

EXERCISE

Notepad

SHOULD YOU TRAIN TO FAILURE?

By Joe Andruela

You undoubtedly have heard the phrase “train to failure” in the gym. More specifically, you certainly have heard that you should or should not train to failure. You may also wonder what exactly constitutes failure.

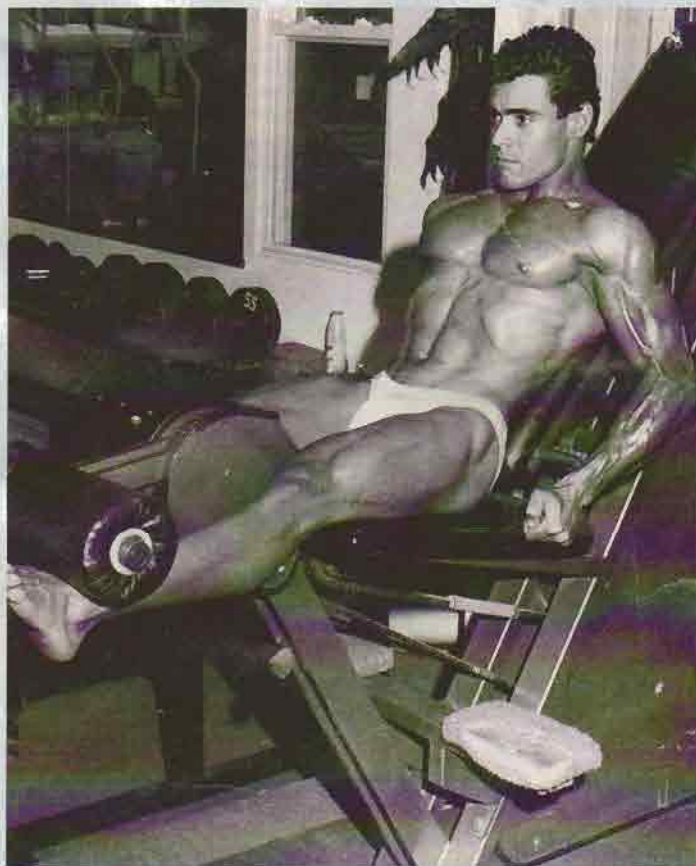
I define failure as the point in a set at which, despite your best effort, you cannot move the weight in good form. A good sign that you did not train to failure is if after the set you ask, “Okay, what’s next?” Training to failure is very taxing on your body. You might feel like you need to lie down after the set and, when you get home, you may need to take a nap and sleep an hour longer that night. Pushing your body to failure is a direct threat to your body’s survival; you will feel exhausted after the workout even if you only do one set! I recommend that my personal training clients have a designated driver after the workout, and I’m serious.

But let’s go over the facts first: A pound of muscle requires about 50-75 calories per day to maintain. A pound of fat requires about three calories per day to maintain. We did not always have fast food restaurants, vending machines and refrigerators full of food. Over thousands of years, human beings had to get rid of any muscle that was unnecessary and store up fat whenever possible in order to survive. It is metabolically expensive to have muscle, and your body knows that.

Regardless of what protein powders you are taking, how many hours you are spending in the gym, how many times

you switch up your routine or how many different fitness gadgets you buy into, your body will not produce more muscle unless it is an absolute necessity. Your body does not want to look good – your body wants to survive.

When you train to failure, you are actually forcing your body to gain muscle. An example of the opposite of training to failure is doing six reps when your body is capable of nine. In this instance, your chances of building muscle would be along the lines of a miracle. If your body is capable of nine



reps, you must do the ninth rep and try as hard as you can to do the 10th. The attempt of the 10th rep will stimulate your body to grow and you will have reached failure. Keep in mind, I am using 10 as a starting point; as you progress and your muscles get bigger and bigger, you will have to reduce the reps to 4-5 to accommodate how fast the lactic acid is building up.

There are some rules and safety issues that must be addressed when it comes to training to failure. First, use a Smith machine or selectorized machine (one with a weight stack where you put in the pin). Do not use free weights, as these become very dangerous once you hit failure.

Second, you must use a slow and steady cadence, like a four-second count down and four-second count up. Using momentum to lift the weight (swinging or jerking the weight up) is not only dangerous, but will for a fraction of a second cause the tension to come *(continued on page 142)*

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