

The Evolution of the Multi-Purpose Bench

How to get the most
pressing power out of your
limited training area
By Rick Anderson
Vice President, BFS



In the early days of strength training, a flat bench was the focal point of many weight-rooms. It still is—America loves the bench press. But as good as a bench press station is for developing upper body strength, it can be made better.

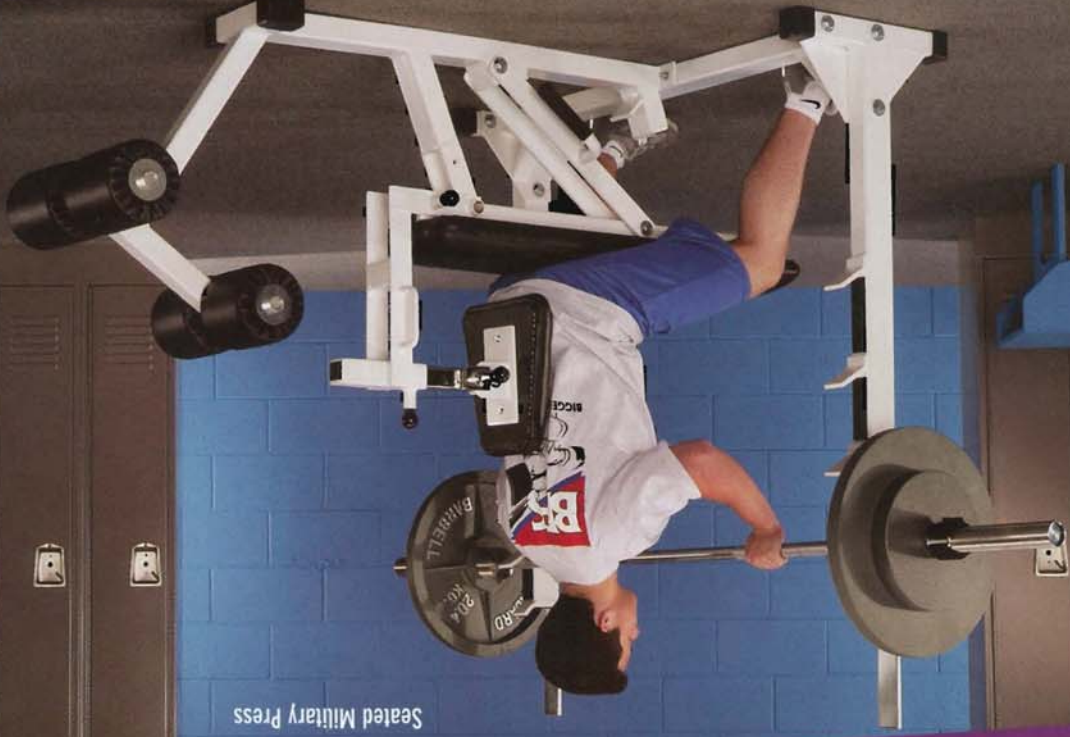
The problem with focusing too much on the bench press is that it can lead to overuse injuries. And just as typing on a computer all day can result in chronic overuse injuries to the wrist, bench pressing too frequently can cause chronic overuse injuries to the shoulders and elbows. Exercise scientists call this pattern overload syndrome.

One way to avoid such overuse injuries is to bench press less frequently. For example, a typical BFS workout would have an athlete perform the regular bench press on Monday and the lowel bench press on Thursday—that's it. Another way to help avoid injuries is to vary the type of pressing you perform. For example, you could alternate among the incline press, decline press and the seated military press.

The only problem is that trying to implement such variety into a workout will require four different types of benches: a flat bench, an incline bench, a decline bench and a seated military bench. This can be a problem if you are on a tight budget or lack enough space to accommodate all these benches—that is, unless you have a multi-purpose bench such as the BFS 4-in-1 bench.

Good Things in Small Spaces

The BFS 4-in-1 bench allows the user to perform four different types

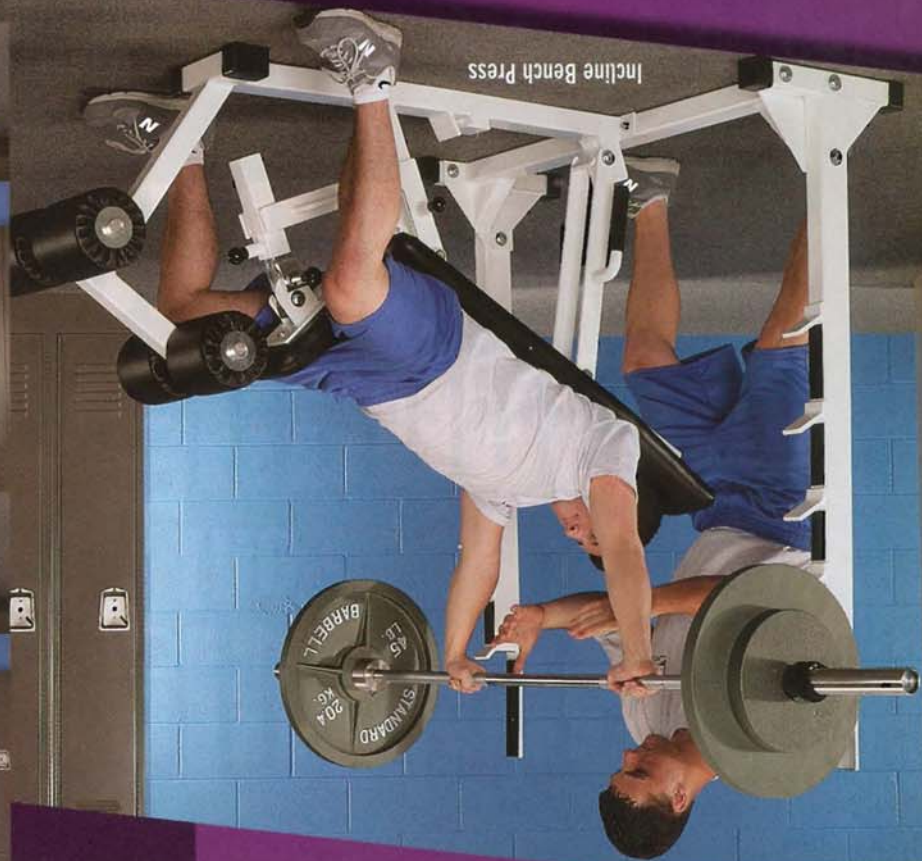


Seated Military Press

of pressing exercises on one bench. Besides saving space because it is self-contained in one unit, it is also more economical: Buying the equivalent number of single-station units would cost more than twice the investment in this bench.

The first 4-in-1 bench was created 10 years ago by BFS research and development consultant Jake Hutchinson. The bench was a popular item in the BFS catalog because it delivered on its promise of performance and space-saving efficiency. But Hutchinson wasn't satisfied yet. "The

Hutchinson says he came up with the idea for a new 4-in-1 bench last winter, and he did it by thinking "outside the box." "The original 4-in-1 bench was a combination of our other benches, and this approach was restricting the design somewhat." However, it wasn't a matter of making the bench look different. This second-generation bench was



Incline Bench Press



Flat Bench Press



Decline Bench Press

original 4-in-1 bench was basically a combination of designs of several of our other benches and it did its job, but I figured we could make an even more efficient unit."

Hutchinson saw in a food processing plant. "There was a jig at the plant that held a special tool in place, and it occurred to me that a completely new design, based upon, of all things, equipment that Hutchinson saw in a food processing plant. "There was a jig at the plant that held a special tool in place, and it occurred to me that a similar design could be used to make the adjustments on the 4-in-1 bench more efficient."

Hutchinson says the new 4-in-1 bench allows the pads to be positioned optimally for each exercise. "For example, with the old bench the bar was too far back during the incline press because of the crossbar, with this new design there is no crossbar and the backrest adjusts to the perfect position. With this feature, plus the adjustable lower seat, you can position yourself so your eyes are directly under the bar, which is the ideal way to perform the exercise. Also, this design enhances the function of the safety catches that are welded to the bench supports." For maximum safety, the bench has leg supports to secure the feet when performing decline bench presses. The supports also can be used for regular benching for those who find that arching the back in the regular bench causes back pain. Further, when the lower seat is pulled up for the military press, there are several adjustments to choose from so that it requires less effort to remove the weight from the supports.

For budget-conscious coaches and athletes, BFS offers two versions of

the 4-in-1 bench: stock and custom. The custom version offers a choice of paint color, vinyl pads, stripping to protect the bars, and chrome slides. Although the custom version might be chosen solely on the basis of its aesthetic appeal, Hutchinson says the chrome slides are a great investment as well. "The chrome is smoother than the wrinkle-black paint of the stock version and will not strip off because of the way it's bonded to the bench. Chrome can become dull, but it would require a considerable amount of abuse to strip off — you'd basically have to grind it off."

One of the best features of this bench is how easily it is to adjust. With its unique design, brass bushings and convenient pop pins, it takes only a few seconds to convert the bench from flat to incline to decline to military press. "The unit is also made of sturdy 11-gauge steel — not like those 18-gauge steel benches you see in discount stores," says Hutchinson. "Anything heavier than 11-gauge and you're making it for elephants — this bench is plenty strong, and even sturdier than our original 4-in-1 bench."

Hutchinson did an amazing job in redesigning the BFS 4-in-1 bench. Now athletes can enjoy much-needed variety and reduce the risk of injury while fulfilling their athletic goals. It's a win-win deal!

BFS



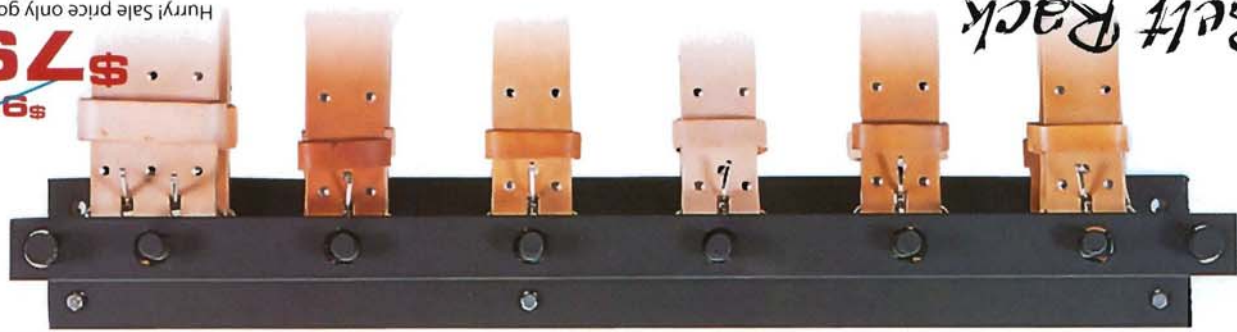
The 4-in-1 bench was created by BFS research and development consultant Jake Hutchinson.

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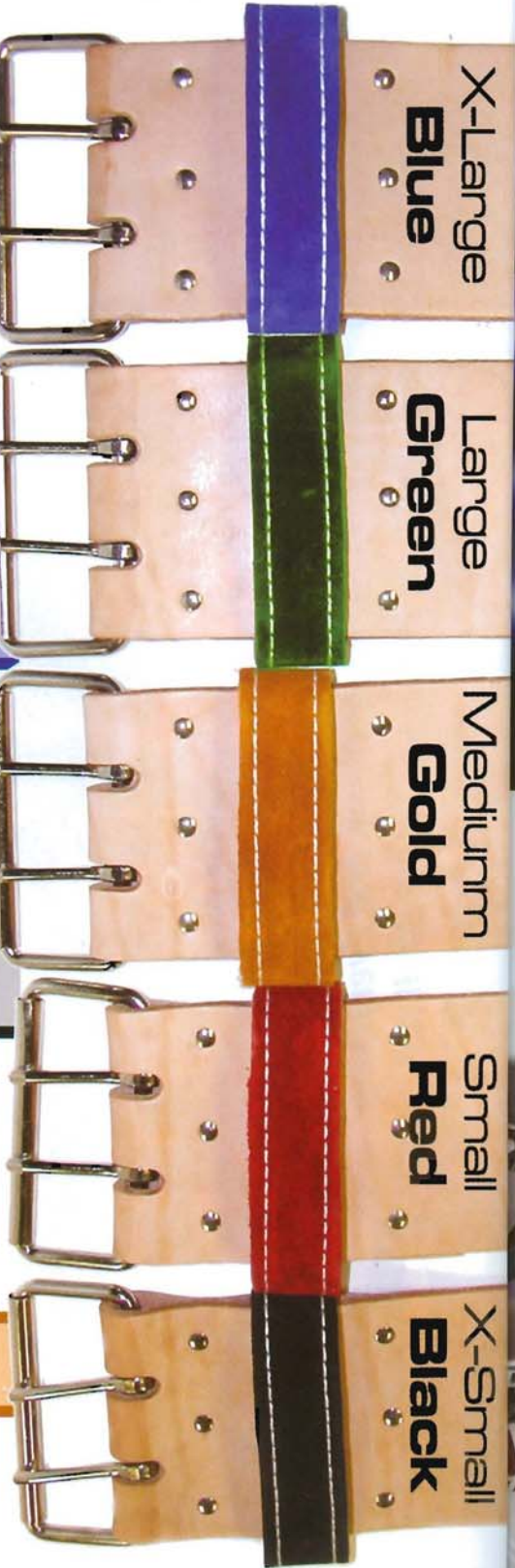
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