Trap Bar Training for Conditioning, Size 
AND Strength!

Part I

I never would have thought of using the trap bar for much other than deadlifts and an occasional farmer walk.

But, one week I was taking it light and getting in some high rep deads for recuperation. I decided to utilize some movements that I use with the trap bar which I normally use with a straight bar complex.

I figured I might as well keep getting a good pump with light weights so movement after movement began to flow and they felt great.

You’ll want to try these movements in a complex or for strength and bodybuilding purposes.

Light weights can be used for several sets for conditioning, muscular endurance and lactate tolerance. Moderate weights build strength endurance and size, and the heavy weights will also build strength endurance and size as long as rest periods are kept to a minimum.
You will see two methods to utilize complexes with the trap bar below.

Of course, you can forgo the complexes and simply perform HEAVY straight sets with any of the aforementioned trap bar movements.

**Trap Bar Option 1:**

Simply use the movements in a complex (perform one exercise after another without ever placing the bar down) fashion, performing 5 – 10 reps per movement for a total of 3 – 6 rounds.

**Trap Bar Option 2:**

Incorporate the complexes and add a farmer walk after each movement. This will REALLY tax the grip, plus the lower and upper body. Your posterior chain will get the grunt of the work during the walks.

If you want to make your core work even harder, place cones down the path so you can zig zag in between the cones during your farmer walks! The distance for the farmer walk can be 25 – 50 ft, it doesn’t have to be long since you will be performing 4 – 5 walks in one set!

**Trap Bar Option 3:**

Perform one trap bar exercise at a time, no complexes or supersets, just go heavy 😊 Keep the sets and rep pretty basic here:

5 x 5, 3 x 6 – 12, 2 x 15, 4 x 6, etc. – all these variables work great for strength AND size.
Here are the movements:

**Bent knee deadlift (the old stand by)**

The trap bar DL is the old standby movement that works phenomenal for developing full body strength and size. Unlike a traditional BB dead lift where the weight is in front of you, thus having gravity play a greater role as it pulls you forward and stresses the lower back much more.

The trap DL works the quads slightly more and also allows for a shorter range of motion since most trap bars have the higher handles. I emphasize athletes to take their time during the set up process:

- grip the handles with hands exactly in the center
- feet should be shoulder width apart (not too wide as novice trainees often allow their knees to collapse or their hands hit their calves)
- feet should be in the center of the trap bar, in line with the handles (not behind or in front of the handles)
- press through the heels and keep the low back neutral. If the low back rounds, go lighter and perform very low reps, or, perhaps the individual is not yet ready for trap bar deads and instead needs to perform movements such as glute ham raises, back extensions, swings and bodyweight squats.
Bent Over Rows

The bent over row is something I rarely ever see performed. With lat pulldowns being the rage, this old school exercise is a rarity, which is too bad. Because this is the ultimate back builder when it comes to adding strength and size!

To perform the movement correctly, you can not bent the hips and knees too much or the bar will hit your knees and / or your ass.

You need to push the hips back and keep a slight bend in the knee, as always with out rounding the back. This is very much like performing an RDL / Romanian dead lift.

The guys from the 70’s and prior were huge proponents of the bent over barbell row for strength and bodybuilding purposes. Arnold, Lee Haney, and then in the 90’s, Dorian Yates was smart to perform these regularly because he knew they were far more superior then all the machine training the others were performing.

For now, here’s how I want you to get started:
- Incorporate the trap bar deadlift and the bent over row as straight sets with heavy to moderately heavy weights. The trap bar should be used for lower body emphasis / workouts and the bent over row on upper body days.
- On lighter days, recuperation / feeder workouts, just use 135 lbs on the bar and crank out supersets of deads and rows for 10 – 15 reps each set.
- Want to work in a full body circuit? Go moderately heavy on the bar and perform 8 – 10 deadlifts, 6 – 8 rows and then crank out upper body pressing with free weights followed by a full body movement.

**Here’s a sample full body circuit** using the trap bar during deads and rows.

1. Trap Bar DL x 10
2. Trap Bar rows x 6
3. Handstand push ups x max reps
4. Sandbag shouldering x 5 reps each side
5. V Ups x 20

That’s a full body circuit which can be worked for full body conditioning. Try hitting 3 rounds of the above workout with 1 or 2 minutes rest between sets.

Stay tuned for the next installment where we cover MORE trap bar movements for developing strength, muscular size and conditioning!

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