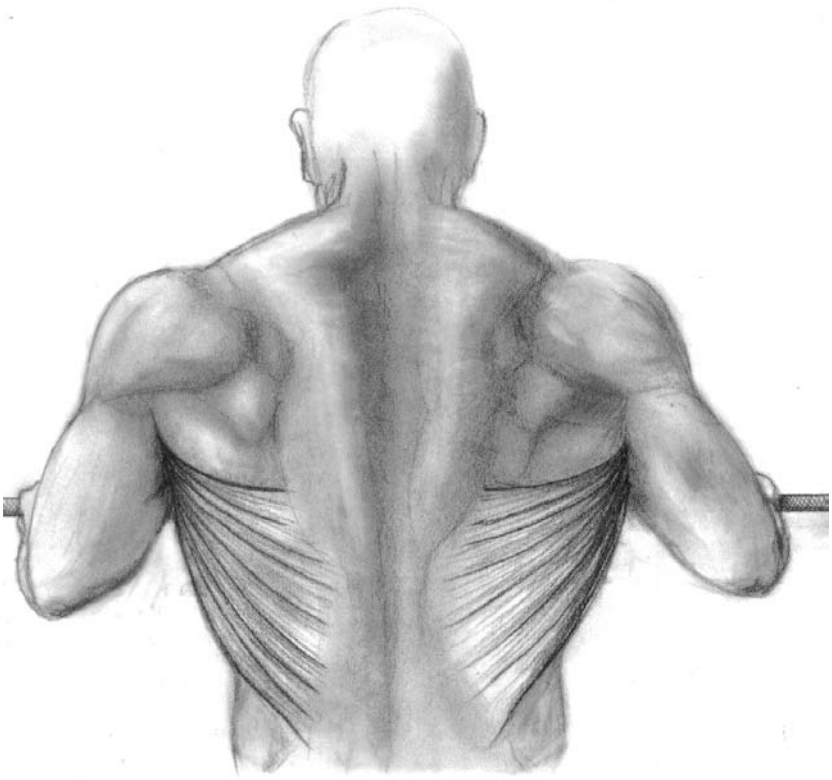

It is interesting that when the bar hits the chest right below the xiphoid process, the humerus lines up across the back with the thickest part of the lats, where the fibers are parallel to the bar and perpendicular to the spine. A lower strike point on the belly fails to take advantage of this alignment.

Figure 7-55. Seen from above, the lats working across the back where the fibers of the muscle bellies are roughly parallel to the bar.

Glute/Ham Raises

There are a couple of ancillary exercises that require special equipment which are useful enough to make it worth locating. The Roman Chair is an old piece of gym equipment that can be found in one form or another in most training facilities. It was developed by the famous physical culturist Professor Louis "Attila" Durlacher in the late 1800s from a device known as a "Roman column" that served a similar function. It is a very basic bench (a bench has no parts that move during an exercise; a machine does) that supports the foot from the top while supporting the thigh from below, allowing for a horizontal leg-supported position. The Roman Chair is used while both facing up for abdominal work and facing down for back work.

Abs done on this bench are called Roman chair situps after the device. The back exercise has been for many years referred to as a "hyperextension", although that term specifically refers to a position that most joints don't like to be placed in, and is therefore preferably termed simply a "back extension". You may hear this term used for the exercise, from time to time, but it is losing its place as more people become more familiar with biomechanical terminology.

The exercise itself is a very good way to directly work the spinal erectors in a concentric/eccentric contractile mode. The normal function of the trunk muscles is stabilization of the spine using an isometric contraction that allows little or no relative movement of the vertebrae. But they can be effectively strengthened using active motion of the spine with this