

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

5. Decades of knowledge in a nutshell

Squat

Interesting fact is that quite some gyms do not even have a decent free weight squat rack or safety cage. Maybe this is because nobody uses them anyway, or they are on a deliberate prevention path to attract serious bodybuilders or powerlifters. Of course they might also think it is a dangerous exercise and takes up too much time to monitor properly. Fact is that at many gyms the section with leg apparatus is not as busy as the other areas. Working legs properly it is indeed very hard work. And the squat is the



king of leg exercises. They mentally harden you, teach the body coordination of near all main muscles in your body and without a doubt have an influence on your complete physique development when you learn to do them regularly and heavy. Squats put your body in a severe stress situation. They make your body overcompensate in strength and growth - not just your legs. Especially your whole "core", which consists of your back, abdomen, serratus, glutes, hamstrings but also your calves, arms, shoulders, upper back, chest are stressed. Already in the early 1900-s simple and effective mass and strength building programs have been devised around the squat. The book "Super Squats" – 1989 - Randall J. Strossen" describes such a method in its extreme.

On top of course just looks silly to develop a reasonable muscular upper body with sticks as legs underneath.

Although squat is a natural simple movement, learning the squat and squat heavy and safe is not that easy. People who are against heavy squats usually say it is bad for the back and knees. Many trainees stick to leg press, leg extensions and leg curls. Neither of those exercises are mechanically very good for the back and knees and development of flexibility and support muscle strength.

A good side effect of learning to squat heavy is that you need to develop flexibility and strength in your hips, lower back, glutes and hamstrings. Following the routines promoted by Louie Simmons, Westside barbell, which include gluteham raises, reverse hyper extensions, box squats, the use of chains and bands – at the age of 50 - I have noticed two things. I keep breaking my personal best records in squat, after 30 years of "legacy" approach – nearing 250 kg. Secondly I now have less small aches in my lower

back, noticed when getting out of bed in the morning and increased speed and agility when playing speedy games like beach ball.

