

-“WNBF Pro Tips – Stu Yellin on Shoulder Training” (article originally published in Natural Bodybuilding and Fitness Magazine 2011)

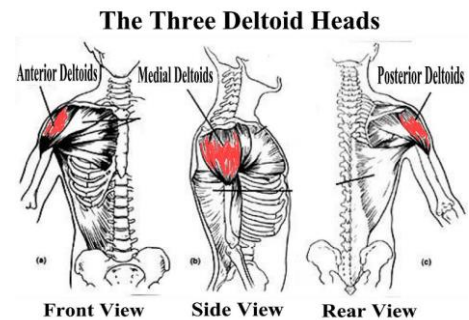
Once any gym rat consciously begins to focus his efforts on sculpting his physique for the stage, as opposed to just getting ‘hyooge’, certain misconceptions about bodybuilding quickly begin to fall by the wayside. Simply heaving the heaviest amount of weight possible, even utilizing compound exercises that recruit a large number of muscles, does not always guarantee the musculature of your dreams.

I spent many years early on in my training career under the false assumption that as long as I kept increasing my strength on the “basic lifts”, I would one day wake up and as if by magic, I would suddenly look just like the super heroes who I tried so desperately to resemble. While strength is certainly a worthwhile goal, it has always been my own personal thinking that I’d much rather walk down the street looking like I can bench press 500 pounds than to ever actually be able to do it.



If you were to walk into any of the countless gyms across the country, and pay attention to the people training their shoulders, the majority of them would most likely focus a great amount of time and effort into various shoulder pressing movements, occasionally tossing a side lateral or front raise in just for good measure at the end. Progressing in the shoulder press is by no means a bad thing, but thinking that it will guarantee the full development necessary to win shows, let alone a WNBF pro card is pretty far off base. The approach that finally clicked for me, which I have recommended countless times, is to look at what parts of the shoulder muscles actually make a bodybuilder appear impressive onstage. While presses are certainly capable of hitting each of the three heads of the muscle to some degree, the majority of the direct stress falls squarely on the anterior, or front portion. Certainly this is helpful in a few poses, but a really good bodybuilder needs to create the illusion of a wide torso in all of their front and rear poses, as well as round, ‘capped’ shoulders in the side ones. This effect is attained only through proper and balanced development of the medial (middle) and posterior (rear) portions of the deltoid muscles.

Several years ago, I made the conscious adjustment of scheduling my shoulder exercises in such a way as to attack the specific areas of the muscle in order of their importance to my success on the stage. Beginning with dumbbell laterals, I focus while I am fresh on the area that I feel will not only grant me the image of the widest torso onstage, but the roundest ‘caps’ when hitting any side shots as well. After I feel I’ve sufficiently toasted the medial heads, I then move on to the often neglected rear delts. Admittedly, I believe that a lot of my rear head foundations came simply from years of heavy rowing work, but you can’t afford to leave any body parts to chance when your goal is standing toe to toe with the best competitors in the world. The trick here is in not allowing your naturally stronger back muscles to take over the movement. Strictness and constant tension should govern your approach with this movement at all times.



Next, I employ a bit of pre-exhaust for the front portion of the delts. As the triceps always come into play with heavy pressing movements, and my own triceps, always a strength, have allowed me to move fairly respectable poundages without adequately stimulating growth in my delts or chest, this approach has allowed me to really target the area that I’m after. My choices of exercise vary between reverse grip military presses, and front dumbbell raises with a palms up grip (if my joints are feeling a bit achy!) Lastly, once each head of the deltoid has been thoroughly trounced not only in a precise, targeted manner, but in an order that addresses their importance to my goal, I actually do shoulder presses. Sometimes seated dumbbells, sometimes seated smith presses, sometimes even standing push presses with a barbell, but one thing is always true; I go heavy, and all out, secure in the knowledge that with this final crushing compound movement, I’ve subjected each portion of the muscle what it needs to bring me one step closer to being the best I can be.