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STRONG ARMS FOR
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HANG GLIDING: IT'S A NATURAL HIGH!

Arm Yourself For Summer Sports

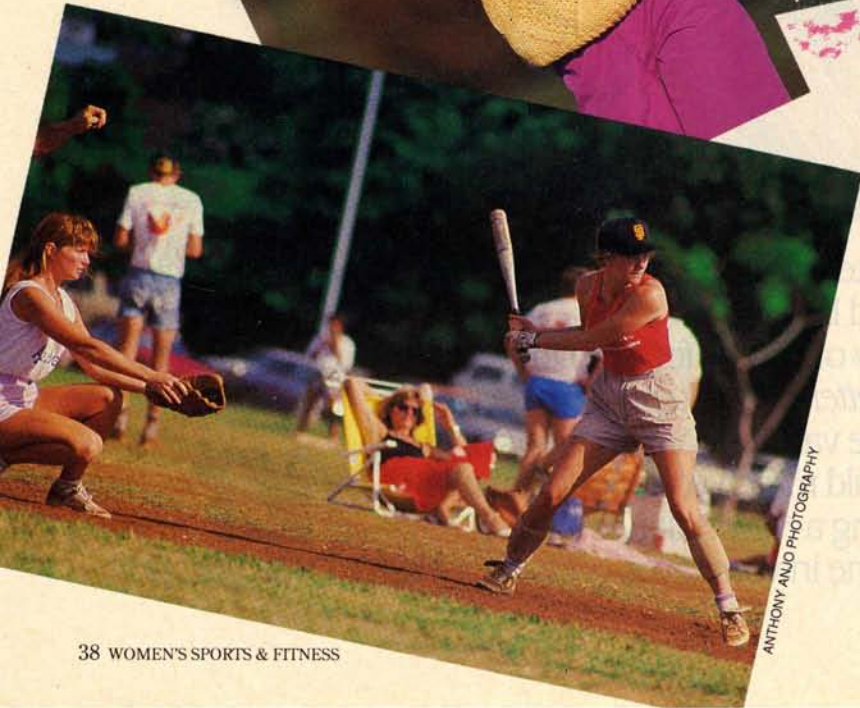
The Workout For Sleek, Strong Arms

By Matt Brzycki



FOCUS ON SPORTS

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As the temperature rises, thoughts naturally drift to that day when we can go outdoors and serve the summer's first ace, or hit a golf ball on a long, straight drive down the fairway. To do that, our bodies have to be not only trained in technique, but strong enough to deliver peak performance.

The largest, strongest muscles in the body are in the hips, legs and torso, and they're the ones that give the most power to your total body movements. No doubt you are already working these muscles hard in your regular fitness program. But arms are at least as important when it comes to carrying through a sport-specific motion, such as swinging a golf club or racket, or throwing a softball or controlling a sailboard.

There are two ways to become more efficient at these motions: practice and gaining strength. You have to repeat the motion literally thousands of times to engrain its neuromuscular pattern in your subconscious movement memory. And you have to strengthen the muscles so that they can perform the movement with less effort, more power and, often, greater speed.

Fortunately, there are several simple exercises you can do at home to develop arm strength—and they can be done in five minutes with a minimum of equipment.

How, you may ask, can one develop arm strength in five minutes a day, when those people you see pumping iron at the gym spend hours there? Answer: they are body builders, and the program here is aimed at strength training. The goal of a body building program is to develop one's body as much as possible. And there's nothing wrong with wanting to look better. But remember, you can look like Tarzan or Jane and still play tennis like Cheetah!

Strength training is less time consuming, and its goal is more practical: to reduce your risk of injury and improve your ability to perform sports skills by strengthening muscles, bones, joints and connective tissue.

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

Some aspects of the exercises suggested here are the same throughout the routine. For example, each one should be performed throughout a full range of motion, from a position of full stretch to full muscular contraction and back to a full stretch. This does not mean you should lock your joints, though. Elbows and knees should always be bent, although the bend can be so slight that it's hardly noticeable. Remember to exhale as you lift the weight, and inhale as you lower it.

For maximum safety and results, you should always raise the weight without any jerking or bouncing movements and lower it, under control, back to the starting position. In this program, slow movements will work well. You may take as long as one full second to raise the weight, and three to lower it.

Otherwise, if you lift too fast and explosively, your muscles will encounter less

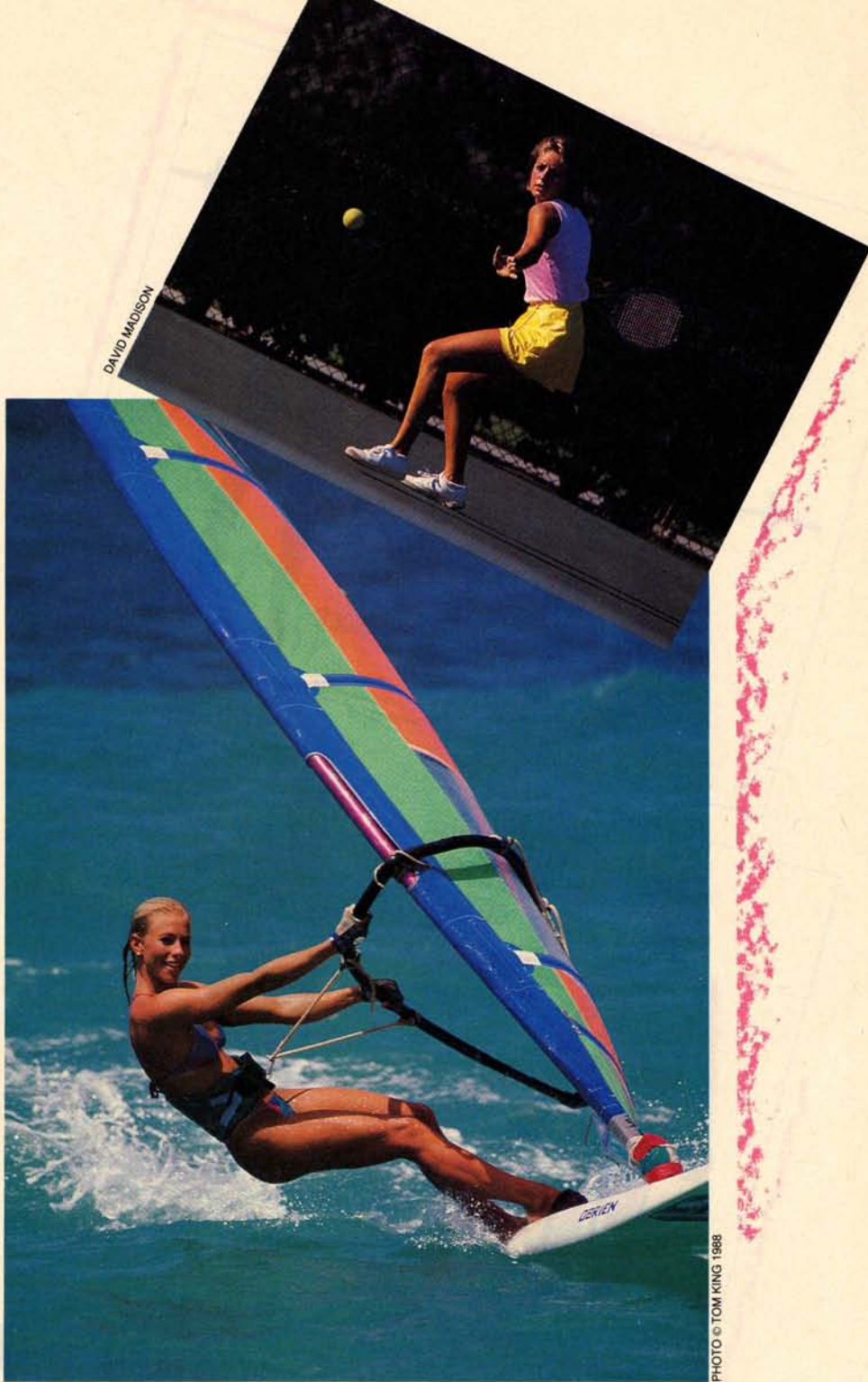
resistance after the initial "explosion" at the beginning, and the weight will practically move on its own. In effect, you will expend less energy to lift the weight, and reduce your potential for strength gains. More importantly, lifting a weight with explosive force increases the internal forces on your joints, and may lead to injury.

Another important aspect of these exercises is to maintain proper form, as described in each exercise. If you arch your back excessively or jerk your arms to do the lift, you need to reduce the weight.

In this program, you can stimulate gains

in strength by performing only one set of each exercise to the point of momentary muscular failure—the inability to lift the weight again. Once you can perform 12 repetitions in a single set, increase the resistance by about five percent.

Finally, you should give your muscles adequate recovery time between workouts. The recovery period is when they actually become stronger; all you do during the workout is tire them out. So be sure to let your arms rest one to two full days after doing these exercises. If you have a softball tournament on a Saturday, your last lift should be on a Thursday.



BURNISHING YOUR BICEPS

The biceps is the prominent muscle on the front part of your upper arm. It's the one that Popeye brandishes after he's eaten a can of spinach. It helps you flex and pull things, such as a sailboard sail, toward you, and also assists in turning your forearm over so the palm faces up, as it does during a golf swing.

Pick one of these three exercises to build better biceps. After six weeks, you'll be able to astound your friends with your Popeye imitations.

Biceps curls. These are the most common—and one of the most effective—exercises for the biceps. Stand with your knees slightly bent and your back straight. Hold a barbell in your hands with your palms up and your hands roughly shoulder width apart. Keep your upper arms at your sides while you flex at the elbow to raise the bar toward your chin, then lower it until it's just in front of your legs.

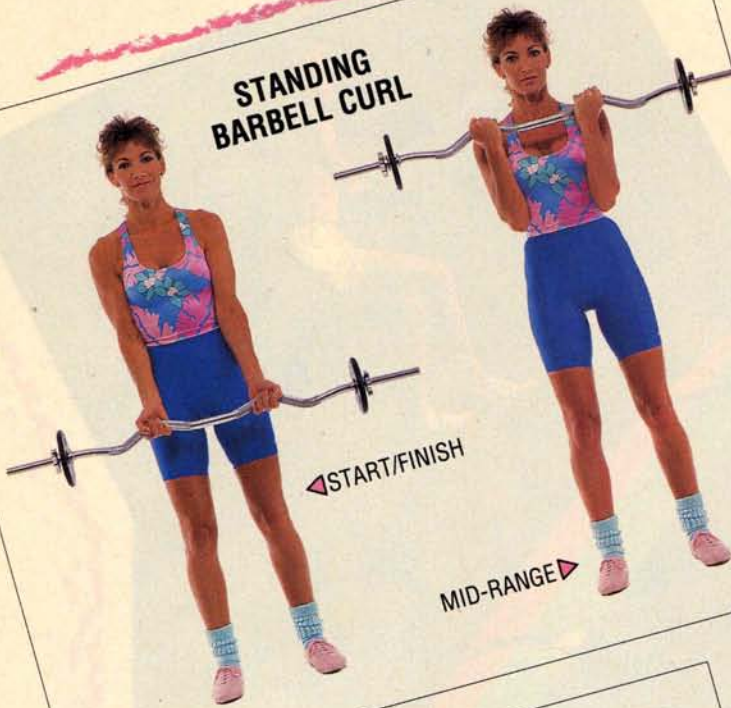
Dumbbell biceps curls. If one arm is stronger than the other, it may be better to curl with dumbbells so that each arm works equally. (With a barbell, the strong arm will do more work and get stronger, while the weak arm will do less work, and not make much progress in strength development.)

You can do dumbbell biceps curls from a sitting or standing position; when standing, the movement is exactly the same as if you were using a barbell.

If you choose to work from a seated position, keep your back straight and both feet flat on the floor. Start with your hands below your thighs, with the elbows bent very slightly. Then raise the dumbbells toward your shoulders, and lower them back to the starting position.

Supinating dumbbell curls. Since the biceps also assist in supinating your forearms, or turning them so the palms face upward, this exercise will work them two ways.

STANDING BARBELL CURL



START/FINISH

MID-RANGE

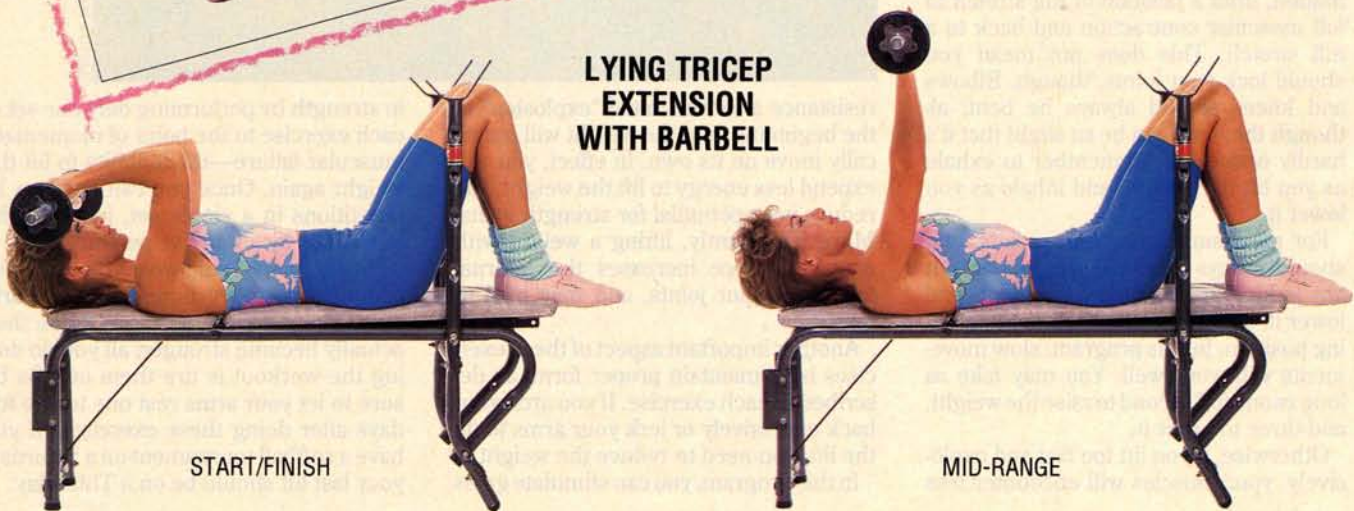
SUPINATING DUMBBELL CURL



START/FINISH

MID-RANGE

LYING TRICEP EXTENSION WITH BARBELL



START/FINISH

MID-RANGE

Start the movement in a standing or seated position with your palms facing each other. As you raise the dumbbells toward your chin, rotate your hands so that the palms are supinated, facing your shoulders. As you lower the dumbbells, reverse the twist so the palms face each other again.

TONING YOUR TRICEPS

The triceps is a horseshoe-shaped muscle on the back of your upper arm. It comes into play when you extend, or straighten, your arm, such as when you throw a softball or serve a tennis ball. It is also used in pushing motions, such as opening doors or setting up volleyballs. The triceps is often neglected, but there are two reasons why you should take the time to develop it: it comes into play in many sports movements, and it opposes the biceps, which everyone seems to develop. You are less likely to become injured when opposing muscles are equally developed—that way one doesn't overpower and strain the other.

Lying triceps extension with barbell. Lie on a bench or the floor with your knees bent so that the feet are flat on the surface. This will help keep you from overarching your back. Grasp the bar palms up, with your hands about four to six inches apart. Your upper arms should be perpendicular to the ground with your elbows straight up, not pointed out to the sides. Now, keeping your upper arms in place, bend the elbows so that you raise the bar straight up, until your elbows almost lock, then slowly lower it.

Lying tricep extensions with dumbbells. With dumbbells, you can do the exercise exactly the same as if you were using a barbell, or you can work one arm at a time. In one-armed extensions, the exercising arm goes through the motions as if it were doing a barbell extension, but you use the non-exercising arm to steady it. Place the hand of the non-exercising

arm just below the exercising arm's elbow, and use it to make sure the upper arm doesn't move during the extension. This will assure you of isolating the triceps and giving it a good, hard workout.

FLATTERING YOUR FOREARMS

Incredibly, each forearm contains 19 muscles. Although they perform a variety of functions from grasping to extending, you don't have to do 19 exercises to properly strengthen them. The two simple exercises in our program work almost all 19, from the flexor digitorum profundus to the pollicis longus abductor.

Wrist flexions. This exercise works the front of your forearm—the same side as the palm of your hand. Grasp a barbell or a pair of dumbbells and sit down on a bench or chair with your feet flat on the floor. Bend at the waist so that you can place your forearms flat atop your thighs, with just the wrist and hand extending beyond your kneecaps. The wrists should be bent so that your knuckles are lower than your arms, and your palms are facing

upward.

Without lifting your forearms off your legs, curl the weight toward your body, then return it back to the starting position. Only your wrists should move.

Wrist extensions. This exercise works the back of your forearms. You begin in the same position as for a wrist flexion, except your palms are down, facing your lower legs. Bend *only at the wrist* to raise the weight as high as you can, then lower it back to the starting position.

After spending five minutes doing four arm exercises a few times a week for six weeks, you'll notice a tremendous improvement in strength. A byproduct: you'll feel more coordinated, simply because your arms will be capable of doing more with less effort. And that should certainly make you well-armed for summer sports. □

Matt Brzycki is an assistant strength coach at State University of New Jersey, Rutgers, where strength training is an integral part of the women's varsity teams' programs.



WRIST FLEXION PALMS UP

