

Strive for balance in your strength routine

The start of a New Year can be a time for making assessments and adjustments to your strength training routine. In this article I will address exercises that are either of questionable value or that are improperly utilized in strength training routines. I will also make recommendations to help avoid or replace exercises that can lead to problems due to unbalanced development. Here are some exercises that practically everybody can eliminate from his or her routine.

One common exercise most people can do without is the leg extension using a seated leg extension machine. Leg extension machines attempt to isolate the development of the quadriceps muscles on the front of the thigh. The problem is that most people already have plenty of development in the quadriceps muscles relative to the hamstring muscles on the back of the thigh so further development of the quadriceps is seldom of any benefit. Here, unless you are in a rehab situation or you are a bodybuilder training for competition, you can probably better spend your time elsewhere. Multi-joint movements such as squats, lunges, or step-ups are better choices.

The front deltoid raise with dumbbells or a barbell is another exercise that is often incorrectly employed in a routine. Front deltoid raises generally are an attempt to isolate the anterior (or front) deltoid. The problem is that the front deltoid is heavily loaded during pushups, overhead presses, bench presses, parallel bar dips and many other upper body exercises. Adding the front deltoid raise to a routine would be an exercise selection that invites over development and/or overuse issues.

Often those that have been strength training for years without proper exercise selection will show a tendency toward having the shoulders rounded forward, the palms turned rearward and experience pain and stiffness in the shoulders. This situation can be a result of performing workouts that are lacking exercises that develop the muscles of the middle back, upper back, and posterior (rear) deltoids. The most basic method for avoiding this over development of the frontal "mirror" muscles is to perform at least one multi-joint pulling exercise, such as pull ups, for every pushing exercise that you do. If you already show signs of the front side over-development mentioned it might be time for you to get some professional evaluation and training to help regain your balance with regards to inter-muscular strength.

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