

Nautilus Bulletin #1

22

Range of Movement – Flexibility

With two minor exceptions – both of which are totally unimportant for any sort of normal activity – an obvious increase in the ranges of movement possible for an athlete should follow as a direct result of weight training, regardless of the actual muscular bulk that is developed; in fact, it can be clearly shown that increases in muscular bulk almost presuppose increases in flexibility – because the type of heavy exercises that are required for building great muscular bulk also produce increased ranges of movement.

Partial, limited-range movements simply will not build anything even approaching the maximum possible degree of muscular mass; thus, for producing great muscular bulk, full-range, extremely-heavy movements are required – and such exercises literally force the body parts into positions far outside the normal range of movement possible for an untrained individual.

Extremely heavy power-lifters are not an exception – instead, they are another matter altogether; a very great part of the actual bulk of many of these men is not muscular bulk, it is fatty tissue – which can and will restrict freedom of movement. Such men have – indeed, must have – great muscular bulk, but most of them also have an equal bulk of fatty tissue, both subcutaneous and intramuscular.

Near the end of the last century, in the infancy of modern weightlifting, most lifters were extremely heavy men – many of them weighing over 400 pounds – and almost all of them had enormous waist and upper-thigh measurements; a man of that weight will display obviously restricted movement – unless he is nearly eight feet tall – and he would do so regardless of just what that bulk consisted of, but it is totally impossible to create such bulk in the same areas so long as a reasonable degree of muscularity is maintained.

At or about that same time – around 1890 – the term "muscle bound" was probably originated; but it should have been called "fat bound", since such a condition of restricted movement has absolutely nothing to do with muscle. About thirty years ago, John Grimek – one of the bulkiest muscular men in history – remarked on the subject, "...you can lift weights and be called 'muscle bound', or not lift weights and actually be muscle bound." Grimek was – and probably still is, past the age of sixty – capable of touching both elbows to the floor from a standing position without bending his knees, performing full splits, and many other movements far outside the ranges of possible movement displayed by the average man. Yet his muscular bulkiness was so great that it almost defies description, and literally had to be seen to be believed.

An exceptional case? On the contrary, almost all really bulky, muscular men show far more than the average degree of flexibility; a man that has practiced heavy pullovers will usually be able to put both elbows behind his head at the same time, regardless of how big his arms may be – and a man that has practiced heavy stiff-legged deadlifts will be able to reach far below his feet without bending his knees – and those are the type of exercises that are required for building great muscular bulk. Such great flexibility is not displayed "in spite of the great muscular bulk", on the contrary, such flexibility is possible "because of the muscular bulk" – or, at the very least, it is a direct result of the same type of training that is required for building a large degree of muscular mass.

The Arthur Jones Collection

The average individual will find it impossible to do a full squat while keeping his heels on the floor – because his Achilles tendons have lost much of their flexibility from prolonged inactivity; but many weightlifters can touch their buttocks to the floor behind them while keeping both feet perfectly flat on the floor – and some weightlifters can touch their buttocks to the floor behind them while almost touching their knees to the floor in front of them, while keeping both feet flat on the floor – and a few weightlifters can touch both buttocks and knees to the floor simultaneously, while keeping their feet flat on the floor.

The two exceptions mentioned at the start of this chapter? In some cases –but not in all cases – it is possible to build the size of the legs and/or arms to such a muscular size that the range of bending movement will be slightly reduced; such a man might not be able to squat quite as deeply as he could at a lighter weight – or might not be able to bend his arms as far as he could when it was far smaller – but the actual reduction would never be more than a few degrees, and would never prevent such a man from engaging in any sort of normal activity.

With most individuals, such a reduction in the ranges of movement is not even possible – and in most of the cases where it is encountered, such a reduction in flexibility is caused by obviously abnormal proportions, a result of heredity, and in no case is it of any slightest importance.

A given individual will almost always increase his flexibility in proportion to his increases in muscular bulk – although obviously not in direct, one-to-one proportion, since it is possible to increase muscular bulk on the order of four-hundred percent (400%) and such an increase in range of movement is literally impossible.