GENERAL

craig monson arm workout

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Introduction

When it comes to sculpting strong, well-defined arms, few training philosophies stand out as clearly as the **Craig Monson arm workout**. Whether you're a seasoned bodybuilder looking to add a new dimension to your routine or a fitness enthusiast aiming for that next level of arm definition, the principles behind Craig Monson's approach offer a comprehensive blueprint for building muscle, improving endurance, and preventing injury. In this article, we'll dive deep into the science, structure, and execution of the **Craig Monson arm workout**, providing you with a practical guide that you can implement in any gym setting—or even at home.

Who Is Craig Monson?

Craig Monson is a respected strength coach, former powerlifter, and the mastermind behind a series of highly effective arm training programs. With a career spanning over two decades, Monson has worked with athletes ranging from Olympic hopefuls to weekend warriors. His training philosophy blends proven hypertrophy science with a focus on functional strength, ensuring that every rep translates into real-world performance and aesthetic results.

Craig Monson's Arm Workout Philosophy

At the core of the **Craig Monson arm workout**lies a set of guiding principles that differentiate his method from generic arm routines:

- Progressive Overload: Gradual increases in weight, volume, or intensity to continuously challenge muscles.
- Compound Focus: Leveraging multi-joint movements that recruit larger muscle groups for efficient growth.
- Isolation Precision: Targeted isolation exercises to finish each muscle group with maximum fatigue.
- Recovery Emphasis: Structured rest periods and periodization to allow for optimal muscle repair.
- Functional Integration: Movements that translate into everyday strength, enhancing overall athleticism.

Key Principles of Craig Monson Arm Training

Understanding these principles is essential before you jump into the routine. They serve as a roadmap for customizing the program to fit your goals, whether that's bulking, cutting, or improving overall arm strength.

1. Volume and Frequency

Monson recommends targeting each arm muscle group (biceps and triceps) twice a week. This split ensures a high total weekly volume while allowing sufficient recovery. For example, a typical schedule might be:

1. Monday: Biceps + Triceps
2. Thursday: Biceps + Triceps

Within each session, the focus is on a combination of compound lifts, heavy isolation, and finishing moves.

2. Exercise Selection

Each exercise is chosen for its ability to maximize muscle recruitment and provide a clear stimulus. Monson's

routine includes:

- Compound lifts like close hand bench press and overhead press.
- Barbell curls and weighted chin ups for biceps.
- Weighted dips and skull crushers for triceps.

3. Tempo and Rep Ranges

Controlled tempo is critical. Monson emphasizes a 3 second eccentric (lowering) phase followed by a 1 second concentric (lifting) phase. Rep ranges vary by exercise: 6–8 reps for heavy compound moves and 10–12 reps for isolation work.

4. Periodization and Peaking

To avoid plateaus, Monson uses a 12 week periodization model:

- Weeks 1–4: Foundation (moderate volume, moderate intensity)
- Weeks 5–8: Intensification (increased intensity, decreased volume)
- Weeks 9–12: Peak (maximum intensity, minimal volume)

The Signature Craig Monson Arm Workout Routine

Below is a detailed breakdown of the **Craig Monson arm workout**split into biceps and triceps days. Each section includes warm up, main lifts, isolation work, and finishing moves.

Biceps Day

Warm up: 5–10 minutes of light cardio (rowing or cycling) and dynamic stretching focused on the upper body.

1. Close Hand Bench Press (Compound)
- Sets: 4
- Reps: 6–8
- Rest: 90 seconds
- Focus: Engages the triceps while also working the chest and shoulders.
2. Weighted Chin Ups (Compound)
- Sets: 4
- Reps: 6–8
- Rest: 90 seconds
- Focus: Builds overall arm strength and core stability.
3. Barbell Curl (Isolation)
- Sets: 3
- Reps: 10–12
- Rest: 60 seconds
- Focus: Directly targets the biceps brachii.
4. Hammer Curl (Isolation)
- Sets: 3
- Reps: 10–12
- Rest: 60 seconds
- Focus: Works brachialis and brachioradialis for fuller forearms.
5. Preacher Curl (Isolation)
- Sets: 3
- Reps: 10–12
- Rest: 60 seconds

- Focus: Isolates the biceps for peak contraction.

6. Finisher: 21's (Biceps)
- Sets: 2
- Reps: 21 (7 lower half, 7 upper half, 7 full range)
- Rest: 45 seconds
- Focus: Exhausts the biceps with a high volume finisher.

Triceps Day

Warm up: 5–10 minutes of light cardio (rowing or cycling) and dynamic upper body stretches.

1. Close Hand Bench Press (Compound)
- Sets: 4
- Reps: 6–8
- Rest: 90 seconds
- Focus: Primary triceps activation while engaging the chest.

2. Weighted Dips (Compound)
- Sets: 4
- Reps: 6–8
- Rest: 90 seconds
- Focus: Full triceps contraction and shoulder stability.

3. Skull Crushers (Isolation)
- Sets: 3
- Reps: 10–12
- Rest: 60 seconds
- Focus: Targets the long head of the triceps.

4. Overhead Triceps Extension (Isolation)
- Sets: 3
- Reps: 10–12
- Rest: 60 seconds
- Focus: Emphasizes the medial head for overall thickness.

5. Triceps Pushdown (Isolation)
- Sets: 3
- Reps: 10–12
- Rest: 60 seconds
- Focus: Isolates the lateral head for definition.

6. Finisher: Close Grip Push Ups (Triceps)
- Sets: 2
- Reps: 12–15
- Rest: 45 seconds
- Focus: Finishes with a body weight movement that maintains tension.

Exercise Breakdown: Biceps

Each biceps exercise in the **Craig Monson arm workout**serves a specific purpose, from compound strength to isolated hypertrophy.

1. Close Hand Bench Press

Although primarily a chest exercise, the close hand variation places a significant load on the triceps, indirectly benefiting the biceps through overall arm activation. Perform the lift with a 3 second descent and 1 second lift,

focusing on maintaining a stable elbow position.

2. Weighted Chin Ups

Adding weight to chin ups forces the biceps to work harder, improving both strength and size. Keep your grip slightly underhand and pull until your chin clears the bar.

3. Barbell Curl

The barbell curl remains the gold standard for biceps hypertrophy. Use a full range of motion, ensuring that the forearms remain neutral throughout the lift.

4. Hammer Curl

Hammer curls target the brachialis, pushing the biceps brachii upward for a thicker appearance. Maintain a neutral grip and avoid swinging.

5. Preacher Curl

Preacher curls isolate the biceps and prevent momentum. Keep the upper arms stationary on the pad and focus on the contraction at the top.

6. 21's Finisher

This classic bodybuilding finisher involves 21 repetitions divided into three segments: 7 lower half, 7 upper half, and 7 full range. It's an excellent way to induce metabolic stress and stimulate growth.

Exercise Breakdown: Triceps

Triceps training in the **Craig Monson arm workout**focuses on both strength and size, with a blend of compound and isolation movements.

1. Close Hand Bench Press

As with the biceps day, this lift is a compound movement that heavily recruits the triceps. Keep your hands close (about shoulder width) and push the bar directly upward.

2. Weighted Dips

Weighted dips are one of the most effective triceps exercises. Keep your elbows tucked close to your body to maximize triceps activation.

3. Skull Crushers

Skull crushers target the long head of the triceps, crucial for overall arm thickness. Use a controlled tempo and avoid hyperextending the elbows.

4. Overhead Triceps Extension

Perform this exercise with a dumbbell or cable to emphasize the medial head. Keep your elbows stationary and focus on the stretch at the bottom.

5. Triceps Pushdown

Triceps pushdowns isolate the lateral head. Use a rope attachment for a full range of motion and squeeze at the bottom of each rep.

6. Close Grip Push Ups

Finish with close grip push ups to maintain tension on the triceps until the end of the workout. Keep your body

straight and lower until your chest nearly touches the floor.

Supplementary Mov

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