GET LEAN

XMAN

Tony Horton, the trainer behind P90X, breaks down the most successful fitness product in history

MF: P90X workouts are tough. Why do you think people stick with them?
Horton: Usually when you buy a fitness DVD, you see a happy, shiny instructor with happy, shiny people in the background. It's all perfectly choreographed. With P90X, we're busting our asses. We don't do everything perfectly. People see that and think, "That's me."
Did you struggle with your weight when you were young? In a way, I was the 98-pound weakling—the last kid picked for teams and the first one to get beat up at the bus stop. In college, I took a weightlifting class, and my instructor was a cool guy with a great attitude. And that's what P90X is. It's fun, and it's sold more than four million copies.
What is the P90X diet? There wouldn't be an overweight person in this country if we all ate lean protein, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables every day. We get people away from foods they can't pronounce. It's mainly a Paleolithic approach in the beginning—more protein and fewer carbs. Over the course of three months, the protein goes down and the carbs go up to fuel more intense workouts.
Looking at the P90X workouts, it seems like a lot of endurance training. Could a guy follow this program and add significant muscle and strength? If you're trying to get a big chest and arms and squat heavy, then I'd say P90X isn't for you. It's for people who want well-rounded fitness. But we have people do pushups with weighted vests with reps of 8 to 10. That'll help you gain size. A lot of our "after" photos are regular guys who end up looking like bodybuilders.
P90X2 is on the market now. What's new about it? It takes everything you did on P90X and makes it different and therefore harder. There are lots of wacky moves. People who love CrossFit are going to dig P90X2 because it's a lot of core, functional balance. I would say the majority of exercises are things people have never seen before.

TONY'S THREE GET-FIT TIPS

P90X may not be enough to build a big bench press. Here's how to hit the numbers you want while getting fitter.
By Tony Horton's own admission, P90X isn't designed to boost your performance on big lifts, and it may not maximize your muscle gains. But, if you want to give it a shot and still have a big bench and loaded guns, try this:


> Begin every workout with a heavy lift. Rotate some kind of squat, press, and deadlift once per week. Since P90X is intended for home use, consider what lifts will be appropriate in a home gym. If you don't have a bench and rack, do an overhead press instead of a bench press, and do a front squat that you clean from the floor rather than a back squat. Perform five sets of five reps with a weight that has you falling at five reps on your last set.

> Eat two grams of carbs per pound of body weight. If you weigh 150 pounds, aim to take in 300g of carbs per day. This will help you put on muscle.

> Cut back. Follow only the most basic P90X routine, and don't do any extra ab work or cardio. Building muscle requires saving calories and ensuring recovery.