

***Be not afraid of growing slowly,***

***Be afraid only of standing still.***

*Chinese proverb*

A personal return on experience from over 30 years strength sports experience.

By Mark Notschaele

## 6. Sixpack

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**Disclaimer:** When you want to start a rigorous training program – consult your physician beforehand.

Believe me when I say that all trainees that approach me – young or old – male or female have – next to their objectives for strength, endurance, power, flexibility – the desire to “look good” – i.e. the esthetic athletic muscular look (the female or male version of that look).

One of the “most wanted” body parts trainees express their desire to have – is a real “sixpack”. I find this very interesting, because in “my days” in the 80s most wanted was chest and biceps and a V in the back – ie “look big”. I am not sure where the new “sixpack hype” comes from - but for sure the internet these days is full of pictures of male and female fitness models showing sixpacks. With or without Photoshop exaggeration of course – one cannot be sure anymore these days.

Anyway – the question I get frequently from trainees is to how to get a sixpack. Trainees on their own seem to follow some distinct strategies:

1. Diet yourself toward a sixpack
2. Do 1000 situps each day
3. Combination of the 2.

What is flawed in this approach ?

In reply to the above strategies:

**Re 1: To show muscle you first need to have muscle.** I have trainees which by caliper measurement have 9% fat or lower and complain that they still do not have / see their six pack. You know, anyone who has real developed abs will have a visible sixpack if you are at 9% fat or under.





Re 2: **Many sixpack/ab programs are very high volume and one sided and train leg and pelvis flexors more than anything else.** Most ab work is done in positions which have no relation to how these muscles are being loaded in real functional life. The high volume leads to sheer overtraining of these muscles and hamper their growth by that alone. Excessive ab workout is in itself going to create an imbalance with your lower back muscles – which can leads to injuries and bad posture.

Re 3: **The combination of under-eating and lots of training never leads to proper muscle mass and strength building results.**

### So how do you develop an amazing sixpack and obliques ?

So what is a way to get a real dense sixpack ? If you look at Greek statues that these have thick powerfull core from all sides (front, side, back)...and go with it a very powerfull, muscular rest of the body.

The punch line to remember is **“Sixpacks do not grow on skinny bastards” !**

I have examples of trainees weighing 62kg at 1,80m length and 9% subcutaneous fat – and believe it is weird that they do not have a sixpack.

The approach is as simple as it is taxing. You need to build significant muscle mass and strength by basic movements – squat, deadlift, benchpress, small grip pull ups, standing shoulder press - train progressive and learn to move significant weights

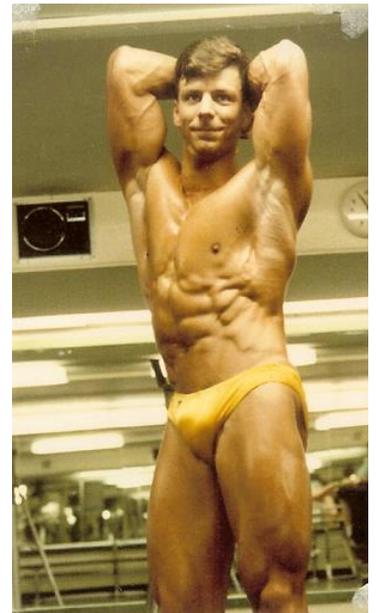
When I confront the “skinny bastards” to these lifts - I never fail to get the remark the next day that **“we did not train abs, why are my abs, obliques so sore” ?**

Answer: In all these lifts you core has to work very hard to keep your upper body positioned correctly versus your lower body – which is the real function of the core.

When the 62 kg trainees adds some 5-10 kg muscle to his frame through these basic movements – he will “automatically” get his sixpack – if he keeps control of his body fat of course. Otherwise it will be there, but covered up.

**Bottom line is that - to get a sixpack – your need to focus away from abs isolation movements and not “diet down to get it”– you simply need to “get big and strong” through basic movements.**

**You can only show muscle if you have it – sixpacks don’t grow on “skinny bastards”**



ATC – “We Are Growing”

