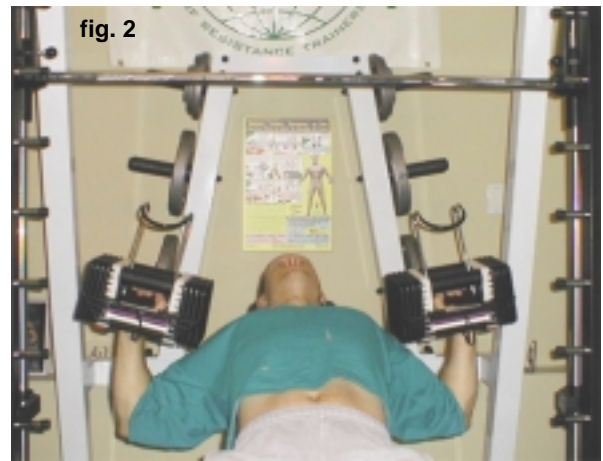


# Power Hooks

Review by Brian D. Johnston

When it comes to free weights, barbells are fine, but most people prefer using dumbbells, and this is why PowerBlocks are so popular with home trainees and with personal training studios. And one of my favorite dumbbell exercises is the dumbbell press, particularly on an incline. However, I haven't performed this exercise in a while for two painful reasons: one, I find heaving and wrestling 95-pound dumbbells up irritating to the shoulders (from years of previous rotator abuse) and, two, I have some minor tendonitis in my left forearm and the compression force when the dumbbell is thrown back to begin the movement does much to intensify the irritation.

Recently, I have reintroduced the dumbbell press, for both chest and shoulders, with use of **Power Hooks**, tested to over 1,000 pounds and a simple yet effective concept that should be the mainstay of any serious trainee who works with dumbbells. This device permits you to use dumbbells as you would a barbell; to unrack the weight safely and effectively with little effort, then to replace them accordingly, rather than dropping them to your thighs or to the floor (see figures 1 and 2).



Now, there's more to Power Hooks than simply saving energy; they make your sets more effective by increasing focus and concentration, as well as providing an effective *pre-load*. To explain, if you were to lift a barbell off the floor or off your lap, you would then need to throw it back before starting the first rep in the bottom, weakest position. Conversely, by being able to take the barbell off uprights, you get a pre-load, thus allowing the nervous system to be ready for the lift. Therefore, you're able to handle much more weight for maximum benefit. Now, the same is possible with dumbbells, and you will notice an increase in performance from the very first workout.

Further, when working with dumbbells in the usual manner, you are restricted by starting and ending each set by fixed points, meaning that after you hoist them, you begin the movement then lower them at the finish in the same position. When using Power Hooks, you establish where the lift-off and drop-off points are by adjusting the catch barbell where you want it, to meet your body size and mechanics best.

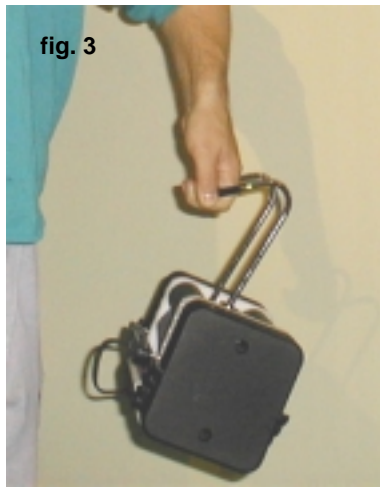


fig. 3

Next, it is easy to spot someone, since you simply pull up on the hooks (fig. 3) rather than grasping the other person's hands or wrists, possibly throwing him or her off balance or pulling in an unnatural plane relative to the trainee's proper alignment.

The diversity of the Power Hooks also is notable. Obviously you can use them with professional fixed dumbbells; but you also can use them with standard home-based adjustable dumbbells. Simply leave the dumbbells hanging on the bar; remove any collars; add or subtract dumbbell plates; then replace the collars.

Further, you can use Power Hooks with PowerBlocks. Although more time consuming, as opposed to a simple slip-on and attach with regular dumbbells, it is worth the extra 60 seconds setup to make a workout more effective and to reduce the risk of any shoulder injury if throwing the dumbbells back or dropping them to the ground. For that reason, I included an instructional photoset, as per below.

The first step is to feed the Power Hook through the middle of the core (fig. 4) and then attach the hooks to the barbell collar. Next, lay the core on its side and attach (feed through) the necessary weights (fig. 5). From there, hang the dumbbells on a fixed barbell as you normally would.



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6

Other uses? You bet. If you chin or dip with a weight around your waist, you usually have to feed the dip belt's chain through barbell plates. Once you get to an appreciable weight, it is best to use a dumbbell to avoid large plates ramming you in the groin or being uncomfortable with several plates wedged between your legs. However, you then are faced with looping the dumbbell around the chain and hoping that it does not come loose, thus affecting your concentration. Instead, hang a Power Hook off your belt, attached to a dumbbell (or a Powerblock in this case), as depicted in figure 6.

Moreover, a useful adjunct to using Power Hooks include heavy partials, as typically included by powerlifters or trainees experimenting with *Power Factor* style of training. Figure 7 shows partial range training in the incline dumbbell press, moving from a position where the Hooks rest on the bar, then lifted only a few inches before returning the bells to the bar.

With some experimentation you will discover that this can be done with several different exercises, including heavy top-range dumbbell curls, or other heavy *static holds*.

Finally, Country Power Inc., the makers of Power Hooks, has an annual competition that allows you to win \$1,000 US. They invite you to demonstrate how much you can dumbbell bench press for 10 reps. As an incentive, the Country Power Inc. wanted you to know that many of its users are able to increase 20-30 pounds per dumbbell in only a few months!



fig. 7

**For contest details, and to order your set of Power Hooks, visit their web site at:**

<http://www.PowerHooks.com>