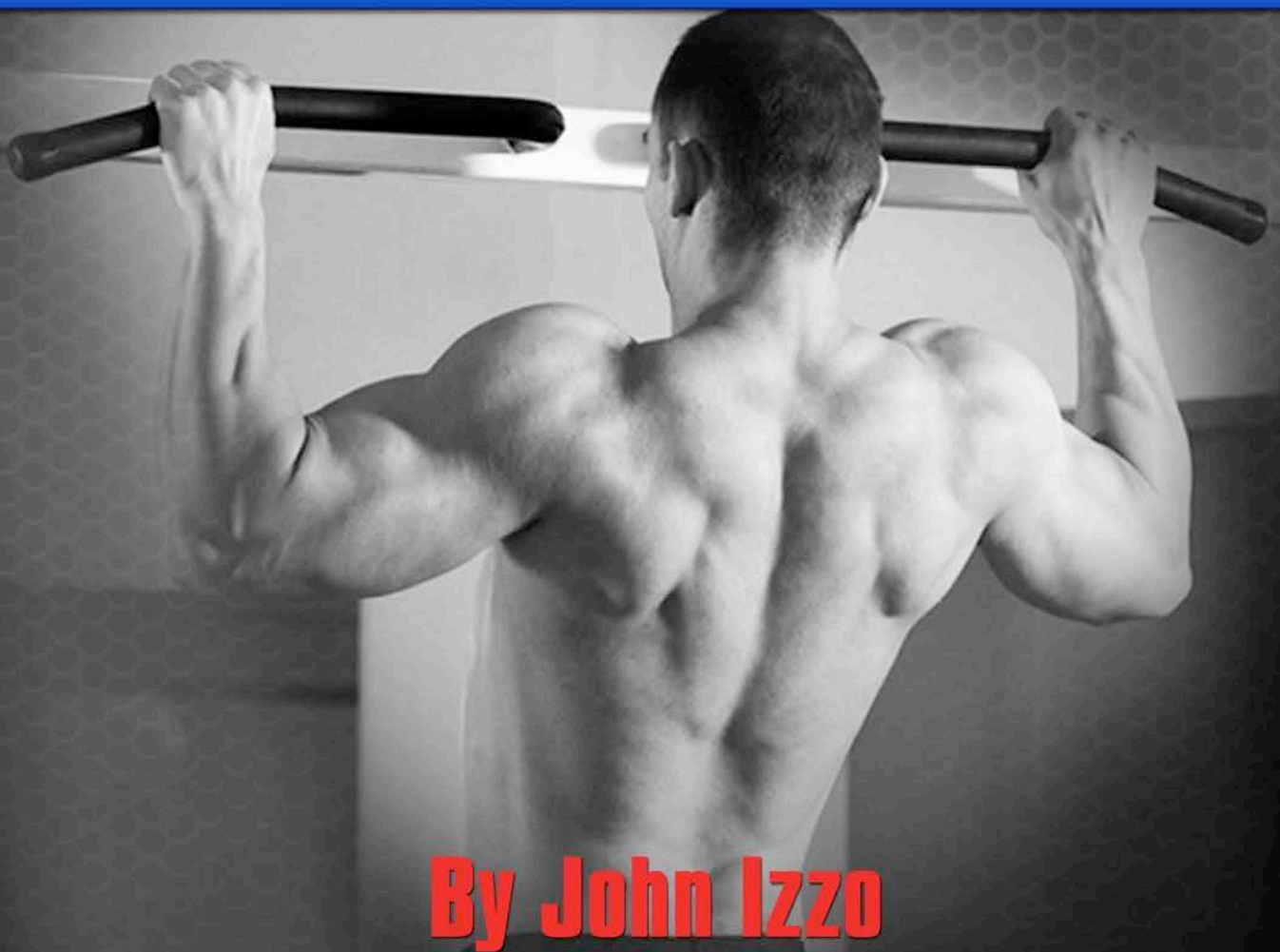


***8 WEEKS TO***

# **INDESTRUCTIBLE SHOULDERS**



**By John Izzo**

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# **INDESTRUCTIBLE SHOULDERS**



Presented By John Izzo

**CRITICAL BENCH.com**  
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Use of the information provided is at the sole choice and risk of the reader. You must get your physician's approval before beginning this or any other exercise program.

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**Author Biography:** John Izzo is an accomplished fitness professional with over a decade of experience working with people to achieve things they never thought possible. He is a commensurate professional and coach, that supports others achieve great levels of fat loss, sports performance, and optimal health. He is a listener and an opportunist that believes in working hard by meeting challenges with passion

and tenacity. John is certified through the National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM); is an avid writer for his popular blog ([www.TrainerAdvice.com](http://www.TrainerAdvice.com)), and is an avid weight-lifter. He trains clients at his facility IZZOStrength & Performance, located outside of Hartford, CT.

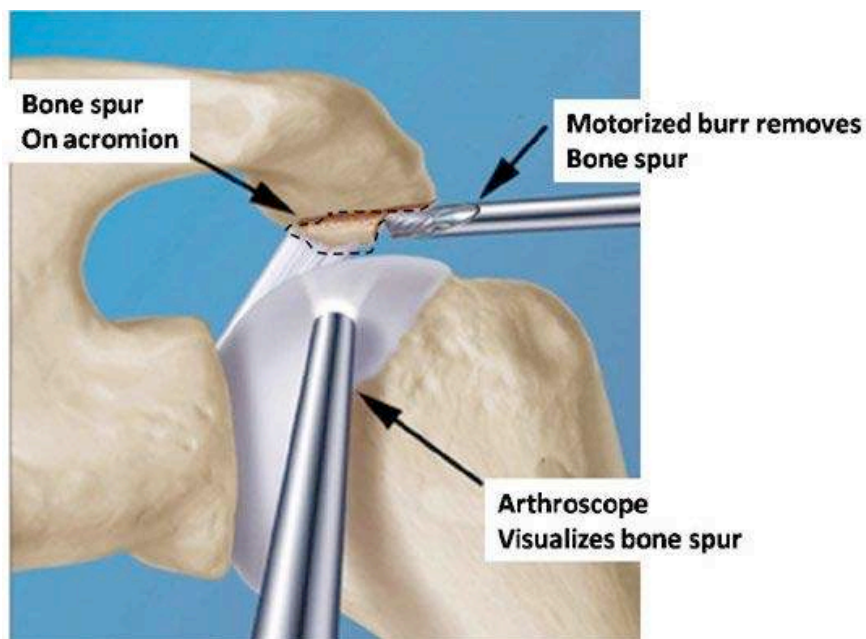




## 8 Weeks to Indestructible Shoulders

By John Izzo

In 2005, I had undergone a shoulder surgery called an acromioplasty. Basically, the surgeon goes into the shoulder joint arthroscopically, and shaves down the end of the collarbone [clavicle] called the acromion process. In theory, the muscles and tendons of the rotator cuff become pinched under the clavicle during pressing movements, and overtime, become inflamed. The constant cycle of inflammation caused the tissue to wear and produce small microscopic tears--which lead to more pain.



Working as a personal trainer for a large commercial gym franchise at the time, the last thing I wanted to do was seem like a wussie when it came to demonstrating overhead exercises to my clients. Exercises like chin-ups, bench pressing, or shoulder pressing made me wince in pain. I avoided these movements in my own training and concentrated mostly on lower body work. While my legs grew to new dimensions, my upper body was dwindling to nothing. The only physical stress that elicited any growth came from biceps curls and triceps press-downs. And we know that those movements are not enough to carve hard-pressed pectorals and cantaloupe-sized shoulders.

Knowing what I know now, I probably would not have sought surgery. But I was growing tired of living in pain and discomfort for those 6-8 months. The shoulder pain was affecting my life. It



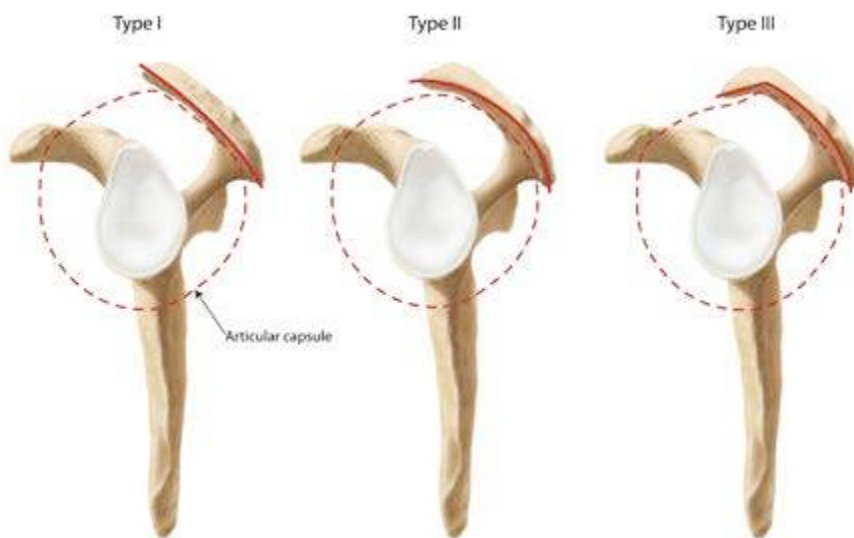
was affecting my training and my ability to perform normal tasks around the house. So, in order to get my life back to running normally, I had to literally remove part of me. Yes...literally.

The goal of the acromioplasty procedure is to shave down any bony protrusion that may be coming into contact with the rotator cuff muscles/tendons during movements. The logic behind this surgical procedure is that the more space that the rotator cuff muscles and tendons have to move around in, the better chance they will not "rub" against the acromion process and begin a cycle of inflammation.

Now, fast forward a few years.

I had done a lot of research on the rotator cuff muscles and their function during shoulder actions. I had talked extensively with my orthopedic surgeon and other shoulder experts, and realized that the surgery I had done could have been avoided.

What I uncovered in my research was that some of us weight-lifters are predisposed to certain shoulder ailments--mainly subacromial impingement--because of the shape of the clavicle end.



The tip of the clavicle is known as the acromion process. There are three variations of this tip.

- **Type 1 - smooth end that allows for greater space**
- **Type 2 - slightly curved end that hinders the amount of space**
- **Type 3 - pronounced curved end that intrudes and compromises space**

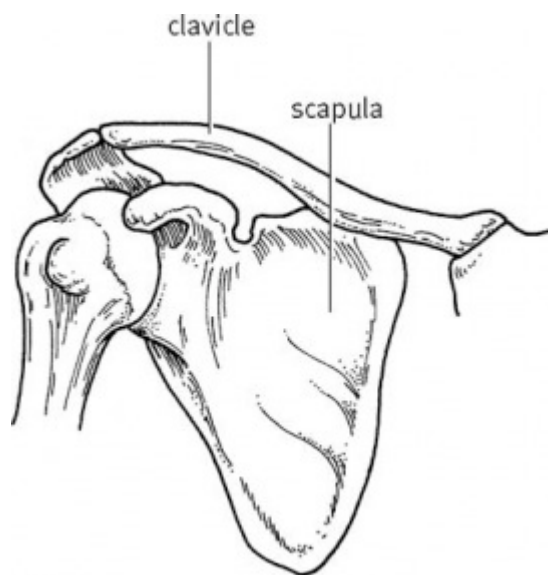


The problem with many weight-lifters is they do not know the design of their acromion process without a radiology or X-ray. Some of us walk around the gym floor with Type 1---having all the space in the world and never an incidence of impingement; while others will walk around with Type 3--that have our shoulders screaming with vengeance after a set of bench presses. Then there are some of us that walk around with Type 2 acromions, and have neither incidence.

Obviously, the type of bone structure is something that was pre-designed at birth. There is nothing that can be done to change the structure of the bone other than surgical intervention. That is the acromioplasty procedure that I had undergone--*but probably could have been avoided if I knew then--what I know now--and what I'm going to teach you in this report.*

Before you run to a hospital and request an X-ray to determine the type of acromion you have; let's break down the shoulder and learn what areas need the most attention.

The “mothership” of shoulder function is the scapula. The scapula, or shoulder blade, is the bone that connects the humerus (upper arm bone) with the clavicle (collar bone). The scapula forms the posterior (back) located part of the shoulder girdle. In humans, it is a flat bone, roughly triangular in shape, placed on the backside aspect of the thoracic cage.



The reason why the scapula is referred to as the “mothership” in this report is because of the vast majority of upper-body muscles that insert or originate from it. Take a look at the following table:



<b>Pec Minor</b>	<b>inserts</b>
Coracobrachialis	<b>originates</b>
<b>Serratus Anterior</b>	<b>inserts</b>
Triceps (long head)	<b>originates</b>
Biceps (long & short heads)	<b>originates</b>
Subscapularis	<b>originates</b>
<b>Rhomboids</b>	<b>inserts</b>
<b>Levator Scapulae</b>	<b>inserts</b>
<b>Trapezius</b>	<b>inserts</b>
Deltoids	<b>originates</b>
Supraspinatus	<b>originates</b>
Infraspinatus	<b>originates</b>
Teres Major & Minor	<b>originates</b>
Latissimus	<b>originates</b>

Movements that occur at the scapula are initiated by the “scapular muscles”--which I will be talking about and designing the exercise program around. These movements include:

<b>Elevation</b>	Shrugging shoulders up
<b>Depression</b>	Pressing shoulders down; stabilizing or setting shoulder blades
<b>Protraction</b>	Shoulder blades moving away from one another
<b>Retraction</b>	Shoulder blades moving toward one another; squeezing together
<b>Upward Rotation</b>	Raising arms overhead
<b>Downward Rotation</b>	Lowering arms

Here is a great visual to understand the movements of the scapula:

<http://youtu.be/rRIz6oOA0Vs>



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Of the muscles that originate from the scapula, four of them are the famed rotator cuff muscles. These four small muscles also have important functions with the scapula:

Subscapularis	Infraspinatus	Supraspinatus	Teres Minor
internally rotates arm	externally rotates arm	laterally moves arm	externally rotates arm

During overhead movements, these four muscles control the more powerful deltoid muscles of the shoulder. Intertwined with the head of the humerus (upper arm bone), the rotator cuff muscles control the humerus during shoulder movements that are typically powered by the deltoids. What is typically seen in the mirror, and most often trained in the gym, is the deltoid. The typical weight-lifter seeks cantaloupe-sized deltoids and attacks the muscles with an abundance of overhead presses, military presses, lateral raises, front raises and snatches.

What rotator cuff muscles also do is decelerate certain movements of the humerus that are accelerated [or produced] by the powerful deltoids. When the arm lifts an object above the height of the elbow, the rotator cuff muscles--along with other global muscles--will "brake" the head of the humerus in the glenoid fossa. This deceleration or braking mechanism is proper mechanics and is responsible for the head of the humerus avoiding contact with the under-side of the acromion. When working correctly and efficiently, the rotator cuff muscles accelerate and decelerate certain movements to aid the deltoids in shoulder action. However, in a faulty shoulder with possible impingement risks, the timing of the rotator cuff muscles decelerating is off...causing the rotator cuff muscles to be impinged under the acromion. Take for instance the baseball pitcher. As he produces a tremendous amount of momentum and power to throw a baseball, his smaller muscles must protect the integrity of the shoulder complex --- or risk throwing his shoulder out of socket.







Many weight-lifters are unaware of this important function of the rotator cuff and simply generalize it as a “strength issue”. Albeit, it is a strength issue to an extent, but it is also a timing and engagement issue. Most rehabilitation protocols call for the typical rotator cuff drills that include external and internal rotation, with some “empty can” drills. Although effective for some depending on the level of function and goals, these exercises do little for the typical weight-lifter. Most often prescribed, but rarely ever done consistently, these rehabilitative exercises become boring, monotonous, and ultimately abolished in any program.

### **Putting a Proactive Program Together**

It is time to take action and become proactive with shoulder health. Most of the exercises in this 8-Week Program are designed with the weight-lifter in mind. Although, some may be familiar, they are effective as long as they are performed consistently in a program. Each week in the program constitutes a phase. It is assumed that you will perform the exercises religiously, to progress through each phase. Once the 8 weeks are finished, it is also assumed, and strongly recommended that these drills and exercises become mainstays in your exercise program.

Some of the exercises can be placed in various places within your program. They can be performed on lower-body days or even cardio days. I like to add them in during warm-up periods before certain lifts and also during recovery sets. A recovery set is a set of exercises or drills performed after a set is completed of a major exercise. Normally used as a “rest” period, this is the time to use performing drills that aid our muscles. . Instead of sitting down on a bench playing with your iPod, a recovery set can be performed to save you time and keep your head in the action. For instance, if you were to perform a set of bench presses; after your set of 10 repetitions, you can use an elastic band to perform a quick set of face pulls, and then return to the bench for your second set of presses. With all that being said, these phases must be completed the way they are designed in order to build indestructible shoulders. If they seem boring or miniscule to you, remember that it is better than sitting on your bed complaining about shoulder pain and working your legs for the next 5 months.

**Cues:** Building the foundation begins with focus on the scapula region with isometric drills. The point of isometric work is to develop good technique in regards to “setting the scapula” and “tightening the core”. Cues like “setting the scapula” usually mean depressing and/or retracting the shoulder blades. “Tightening” means creating stiffness throughout the targeted region. If the shoulder blades are depressed and retracted, there is a “stiffness” created that allows the global muscles to produce force without losing the “leverage” created from this form of bracing. This also applies to the core.

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**Isometrics:** The purpose of isometric work throughout the program is to enhance endurance of skeletal muscle--both intrinsic and extrinsic. Most breakdowns in exercise form are related to poor endurance levels of core intrinsic muscles. When the lifter focuses too much on the actual "load" and "execution" of a particular exercise; but fails to keep certain regions stiff or set, the core breaks down. It is at this time when power is leaked and the risk for injury increases. The object is to increase endurance by training it for in specific regions (shoulder); thus, developing an autonomous response under stress (load).

**Feedback:** During these first 2 weeks, it is advised to perform these drills with a workout partner or in front of mirror. Receiving feedback is important as we want to engrain the proper technique within the nervous system. A friend or a workout partner that is rehearsed in this program or shoulder health would be a perfect fit for coaching feedback. If neither is available, try setting up a video camera and watching yourself perform the drills from all phases of the program. A camera can be set in the beginning of the week, and then later, follow-up filming conducted later. It is actually pretty cool to watch your form improve over an 8 week period.

## **How to Use this Information?**

I am never a big fan of learning from photographs. They are limited in that they only show the action two dimensional. Unfortunately, it is a highly used vehicle for learning visual actions. More importantly, is the introduction of video nowadays. With that being said, each phase will have a list of the exercises and/or drills with images of the start and end [of each]. With each exercise and image, I've accompanied a YouTube link to check out the exercise being executed on video. I encourage you to check out the link to the video to gain the full learning effect.

Nevertheless, if you have questions pertaining to anything in this 8-Week Program or the video links, feel free to email me a message at [john@izzostrengthtraining.com](mailto:john@izzostrengthtraining.com)

Now, on to the actual program.



## Phase 1: Week 1 & 2

**Training Modality:** Isometric

**Training For:** Scapular stability and endurance

**Tools Needed:** Stopwatch, Band or Tubing, Mat

### Exercises:

- Side Plank
- ISO Push-Up Hold
- Wall Slide ISO w/Band

**Notes:** This is the time where we want to develop some muscular control and endurance. The focus is to feel the scapular muscles working, and eventually fatigue under load. When performing upper-body exercises, the smaller scapular muscles and rotator cuff muscles lose rigidity because they fatigue faster than the larger global muscles. In this phase, we are training to improve that.

## Side Planks

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Lie on your RIGHT side on a mat. Next, tuck your right elbow under your shoulder. Stack each leg and keep the foot touching the ground "stiff". Once prepared, lift the body up and hold steadily from the right elbow and the lateral aspect of right foot.	Advanced persons should hold 60-90 seconds.  Beginners should hold for 30-45 seconds.	Remember to keep the abs tight and glutes contracted. You should not turn your body towards the ground during the side plank. If you do, the hold is complete.

**Start**



**Finish**







## ISO Push-Up Hold

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Lie on your stomach on a mat. Place your hands in a push up position--preferably closer to the body and at an angle. When ready, lift your body up as in a push up, but stop short of reaching the "top" position. You should hold your body (hovering over floor), with elbows bent, toes stiff, and head straight.	Advanced persons should hold 45-60 seconds.  Beginners should hold for 30-45 seconds.	Remember to keep the abs tight and glutes contracted. You should not allow your stomach to "sag" or allow your lower back to extend towards floor. Maintain a full body stiffness throughout the drill.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/gwLu7gopNQg">http://youtu.be/gwLu7gopNQg</a>		

**Start****Finish**

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## ISO Wall Slide Hold

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Find a clean wall and stand with your back against it. Keep your upper-back, buttocks, and back of the head in contact with the wall. Place a dumbbell in front of you about 1-2 feet away from your feet. Wrap some rubber tubing around the DB handle and hold your arms in an "L" position.	Advanced persons should hold 45-60 seconds.  Beginners should hold for 30-45 seconds.	Remember to keep the abs tight and glutes contracted. Your buttocks should not come away from the wall. If your elbows cannot touch the wall (or upper-arm), you are using too much tension on the band. Choose a lighter band. Hold the "L" position; do not slide up the wall.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/N9X4g9oY6_c">http://youtu.be/N9X4g9oY6_c</a>		

Start



Finish



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## Phase 2: Week 3 & 4

**Training Modality:** Mobility

**Training For:** Scapular mobility and flexibility

**Tools Needed:** Dowel, TRX Suspension Trainer or similar

### Exercises:

- TRX Shoulder Mobility Drill
- S-Stretch
- Scap Clock Drill

**Notes:** At this time, mobility is important within the scapula. Stabilization helps with increasing endurance, but it is also important to understand the mobility of each shoulder blade and how they work bi-laterally to one another (depending on the movement) or uni-laterally.

## TRX Shoulder Mobility Drill

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
With a TRX apparatus or similar, walk forward to create "tautness" in the straps. With arms outstretched, move the body side to side laterally--always keeping tautness in the strap. Try to relax your body in each end position. Only use range of motion (ROM) that you are comfortable with and doesn't elicit pain.	Perform movements 8-12 times per side (right and left) of body.	Remember to keep the straps tight and allow movements from the shoulder girdle--not the elbows.
You can check out a video o f this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/Nu-5wtdU8rY">http://youtu.be/Nu-5wtdU8rY</a>		

**Start**



**Finish**







## S-Stretch with Dowel

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Hold a long dowel with hands greater than shoulder-width. Start with arms in front and raise one arm and clear the dowel over your head--keeping as large of an arch as possible. Have the trailing arm clear your head on the way around back and repeat.	Perform movements 8-12 times per side (right and left) of body.	Keep your torso stiff and not move during this drill. The movement should come solely from the shoulder girdle. If there is pain with this movement- STOP.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/yOsLSKEzBmc">http://youtu.be/yOsLSKEzBmc</a>		

**Start****Finish**



## Scap Clock Drill

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Find a smooth clean wall and face it. Keeping your distance from your toes and wall about 6 inches. Lay your bodyweight into the wall with your arms outstretched and palms in contact with wall. Next, move your shoulders and arms in a clock pattern: 12, 6, 3 & 9 o'clock. Slide hands in different "time patterns" for more angles.	Perform movements 8-12 times total.	Keep your elbows as stiff as possible There may be some bend, but the movement must come from scapular muscles. Keep your distance from wall. If you are too close to wall, there will be no resistance. STOP if you have any pain.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/zPa1i3DPu54">http://youtu.be/zPa1i3DPu54</a>		

**Start****Finish**



## Phase 3: Week 5

**Training Modality:** Strength 1

**Training For:** Scapular control and strength

**Tools Needed:** Dumbbells, bench, cable tower, band

### Exercises:

- Resisted Ext./Int. Rotation with Band (Thumb Anchor)
- Face Pulls
- Low Trap Raises

**Notes:** We begin to introduce specific strength exercise to the muscles that encompass the humeral head and scapular region. The focus in this phase is not on using a tremendous amount of weight—but using strict technique and being constantly mindful of “setting the scapular” and maintaining “stiffness” throughout the torso.

## Resisted Ext./Int. Rotation with Band (Thumb Anchor)

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Tie a rubber band or tubing around a fixed object at about waist level. Next, wrap the other end around your hand with your thumb sticking up. The band should loop around your fist once, and come out across the thumb. To execute, you will keep your arm straight and turn your arm (from the shoulder) internally and externally slowly. Being sure that the movement comes solely from the shoulder joint.	Perform movements 12-20 reps per side arm.	This is a small, subtle movement and calls for good technique. The motion should involve the humerus rotating inside the glenoid fossa of the shoulder. Keep the arm stiff and rotate slowly. If you have pain with this movement, STOP immediately.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/WL5NrOB_JIQ">http://youtu.be/WL5NrOB_JIQ</a>		

### Start & Finish





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## Face Pulls

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Stand in front of a cable tower with a triceps rope attached. if you have a cable column that adjusts the height, lower pulley to forehead height. Grab rope with an overhand grip and turn so your thumbs are facing up. Keep hands in this position throughout movement. Engage motion with your elbows as you are pulling the rope towards your torso.	Perform 10-15 reps with a moderate weight and use strict form.	Keeping the thumbs up and externally rotated throughout the entire movement is key. Make this an exercise for the shoulder and not a biceps exercise. Pull towards the forehead and keep the "line of pull" in this direction always.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/l1puoFecqrY">http://youtu.be/l1puoFecqrY</a>		

Start



Finish



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## Low Trap Raises

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
With an adjustable bench, adjust to a 30 degree incline and lie flat on it (on stomach). With dumbbells on floor, reach down and hold with palms facing each other. Maintain a straight head position with your chin off the bench. Keeping the arms straight, and chin tucked, slowly raise the dumbbells off the floor and into a "Y" pattern. This movement should only involve the muscles of the mid back.	Perform 10-15 reps with a moderate weight and use strict form.	Keeping the thumbs up facing each other and elbows locked is key. If your elbows bend, lighten the weight. This movement should target the mid-low trapezius muscle.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/7P78Pzu-mFc">http://youtu.be/7P78Pzu-mFc</a>		

Start



Finish





## Phase 4: Week 6

**Training Modality:** Strength 2

**Training For:** Scapular control and strength

**Tools Needed:** Dumbbells, stability ball, cable tower

### Exercises:

- Front-Loaded Cable Press
- Uni-Press
- Wall Ball Push-ups

**Notes:** Now we begin getting into the “cool” stuff that warrants looks in the gym. In phase 4, we are collaborating on the previous modalities and hopefully, the rotator cuff and scapular muscles are firing and engaging appropriately. The acceleration and deceleration timing should be enhanced and now strength gains are to be had.

## Front-Loaded Cable Press

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Set up a cable column with D-handles and lower the pulley to the lowest position. Face the tower and grab both handles and place at shoulder height. With a tight core set, raise the handles upwards. The resistance from the cables will shift your body weight forward, so it is key to keep your weight shifted back and keep your torso stiff.	Perform 10-12 reps with a light to moderate weight and use strict form.	Using an appropriate weight that allows the external rotators to stabilize the girdle and allows the scapula to upwardly rotate is key. This is a great exercise to “feel” the shoulder blades at work.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/UiptF6nyE0Q">http://youtu.be/UiptF6nyE0Q</a>		

**Start**



**Finish**





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## Uni-Press

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
Find a stable object like a rack or door frame and hold on to it with one free arm. Keep that arm as straight as possible and hold on firmly with a neutral grip. Firmly, "set" the shoulder blade on that side--keeping it depressed and stiff. Hold a dumbbell in the other hand in a neutral position at shoulder height. Then, push the dumbbell upwards as straight as possible achieving a full ROM.	Perform 10-12 reps with a moderate to heavy weight and use strict form. Repeat on other side.	Remember to keep the scapula set and torso stiff during this movement. Try to lift the dumbbell as high as possible achieving full extension of your elbow.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/Np7396pUN6g">http://youtu.be/Np7396pUN6g</a>		

Start



Finish





## Wall Ball Push-Ups

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
With a stability ball against the wall, stand with arms outstretched and wrists placed in a neutral position. Stand away from the ball with your body angled so that much of your body's weight is placed into the ball. Lower your chest to the ball as you bend your elbows. Push against the ball and repeat.	Perform 15-20 reps.	Keep pressure on the ball and lower your body into the ball for maximum benefit.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/oirQ4cpV0gU">http://youtu.be/oirQ4cpV0gU</a>		

**Start****Finish**



## Phase 5: Week 7-8

**Training Modality:** Total Body with Scapular Integration

**Training For:** Scapular control and strength, core stability/strength

**Tools Needed:** Cook Lift bar or stick, TRX Suspension Trainer, Sandbag or Water bag

### Exercises:

- ½ Kneel Overhead Cable Chop
- TRX Rollout
- Walking Lunge w/ Overhead Water bag

**Notes:** Now the real fun begins. We have concentrated our efforts on strengthening the entire upper back and shoulder region, that it is time to put it to the test. Here is where we integrate multi-joint/compound movements and keep our “set” and our “stiffness” in check. Take your time with these movements and focus on quality, rather than quantity.

## ½ Kneel Overhead Cable Chop

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
With a Cook Lift bar or stick with a eye-hook, attach a cable to end. Get into a ½ kneeling position. Hold the bar with hands greater than shoulder width. One hand should hold the bar at the end (not attached end) and the other about 18 inches away. Now, pull the arms over your head. Pulling together, press the end of the bar with the attachment upwards forcefully.	Perform 10-12 reps with a moderate weight and use strict form. Repeat on both sides.	Keeping a tight core is key. This is an advanced exercise that calls for alot of muscular actions taking place at the same time. Press the weight up and keep the scapula working independently from shoulder joint. If you cannot keep the torso straight in the kneeling position, lighten the load.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/yBsuxvY_h_8">http://youtu.be/yBsuxvY_h_8</a>		

**Start**



**Finish**







## TRX Rollouts

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
With a TRX, begin with bending forward at the waist and slowly driving your hips forward. Your arms should be locked and core should be set/braced. You can control how far out to “fall forward”, so take your time and control your body.	Perform 10-12 reps.	The further away you are from the center of the TRX, the more difficult this exercise is. Therefore, start with a safer distance and progress from there. If you feel any pain with this movement, as it will challenge your shoulder joint, STOP the exercise.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/n7uxvj2xG9o">http://youtu.be/n7uxvj2xG9o</a>		

**Start****Finish**



## Walking Lunge with Overhead Water Bag

How to Perform	Time	Coaching Cues
You can use any tool to hold over head during walking lunges. Start with your feet facing forward and hold the object overhead with elbows locked and scapula depressed tight. Next, step forward and flex the knees into a lunge position. As you lower the body (into the lunge), your shoulders should remain tight and elbows stiff.	Perform 10-12 reps with a moderate weight for each leg. Use dumbbells, kettlebells, sandbag or water bag for load.	This is a very advanced exercise and can be complex. If the elbows fail to stay locked, begin the exercise with no load and simply hold your arms up during a walking lunge.
You can check out a video of this drill here: <a href="http://youtu.be/w5RJswcRiig">http://youtu.be/w5RJswcRiig</a>		

**Start****Finish**

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**8 WEEKS TO**

# **INDESTRUCTIBLE SHOULDERS**



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