

The Squat Controversy

by

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A compound movement, the full back squat is both hated and loved. Challenged as a poor movement for bodybuilders by the Iron Guru Vince Gironda as well as many others I might add, and hailed as the single greatest movement of all exercises by countless others including some of bodybuilding's greats. Those in opposition to the back squat claim it will make the hips wide, bulk up the glutes, thicken the waist and cause back and knee damage. Those in favor of the back squat claim it will build huge muscle mass not only on the thighs but other bodyparts as well, it will increase the ribcage, and increase endurance. So, with experts and highly educated and experienced proponents on both sides of the issue, who is right? Both are! Sound like an easy way out, well it's more than that it's also the truth.

You see, proponents of anything not only the squat, often tend to place things into a single category. It is either this way or that way and no room for anything different. Each side has valid and substantial facts to make their case. That being said, if facts exist on both sides, how then is it possible to select which side is right? Unfortunately it can sometimes be extremely difficult to make the right decision.

Over the years, I have come to realize in my own training and, in training of others, there does not exist a pat answer for the majority of questions that one can ask. I also learned, and it should be obvious without even having to be stated; human beings are all different and unique creatures, allowing something to work well for one person and not work at all for another. Let me give just one example that I have used many times in the past. Take the Preacher Curl or Scott Curl for example. Performing the movement requires the use of a special piece of equipment. Almost every equipment manufacture

makes at least one type of Preacher Curl bench or apparatus. This popular movement is performed by thousands of bodybuilder's every single day. Many and even some champion bodybuilder's claim it to be the ultimate in biceps exercises. Well, I used the Preacher or Scott Curl in my workouts for over a year, to see what benefit I would obtain from it. The results; nothing. I didn't get anything out of the movement at all. It wasn't a wasted year as I did discover the movement simply did not provide me with any benefit. For me, it is not a productive movement but it is for thousands of others.

Now, just because the movement is nonproductive for me, should I campaign against it and label it as being worthless? That would be pretty silly considering the fact I know first hand the movement has produced some terrific results for others, some I trained myself and actually recommended they use the movement. Listen again; what works for one does not necessarily mean it will work for everyone. Everyone is different and finding what works best for you is of utmost importance for results. You can't just rely on what you read or what you are told. Experience and experimentation are the best tools in bodybuilding.

I have personally found the regular back squat to be one of the most productive exercises ever for all around development. Will it make your hips wider, will it increase the size of the buttock; well, for most people the answer is yes. Will the regular back squat damage the knees; will it hurt the lower back? Honestly, the answer is; it can if performed incorrectly. Some may find they are not able to perform the movement properly due to the way their hips are connected. In this case, you can't do anything about it. I have worked with people who, because of the way their bone structure is, they are unable to perform a squat properly. It was not a matter of technique or concentration; it was simply a matter of the bone structure and connection they were born with.

Can you still obtain size, shape, and cuts without performing the regular back squat... absolutely! Can you become Mr. Olympia without performing the regular back squat? I doubt it but then only a very few people are even blessed with what it takes to be worthy of competing in the Mr. Olympia or other major contests.

It's easy to knock the squat because it is a very difficult and draining movement to perform. Maybe one out of every one hundred people who exercise will say they like the squat. It's demanding on a person physically, mentally, and emotionally. In fact, I can't think of another movement that can place such demands on the body as the squat does. I really believe this in itself makes the squat easy prey for those who do not like to perform the movement and provides justification for those who prefer not to use the squat in their workouts.

The sheer unpleasant drain on the body one gets from performing the squat is enough to make the majority of people "Antisquatist" in the first place. Scientific information for not performing the squat exist in abundance but... so does scientific information in praise of the squat. Be honest and face the issue head on. There is enough valid information on both sides of the issue to prove a case so let's just remove, "calling on science" or "the doctor" from the discussion. Instead, focus on you, the individual and what works for you.

One of the biggest mistakes a bodybuilder can make is in automatically believing something they read or hear without trying it for themselves. Potential exists with every movement, routine, program, idea, method, and concept. Just who receives the benefit is not known until the individual themselves experiments.

Good Luck and move forward with courage and confidence in your ability to choose that which is best for you based on fact, trial and error. Once you begin to make decisions based on your own findings, you can state with authority you know what is best for you!

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