

A Closer Look at *SHOULDER SHRUGS*

Tips on getting the most out of this valuable exercise

The trapezius is probably the most underrated and neglected muscle in athletic training. This is a serious omission, because trapezius muscles are involved in elevating the shoulders, such as in a power clean, and stabilizing the shoulders in military presses and other movements. Further, the muscles help stabilize the neck and therefore play a valuable role in preventing injuries in sports such as football and wrestling.

From a functional standpoint, the trapezius muscle is shaped like a diamond and has three sections: upper, middle and lower. The strength of the trapezius muscles enables athletes to use extremely heavy weights in shrugs, even heavier than the athlete can deadlift. As such, it's especially important for athletes to have perfect alignment when performing the exercise to avoid injury. The key faults are looking down (eyes not on target) and allowing the head to move forward. Also, the shoulders should move up and down – not rolled in a circle, as this not only can be hard on the shoulder structures but also

tends to limit the range of motion of the exercise.

Shrugs can be performed holding a barbell in front of you, but the downside there is the barbell tends to pull the shoulders and head forward. And because you can shrug more than you can deadlift with a straight bar, for maximum

The best alternative is to use a Hex bar, as the design of the bar positions your hands at your sides and the weight is more stable. To prevent the Hex bar from tilting back and forth, it helps to offset the grip slightly (one hand slightly forward and the other slightly back). And rather than per-



Kicker Justin Sorensen, who is profiled in this issue, demonstrates the start and finish of the shoulder shrug.

overload you would have to remove the barbell from supports (such as from inside a power rack). Holding dumbbells at your sides would be a better alternative from a postural standpoint, but it is difficult to use heavy weights with dumbbells because they are less stable.

forming the lift as a separate exercise, shrugs can be performed after the last rep of a set of Hex bar deadlifts.

If you want to “elevate” your program, be sure to include shoulder shrugs. **BFS**

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