

TRICK OF THE TRADE: TRENDING TOPICS

Shoulder Stretch Routine

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Demonstrated below are basic shoulder stretches that we like to do with some of our throwers as well as rehabbing players in our organization. Keep in mind that there are several additional techniques available, and we typically stretch the tissue that is in need rather than stretching just for the sake of stretching. It's important to proceed stretching shoulders with a proper evaluation or screening to identify target tissue. For example, if we find a shoulder to be very loose or "sloppy" we may be less inclined to add ROM or laxity to an already loose shoulder. By contrast, we do not want to create imbalances in a tight shoulder without an appropriate plan.



Figure 1A



Figure 1B



Figure 1C



Figure 1D

Supine Internal Rotation (Figure 1A)

For the right shoulder, place right hand anterior to GH joint to control anterior humeral head translation. Your left hand can gently push on back of wrist while elbow is at a true 90 degree angle. I like to use my right knee for support. As with all stretches, push until slack of tissue is taken up and athlete communicates sensation.

Supine Internal Rotation with Distraction (Figure 1C)

This is a popular stretch for overhead athletes who tend to have tight posterior capsules. I prefer to use my left arm to hook under the elbow of the athlete and leverage it on my right arm to help with distraction. (If you find this uncomfortable, you can hook with your right arm and rotate athlete with your left.) After distracting the shoulder, I apply pressure on the back of the wrist to internally rotate the shoulder.

I encourage you to take note of technique, including stretcher hand placement and body positioning. It is also important to communicate with your athlete during the stretch as well as recognize the compliance of the tissue you are addressing. I am a big fan of adding light contract/relax work with most of my stretches, so feel free to explore the possibilities.

All stretches demonstrated below are described for the right shoulder.



Figure 1X

Internal Rotation with Horizontal Adduction (Figure 1D)

With my right hand the lateral border of the scapula is stabilized. With my chest against the back of the athlete's arm I apply light pressure across the player's back in a slightly upward direction (think distraction). This will help avoid any pinching sensation the athlete may have.

I then follow up with pressure on the back of the wrist, rotating the shoulder internally.



Figure 1E



Figure 1F



Figure 1G



Figure 1H



Figure 1I



Figure 2A



Figure 2B



Figure 2C

Shoulder Flexion (lat/inferior capsule) (Figure 1E)

With my right hand I stabilize the scapula at the lateral border. I then use my left hip against the athlete's arm/elbow to take the arm up into abduction. Note my left hand pushing the humerus inferriorly to avoid any pinch. Athlete can push against your hip to add the contract/relax component.

A nice alternative to this stretch is using your left hand to externally rotate the shoulder by applying light pressure at the forearm.

Latissimus Dorsi Stretch (Figure 1F)

With athlete supine, grab both hands or wrists. Have athlete bend knees with feet on table and rock knees side to side. This will provide a nice dynamic latissimus stretch.

Neck Stretch (Figure 1G) / Forearm Stretches (Figures 1H, 1I)

I like to finish my supine series of stretches with a quick neck stretch. My right hand spreads the proximal neck into the lower occipital region and my left hand applies some shoulder depression. I can alter head position with my right hand to change the stretch and I can also add in some quick myofascial work in the area.

I will also add pronator/flexor, supinator/extensor stretches from this position (Figure 1H, 1I)

Prone Internal Rotation Stretch (Figures 2A & 2B)

In prone position, place the athlete's hand (palm up) just superior to the ASIS. With my right hand I first attempt to stabilize the scapula from abduction. With my left hand I hold the athlete's wrist in place and apply downward pressure with my forearm against the athlete's forearm. Occasionally you will find an athlete is too flexible for this position. In this case I can adjust the placement of the athlete's hand onto his or her back (Figure 2B).

Scapular Mobility (Figure 2C)

In the same prone position as the previous stretch you can attempt to grab the medial border of the scapula and move it away from the midline. You will likely find that some athletes have their scapula pinned down, and getting any significant leverage may create some challenges with this stretch.