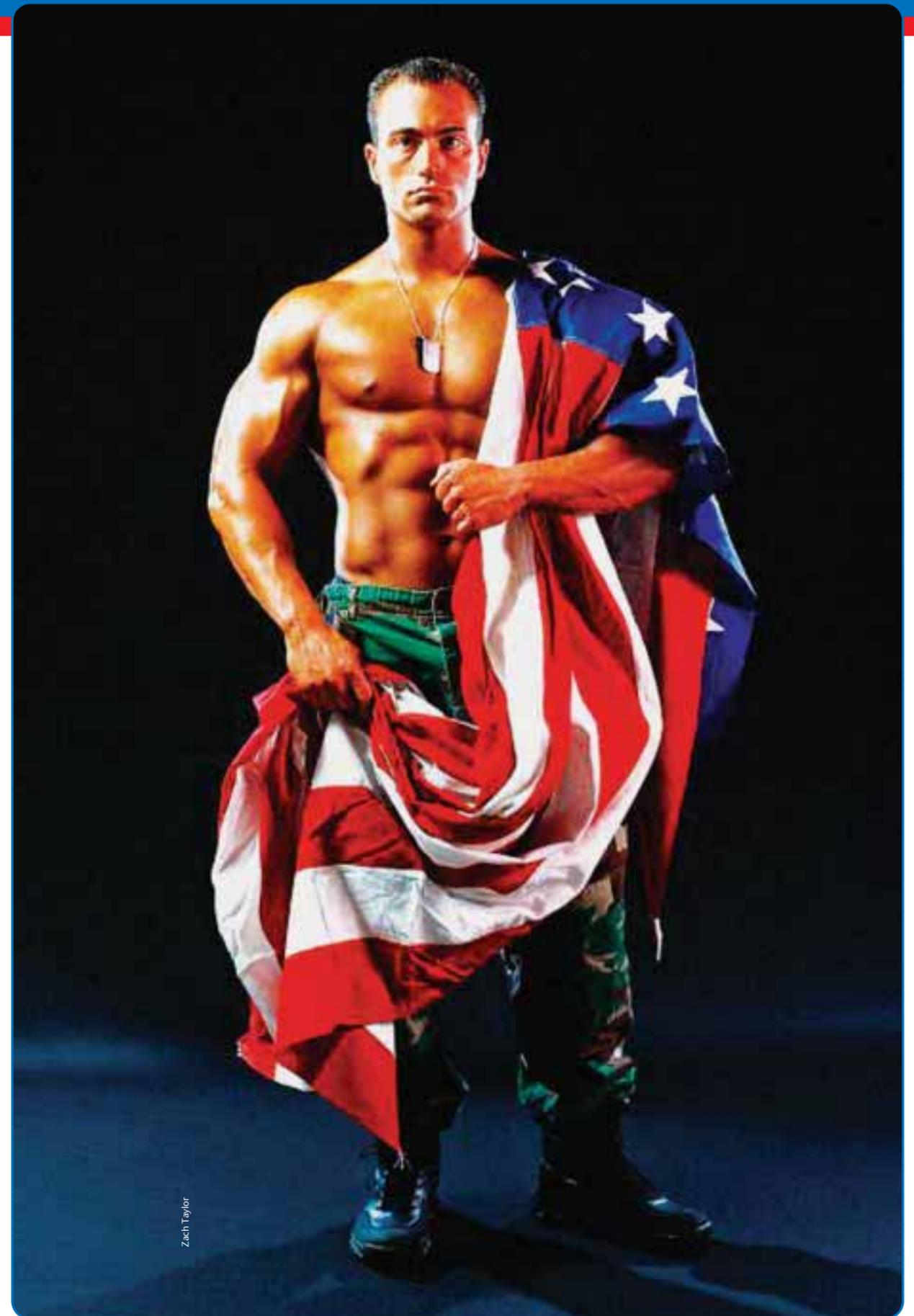
# Success Story

## The Laws of Change

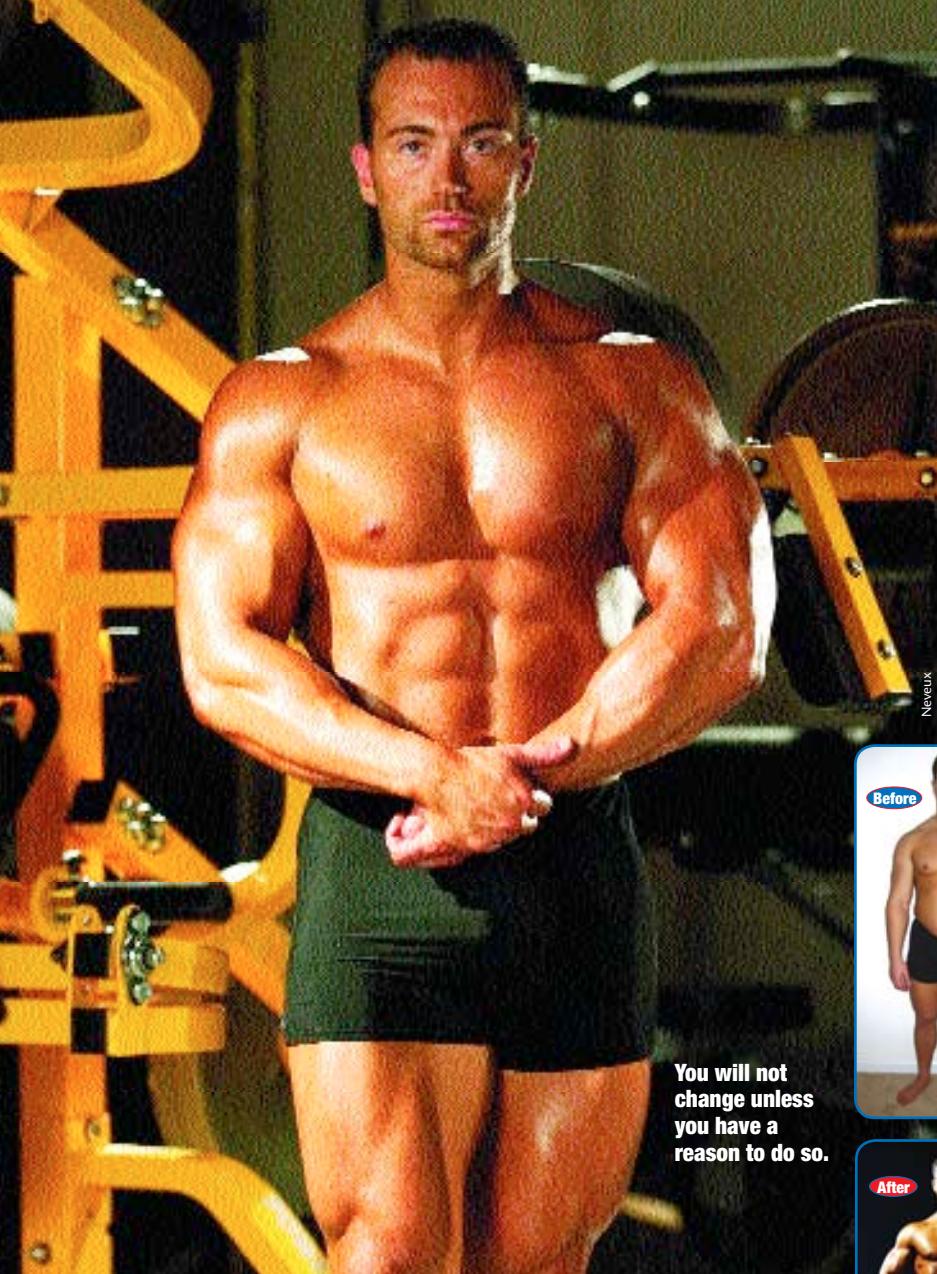
Greg Alder, Met-Rx Body Challenge Winner and Lawyer, Tells How He Transformed Himself

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ by Greg Adler ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**M**ay 8, 2004, was one of the best days of my life. I found myself onstage at the Contra Costa Bodybuilding and Figure Championships receiving a \$50,000 check from Met-Rx rep and IFBB fitness pro Julie Childs for winning the Met-Rx Body Challenge. I didn't think life could get much better than that—but it did. After I graduated from the University of California, Davis, School of Law on May 22 and took the California Bar exam, the editors at *IRON MAN* asked me to write about my experiences in getting in the best shape of my life to earn my victory. I'm honored to have this opportunity to share the details of how I reached my goal, and I hope my success will assist you in reaching your goals.



Zach Taylor



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**You will not change unless you have a reason to do so.**

### How Do You Plead?

Motivated or unmotivated? You will not change unless you have a reason to do so. In the most general sense, people decide to change because they're unhappy with what they have become. The hard part is finding a stable, lasting motivation to keep you on track as you work toward your goal of becoming a happier, healthier person.

Self-motivation works great, but you must use it carefully because it can be fleeting. It's easy to establish the amorphous goals of "looking better" or "losing weight." Your mood, self-image and enthusiasm will improve once you decide to do those things. But what happens if you fail? It will be far more difficult to muster even temporary enthu-

siasm, as you remember that your plan failed the last time you tried. Thus, you cannot base your success on self-motivating mental tricks and hollow promises of vaguely defined outcomes. You need steady, consistent effort aimed at progressing toward concrete goals.

My motivation came from the need to honor promises I made to myself. I was a competitive athlete all my life. In high school I competed in the decathlon on the national level. I eventually lost interest in it, but I still felt the need to remain active. It was during my junior and senior years at U.C. Berkeley that bodybuilding started to fill the void. I found that unlike

decathlon training, which required several hours of practice at a set time every day, bodybuilding was something I could schedule around my academic commitments, without a huge investment of time. For me it was the perfect recreational sport. Although I never competed, I still enjoyed bulking up and cutting down once every year to see what kind of changes I had made to my physique.

When I got to law school, I found myself surrounded by the most unhealthy, out-of-shape group of people I had ever met. At first I was unsure why. I thought maybe we were just the cream of the nerdy crop. But as my law school experience progressed, I discovered that

the lawyers were even worse off than the students. I was astonished at how tired, run-down, disheveled and stressed-out the vast majority of them were. They were so busy and overworked that most of them went nearly the entire day without eating, stuffed themselves once or twice a day when they were too irritable to concentrate or could no longer bear the hunger pangs, then went home and watched TV until it was time to get up and do it all over again.

On the one hand, I knew I would never let myself get that way—but then I wondered how many other people in my position had thought the same thing when they started law school and ended up that way despite their best intentions. I started to see why they called it white-collar boot camp, and I could tell it would only get worse. Law school was preparing us for a time when we would have more work than we could possibly finish, and I was having a difficult time reconciling that lifestyle with one that valued health and fitness.

I promised myself two things: One, that I would never become one of those out-of-shape lawyers, and two, that I would always set a good example for other students



Zach Taylor

and lawyers by staying fit and healthy, even under the pressures of a legal career.

**Out of Order**

A couple of years into it I'd nearly broken my promises. My workouts and diet were inconsistent. I had not yet succumbed to being a completely frazzled law student, but I certainly wasn't setting a good example. I was afraid that if I failed to establish good habits while I was still in school, I might never do it. That's when I decided to put my mental and physical fitness first in my life by entering the Met-Rx Challenge.

The next thing I did was to recognize that I was responsible for my unhappiness with myself. I've learned that success has countless fathers, but failure is a bastard. We are often quite willing to take credit for our success but equally if not more willing to blame our failures on someone or something else. It would have been easy for me to blame being out of shape on a combination of law school, extracurricular activities, my internship, personal issues—the things that we all deal with. I realized, however, that I would just be making excuses. Instead, I decided to do what bodybuilders do: I looked in the mirror. Once I accepted that I was the only person standing in my way, moving forward became much easier.

After that the way was paved for me to set concrete goals. I used to think that successful people were just extraordinarily lucky. I no longer think so. Successful people get where they are by following a strategic plan. We all know it takes a blueprint to build a house, but we sometimes forget that it takes a blueprint to build a successful life. The same applies to building a better body.

Generally, success is not accidental. People who approach things with order, conscientiousness and persistence ultimately succeed. Knowing that, I developed an exercise, nutrition and supplement program and followed it consistently. I measured my body composition and set a realistic goal for how lean I wanted to be for my

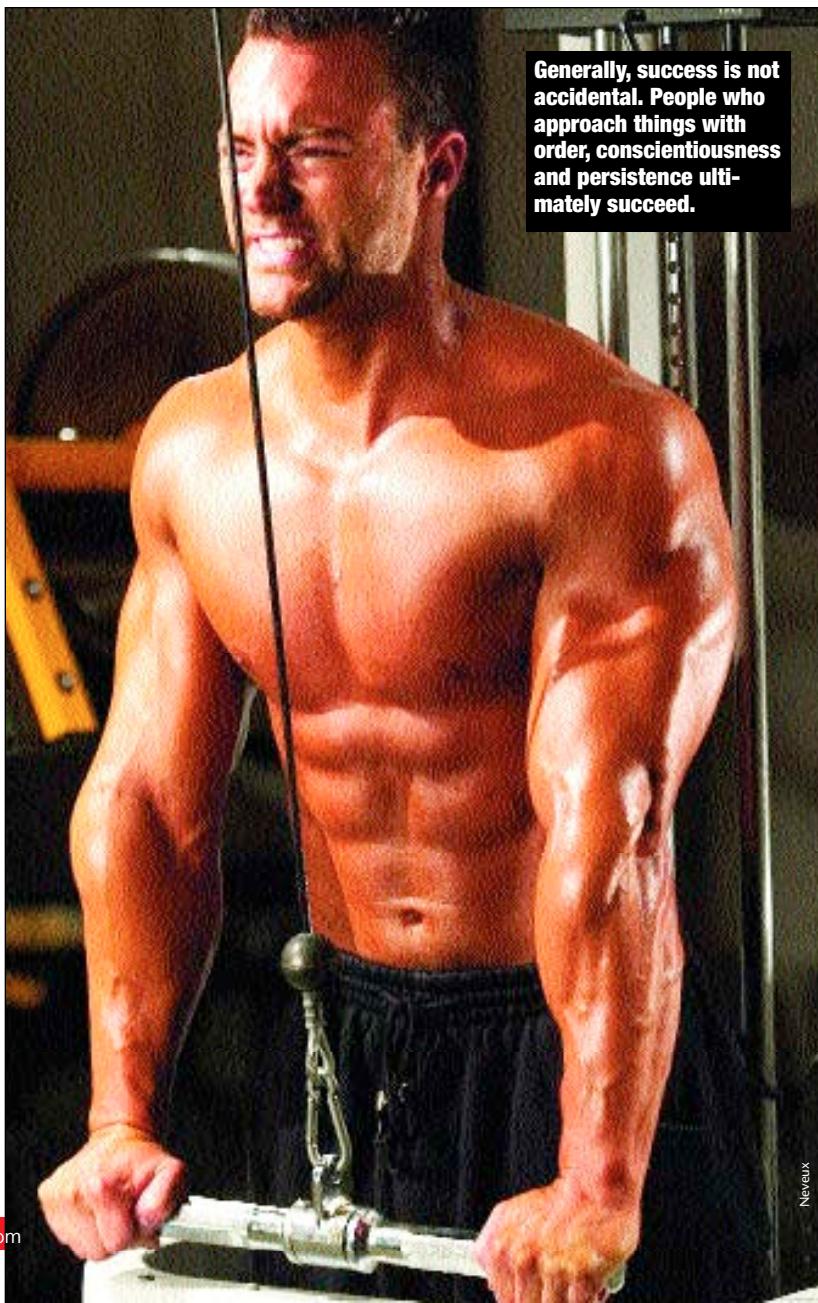
after photos based on the amount of time I had to prepare and a reasonable assessment of my abilities.

**A Lighter Sentence**

Like anything else, starting is always the most difficult part of any task. After I started the Met-Rx Challenge, all I needed to do was stick with it. But there was a particular way that I stuck with it that seemed to work really well for me. We've all heard the saying, "Work hard, and you will be rewarded." It sounds simple, right? Too bad it doesn't always work that way. Remember what it was like in school? No matter how many hours some kids studied, they always got bad grades. Then there were others

who rarely studied at all and got straight As. You can go nowhere fast by working hard but inefficiently, or you can employ modest efforts efficiently and reap substantial rewards. I think my success was due to a sharp focus on working smarter, not harder, throughout the Challenge.

It boils down to a single concept: purpose. The purpose of following an exercise and nutrition program is to make progress, not to burn yourself out. It will be tough at first, but eventually your continued progress will boost your enthusiasm, which will lead to more progress, more enthusiasm and so on. Then, as my constitutional law professor was fond of saying, it's a



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slippery slope from there. Just be sure to help others along the way by sharing the knowledge and wisdom you gain from what I'm sure will be a successful experience.

**No-Guilt Transformation Strategy**

**Diet.** My diet is primarily low-carb (less than 50 grams per day) all year long. A low-carb diet is best for losing and keeping off excess bodyfat. That's largely because of the relationship between macronutrients and insulin.

Insulin is a hormone created in the pancreas that moves nutrients out of the blood and into the cells. Carbohydrate produces a far great insulin response than protein or fat. So the more carbs you eat, the more insulin is released, and, consequently, the more nutrients move out of the blood and into the cells. That's not a desired result if your goal is to lose bodyfat because you need to have nutrients—specifically, stored lipids—moving out of the cells, not in. Low-carb diets work so well because they keep insulin levels low, which encourages more fat to move out of your cells.

Still, continuous low-carb dieting leads to depleted glycogen stores, which inhibits your ability to engage in strenuous exercise. Activities such as sprinting and lifting weights involve the anaerobic—meaning

without oxygen—use of stored carbohydrate. So, as glycogen levels dwindle, the body has little fuel to use for anaerobic processes. Consequently, your ability to work out hard tapers off as well.

My diet combines the best of both worlds: a generally low-carb plan with one or two carb-load meals (250 to 300 grams of complex carbs) every few days. That allows me to keep my insulin levels low and stay lean the majority of the time but also occasionally replenishes my glycogen stores so I can train hard. I never count calories, and I allow myself one cheat meal per week, except during the last four weeks before a photo shoot.

The only things I change as a photo shoot draws near are the frequency of my carb-load meals and the percentage of my total calories coming from fat. Generally, during the last four weeks before a photo shoot I have a carb-load meal once every two weeks instead of twice a week. I also increase my protein intake and reduce my fat intake to create a slight calorie deficit.

**Training.** My training program during the Met-Rx Challenge was pretty basic. I lifted weights three times a week, usually Monday, Wednesday and Saturday. Then I did cardio—20 minutes of high-intensity interval training on a treadmill, stair climber or stationary bike—on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday mornings. I also added low-to-moderate-intensity cardio sessions



I lifted weights three times a week and used a low-carb diet.

on the stair climber or stationary bike on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday evenings.

I go to failure on every set, except warmups, and generally keep my reps between six and 12. I also vary the stress on my muscles by constantly changing my routine. I never do the same workout twice.

Here's a variation of my basic routine:

**Monday: Legs**  
Squats, six sets

- Leg presses, 3 sets
- Leg extensions, 8 sets
- Seated leg curls, 5 sets
- Lying leg curls, 5 sets
- Seated calf raises, 4 sets
- Donkey calf raises, 4 sets
- Standing calf raises 4 sets

**Tuesday: Cardio (a.m. and p.m.), abs (circuit training, a.m.)**

**Wednesday: Chest and back**

- Dumbbell incline-bench presses, 5 sets
- Cable crossovers, 3 sets
- Machine flyes, 3 sets
- Narrow-grip seated rows, 4 sets
- Wide-grip pulldowns, 4 sets
- Upright rows, 3 sets
- Machine pullovers, 3 sets

**Thursday: Cardio (a.m. and p.m.), calves (a.m.)**

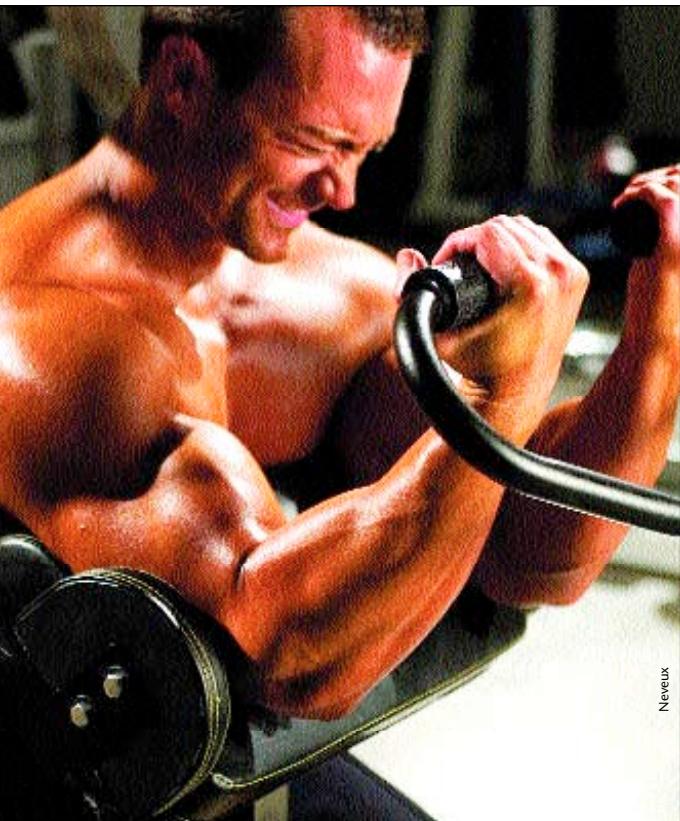
**Friday: Cardio (a.m. and p.m.), abs (circuit training, a.m.)**

**Saturday: Cardio (a.m.); shoulders, biceps, triceps (p.m.)**

- Seated dumbbell presses, 4 sets
- Machine presses 4 sets
- Lateral raises, 4 sets
- Rear-delt flyes, 3 sets
- Shrugs 3 sets
- Standing barbell curls, 4 sets
- Seated dumbbell curls, 4 sets
- Spider curls, 3 sets
- Pressdowns, 4 sets
- Reverse-grip pressdowns, 4 sets
- Standing overhead rope extensions, 4 sets

**Sunday: Off**

**Editor's note:** For more information on the Met-Rx Body Challenge, visit [www.metrx.com](http://www.metrx.com). **IM**



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