

by Jakkie Pidanic

Tennis Talk

If you are looking for some ideas for tennis specific exercises an excellent resource is the USTA website - www.usta.com. Below is sampling of the shoulder specific exercises you can find there, complete with photo illustration.



One of the most complex structures in the human body is the shoulder. This joint, when healthy, has enormous range of motion, which is orchestrated by a complex network of muscles. Specifically, the rotator cuff muscle group, comprised of four muscles, is responsible for much of this freedom of movement. However, this area is subject to imbalances, and thus, prone to injury when under duress or overused. More than almost any other sport, tennis puts tremendous demands on the rotator cuff group. Consequently, without preventive measures, shoulder injuries are all too common in the avid tennis player. So what's a passionate player to do? Strengthening the individual rotator cuff muscles are crucial for a tennis player's shoulder health. As an added bonus, by focusing on empowering your shoulder joint, you not only help prevent injury, but also add some serious zip to your serve and strokes.

If you are new to this type of sport specific training, it is a good idea to seek out a fitness trainer who is familiar with the demands of your particular sport. Having guidance when setting weight and resistance guidelines, as well as having someone guide you through proper form, is essential to proper execution of a new, healthy exercise regime.

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Standing External Rotation

Attach tube to a pole or in close within a door and start with the left side closest to the attached side. Next, bend the right arm to 90° with the upper arm down next to the side of the body. Place a rolled up towel between the upper arm and the body. Grab the tube with your right hand with palm facing in and pull the tube away from your body keeping the elbow next to the side of the body. Return to the starting position and repeat 1 to 3 sets at 15 to 20 reps.

Low to High Pull

A multi-planar exercise that uses rotational movement patterns and integrates the entire kinetic chain. To perform this exercise, adjust a cable column weight machine so the handle starts approximately one foot off the ground. Position your body so you will have to rotate your torso to reach the handle in its starting position while also being able to bring the cable up and across your body during the lift. Using a low weight to start, grasp the handle with both hands at the starting position while flexing the knees and loading the right leg. Drive off the right leg while first pulling and then pushing the cable across the body so that the movement ends with both hands over the left shoulder with the arms fully extended. Perform this exercise explosively and lower the weight in a controlled manner between each repetition. Perform three sets of 15-20 repetitions.



Straight Arm Rowing

This exercise trains the muscles that stabilize the shoulder blades to help protect the rotator cuff from injury. Loop a piece of elastic tubing through a fence, or around another stationary object, at about hip level. Standing in an athletic position and holding an end of the tubing with each hand, elevate the arms so they are at an angle of 45° relative to the body. Step back so there is tension in the band in the starting position. Squeeze the shoulder blades together and perform a rowing action by pulling the handles back towards the hips while keeping the arms straight. Return to the starting position with the body and tension in the tubing under control, and repeat. Perform 1-3 sets of 15 repetitions.



Forearm Supination

Sitting on a chair, attach one end of a piece of elastic tubing to the net post, doorknob, or other stationary object. For supination (shown here for the Right arm), grasp the tubing in the right hand and wrap it around the hand several times. Rest your forearm on your thigh and position yourself so that there is tension on the band with your palm facing the floor. Without moving your upper arm or body, rotate the forearm so that the palm is facing upward in the end position.

Perform 2-3 sets of 15 repetitions of this exercise. If you have time constraints, make sure you perform this exercise with your dominant arm.

