

## **Marathon and Endurance Athletes**

### **Strengthening legs and hips**

With spring right around the corner more people will be leaving the comfort of their basement treadmills and their gyms in order to walk, jog, bike or run outdoors. The more ambitious will begin their training for local 5 and 10 K races as well as biathlons. As well the hardcore begin their journey to train and complete the world famous 26.2 mile NYC Marathon.

With time being an issue, those training for marathons or other endurance events may limit themselves to whatever demands their sport requires. This however can lead to overuse syndrome, creating injuries. To prepare wisely for endurance events one must cross train, and weight training is an important and often overlooked component for the distance runners. The following exercises will assist the distance athlete in keeping a muscularly well-balanced body, in turn helping to prevent injuries.

### **Squats**

Squats effectively develop most of all your lower body including quadriceps, hamstrings, and gluts in one simple movement, therefore making them a very effective lower body strengthening exercise. You perform squats on a daily basis when you stand from a sitting position. Therefore if you are new to this exercise, the best way to acquaint yourself is to sit in a chair with your legs 90 degrees to the ground. Keeping your back straight, use your leg to raise yourself from the chair. Sit down again very slowly. Doing this a time or two will familiarize your body with the correct motion. Once you understand the mechanics you want to add weight and increase repetitions. Squatting can be made simpler by performing them with a smith machine in the gym. These are safe and allow you to squat correctly without a spotter. Another option would be a leg press machine where your body is no longer standing but sitting or laying down, moving the weight in an even more controlled and safe manner.

### **Caveat**

When squatting, it is vitally important that when your legs are at a 90-degree angle, the knee should never lean forward past the toe. This transfers all the pressure from the thigh and places it in the knee joint making it very vulnerable to injury. Make sure your legs are at 90-degrees even.

Strengthening the legs will build more muscle around the knee joint, making it considerably more stable, thereby reducing your risk of injury from running.

### **Its Hip to Train Hips:**

Hips are dangerously overlooked by distance runners and have been linked to many of the woes that haunt these athletes. Unlike most joints in the body the hips move in basically four directions, front (Flexion) back, (Extension) away from the body (Abduction) toward the body (Adduction)

Hip strengthening is vital to keep a runner's body well balanced. These four important muscle groups serve as stabilizers for the body while running. It is therefore important to keep them strong in order for them to do their job efficiently. These can be performed on a four way hip machine found in most gyms. However in the absence of a hip machine an ankle weight of challenging poundage fastened to the ankle will do the trick as well.

**Hip Flexors:**

Standing straight with the weight around your ankle, raise your knee straight up so it is level with your hip. Lower slowly to the ground and repeat.

**Hip Extensors:**

Standing straight move the leg behind you as far as you can without bending the knee. Your upper body may tend to lean forward a little bit but keep this to a minimum, trying to keep the body as straight as you can. Bring the leg back to the ground and repeat.

**Hip Abductors:**

Standing straight slowly move the leg out to the side, again without bending the knee, and raise as high as you can without your upper body bending or leaning over to far.

**Hip Adductors:**

This time you are required to lie down at your side with your top leg placed behind your bottom leg. Raise your bottom leg straight up, again keeping the knee straight, and lower slowly.

Distance runners will also want to train upper body as well. An upper body circuit with challenging weight is preferred. After all, the upper body can be quite challenged as well in endurance and marathon events. Because time is limited and you want to spend as much time on the road as possible, you will yield benefits from resistance training even if you do it only once a week. Twice is preferred, but one good quality strengthening session a week for both upper and lower body will be fine.

Keep in mind that though subjecting your legs to weight training may not necessarily be the missing link to turn you into a four- minute miler, it most likely will save your joints from being injured as you rack up your many miles on the road. Look for more helpful marathon tips throughout this coming spring/summer training season.