

The Sturdy Shoulder Seminar Recap

By Jim Smith, CSCS

A few weekends ago, I made the trek up to Excel Sport & Fitness in Waltham, MA to attend Eric Cressey's *Sturdy Shoulder Seminar*.



John “Sully” Sullivan, Brad Cardoza, and Rebecca Manda, the owners of Excel, have done an excellent job equipping their new facility. Excel has huge power racks, kegs, tons of weights, hurdles, medicine balls, bands, weightlifting platforms, bumpers, and everything else under the sun. They spared no expense – especially on the largest paperweight I’ve ever seen – I believe they called it a leg press? But I could be mistaken.

You might also note that their lat pulldown/seated row stack was only 200 lbs. Don’t panic; if this happens to you, just wrap a JumpStretch band of your choice around the stack and anchor it back to the stack pin and you will be all set. More about this below.

All in all, it was a great weekend. Eric and Tony (Gentilcore) were great hosts. I learned a ton and got to network with a lot of great minds.

I arrived at Excel just in time to hit some upper body ME work with Eric, Todd Hamer and Pat Battaglia. Todd's energetic personality was amplified by massive amounts of coffee that he had consumed during his 8-hour trip with Hatebreed playing the entire way.

The Training Session:

The bench session consisted of some 3-board presses, supplemental sets for upper back, prehab rotator cuff work, and a cool grip exercise.



Eric and Todd led the pack, putting up some solid weight and even better insults. Cressey beat him on the max effort movement by ten pounds, and when Hamer looked for redemption on an impromptu 225-bench contest, Eric once again triumphed, putting 18 reps on the board to Hamer's 11.

Todd, a powerlifter and Strength Coach at George Mason University, really impressed me with his rock solid form.

Moving onto upper back - we had to wrap a JS band around the stack for the thick handled seated rows because of the weight restriction. But with this simple modification, we were able to increase the poundage significantly.



The next exercise was some prehab rotator work consisting of prone “Y’s.”



The crew was then looking for an innovative grip strength exercise, so I grabbed the loading pin that was collecting dust. We tossed on some plates and hit some hammer curls.

Nice!



Hamer pumping up his guns!

While we were hitting the bench, Tony was hitting some big trap bar deadlifts.



Rocking the hat real low.

The Seminar:

On to the day of the seminar.



There were over 60 in attendance, including the previously mentioned Todd Hamer. Todd is a great guy and an even better strength coach; he started out under Buddy Morris and continued on to become a great coach in his own right. Brijesh Patel, now at Holy Cross, was a presenter a few years ago at the NSCA PA State when I first met him; he's just as nice now as he was back then. You probably all know him from SBCoachesCollege.com and his massive amount of products in the [Perform Better](#) catalog. Mike Boyle was also in attendance. I didn't get a chance to speak with him at this seminar, but he was taking notes and talking with all the attendees as well.

So, what did Eric cover?

The Key Points:

Key Point 1:

First off, Eric hit the academic functional anatomy of the shoulder, including origins and action of the musculature, as well as common compensation patterns that kick in when dysfunction is present. This was very thorough and similar to Eric and Mike's (Robertson) *Building the Efficient Athlete* seminar in NYC. In Eric's words, "If you don't know it, learn it!"

Key Point 2:

The 23/1 Rule: We need to take control of our athletes in the 23 hours they are NOT in the gym in addition to the one hour they are actually training. Sleeping on their sides and long hours playing video games or slumped over the PC are all small **ROM** (amplitude), long duration (tension) postures that will lead to "insult" to the tissues of their body. This all feeds into the *Law of Repetitive Motion*.

Key Point 3:

The human organism can survive on little more than eggs, salads, and T-Nation products! Case study by Eric Cressey and Tony Gentilcore:



Key Point 4:

Perfect Posture does not exist – but our goal is to get as close as possible! Look for straight lines and right angles – shoulders, hips, knees and ankles all aligned in the frontal plane – and check front, back, and lateral views.

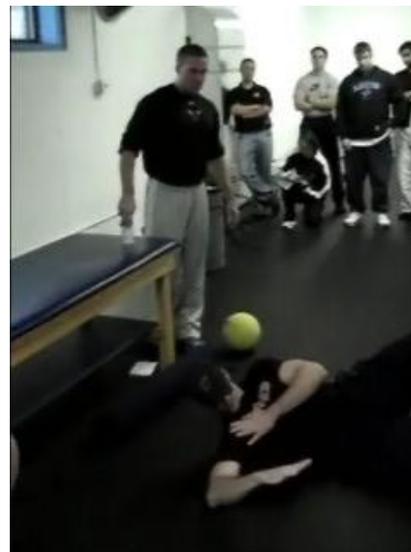
Key Point 5:

The *Serape Effect*. Appropriately named for the *serape*, a Latin American garment strategically draped across a women's shoulder to her opposite hip. It describes the interaction of musculature from the one shoulder to the opposite hip and down to the ankle of that side.

Encompassing the lats, rhomboids, serratus anterior and the internal/external obliques, it is the coordinated contraction of the muscles that diagonally transverse the torso, that create or prevent rotation. This contraction (tension) provides a great foundation to express maximal power.

Key Point 6:

A type 1 acromion (1/3 of the population) is the best-suited anatomically for overhead pressing. The other 2/3rds – Type 2 and Type 3 – are not so great.



Key Point 7:

Most shoulder problems originate at the scapula. If they aren't tracking due to injury or weakness, the movements of the humerus will immediately be affected. Don't forget your push-up plusses, protractions and retractions.

Key Point 8:

Dynamic and Static Assessments give you an excellent starting point for identifying compensation patterns, weaknesses, and misalignments. Track the integrated compensation patterns back to an isolated dysfunction.

REMEMBER: The location of pain is not always the location of the dysfunction!



Key Point 9:

There needs to be balance: a protraction for a retraction, a depression for an elevation, and an external rotation for an internal rotation.



Key Point 10:

You can categorize the muscles throughout the body with three subdivisions?

- Commonly Tight / Overactive Muscles
- Commonly Weak / Inhibited Muscles
- The Infamous Gray Area – category left for muscles that can be in either category

Key Point 11:

Dynamic warm-ups, consisting of soft-tissue work on the foam roller and tennis ball, and mobility and activation exercises are essential to the longevity of your athlete's shoulders (and careers.) Mike Robertson and Bill Hartman's [Inside-Out](#) DVD and manual is a fantastic resource that addresses these pressing needs for athletes and coaches.



All in all, it was a great weekend. The whole crew at Excel is setting a new trend for athletic performance centers. They not only understand the science behind strength; they are all standouts in their respective sports as well.

Having more knowledge will improve your ability to better prepare your athletes for their respective sports. When we are talking about the complex shoulder, this means learning more about functional anatomy, t-spine and c-spine mobility, compensation patterns, rehabilitation protocols, identification of dysfunction, proper exercise technique, and the list goes on and on...

Jim Smith "Smitty", CSCS, CFT, USAW

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