

24 weeks to Battering Ram Pushing Power!

Researched and Composed by Adam "Old School" Knowlden

Over the past couple of issues we've been discussing strategies for making our mortal foe, homeostasis, yield to our every whim. We learned how to conquer him even when he adorned himself in the heaviest of armors! We've got him on the run, but like the coward he is, he keeps finding a way to guard himself from growth and continues to keep one step ahead of our best training efforts.

This month's feature...8 weeks to Cannon Ball Delts!

Welcome to *Part 2* of the 24 week Battering Ram series! Get ready to bombard the walls of the castle, as you go about constructing the ultimate battering. The beam, or cross piece, of the battering ram was the most crucial part. It supported the frame and construction of the battering ram, and played huge rule in how much impact the battering ram could muster. The goal of this series is to turn the battering ram from a wooden dalrod to a solid beam of oak!

I just wanted to re-emphasize that this series is founded upon heavy weights! Strive to go heavier than you've ever gone before! I'm going to prescribe rep ranges, but more importantly than reaching them, is that you've achieved the type of heaviness that the ranges impose!

Since we are utilizing the prioritization principle on shoulders with these eight weeks, I highly recommend training the deltoids on a day of their own.

Week One- Shoulder the Load!

We're going to get right into the fun stuff! Get ready for lesson one in building your own pair of boulder shoulders! This week's emphasis is going to be on the front deltoids.

Exercise one: Seated Military Press-

4 total sets

The military press represents pure shoulder power. Go deep on these as emphasis on the frontal delts is the primary goal of this exercise. The further down you go the more power your front delts will have to muster to get the bar back up. So, go down as far as possible and then press back up to a full extension. As you press back up concentrate on pushing the weight up with your front delts. This may take some time to master, but keep working on it and the mind-muscle link will get stronger.

For the first 3 sets, pyramid up on a rep scheme of 8-6-4.

On the last set, you'll be doing pure negative reps. I recommend loading the bar up with 20-30 percent more weight than you were able to complete on the last set of 4 reps. If you know your one rep max, simply add 10-15% more weight than your one rep max will allow.

You will definitely need a spotter for this last set. Get help with the lift off so you can save energy for the tough stuff. Now, as the name suggests this is purely working on the negative portion of the rep, so really push up hard against the bar as the full brunt of its weight tries to crash down on top of you. This is very challenging mentally, especially after the first pure negative rep, but you have to let the negative pull on you all the way down to the bottom of the range of motion. Then, with the help of a spotter, push back up on the weight and have your partner help get you back to the starting position. Go for 2 to 4 pure negative reps. If you can get more than 4 reps there isn't enough weight on the bar.

Exercise two: Dumbbell Upright Rows-

3 total sets

Nothing will broaden your shoulders like hardcore sets of upright rows! These can thicken up even the skinniest of frames, and add slabs of meat to even the most stubborn shoulders.

Go for 3 total sets here, with a rep scheme of 12, 10, 8.

Start with the dumbbells touching each other at the bottom, and pull the dumbbells up with pure shoulder strength. As you pull the dumbbells up, spread your arms apart evenly along the way until your hands are aligned with your shoulders. These are a pure power movement and will really help pack meat on your delts and your traps, as well as carve out separation between the two muscle groups, for menacing double bicep back poses.

Exercise three: Low cable rope front raises-

3 total sets

This exercise is awesome for carving out well defined-front delts, and for adding separation between the frontal shoulders and the pectorals.

To perform these begin by attaching a rope apparatus to a low cable.

Now stand facing away from the stack of weight and grab the rope between your legs. Maintain proper form by keeping your knees bent and arching over at around a 40 degree angle. Now, walk far enough away from the rack so that you can bring the rope all the way down between your legs, and yet the cable still provides constant tension on your shoulders. At the bottom of the range of motion your hands should be just brushing along the inside of your thighs. Finally, raise the rope up to full extension, splaying the rope apart along the way up.

Aim to get 10 reps on each set for these.

Exercise four: Neutral Grip Incline Dumbbell Press (with a twist)

3 total sets

These allow you to get more weight than a more vertical dumbbell press, and I feel that they provide more tension along the frontal delts. However, I want you to throw a little twist at the top of these.

As you push up, twist your wrists so that you go from a neutral grip to a standard grip. This should be one fluid motion that is performed smoothly along the entire positive portion of the range of motion. Doing this will ensure that the front delts are receiving the brunt of the weight throughout this exercise.

Go heavier on these with a rep scheme of 4-6-8.

Exercise five: Incline shrugs facing bench-

Simply lay face forward on an incline bench with two dumbbells in hand. Now shrug your traps together and get a strong peak contraction at the top. Hold the contraction for 2 seconds and lower the dumbbells. These really hit the tough to target middle traps.

I'm not going to focus too much on trapezius this series. I'm just going to give you a sample exercise. I highly recommend reading Jacob's superficial guide to back, where he talks extensively about training the traps. You can access that [here](#). In those articles you will learn how to target your traps through varies rep ranges and other strategies. I think it's important to do some trap work during these workouts so that the tie-ins between the shoulders and traps will be more prominent since we are prioritizing. I'll give you a sample exercise, but will leave the details up to you.

Exercise 6: Front Barbell Raise-

3 sets

These are an awesome power isolation exercise for the front delts!

They will pump up this region in a very unique way like only a power exercise can! I want to add though that you want to be able to control the weight up and down. *Don't use body momentum with these*, even though it's tempting. Think of the strictness you use with a barbell curl and apply it to the front barbell raise. This is a very strainful exercise and cheating on these, or performing sloppy reps, on these can easily bring about injury.

These are an incredible exercise, just be sure you have control of the weight, and don't let it control you!

If you don't yet have the strength to do these with a barbell you can substitute with an EZ curl bar. You may want to use the EZ curl bar anyway if you have a history of shoulder injuries.

As you reach the top of the range of motion, squeeze your delts for a peak contraction, and then slowly lower the barbell to the starting position. Stop just short of the bar touching your thighs, and then proceed with the next repetition.

Go for a little higher reps here shooting for a rep range of 15-12-10.

Week Two- Caution: Wide Load

Week two's focus is going to revolve around expanding our frame. The medial deltoid head is the muscle chiefly responsible for widening the upper body, and giving the broad shoulder look. With that in mind, let's get ready to tackle this workout with a hardcore attitude. But I have to warn you, the results of this routine could make you have to start walking sideways to get through door frames!

Exercise one: Standing Isolation One Handed Dumbbell Lateral Raise-

2 sets per arm

Here we are going to use some pre-exhaustion to lightly fatigue the medial shoulder caps. Begin by placing your feet against an immovable object. Now, while holding on with one arm, lean away from it.

Performing side laterals this way allows for a greater range of motion, and makes it difficult to cheat with other muscle groups.

Now control the dumbbell up with your side delts, keeping your palms down as you raise the dumbbells up in semicircles directly to the sides until they are at shoulder height. At the top of the movement, rotate your thumbs slightly downward in a fluid motion. This twist will help isolate stress primarily on the sides of the shoulders.

Shoot for a rep range of 8-12 reps per arm.

Exercise two: Barbell Upright row-

4 total sets

Barbell upright rows are the squats of shoulder thickness! Nothing will cap off the side heads like hardcore, power upright rows. To better emphasize the medial shoulder heads, take a slightly wider than normal grip on the barbell as this will better stress the area we are targeting.

As you row the weight up, check your side delts thoroughly in the mirror. You should see your medial heads peak-up as you reach the top of the range of motion, and they should be even more profound as you reach the point of maximum contraction. If you don't see the side heads poking up, take a slightly wider grip, and make sure your form is correct.

Upright Rows are an excellent exercise to perform a few cheat reps with. However, I don't recommend cheating without the use of a safety belt and plenty of stretching before the set.

Go for a rep scheme of 10-8-6-4 over a total of 4 sets.

Exercise three: Power-rack medial press-

3 sets

Power rack presses are excellent for building up pressing power in the side delts. By limiting the presses range of motion, the medial heads can be better targeted to build up thickness and strength in this region.

To perform a power-rack press, begin by securing a squat station or power rack. Now, position the rack at chin level. The execution of this exercise is the same as a standing military press, with one major difference. You will only bring the bar down to your chin; not your chest, before beginning a new repetition.

This will force your side delts to take the reigns of the shoulders and severely limit the use of the front delts. Remember that the front delts take on most of the work during the beginning of the movement and to the half way part of the range of motion. So, by stopping the bar at your chin level you are effectively cutting the range of motion in half and limiting the utilization of the front delts in the exercise. This is exactly what we are looking for in this exercise! Be prepared to use a little less weight with these, however, power rack presses can greatly enhance the side deltoid size and power.

For the power rack presses we are aiming for a general rep range of 6-8 reps.

Exercise four: Seated Lateral Raises-



2 sets

Get ready for the blood pump of your life! We're going to take lateral raises to a whole new dimension! By imploring the drop set principle and adding in a static hold we can literally carve the side delts into cannon balls of steel!

Start out by collecting three different weights of dumbbells to perform a triple drop set.

Begin by performing regular seated lateral raises to failure, with a weight that allows you to get 8 to 10 reps.

After failure with the initial weight, pick up the next lightest set of dumbbells and go to total failure again, this time not taking any consideration for rep numbers. Just get into a mind set of taking your shoulders to total annihilation!

Finally, pick up the lightest set of dumbbells and hold your arms straight out to your sides so that your medial heads are firm in their contracted state. Just hold your arms out until you can't take the pain anymore! I like to set my mind on a 30 count here. Even if I can only hold my arms out for a 10 count, I will simply drop my arms, rest 5 to 10 seconds and go again, until I have achieved a 30 count! So if you have to essentially use rest-pause to get a 30 count! If you achieve 30 seconds easily that means you need a heavier dumbbell for the static state.

Exercise 5: Standing dumbbell shrugs-

I recommend going heavy here, and for lower rep ranges. I like to use straps for these, and go real slow and let the weight pull hard on my traps at the bottom of the movement. After I get a good stretch I like to squeeze hard against that stretch and pull the weight up as high as I can.

Exercise 6: Vertical Dumbbell Press-

3 sets

We're going to top this week off with vertical dumbbell presses.

By vertical I just mean setting the seat so that it is at a 90 degree angle. This limits the amount of power the front deltoids can use and places more strain on the side deltoid heads.

The implementation of this movement is pretty straight forward. However, we will throw in the partial rep principle for good measure.

Remember how I said that in a press the side delts tend to take the brunt of the load from half way through the range of motion and up? Well, after failure of the vertical dumbbell presses, take this exercise to the next level and continue beyond failure with partial repetitions to burn out the medial heads.

After failure, bring the dumbbells down until they reach about eye level and then press right back up. Continue in this manner until fatigue starts to set in. As exhaustion sets in, begin limiting the range of action more and more, until you are only pressing the dumbbells a couple of inches at the top of the extent of motion. This will guarantee the side delts are totally fried! Aim for a rep range of 8-10 reps before starting the partial reps with these sets.

Week Three- Rounding Off the Edges...

During week three we're going to hone in on the rear deltoids. This is an often neglected area, but a crucial one none the less. The rear delts really round off the edges of the shoulders and make them look much more complete. Once developed, they make your delts look much more prominent and much larger!

Exercise one: Bent-over cable laterals-

3 sets

This is perhaps the greatest rear delt movement in existence!

The movement this exercise mimics coincides perfectly with the rear delts natural range of motion.

Make sure your arms cross enough that an adequate stretch is being applied to the rear shoulders. This movement is excellent to have a spotter for. Having a partner help force out that extra half-inch at the top of the movement can make all the difference in the world with this exercise!

Go for a pyramid rep scheme here of 12-10-8.

Exercise two: Seated Dumbbell Cleans-

4 sets

Seated dumbbell cleans will work the rear delts and upper back quit extensively! This is a fairly exhausting exercise so muster your strength.

Begin by grabbing a pair of dumbbells and sit on the edge of a bench. Start out by pulling your shoulder blades up and back. From there clean the dumbbells up to a 90% flexion of the elbows (or 10% away from total lockout).

To clean the dumbbells rotate your elbows around and under the dumbbells, until they're pointing forward and slightly upwards; hyperextend the wrists as the elbows move through the range of motion.

As you do this exercise remain in an upright position and don't rock your upper body by allowing your lower back to assist you in the movement. You want all the power from this movement to be expended from your rear delts and upper back.

It really is hard to get a compound rear delt movement that won't involve heavy use of the upper back. The mechanics of the rear delts just involve getting assistance from the upper back. So if you feel a burn in your upper back, or experience sore traps the next day, you'll understand why.

We're going to pyramid up here, to make sure the area is thoroughly warmed up, so start out with 12 reps then, 10-8-6.

Exercise 3: Face Pulls-

3 sets

This is another excellent movement that will provide an awesome burn in the rear deltoid/upper back zone

You can use either an overhand or underhand grip. I suggest trying both to see which one suits you the best.

I recommend using a seated cable rowing machine as it's easier to position yourself properly for this movement. But you can also use a pull down machine too by pulling the bar or rope to the face. Another option is that you can use either a rope or a bar for this movement. Both offer a little bit different feel, so I suggest experimenting with each.

From either a seated or standing position, pull the rope attachment towards your face/neck with your elbows held high. Contract your rear delts and upper back by squeezing your shoulder blades together while keeping your chest held high. Go for a general rep range of 8-12 here. The reps count on this exercise isn't as important as feeling the burn it provides. It's easy to lose form on these, so keep your concentration fixed on feeling the rear delts pull on the weight.

Exercise 4: One Arm Dumbbell Lying Rear Delt Raise-

2 sets per arm

This is an awesome dumbbell rear delt movement that will work the back shoulder through its complete range of motion! This isn't a heavy weight exercise, so start with a light weight and get a feel for it before you go heavier. This exercise is more about getting a complete range of motion as opposed to lifting heavy. The rear shoulders have a very poor leverage in this position so a small increase in weight will bring a big increase in strain.

Start by lying on your side on a flat bench and keeping a slight but constant bend in your elbow. Slowly lift the weight until your arm is almost pointing straight up. Definitely over-emphasize the negative on this exercise. As you approach the bottom of the movement find the point where the dumbbell is pulling on your rear delt but your arm is not totally at rest. Hold that stretch for a two count, and then ascend back up for another rep. Aim for a general range of 8-12 reps.

Exercise 5: Cable Upright Rows-

2 sets

We're not going to include a direct trap exercise in week 3, simply because we've already used a lot of upper back strength in many of these movements.

Cable upright rows hit the rear delts hard at the top of the range of motion, so we're going to take advantage of that by emphasizing the constant tension they provide in a unique way.

We're going to be utilizing the ascending and descending shock principles with this exercise.

On the ascension portion of the exercise, go for a rep scheme of 8-10-12, and on the descending portion aim for 10-8-6. It's not vital that you follow this rep scheme to the tee, but just aim for the general pattern of pyramiding up and down.

Here's the catch. After each ascent and descent, hold the last rep for static contraction for 3-5 seconds. And on the last rep of the entire set hold it for a 10-30 count.

Your whole upper back and rear delts should be pumped so full of blood after these sets you'll be light headed!

Week Four- Meltdown

Exercise one: Dumbbell Press supersetted with Dumbbell Upright Row-

4 sets.

One word: Intensity

This has to be the most hardcore shoulder superset in existence. It hits all three heads with the most lethal angles for mass possible.

Your shoulders are going to look twice as huge after a few sets of these! I put this exercise first because I really want you to put your all into these supersets. It's size building properties are off the charts! Just thinking about this superset will put you your shoulders in an anabolic state!

OK, maybe not, but this superset will definitely pack some meat on your bones!

Go for a heavier range on the Dumbbell presses, around 6-8 and a little higher on the Upright rows around 10-12. But don't concentrate so much on reps. Just concentrate on taking each set to utter and dismal failure...

Exercise two: Push Press-

3 sets

Push Presses are a great way to get a few forced reps with extra weight.

They will work to enhance your overall body strength, as well as your shoulder strength, by training your body how to coordinate itself together under heavy weight.

Before doing these I highly recommend using a weight belt for added protection.

Also make sure to really emphasize the negative after you "push" the weight up. The negative is what it's all about with this movement!

I like to target my rep range at around 6-9 on push presses.

Exercise 3: Dumbbell circles supersetted with L-laterals-

3 sets

This is a down right barbaric superset! It takes blood and guts to the next level.

Really focus on getting perfect for with the dumbbell circles, by getting a full range of motion and really controlling the weight. Use the L-laterals as more of a burn out movement to finish off what remains of the side and rear laterals.

Exercise 4: Machine Press-

3 sets

That last superset will have totally singed your stabilizer muscles. We'll use machine presses next to continue bombarding the deltoid muscles into submission.

Here's the technique you will use.

1st set- Just a regular Machine press to failure within the 10-12 rep range.

Sets 2 and 3- implement the double negative principle. On sets two and three we're going to split some muscle fibers in half!

This was one of Mike Mentzer's all-time favorite shocks and it showed in his massive frame.

Gather up all your intensity for these two sets. You can read more about how to wield the growth effects of double negatives, and how to them to the next level of pain, in shock yourself out of the comfort zone part I.

As far as a rep range is concerned just focus on the general hypertrophy rep range of 8-12. Again, this is one of those movements where going to utter destruction is more important than rep ranges. So I advise getting out of the rep range state of mind and get into the pain zone frame of mind!

Exercise 5: Machine Shrug

Use the machine shrugging station to fill out your traps and form the eye pleasing tie-ins to the shoulder muscles.

Exercise 6: One arm cross cable lateral superssetted with One arm kneeling cable lateral superssetted with One arm cable front raise.

2 sets per arm

Exercise six is going to be a total burn out of the entire deltoid region!

We're going to be performing a grueling tri-set that will fry any stubborn muscle fibers that survived this week's workout. This tri-set is designed to shape your delts into the cannon-balls we so desperately want.

The focus here is going to be on providing the shoulders with constant tension throughout the entire set. Before you begin this let's talk about reps. I like to

generally find a rep range that allows me to fail somewhere within 10-12 reps on the first exercise. Beyond that just concentrate on giving the deltoids continuous stress as opposed to fulfilling a set rep span.

Also, you can adjust the weight of the rack between exercises, depending on how exhausted your shoulders get along the way. So don't think that you have to keep the same weight the whole time because then you'll start cheating the weight up. If this movement gets so tiring that you don't have any weight on the rack that's OK, just focus on form as opposed to weight and rep amounts.

We're going to begin with *one arm cable laterals*.

These are an incredible exercise for capping off the side delt complex. Just make sure your shoulder is getting the weight up and not body momentum. This movement demands very strict form to reap the benefits, so keep that in mind. Once you reach the top of the movement contract your deltoid hard with particular emphasis on the medial head.

Next, move immediately into the *one arm kneeling cable lateral* position. To start this exercise, kneel on the floor with your side turned to the pulley. Grab the handle with the hand furthest away from the pulley and lean forward so that you support your upper body with your free hand against the floor. Let the handle pull your other arm so that you feel a good stretch in the rear delt (in other words, if you got your right side facing the pulley, you hold the handle in your left hand while supporting yourself with the right hand on the floor.)

You should be so far away from the pulley machine that you have resistance even at your most stretched. Then simply pull the handle out to the side as far you can without moving or swaying the rest of your body. The only thing moving should be your shoulder and your arm. This way you can experiment with different angles and slight variations to hit the rear delts 100%.

As soon as you execute that movement to failure, stand up and begin performing one arm cable front raises.

Finally, stand up so that you are facing away from the stack of weight, and grab the pulley handle from between your legs. Now raise the weight up and down, providing constant tension to the front delt.

Now alternate arms and repeat. You'll be doing four total sets, or two sets per arm.

You made it!

Congratulations! You made it half-way through the eight week blitz! The rest of the weeks repeat as follows:

Week 5: Repeat Week One

Week 6: Repeat Week Two

Week 7: Repeat Week Three

Week 8: Repeat Week Four

We've won the Battle, and the WAR!

As you go through all 8 battles of this shoulder series, keep in mind that with each successful battle, you come one step closer to winning the war! You are that much closer to carving out a battle ram of lethal proportions that will allow you to smash the walls of homeostasis' down at any time you whim!

I wish you the best of luck with this series! Next month we're going to complete our goal by building the ram of our weapon! The triceps are literally the force behind the blow. Until then, keep it hardcore fellow athletes!

-Adam Knowlden oldschoolabcbbing@gmail.com