



THE SLAVIC SWOLE

A GUIDE TO AID IN YOUR GAINS



My assumption is that if you're reading this, you've already read *The Bulgarian Manual*. If not, get yourself a copy and read it. This short guide discusses how to apply the Bulgarian Method to hypertrophy training.

Exercise Selection

In the high intensity, high frequency program laid out in *The Bulgarian Manual*, the daily maxes revolved around the powerlifting-style squat and bench press since the main purpose of the Manual was to teach you how to apply the Bulgarian Method to powerlifting training.

To maximize hypertrophy, range of motion is the name of the game: ass-to-grass squats if you want your squat work to be totally dedicated to building your wheels, or front squats if you want some additional upper

back work.

For pressing, you have a decision to make. Is your chest or are your shoulders more of a lagging body part? If chest, stick with some form of horizontal pressing, preferably close grip bench press or low incline press – 15-30 degrees (again, due to a longer range of motion). If shoulders, then push press, seated shoulder press, and military press are all good options.

Structuring the Training Week

In *The Bulgarian Manual*, the training week was basically flat. No single session had a dedicated purpose different from the rest. When adapting it for hypertrophy, though, we need a slightly less uniform distribution of stress. There are several factors that cause muscle hypertrophy, including mechanical tension, muscle damage, and metabolite accumulation. The type of HIHF training laid out in *The Bulgarian Manual* absolutely maximizes mechanical tension, but almost entirely neglects the other two factors – as your body adapts to the stress, you get less and less muscle damage, and sets of so few reps are pretty ineffective at building up the metabolites that cause growth.

To refocus HIHF training on the purpose of hypertrophy, we need to place more of an emphasis on muscle damage and metabolite accumulation. That means having days that are much more difficult for each movement and muscle group, featuring higher rep sets, interspersed with easier daily max days for each movement that basically serve as active

recovery.

Even Development

Obviously, there are a lot of muscles that are all but entirely neglected doing the HIHF training laid out in *The Bulgarian Manual* as well. The method in the *Manual* was formulated with the singular purpose of pushing your squat and bench as high as possible, as fast as possible.

When training with a main emphasis on hypertrophy, that's obviously not going to cut it. There has to be room in the program for a broader variety of exercises for more well-rounded development.

A Bit Less Autoregulation

The name of the game in the HIHF training laid out in the *Manual* is minimizing fatigue of both the muscles and the nervous system. The less accumulated fatigue you're carrying through a training cycle, the more high quality heavy work you can do.

However, hypertrophy-focused training is inherently fatiguing. Total volume is the most important factor for hypertrophy, and a lot of volume wears you out. If you're NOT a little fatigued throughout a hypertrophy-focused program, you're not getting everything out of it you could be.

Since that's the case, extensively using autoregulation with the aim of minimizing fatigue is self-defeating. Hypertrophy-focused training, even HIHF training, requires a bit less autoregulation and a bit more "suck it

up and do your work.”

The Slavic Swole: Option 1

The Slavic Swole is structured like a basic Push/Pull/Legs split, repeated twice(ish) per week. If you can only train four or five times per week, or if you can train seven times per week, that’s fine. Just do the workouts in the order listed, and you’ll be fine – there’s no law saying a training week has to be the same length as a calendar week. Just work through the six exercises and repeat, adding weight, sets, or reps as you’re able.

Day 1: Push day, chest focus

Squat of your choice (Ass-to-grass squat purely for legs or front squat for extra upper back work).

Work up to a daily minimum. No dropback sets.

Press of your choice (overhead variety if shoulders are lagging, closegrip bench or low incline press if chest is lagging)

Work up to a daily max.

Drop 15%, 3x5-8

Drop another 10%, 1x as many as possible (AMAP)

DB press or dips

3-5x6-12

DB flyes, pec deck, or cable crossovers

2-4x10-15

Two triceps exercises (overhead extensions, skullcrushers, pushdowns,

etc.)

3-5x8-15

Day 2: Pull day, back thickness focus

Squat of your choice

Daily max, no dropback sets

Press of your choice

Daily minimum, no dropback sets

Rack deadlift (from just below the knee)

3-5x3-8

Row of your choice

2-5x8-15

Two curls of your choice

3-4x6-12 apiece

Day 3: Leg day, quad focus

Squat of your choice

Daily max

Drop 15%, 3x5-8

Drop another 10%, 1x as many as possible (AMAP)

Press of your choice

Daily max, no dropback sets

Leg press or hack squat

3-4x8-12, 1x20+

Lunges or step ups

2-3x10-15

Calf raises

3-4x10-25

Day 4: Press day, shoulder focus

Squat of your choice

Daily minimum, no dropback sets

Press of your choice

Daily max

Drop 25% for 3-5x8-10

DB shoulder press

2-4x6-12

Side delt raises

3-5x10-20

Rear delt raises

3-5x10-20

Two triceps exercises (overhead extensions, skullcrushers, pushdowns, etc.)

3-5x8-15

Day 5: Pull day, back width focus

Squat of your choice

Daily max, no dropback sets

Press of your choice

Daily minimum, no dropback sets

Pullups, chinups or pulldowns

4-6x8-15

Pullovers

2-4x10-20

Two curls of your choice

3-4x8-15 apiece

Day 6: Leg day, posterior chain focus

Squat of your choice

Daily max

Drop 25% for 3-5x8-10

Press of your choice

Daily max, no dropback sets

RDLs or good mornings

3-5x8-12

Hamstring curls

3-5x8-15

Hip thrusts

3-5x6-12

Calf raises

3-4x10-25

Notes

You'll notice that there's quite a broad range of sets and reps for the accessory exercise. This is where the bulk of the autoregulation in this plan comes in – not with the main lifts. If you can do more (HIGH QUALITY WORK, not half-assed reps just for the sake of doing extra), then do. If not, stay on the easier end of things.

OBVIOUSLY, this is not to be undertaken in a calorie deficit or without your recovery in line. Do not even attempt this unless you're currently gaining weight, have low life stress, and can sleep enough that you don't need to wake up to an alarm most nights.

You should have at least 2-3 years of consistent lifting under your belt before attempting.

These are workouts that you build up to. I'd strongly recommend scaling things back to start with. Only do one or two of the prescribed dropback sets of squats and bench, and only do 1-2 sets of each accessory exercise. As you get a handle on the amount of productive work you can do, slowly add more. I think you'll be surprised with how quickly your body can acclimate to increased volume, but only if you start conservatively. The advice from *The Bulgarian Manual* to monitor your readiness using HRV still holds. Although carrying some muscular fatigue is inevitable, you should keep an eye on nervous system recovery to make sure you're not tipping over the edge toward overtraining. Like was addressed previously, a little fatigue means you're doing enough work, but if your HRV number starts divebombing, don't be a gym hero – rest up until it

returns to baseline, and then start back with the volume scaled back a bit more. You should be teetering between baseline and parasympathetic dominance (a sign that your recovery capabilities are “reaching” to keep up with the demands), NOT slipping into sympathetic dominance.

The Slavic Swole: Option 2

This option retains the spirit of HIHF training – frequent, specific practice – while giving your body a bit more of a break if you can’t handle daily maxes in addition to the specific hypertrophy work.

For this option, days are either “bodybuilding” days or “skill practice” days.

The “bodybuilding” days are a basic upper/lower split with some upper body pulling on all days, following a monthly progression. At the end of the month, you try to break a rep PR that determines your training maxes for the next month.

The “skill practice” days work like this: Start with the squat. Work up in weight, and stop when one set is noticeably slower than the one before it. Drop back to the last weight that you could move fast. Do singles every 90-120 seconds until one is noticeably slower than the one before it. Then move on to bench, and repeat. Then repeat again with deadlift.

This will vary person to person, but just to give general estimates, *most* people will end up working up to 80-85% of their max (lower than the 90-95% typical with daily maxes) for each lift, followed by 3-8 more singles. These workouts should be short – generally less than an

hour. You should feel better when you leave the gym than when you entered it. These are almost like active recovery days, while still providing a great opportunity to get in quality practice with the lifts in a non-fatiguing manner.

To see how it's all laid out, see the attached spreadsheet. Take note of the comments on the sheet – they should answer the vast majority of the questions you may have. You'll see that the spreadsheet is labeled in weeks. Just like in Option 1, though, there's no law saying a training week has to be seven days (in fact, a training “week” for this program is 8 workouts).