



Instant Hunk

How I went from couch potato to Chippendales dancer in only six weeks!

BY ADAM WASSON

Imagine this: Two years after a serious back injury, you've completely given up exercise and are watching life from the couch as your muscles atrophy and your ever-expanding waistline gives new meaning to the phrase "middle"-age. Out of the blue, a television network calls you and says, "Congratulations! We want to make you a Chippendales dancer on national TV. You've got six weeks to transform your body, then millions of people are going to watch you take your shirt off."

You'd probably think that someone was playing a practical joke. That's what I thought when it happened, but I was wrong. The show was called "Faking It," and they really did want to transform me from a couch-potato with a bad back into a studly Chippendales look-alike. I had just one question: How can you take a woefully out-of-shape 34-year-old guy and make him look like a Chippendales guy in six weeks — all without risking injury?

The show put me in touch with J. J. Flizanes of Invisible Fitness, who seemed remarkably undaunted by the challenge (but then, she wasn't the one who'd have to rip her shirt off in front of 5 million people). After assessing my injuries and physical condition, J.J. put me on a three-point diet and workout regimen.

The first two points were fairly straightforward: Lose the substantial roll of fat around my stomach through diet and cardio exercise, and strengthen the core muscles (back, obliques, abs and hips).

The third and most crucial goal took me completely by surprise: Gain 10-12 pounds of upper-body muscle by lifting light weights. Gain muscle with light weights? I'd always been taught that in order to build muscle you should do sets of 5-8 repetitions with as much weight as you can handle. It turns out I had a

Wasson, right, takes stock of his expanding midsection. Six weeks later, he was a hunky Chippendales dancer posing for glamour shots. "I was bigger, leaner, stronger and injury-free," he says. The difference was a training routine that stressed the "quality" of the rep over volume.



thing or two to learn about training.

Our first day in the gym, J.J. asked me how much I thought I could bench press. I said that even after two years of no exercise I was confident I could hoist up 180 pounds or so.

She did a quick calculation, and then put 105 pounds on the bench.

"I can do way more than that!" I objected.

"Let's start with this and get the form right," she said. "We can always go up."

She showed me how to keep very strict form, with the stomach tight and back flat to the bench. Then she asked me to lower the weight slowly, counting to three as I did so, and push it back up just as slowly, also with a three-count.

I felt pretty embarrassed to be bench-pressing 105 pounds in full view of guys throwing up 275, but decided the only way she'd put on a heavier weight was if I showed her how easy this weight was.

I did the first rep — easy. Then another — piece of cake. And another — okay, a little harder. Something about the slowness of the up-and-down rhythm made it more difficult. "How many of these are we going to do?" I asked as I pressed up numbers 4 and 5.

"It's not how many, it's how long," she said. "Keep going for a full 60 seconds. No pausing at the bottom, no pausing at the top. I want tension on the chest muscles the entire time."

Well, by the time I hit 60 seconds my arms and chest were twitching and trembling.

"Okay, now rest for 60," she said. "Then we

bench press for another 60 seconds."

This is the way all the exercises went. Low weights that felt easy at first, always for 60 seconds of slow, up-and-down movements. Three sets of each exercise, at the end of which each exercised muscle was pumped with blood—and felt like melting jelly.

The amazing thing about this routine is that I started feeling bigger and stronger from the very first workout. I was quite sore the next day, but it was a different kind of soreness than what I'd experienced earlier in life with the 5-8 rep kind of lifting. With this routine, there was no peripheral soreness, no stressed-out ligaments or tendons, no backache, no joint pain. Instead, there was a deep soreness right in the belly of the muscle. I could almost feel it getting bigger. By the end of six weeks, I'd gained all the muscle that J. J. had promised.

Of course, what you really want to know is, did I pass the test? Was I able after six weeks to convince three expert judges that I was in fact a Chippendales dancer? Well, the truth is I was pretty nervous when I started the dance routine, but then I got to the part where I tore my shirt off. The audience went completely berserk, and that gave me the confidence I needed to finish the routine in style. It ended with a muscle-flex move, and as I looked down and saw a ripped chest and bulging biceps, I almost believed I was a certified Chippendales dancer. As it turns out, so did the judges. I passed the test.

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routine

Here is the upper-body program J. J. worked out for me.

DAY ONE — CHEST AND SHOULDERS

- Bench Press — 60 seconds, 3 sets
- Dumbbell Incline Press — 60 seconds, 3 sets
- Dumbbell Military Press — 60 seconds, 2 sets
- Triceps Extensions — 60 seconds, 2 sets

DAY TWO — BACK AND BICEPS

- Lat Pull-downs — 60 seconds, 3 sets
- Seated Rows — 60 seconds, 3 sets
- Shrugs with Cable — 60 seconds, 2 sets
- Biceps Curls — 60 seconds, 2 sets

DAY THREE — REST

DAY FOUR — SUPERSETS

- Superset Bench Press with Lat Pull-downs
- Superset Dumbbell Incline Press with Seated Rows
- Superset Dumbbell Military Press with Shrugs
- Superset Triceps Extensions with Biceps Curls

DAY FIVE — CARDIO, ABS ONLY

DAY SIX

- Start over with Chest and Shoulders — increase weights to achieve failure at 60 seconds. Repeat days 1-5, increasing all weights as necessary.