

Neck Training

By: Josh Bryant

Four score and seven years ago any serious strength-training regimen included neck work. As things “advanced” or self-castrated, neck work in a training program was a



MIKE BRUCE USING 300 POUNDS ON THE NECK HARNESS

likely as a Liberace performance at a Jerry Falwell rally.

Is it any wonder that study after study show men’s testosterone levels plummeting?

Some of us old heads won’t let it go that easy. I am inviting you to join the last of a dying breed.

Powerful Neck Epiphany

When I was a junior in high school, my best friend, Adam benShea, and I really wanted to go to a bar after watching the movie Roadhouse for the umpteenth time.

Being in Southern California, Mexican bars were a dime a dozen, especially in Oxnard. We decided to head down to the “Nard” to this little Mexican kick and stab joint called The Roadhouse (yes, the name influenced us).

We had been working out at the Gold’s Gym in the “Nard” with our lifting mentor, Steve Holl. To our astonishment, we noticed a wannabe bodybuilder from the gym, the typical all show no go pec and bi warrior, didn’t train legs and sported a neck like a stack of dimes.

Some sort of argument erupted with the wannabe bodybuilder and a bouncer that rushed out of the back sporting traps like a silver back gorilla and one of the thickest, most imposing necks I had ever seen. This look screamed raw power, a precluding silence irradiated an energy that knew those muscles could coil into combat-ready weapons at the drop of a hat.

The end result: the bouncer walked up to the puffed up pretty boy and proceeded to put his hands behind his back in a crossed style and walked right up in his face and told him to leave immediately followed by some other words that would have poor Dale Carnegie rolling over in his grave.

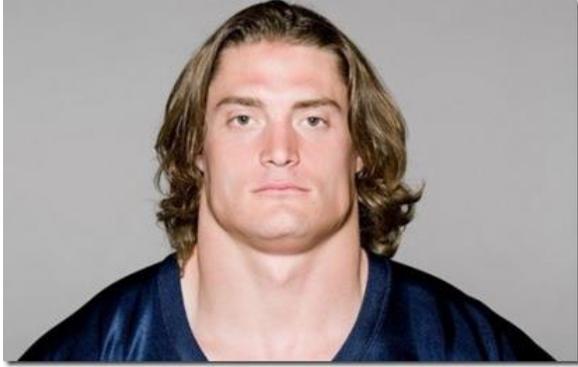
The pretty boy could have taken a cheap shot, with the bouncer's hands behind his back, but he knew better. The bouncer demonstrated power from a passive position; very impressive to watch.

When push came to shove, the pretty boy was looking for the back door!

Adam looked at me and said, "It's the neck." I knew it was, if for nothing else, this alone was reason to train the neck.

Functional Benefits of a Strong Neck

"When a warrior goes to battle, he must have a sword and a shield. The neck is the fighter's shield," says former Brazillian Jiu-Jitsu world champion, Adam benShea. A strong, muscular neck will reduce the fighter's chance of getting knocked or even choked out. In any physical collision, whether in automobile or on the football field, your likelihood of neck injuries and/or head injuries will be reduced with a strong neck.



You have to love the football “sports performance specialists” that do ladder drills ‘til the cows come home but neglect neck work.

From a purely aesthetic standpoint, a muscular neck screams bad ass and training the neck can help chisel that sagging jaw line into the classically handsome grant masterpiece it once was.

I know you military guys that have to make “the tape” body fat requirement can benefit from some added neck work.

Big Lifts = Big Neck?

I don’t think I am going to have to convince any readers that compound movements are the most efficient movements and need to be at the core of any program geared toward strength, size or fat loss.

Some believe that performing just a few big lifts will equal big gains all over. While the average serious weight trainer has a more developed neck than the lay public pencil neck, to truly maximize neck strength and size, you will have to directly train the neck.

The European Journal of Applied Physiology and Occupational Physiology confirmed this from a landmark study published in 1997 entitled “Specificity of resistance training responses in neck muscle size and strength.”

The study consisted of three groups: a resistance training group that trained performing squats, deadlifts, push presses, high pulls and barbell rows. A second resistance training group that performed the same strength training movements in addition to neck extensions with a harness three times a week and a third group that did not workout at all.

The resistance training group that did not train neck extension did not increase neck strength contrasted to subjects that performed neck extension work that increased neck extension strength by a whopping 34% over the 12 week duration of the study. The group that performed neck worked increased the cross sectional area of neck musculature by 13% compared to no increase for subjects that did not directly work the neck.

Bottom line, if you want a big, strong neck, you have to train your neck!

**Conley, M. S., Stone, M. H., Nimmons, M. M., & Dudley, G. A. (1997).
Specificity of resistance training responses in neck muscle size and
strength. *European Journal Of Applied Physiology & Occupational
Physiology*, 75(5), 443-448.**

How Quickly Can this Happen?

The Naval Health Research Center demonstrated, in a 2006 published study, that significant increases in neck strength were evident in both static and dynamic strength assessments with a month of neck resistance training. Total neck size increased by 13%; this can be the difference between average and projecting a persona of power.

The study also showed that military personnel that regularly trained the neck had fewer injuries and far less sick days; I'd venture to say the same for the linebacker to the clergymen to the gypsy bareknuckle prize fighter.

So, significant increases in neck strength and size can be realized in as little as 1-3 months according to scientific literature.

How Do I Train My Neck?

For help with this routine, I consulted my good friend and Texas Powerlifting Legend, Jim Voronin. At 380 pounds, Jim measured a 25.5 inch neck!

Together, we pieced together this two day routine.

Jim was arguably the most dominant super heavy weight powerlifter of the 1990s, also a successful strongman competitor. Today Jim is a powerlifting referee and vice principal. Jim gives back to the sport more than anyone. He has dazzled crowds with his amazing size and strength from Juarez, Mexico to Paris, France.

Day 1

Week 1	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	10	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 2	REPS	SETS

Neck Harness	10	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 3	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	9	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 4	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	9	4
Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 5	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	8	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 6	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	7	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 7	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	5	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1
Week 8	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	6	4
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	20	2
Barbell Shrugs (FULL ROM, Controlled)	15-40	1

Day 2

Week 1	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	15	3

One Armed Barbell shrugs	12	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	15	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 2	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	15	3
One Armed Barbell shrugs	12	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	15	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 3	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	15	3
One Armed Barbell shrugs	15	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	12	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 4	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	15	3

One Armed Barbell shrugs	15	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	12	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 5	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	15	3
One Armed Barbell shrugs	15	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	12	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 6	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	12	3
One Armed Barbell shrugs	10	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	12	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 7	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	12	3

One Armed Barbell shrugs	10	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	12	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6
Week 8	REPS	SETS
Neck Harness	20	3
Overhead Shrugs	12	3
One Armed Barbell shrugs	10	3
Lateral Flexion Neck(against a band or on a four way neck....in other words bend neck to side)	12	3
Neck Flexion Isometrics (push head downward against immovable resistance for ten seconds, if you have a four way neck machine that is okay to substitute flexion for 3 sets of 10-15)	1	6

Final Thoughts

Ask not what your neck can you for you but what you can for your neck.

Time to build it and decrease your chance of real life injury and build an aura of power that garners respect anywhere from Penn State to the state pen!