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Muscular Proportions

Except for bodybuilding purposes – for physique competition – serious attempts to build or maintain perfect muscular proportions are neither necessary nor desirable; a large part of the time and effort expended by bodybuilders is directed towards the attainment of ideal proportions – but trainees involved in any active form of sport should confine their efforts entirely to the development of the muscles that will contribute directly to the performance of their chosen sport. And let the resulting muscular proportions be what they may.

This is not meant to imply that the muscles developed by bodybuilding activities are useless – but in many cases, such development will contribute little or nothing to the performance of a particular sport; and thus the time that would be required for building such development can almost always be used to far greater advantage in other ways.

It is expecting far too much to expect a leading bodybuilder to also be a champion athlete in every form of active sport; but it is also expecting too much to expect a champion athlete in any sport to possess a perfectly proportionate physique.

Certain muscular structures can be developed rapidly and easily – some others require far more time and effort; and when considering a body part that is difficult to develop, such development is not justified unless it contributes directly to the performance of the subject's chosen sport. Nor is maximum possible development of even the muscular structures that are easy to develop justified – unless such development is required.

Regardless of the recovery ability of an individual, definite limits exist insofar as his available energy and recovery ability are concerned – and both of these factors should be utilized to the greatest possible advantage; if energy is wasted – or if the subject's recovery ability is exhausted – in efforts to develop muscular structures that will not contribute directly to the subject's sports activities, then maximum possible benefit from supplemental training will be impossible.

In later chapters devoted to exact training programs, I will detail a number of exact workout schedules – and for best possible results, these should be followed without any slightest change in almost all cases. But if results are less than those expected, then such programs should be reduced – rather than increased – before any other type of alteration is undertaken; when less than optimum results are produced by any schedule of heavy exercise, then it is almost always due to overtraining rather than to undertraining.

Many subjects will be tempted to add some of their favorite exercises to these schedules; but if they do, then overall results will almost always be reduced – because these schedules are carefully designed to induce maximum possible degrees of growth stimulation in a minimum of training time, and such results cannot be produced unless the recovery ability is disturbed as little as possible.

Secondly, as the subjects become conditioned to a schedule of heavy exercise, there will always be a natural temptation to increase the number of sets or the number of exercises – and in some cases this is desirable; but in the vast majority of cases, such increases should be avoided – once well conditioned, the subjects have a feeling of almost boundless energy, and they feel like utilizing this energy in longer workouts, but this is always a mistake. After all, the purpose of training is to increase the athlete's stores of energy while increasing both his strength and muscular efficiency – and if this energy is wasted in workouts of increased length or frequency, then a condition of overtraining will soon result, and progress will be greatly reduced.

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Once properly conditioned, an athlete should be able to complete a hard workout – and then, after not more than thirty minutes rest, go through the entire workout again at the same pace without reducing his number of sets, number of repetitions, or number of exercises, and without reducing the amount of resistance by more than five percent (5%). If he cannot do so, then he is overtraining; overtraining insofar as the "amount" of exercise is concerned – not insofar as "intensity of effort" is concerned.

But I certainly do not mean that he should repeat his workouts immediately – merely that he should be capable of doing so.