

ISSUE 29 | MARCH 2009

the crew

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Shoulder Problems

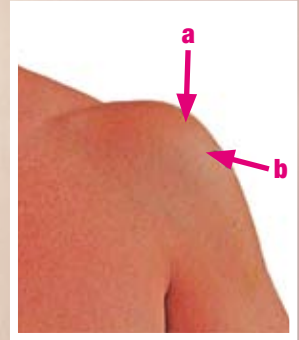
In the second article of the series on crewing-related physiological issues Mark Healy discusses common causes of and alleviations from shoulder problems.

Shoulders in our nautical world are often placed under a great deal of stress. The demands on these complex joints can be huge and are often with insufficient preparation. Even the smallest action can result in aggravating soft tissue and a debilitating pain, which can last days or even weeks. The most common shoulder problems are rotator cuff injuries, impingement syndrome and subacromial bursitis (for more information on bursitis see Issue 28's Health & Fitness).

a) Rotator Cuff Approximately 75 per cent of shoulder problems are linked with this muscle (supraspinatus) and associated tendons. It supports and stabilises the shoulder and assists the deltoids (shoulders) in raising the arm. Partial or complete ruptures of the tendon through overexertion are relatively common, as degenerative changes occur through overuse and age (especially those over 30).

b) Impingement Syndrome This occurs when soft tissue becomes trapped in the subacromial space (shoulder joint). A single movement or repetitive actions, where the arm is held above the horizontal plane, can pinch various tissues (bursa, bicep tendons and rotator cuff muscles). This often results from the thickening/overdevelopment of these tissues, which

become too large for the space available. Pain is felt when the arm is raised out to the side but only between 60 and 120 degrees. Common causes include working at length on areas above shoulder height, not warming up the joint, an impact or sudden movement of the arm or in the gym when performing lateral pull-downs behind the head. In my experience, those who suffer least exercise their shoulders regularly. Toned deltoids create a far more balanced joint; therefore reducing the pressure on these small problematic areas is recommended. If you have suffered from the above, or are not too keen on the prospect, then I suggest 25 press-ups daily.



Mark Healy is the personal trainer and sports therapist for The Maltese Falcon. He also runs MH Fitness Management, a specialist health and fitness company for the superyacht industry. www.mhfitman.com Image courtesy of Istockphoto.com