

# X-FILES

## Mass Secrets

## From the Champs

by Steve Holman and Jonathan Lawson

**D**o the biggest bodybuilders on the planet know something the rest of us don't? Are they using some muscle-building secret to get incredibly huge? Yes! And no. Yes in that certain workout techniques they use create extreme mass; no in that those techniques aren't really secrets. They're just specific details that the mass monsters instinctively adopted—in most cases without realizing it.

For example, we've discussed the way Mr. Olympia **Ronnie Coleman** does his heavy work sets through a partial range—like only the bottom half of the bench press. He says he does it to preserve his

joints; however, what those partials, or exaggerated **X Reps**, really do is provide more continuous tension, blocking blood flow to the target muscle. Research shows that partials can activate more muscle fibers and more anabolic hormones.

**Coleman's** partial-rep method is also an awesome quick-hit overload right at the exercise's max-force point—that bottom area of presses or squats, for instance. Doing partial reps with a controlled explosive turnaround can build mass fast. And on some exercises, like shrugs, he double-blasts that key sweet spot for even more mass stimulation. We call that the Double-X Overload technique.

Neveux \ Model: Jay Cutler



In fact, **Coleman's** number-one nemesis, Jay **Cutler**, who was second to big Ron at the '05 Mr. Olympia, uses the DXO technique on almost every exercise—he does **X Reps** between reps or groups of reps for every muscle, giving attention to semistretched-point overload. Is that one of the secrets of his muscle-building success? It's interesting to note that in **Cutler's** early competitive days many believed that he didn't have the genetics to go far in bodybuilding. He proved them wrong, and we think that his integrating more X-spot overload was a *big* contributor! Here's why...

As we've noted in our **e-books** and this **magazine**, stretch and semistretched-point overload are tied not only to more fiber activation and anabolic hormone

stimulation but also to hyperplasia, or fiber splitting (one study showed a 300 percent mass increase in animals from only 30 days of stretch overload!). Does **Cutler** realize all of that? Maybe, maybe not. But it doesn't matter. What does matter is that he's figured out how to use it to build incredible mass. Let's look at how he integrates the DXO technique for semistretched-point overload on cable crossovers.

On his first set he does 7-1-1-1. That means he does seven rapid-fire reps, and then he pause/pulses at the top, his arms outstretched and his pecs in a semistretched state, before he does rep eight. He does it again before rep nine and before rep 10. (Keep in mind that those pause/pulses in the semistretched position also extend the time under tension

for the target muscle, which is another key anabolic trigger; there's a lot more on that in our **e-books**.) Then on set two he ups the anabolic ante.

On his second set of cable crossovers he does 4-1-1-1-1—in other words, four rapid-fire reps followed by four reps with X-Rep pause/pulses on each—but he doesn't stop there. He immediately reduces the weight and performs 3-1-1-1, making the whole thing a drop set. Think about how long the target muscle is under tension and how much semistretched-point overload he's getting at the top end of most of his reps. He gets an incredible amount of growth stimulation from only three sets—well, really only two, one plus one drop set.

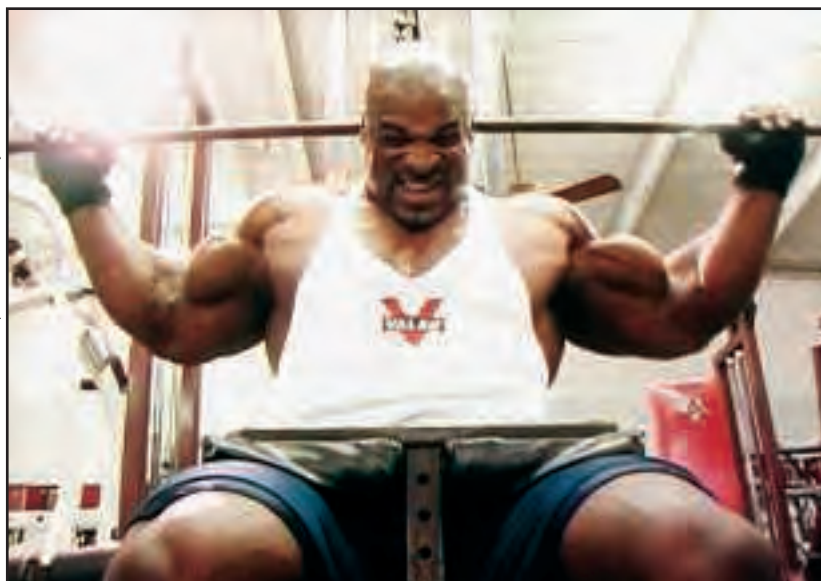
If you're interested in packing on some new muscle—and perhaps leapfrogging your so-called genetic limitations—try the DXO method, which is simply **X Reps** performed between standard reps. Is it **Cutler's** critical size-building secret? After trying it for ourselves and seeing the results, we have to say yes—it's one heck of a mass X-celerator! (Our latest photos are at [www.BeyondX-Rep.com](http://www.BeyondX-Rep.com).)

## Watch, Learn and Grow

Obviously, we're big believers in watching the best bodybuilders train and analyzing what they do to build more muscle. Notice we said "watch" rather than "ask." Most of them can't quite articulate what they do and why they do it; in fact, in most cases, instinct has led them to the mega-mass pot of gold.

As we said, **Ronnie Coleman** is a good example. In fact, his training is mostly exaggerated **X Reps** on every single exercise—no full-range reps whatsoever. While it's probably true that doing the partial reps helps to preserve his joints, it also jacks up the stress at the semistretched point, where maximum force is generated and, therefore, where the most muscle fibers are activated.

Watch **Coleman** do bench presses. He lowers the first rep from complete lockout, but after that he moves the bar off his chest to just below halfway up the stroke—at



Okabe \ Model: Ronnie Coleman \ "Redemption" DVD, www.Home-Gym.com

**Coleman** does partial-range movements on most exercises—similar to exaggerated **X Reps**—for continuous tension and max-force-point overload.





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**Cutler and Coleman, two of the biggest bodybuilders on the planet. Their training techniques can help you grow massive.**

which point he lowers again and explodes for another partial rep, cranking out those pistonlike partials till failure. It's a quick-hit overload right at the sweet spot—and with mega-heavy weight (you can use much heavier poundages when you just do partials). He also keeps his reps fairly high, around 12 on most exercises, so his muscles get the proper time under tension for growth stimulation.

Now, **Coleman** would probably say that doing 12 just feels right and doesn't stress his joints the way doing low reps would. That's not to belittle him. He's one of the greatest bodybuilders to ever walk the planet, but it just goes to show that a lot of the most massive men discover what works and then leave it up to the rest of us to watch, learn and figure out the science behind it.

### Tension for New Muscle Dimensions

So should you follow **Coleman's** lead and do all of your exercises in partial-range style? That might work to a degree; however, since muscle fibers fire all the way through the range, it's possible that you could miss some by not getting at least close to lockout on a set or two. We don't recommend full lockout

because of the joint stress that **Coleman** talks about, but the bigger reason is continuous tension. As we've written in our **e-books**, in this **magazine** and in the **IME-zine**, research shows that keeping tension on the muscle can jack up muscle growth significantly.

Yep, no pain, no gain actually has science behind it. Here's a conclusion from a recent study on muscular adaptations that gets the point across (*Med Sci Sports Exer.* 35:955-63; 2005):

"The increased acidity in muscle during intense training not only promotes anabolic hormone release but also appears to increase the level of muscle fiber recruitment. The brain apparently senses the heightened metabolic stress and compensates for it by recruiting additional fibers."

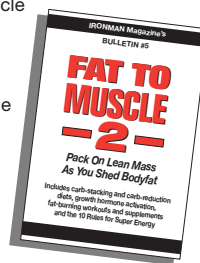
Did you get that? Anabolic hormone release. More fiber recruitment. That pretty much seals the deal for continuous tension. Yeah, we know a nonlock style hurts, but that's the point. It triggers muscle burn, and you want to extend that searing effect with **X-Reps**, partial pulses done at the end of a set or between reps or groups of reps, as **Jay Cutler** does them. Either way they extend the set, giving a chance for even more acidity to

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collect in the target muscle so, as the quote above indicates, they can “increase the level of muscle fiber recruitment.”

We’re talking turbocharged growth stimulation. **X Reps** and X-hybrid techniques, like the Double-X Overload method we discussed above, can make a set two to five times more productive than a standard positive-failure set. More anabolic hormone release and muscle fiber recruitment are the reasons why. All that said, however, you do want to rest long enough, about three minutes, between those sets so you can fire the muscle with the most force possible on each.

## Quick-Hit Muscle Makers

Okay, you want some specifics on how to apply the above info. Here are a few ultimate-exercise sequences you can try with some **Coleman**-esque and **Cutler**-like touches for good measure—and bigger measurements. (The ultimate exercises for each bodypart are explained in *The Ultimate Mass Workout* e-book, available at [www.X-Rep.com](http://www.X-Rep.com).)

**Sequence 1.** Do work set 1 in nonlock style, and at exhaustion do **X-Rep** partials at the semistretched point. For work set 2 add weight and do an **X-Rep**-only set, blasting out heavy partials in the X range, about a 10-inch move from just above the turnaround to just below halfway up the stroke—**Coleman** style. Try to get 12, and when you can’t manage another, do a static hold to failure right at the semistretched point. (Smith-machine incline presses or another type of machine bench presses would be a great exercise to try this on.)

**Sequence 2.** Do work set 1 as an **X-Rep**-only set, blasting out heavy partials in the X range, about a 10-inch move from just above the turnaround to just below halfway up the stroke—**Coleman**-style again, but no static hold this time. Do work set 2 in Double-X Overload style, the way **Coleman** does his shrugs and **Cutler** does

**Cutler favors rapid-fire movement, often X-Repping in the semistretched position between reps.**

Okabe \ Model: Jay Cutler \ “Ripped to Shreds” DVD \ www.Home-Gym.com



a number of exercises: Drive the weight up through the full range, not quite to lockout, then lower and do a quarter rep that encompasses the X Spot before driving through the full range again—but not quite to lockout. You want continuous tension to throttle the target muscle. When you can’t get any more of the DXO reps, do standard **X Reps** at the semistretched point.

With each of the above you get continuous tension, which accelerates muscle pump and capillary bed enlargement, and semistretched-point overload, which may trigger fiber replication. Altogether it creates extraordinary muscle fiber activation and anabolic hormone release. In fact, if you can grit your teeth and generate enough intensity on the ultimate

exercises, you can get quick, mass-building workouts—averaging about 30 minutes. Sure, we prefer to train our bodyparts with more than one exercise in **Positions-of-Flexion** style—midrange, contracted and stretch—but if you’re pressed for time or simply want to try something different, the big midrange ultimate exercise for each bodypart performed in X-tremintensity style, as illustrated in the above examples, can get the mass-building job done.

No excuses; it’s time to grow!

**Editor’s note:** For more information on **X Reps**, X-hybrid techniques, *The Ultimate Mass Workout* e-book and the *Beyond X-Rep Muscle-Building* e-book, visit [www.X-Rep.com](http://www.X-Rep.com). **IM**

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