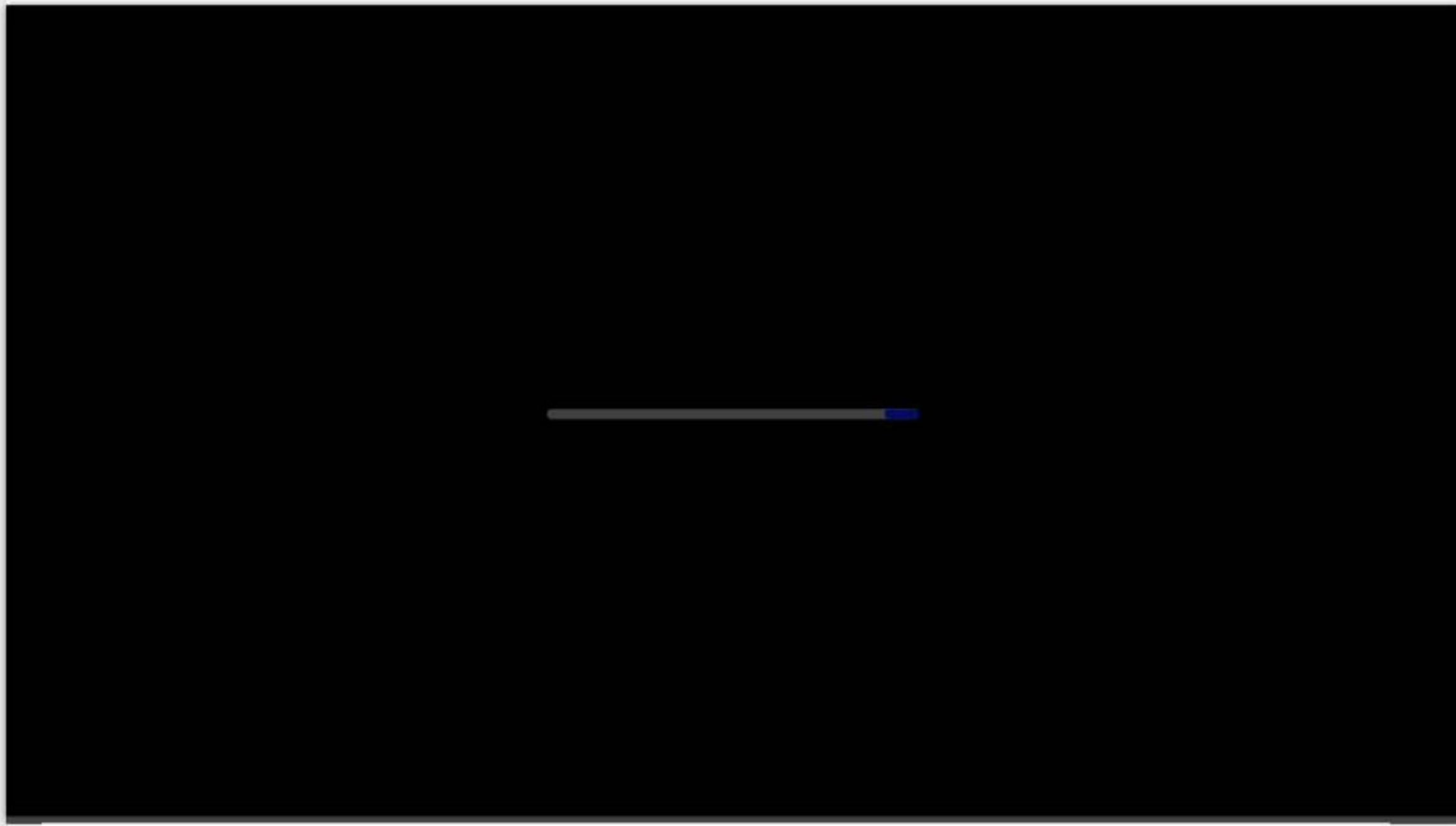


Football:Sports Injuries

Quarterbacks: 4 Tips to Keep Your Throwing Shoulder Healthy

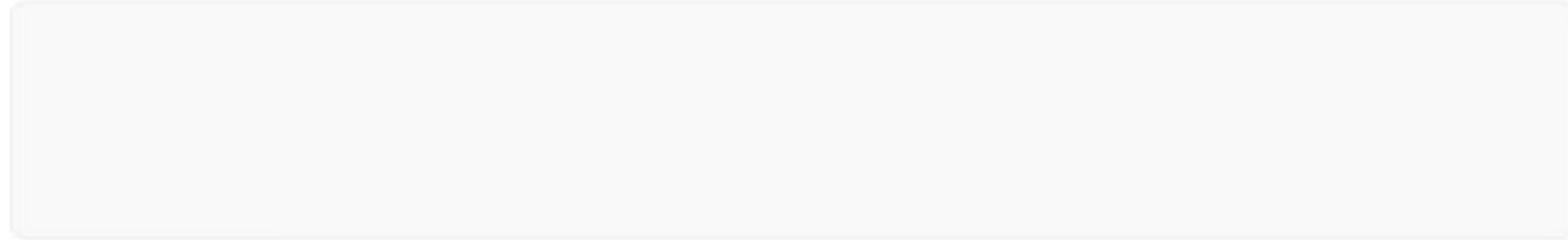
By Andy Haley Published On: 2022-02-07



Quarterbacks need to take care of their primary athletic weapon—their throwing shoulder. A strong shoulder can produce powerful and accurate passes, while reducing the risk of an injury from a hard sack.

QB's share common concerns with baseball pitchers, but according to Dr. Wayne McGough, an orthopaedic surgeon at the renowned Andrews Sports Medicine and Orthopaedic Center (Birmingham, Alabama), quarterback shoulder injuries present a different set of problems.

Overuse injuries to the labrum or rotator cuff are not as common as they are among baseball players. Dr. McGough says, "The angular velocity that the arm goes through when throwing a football is much less compared to a baseball throwing motion. So there's less energy likely to cause damage or injury to the shoulder. Also, the throwing motion of a football requires less extreme ranges of motion. When you're not pushing your shoulder to extreme ranges of external rotation or internal rotation, it's less likely to lead to injury."



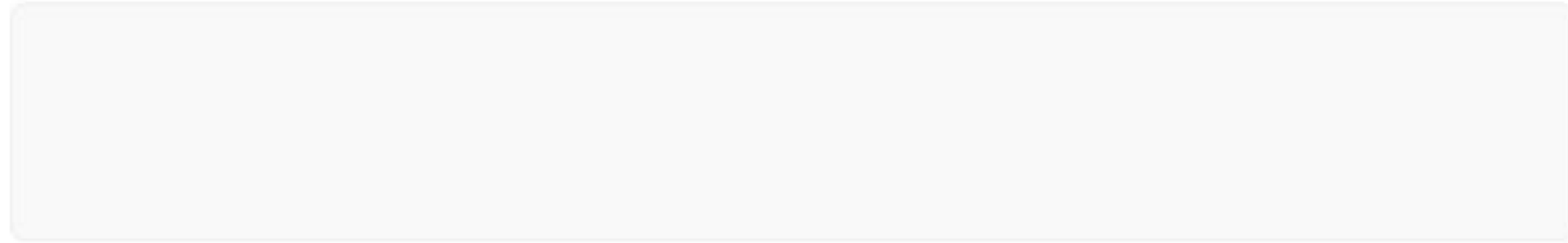
The mechanics of a football throw are not as inherently dangerous, but pitchers throw in a controlled setting. In contrast, QB's play with 300-pound linemen swatting their throwing arm and trying to drive their body into the ground. "Traumatic injuries are more common in quarterbacks," Dr. McGough adds. "About 80 percent of shoulder injuries are due to direct trauma."

Common injuries include, but are not limited to, AC joint injuries, rotator cuff strains, and fractures of the humerus or collarbone. In extreme circumstances, the shoulder may dislocate, causing labrum damage.

Often there's nothing you can do to prevent a contact injury. If you collide with an opponent or fall to the ground, there's always a risk for injury. But you can increase the durability of your shoulder so that it requires a larger impact to cause an injury. Dr. McGough recommends that every quarterback follow the following four tips to maintain a strong and healthy shoulder.

1. Strengthen Your Shoulder Muscles

This is your first step to keeping your shoulder healthy. The muscles that surround your shoulder, such as the four rotator cuff muscles, keep the joint together. If one of them is weak, your shoulder may become unstable and at risk for injury. "You need to strengthen the muscles around the shoulder, particularly the rotator cuff muscles, which are very important throughout the whole phase of throwing," Dr. McGough adds.



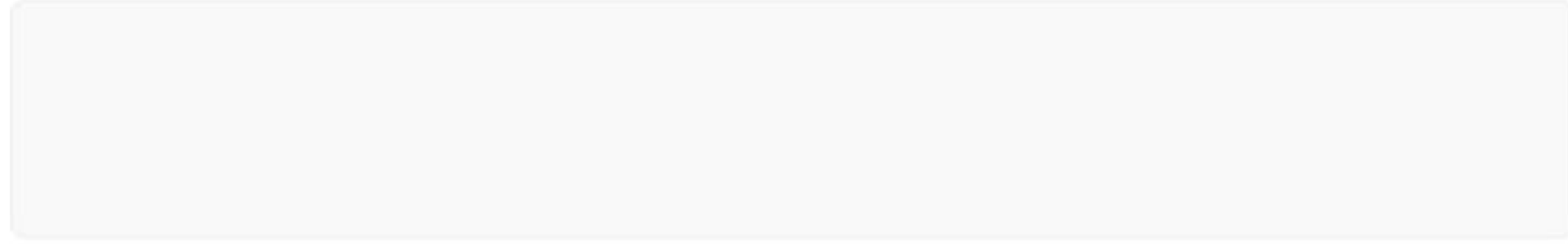
He recommends adding the *Thrower's 10 Program* to your routine. It consists of ten exercises designed to strengthen the muscles that act on and support the shoulder. Perform the workout three to four times per week on non-consecutive days. Watch the video above to see Drew Brees performing his WOW shoulder resistance exercise.

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2. Focus on More Than Just Your Shoulder

To keep your shoulder healthy, you need to take a full-body approach. Your body functions as a complete unit in a kinetic chain, starting with your feet on the ground, moving up through your legs and hips, through your torso and to your upper body and shoulder. "Keeping these muscles strong will help you attain better strength and throwing mechanics, and you'll be less likely to get injured," says Dr. McGough. "Also, it will help better absorb impact from tackles."

There's no single way to do this. You simply need to train during your off-season, focusing on full-body strength. And don't forget to work out during your season to maintain your strength and durability.



3. Don't Play Too Many Sports

Dr. McGough sees this scenario too often. A quarterback competing during the football season practices with a baseball pitching coach on the side—and ends up hurting his shoulder. The moral of the story? More is not always better. There's no necessary equivalent of a pitch count for QB's, but they still need to be aware of the workload they put on their shoulders. "Focusing on one sport at a time is a good rule," Dr. McGough advises, and he also recommends avoiding year-round sports participation. Give yourself at least three months for an off-season to focus on getting stronger.

4. Ice After Practice and Games

Icing isn't just for treating an acute injury. It's a useful and effective method for reducing inflammation and improving recovery. Dr. McGough explains that icing decreases lactic acid buildup within the targeted muscles, which reduces pain and helps accelerate the recovery process. "It's not a fix for everything, but it is a good way to get over some pain," he adds.

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