

WEST SIDE BARBELLS 5X5 hybrid

Well, after posting the WSB Template and WS4BB, I have gotten MORE PMs, this time regarding a hybrid 5x5/WSB program. Now, usually I speak from complete experience; I've done variations of each the 5x5 and Westside programs before, as well as the "early version" of DC, various iterations of HIT, 8x8 training, 3-day splits, 4-day splits, 7-day splits (each bodypart got its own day), super high volume, Yates-style lower volume, Ed Coan style PL SF periodized programs, etc...when you hear me state something, I am stating MY opinion, unless I give credit to the originator. I don't like guesswork, and I don't talk smack about someone else's ideas if I have not tried them out myself or had a few of my buddies, soldiers or wife try it out. Like most dudes who are the "biggest" fish in a small pond, I get asked a lot for weight training advice by my buddies and guys in the various military units to which I've been assigned, so I have a decent pool of results to pull from.

Again, I have done a variation of the 5x5 with great success, and have had TONS of success with my WS4BB variant, but I have NEVER combined 5x5 with Westside. I have enough personal experience with both that I feel I can toss out a pretty good idea as to how a WSB/5x5 template would work though by taking what I like from each and adjusting what I don't like. With that in mind, recognize that this is one man's opinion, and the key to any true advanced program is going to be customization.

If you have not AT LEAST run both the intermediate 5x5 and a WSB style training program for awhile, you really will not be able to customize this properly. In order to know what the hell I'm rambling about, you will need a damn good understanding of the why's, how's and where fore's of both training methods. If you don't understand the principles and the reasoning behind the principles of each training method, I am going to seem like a rambling fool to you. In fact, even if you DO understand both programs, I'm probably going to seem like a rambling fool.

However, never let it be said that I fear looking like a fool, so here we go.

5x5 is cookie cutter. WSB is all about customization. Madcow himself said outright that the spreadsheet serves ONLY as a starting point, that the 2nd time around, you should be able to adjust for your own needs/strengths/weaknesses as far as weight selection and Wednesday exercises. This is not a beginner's or an intermediate program. It is an ADVANCED program. It also has a lot of volume, so it is best that you do this program after a full deload (from a DF program) or after a SD (if you were running HST). If you are not in good "shape", meaning your workload capacity/recovery is poor, then run the intermediate 5x5 for a month, starting at week 2, to get yourself into proper workload shape. Do a 1-2 week deload and then hit things up with this one.

Monday - ME upper body/press

ME press variant-----3 x 1 – 3, 1 set each @ 90% / 100% / 95% of 3, 2, or 1 RM

Squat/DL variant (a)-- 5x5 (ramped)

RE press variant (a)--- 5x5 (sets across, adjust weights down 5-10% from template)

Pendlay rows-----5x5 (ramped)

Wednesday - RE day

SQ/DL variant (b)----- 4x10

RE Press variant (b)-- 4x10

Chin-ups----- 4x10
Yates rows----- 4x10

Friday - ME lower body

ME DL variant-----3 x 1 - 3 > @ 90% / 100% / 95% of 1, 2, or 3 RM

Squat/DL variant (a)---5x5 (sets across, adjust weights downward 5-10%)

RE press variant (a)--- -5x5 (ramped)

Pendlay rows-----5x5 (sets across)

The ever popular laterals are easily implemented for the medial delts. Sets of GHRs and/or reverse hypers and/or heel plate drags provide a way of taxing the hamstrings without overly taxing recovery. One (or two, or all 3, if you are a stud) can be added in up to twice weekly, the laterals all 3 days if you can swing it, much as direct arm work and hypers/abdominals are added in the Madcow 5x5's. Understand that those exercises are ADJUNCTS, rather than core principles. Leave them out if you must. Don't introduce them haphazardly.

Exercise selection. I included both Pendlay rows and Yates rows because they are the 2 most effective exercises for the entire back that I know of, and they are DRASTICALLY different in both technique and affect. The Yates rows are done on 10-rep day for a reason. This is an exercise that knuckleheads like to get stupid with and load up the weight. DON'T do that. Suck down 5% of your ego and use 5% less weight and watch your technique improve by 50% and your results improve by 100%. Leave the egos at the door, bitches. To further mitigate this problem, I have chin-ups as the precursor to the rows as a means of "pre-exhaustion". So now you have a very reasonable excuse to scale back on the weight for them. Tell that little voice inside your head to STFU, you just got done chinning, you don't NEED 3 plates on there.

- Select your exercises for the squat/DL/bench variations according to your strengths and weaknesses. If you know that "off the floor" is a weakness in the deadlift, then leave the rack pulls for someone else. If you know that your lockout is ass kicking, you're fine at the midpoint, but you suck right off the chest, then give some strong consideration to reverse wide-grip benches and overhead presses, rather than CGBP and DB presses. If you don't give a shit how much you lift, you just want to pack on mass and strength is secondary, then select your exercises according to physique weak points rather than strength weak points.

- Unlike the basic WSB, which says "no direct squatting, deadlifting or benching", I recommend that you use the basic squat, deadlift and bench press as much as possible in this program. No one that is reading this is an elite powerlifter, so chances are pretty good, you'll need to keep benching, squatting and deadlifting in order to continue your progress. Additionally, unlike those advanced lifters, you can still have a tremendous amount of success incorporating the big 3 into your routine.

- ME exercises will be maintained for 2-3 weeks. Again, no world class powerlifter is going to take my advice, and the "change every week" thing primarily applies to them. On Week 1, you take your 3RM and perform a set at 90%, a set at 100%, and a set at 95% of your 3RM. All 3 sets are for 3 reps apiece. On week 2, you will do the same thing, but you will do doubles. During Week 3, you do singles and attempt to hit a Page Ranking for your 1-RM. At that point, you change ME exercises as you should hit a 1-RM for that exercise, as well as getting to your previous 5-RM on your main "supplementary" exercises (press variant "a" and squat variant "a"). Keep the supplementary exercises the same for another 3 week run and change to a new ME exercise. Do another 3-week run with the different ME exercise, as above (Triples during week 1, etc). (NOTE – If you have run WSB previously, then stick with whatever ME %age scheme you like. I like 90/100/95. If you like something different, then by all means, do what you like . (Customize!) If

you choose to switch ME exercise every other week, then shoot for week 1 = 3RM, week 2 = 1RM

Weight selection. You can use Madcow's Advanced template as a starting point for weight calculations for the 5x5 ramping and sets across, as well as weekly progression. On Monday, reduce poundage on your second press by 5-10% to account for the ME press you do first in the day. Same for Fridays and the lower body exercise. Remember, it is a TEMPLATE. You should already know whether a 6% ramp works for you or if a 9% ramp works better.

- On Wednesdays, you will do 10-rep sets of completely different exercises (lower "b", press "b", Yates rows). Normally, your 10-RM is ABOUT 80-85% of your 5RM for that exercise. So if you can hit 200 for a set of 5, then you should be able to hit 160-170 for a set of 10. If you cannot hit 160-170 in this case, then adjust the weights upward or downward on the 10-rep day according to your own abilities. If you can hit 175-180 for a set of 10, then you probably can go reasonably heavy on Wednesdays. Adjust according to your own abilities

- I am of the (strong) opinion that, especially for bodybuilders, a very tight "ramp" should be done for the rows, and a noticeably "looser" ramp on the presses. I like a 5-6% ramp on the rows, a 12% on the presses (more on CGBP), and a 10% on the legs. Adjust as needed. I'm not going to tell you how to suck this egg, you should have enough training experience to suck it your own way.

If you have not done at least the intermediate version of 5x5, you will not know how best to individualize this for you, so you may need to adjust fire as you go along. Ramp 12% on Wednesdays, maybe even 15%. Remember, Wednesday is supposed to be something of a "break". This may seem easy compared to a 5x5 where you still work hard on Wednesdays, but remember, Mondays and Fridays will be MUCH tougher when doing the ME work. Shorter rest periods, move between sets faster. Wednesdays is the "pump" day.

For deload, set all 5x5 work on Mondays and Fridays to 3x3, replace the ME work with DE work (8x3 @ 50-60% on bench press, 10x2 @ 50-60% on box squats). Drop to 3x10 on Wednesdays for each exercise. Like 5x5, as long as you are hitting PRs on those main supplementary exercises and bar speed is good for the DE work, keep riding that overreaching/supercompensation wave. I'm estimating that every other ME exercise switch will be good for a deload.

I'm working on a spreadsheet that will account for the 5-10% reduction on ME days as well as adjust for the ramping differences and the extra exercises. I may or may not bother to finish with it, as I am pretty strongly of the opinion that the key to success in this program is going to be knowledge of your own body and how you react to training variables (Such as exercise selection, weight progression, ramping, etc)

Besides, I spoon feed people more than enough. If you're to this point now, you should be able to take my ideas, adjust as needed, and run with them.

Now then, that's the basic program, let's look at the pros and cons of each method and why I organized things the way I did.

5x5 "basic ideas"

- 1) Do 5 x 5 with the same weight on one day, ramping on another day
- 2) Wednesday has less total tonnage and less volume than Monday and Wednesday
- 3) Constantly push to increase the weights in your core lifts
- 4) Keep the identical lifts throughout

WSB “basic ideas”

- 1) Pick an exercise for bench and an exercise for squat/DL and “max out” once weekly (ME)
- 2) Perform a speed day for bench and squat (DE)
- 3) Select exercises that increase your ability to perform each of the “big 3” and perform a strength/hypertrophy routine with them for sets of 5-12 reps (RE)
- 4) Change the ME lifts frequently, the RE lifts not so frequently

5x5 Pros

- 1) Effective - Focus on squat, bench and dead guarantees increases in overall strength and mass (assuming proper diet)
- 2) Easily organized, easy to understand
- 3) Easy methodology for ramping, progression, and deloading (programming)
- 4) Done properly, all lifts go through the roof

5x5 Cons

- 1) Static program is not easily customized
- 2) No real way to emphasize weak points
- 3) Monotonous – Focus on very small # of “core” exercises may lead to boredom (we’re dealing with the Nintendo generation here, stuff has to change every hour or they will get antsy and start spastically clicking on the channel changer)

WSB Pros

- 1) Easily customized for individual preferences
- 2) Designed to perfectly emphasize weak points
- 3) Variety keeps things interesting and makes workouts “fun”
- 4) Done properly, all lifts go through the roof

WSB Cons

- 1) “Complex” exercises and concepts can be confusing
- 2) De-emphasis of the “big 3”, especially the deadlift, can result in halted gains for intermediate trainees; even advanced trainees frequently need to hit “heavy” benches, squats and deadlifts
- 3) More difficult to periodize for the average trainee due to frequently changing exercises
- 4) Absolutely REQUIRES a spot 2 days out of the week for both ME days

WSB and 5x5 are almost perfectly complementary, as far as their pros/cons. A con of 1 is a pro in the other.

The WSB template is far more complex, the 5x5 template is easy, so we’ll start with the 5x5 template (mitigating WSB Con #1). DE days have mostly strict carryover for powerlifters rather than bodybuilders, so we will drop DE work entirely (NOTE – DE work makes for a GREAT deload!) 5x5 sets across as well as ramped 5x5 and ramped 4x10 comprise the RE work. The 2 ME days are very easy to incorporate, one on Monday for upper body, one on Friday for a deadlift variation (mitigating WSB con # 2). If you want to pull heavy on Mondays and bench heavy on Fridays, be my guest. Adjust your supplementary rep scheme accordingly. Wednesday during 5x5 is typically a “lighter” day, with 4 sets instead of 5, sub-max squats, military presses instead of bench presses, and only 1 maximal set of 5 for the deadlift. This becomes an RE day where all sets are ramped, and we get to go for the pump because “it is like cumming” and even powerlifters like to cum, right?

In order to mitigate all 3 of the 5x5 cons, a group of core exercises is selected for the press, squat and deadlift. Several ME press exercises will be chosen and will be rotated every 1-3 weeks on Monday. 2 additional presses will be chosen, 1 performed Mondays and Fridays (main supplemental exercise) in typical 5x5 fashion, the other performed on Wednesday RE day

(accessory exercise), with higher repetitions. The supplemental exercises do NOT change, you continue to work hard to improve them and add weight. The accessory exercises are not weight dependent and can be changed on a whim from week to week if you like.

The various primary deadlift variants will comprise the ME lower body work, mitigating WSB con # 4 since deadlifts don't need no steenkin' spotter. If you have a spotter and you want to do ME squats, then go for it! Or if you like to base jump without a parachute, swim with sharks and run with the bulls, do ME work WITHOUT a spotter. Just make sure you list me in your will, mmmmkay?

Anyway, 2 different squat/pull variations will be chosen. As with the press variations, 1 is performed Mondays and Fridays in typical 5x5 fashion, the other performed on Wednesday RE day, with higher repetitions. In both cases, you select your supplementary press/squat/pull to suit your own weak points. Also note – your own lower back recovery abilities should play HEAVILY into your selection. You're doing Yates rows on Wednesdays. That is a heavy-ass exercise, even at 10 reps. That might not be the day to select heavy RDLs as your "accessory" exercise. Yeah, they're 10-rep sets, but your lower back might really limit you and jack up your Yates rows. Might recommend reverse hypers, ghetto glute-ham or front squats, to keep your lower back a bit less..."taxed". If you really really need to hit the hammies and you cannot do the ghetto GHR or reverse hypers, you might want to switch to supported rows or cable rows of some sort rather than the Yates and do the SLDL/RDL. I'd rather see you perform cable rows properly and hit your weak points than do Yates rows (especially improperly) at the neglect of your weak points. Also note – you can select concentric-only exercises for your weak points on Wednesdays if you have a problem with DOMS on Fridays from the Wednesday workouts.

By using the large group of exercises YOU chose to best develop YOUR weak points, you can keep training more fluid while maintaining easy progression, thereby mitigating all 3 of the main 5x5 cons.

So there you have it, a "basic recipe" for success. Not a step-by-step spoonfeeding, but a sampling of ideas that you can use as a starting point to construct your own workout program. If you aren't experienced, stick to a templated workout. If you have the experience, give the 5x5/WSB hybrid a go and report back with how you adjusted it and how it worked as a result, for better or for worse.