

Russian Super Cycle

By Pavel Tsatsouline

Date Released : 03 Oct 2002

Editor's Note: The following article highlights an advanced program, designed for competitive weightlifters. Keep this fact in mind when considering application for you and your clients' training programs

In case you got all starry eyed and bushy tailed having read the title, beware that you cannot get something for nothing. Either of the two four week loading blocks of the 13 week Russian cycle pack more work than most American squatters do in a year, no joke. You shall gain but you shall pay with sweat, blood and vomit, Comrades.

The super cycle was designed by Master of Sports S. Y. Smolov and stacks like this:

1. Layoff or maintenance training
2. Introductory microcycle - two weeks
3. Base mesocycle - four weeks
4. Switching - two weeks
5. Intense mesocycle - four weeks
6. Taper - one week
7. Competition

The introductory microcycle will bring you up to 90 percent of your personal best squat in just a week and will prepare you for the horrors to come.

Every day is Halloween during the next four weeks. It is worth it: the base mesocycle delivers a 10 to 30kg gain for big lifters and five to seven for lighter lifters.

The "switching" two week stretch is dedicated to plyometric and compensatory acceleration training. The idea is to stimulate your nervous system with a different type of stimuli, and thus make it more responsive to another round of slow and heavy training. You will also appreciate the chance to lick your wounds after the base mesocycle.

The intense mesocycle is another cruel and unusual stretch of four weeks. It is good for another 15 to 20kg squat gain.

Finally, you will taper with what you could have interpreted as an overtraining program before you embarked on the Russian cycle but now will gratefully accept as a vacation.

Week 13: Enter the platform and dominate.

If you are starting Smolov's super cycle after a major layoff, perform the following two week introductory microcycle. The Russian lifter and author shows how you can reach 90 percent of your peak condition in just three days:

Day 1 - 65%x8x3, 70%x5, 75%x2x2, 80%x1

Day 2 - 65%x8x3, 70%x5, 75%x2x2, 80%x1

Day 3 - 70%x5x4, 75%x3, 80%x2x2, 90%x1

The percentages are based on your best suitless squat right before the layoff, not on an estimated current or projected max.

Whatever stage of the cycle you are in, Smolov advises to include what Russian Olympic lifters know as a protyazhka, or a long pull, in your warmup. A protyazhka is a snatch without any knee dip whatsoever. Smolov plugs it in a time tested combo: a snatch grip long pull x 3-5 reps + a wide grip press behind the neck x 3-5 reps + a squat with the bar on the shoulders x 3-5 reps. I believe that you would do even better if you ditch back squats in favor of overhead squats. The latter are great for developing SQ specific flexibility and enforcing a good technique the hard way. Smolov's warm-up calls for four to five sets of the above combo.

The next three days of the first intro week spend doing lunges with the emphasis on maximal stretching of the thighs.

During week two squat every other day with 80 to 85 percent weights. You must be able to work up to one set of five in that percentage range by the end of the second intro week.

Smolov insists on including explosive drills into your introductory microcycle: jumps over various obstacles, broad jumps, jump ups on a pommel horse, etc. The Russian expert advises that you stay away from depth jumps though; intense plyos can be murder on your knees at your current level of conditioning.

"Abandon hope all ye' who enter here." The inscription on the gates of hell in Dante's Inferno could be applied to the four week base cycle without a shade of exaggeration. It is a Russian program, so you would be naïve to expect hitting the squat rack on Monday and dedicating the rest of the week to assistance work at McDonalds. You shall squat four times a week, Comrade, whether you like it or not. And in case you are planning on working up to a top set of five or whatever, you've got another thing coming. Expect loading schedules such as seven fives with 80 percent weights and 10 triples with 85 percent 1RM!

Week#	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday
1	70%x9x4	75%x7x5	80%x5x7	85%x3x10
2	(70%+10kg)x9x4	(75%+10kg)x7x5	(80%+10kg)x5x7	(85%+10kg)x3x10
3	(70%+15kg)x9x4	(75%+15kg)x7x5	(80%+15kg)x5x7	(85%+15kg)x3x10
4	REST	REST	Prikidka (work up to a near max single)	

You must have gotten tired just reading The Matrix, haven't you?

This is an off-season program, so the percentages are based on your current 1RM without a suit. If you do not know what it is, make an estimate. If you do not have kilo plates, add twice the recommended number in pounds (e.g., 30 pounds instead of 15kg). Put up your weights at a slow or moderate tempo. Dynamic efforts do not belong in this phase.

In the last session, you are supposed to work up to a near max to get an idea of where you are at. The original program does not call for a supersuit, but you may choose to wear it during the final trial session if you have no problem going for a PR in gear after a long stretch of raw or semi raw training.

If you do not like the fact that you simulate a contest on a day other than a Saturday, you may push the training days one forward: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. You may even decide to enter a relatively unimportant meet on the day of the prikidka and post very conservative attempts.

The mad Commie who dreamed up this anti-Constitutional cycle promises that once you have survived these four weeks, your legs will turn into car jacks. But no matter how inspired you are by the gains, you are to immediately back off after completing the last workout of the base cycle! The regimen pushes you to the limit of your strength and recovery and carrying it on longer than a month guarantees the mother of all overtraining.

A so-called "switching" semi mesocycle is now in order to let the body and mind recover before taking on the pre-competition cycle. With the exception of negative squats recommended once or twice a week, all lifts and exercises are now performed with maximum explosion. Series of various jumps and hops, deep squat jumps with a light barbell, etc. are on the Party approved list. So are leg presses with compensatory acceleration and similar drills. Exploding from the sticking point in the squat is another fine exercise for the switching period. "The motto of the switching program is speed, and speed again," explains S. Smolov. For a change of pace as much as anything else.

Following the two week switching phase, the Russian coach instructs the lifter to start another four week loading cycle. It was designed by weightlifting and powerlifting coach I. M. Feduleyev from Moscow and is responsible for preparing eight nationally ranked lifters in record times. It is good for another 15 to 20kg on your squat in just a month if you have the balls to take it on. Here is Feduleyev's program in all its Communist glory:

Week # 1	
Monday	65%x3, 75%x4, 85%x4x3, 85%x5
Wednesday	60%x3, 70%x3, 80%x4, 90%x3, 85%x5x2
Saturday	65%x4, 70%x4, 80%x4x5
Week # 2	
Monday	60%x4, 70%x4, 80%x4, 90%x3, 90%x4x2

Wednesday	65%x3, 75%x3, 85%x3, 90%x3x3, 95%x3
Saturday	65%x3, 75%x3, 85%x4, 90%x5x4
Week # 3	
Monday	60%x3, 70%x3, 80%x3, 90%x5x5
Wednesday	60%x3, 70%x3, 80%x3, 95%x3x2
Saturday	65%x3, 75%x3, 85%x3, 95%x3x4
Week # 4	
Monday	70%x3, 80%x4, 90%x5x5
Wednesday	70%x3, 80%x3, 95%x3x4
Saturday	75%x3, 90%x4, 95%x4x3

In case you got excited that the loading cycle number two calls for "only" three squat sessions a week, you must have wilted as soon as you have read the numbers. Feduleyev's regimen calls for an inhumanly high number of squats in the 81 to 90 percent intensity zone: 134 lifts or a whopping 44 percent of the total load. You are going to top off with three sets of four reps at 95 percent of your current, not projected, max, and these numbers mean two things. First, you are going to get unbelievably strong, and second, there will be many moments when you will wish you had stuck to your stamp collecting.

Lift at a medium tempo. The choice of equipment is up to you, but full contest gear is encouraged. Calculate the percentages from your new max established two weeks earlier, if necessary with corrections for supportive equipment.

The cycle is designed for a lifter hardened by high volume/high intensity training, and you are supposed to completely recover between workouts. Note that every week the Wednesday session calls for the greatest load, which is why it earns two days of rest. If you are not in good enough shape to handle such a macho work load and you feel very tired by the end of week two, merciful coach Feduleyev will let you reduce the weight by five to seven percent in all sets without cutting back on the sets or repetitions.

The above cycles have built great strength. Now you are facing the tricky task of peaking it when it counts. Once you are a week away from the meet, Smolov recommends the following week-long podvodka or taper. Wear full contest gear, naturally.

Monday	70%x3, 80%x3, 90%x5x2, 95%x4x3
Tuesday	Rest
Wednesday	75%x4, 85%x4x4
Thursday	Rest
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Rest
Sunday	Competition

The Russian coach promises that the high load in the beginning of the week shall not negatively affect you. That may not be the case with a lifter unaccustomed to Russian style high volume/high intensity/high frequency training, especially since Smolov's plan is charted out for a Sunday meet, an unheard of thing in the U.S. Consider skipping the Monday session and pushing the Wednesday session a day back:

Monday	Rest
Tuesday	75%x4, 85%x4x4
Wednesday	Rest
Thursday	Rest
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Competition

If you choose to follow Smolov's peaking plan to the letter, push all the sessions one day back to peak on Saturday:

Sunday	70%x3, 80%x3, 90%x5x2, 95%x4x3
Monday	Rest

Tuesday	75%x4, 85%x4x4
Wednesday	Rest
Thursday	Rest
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Competition

You will have to reschedule the four weeks of the preceding four week cycle accordingly: train on Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays instead of on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays so you will have a day off between the last session of the loading cycle and the first of the peaking one. And if you opt for your pet peaking schedule, Smolov will not take it personally. Peaking is an art as much as it is a science.

Give this Russian super cycle a shot if you have what it takes. Comrade Smolov promises a result that will surprise you.

[close](#)

[PTN Trainer Online](#) | [about PTontheNET](#) | [FitPro](#) | [Testimonials](#)

design: [philter](#) | development: [sabukat](#)