



# FILLING THE GAP:

## Post Physio - Pre Performance

### Part 2: Lower Body

TEXT BY KRISS HENDY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

**T**oo often injuries re-present time after time, a constant cycle of injury, rest, return, injury, rest, return and so on. This is often caused by athletes missing a crucial phase of their training and can be avoided.

Similar to Part 1, this article isn't about diagnosing, treating or prescribing initial rehab exercises. The phase that we are concerned with is the period of time after the green light is given, until you resume full training and prepare to toe the line at your first race back. Part one focused on upper body exercises to bridge that gap between physio and performance. Some physios will take you through

your full progression right up to race day, however for those of you who are left with that missing link the following article will give you a better understanding of the steps to take.

Consider this...when you have suffered with an injury in the past, did you fit into either of these categories?

#### CATEGORY 1

You have sporadically done a few of the exercises the physio gave you, (usually the night before your next appointment). You have been given the all clear and celebrated by resuming training the next morning. However, your celebrations are

short lived and you now have another niggle presenting somewhere other than the initial injury site.

- What we have to remember here is that our bodies are very efficient machines and they will adapt very quickly to "make good" of a bad situation. By skipping the gradual progression back to training and considering the cause of the recent injury, other problems will start to develop.

#### CATEGORY 2

Even though you may have correctly followed the prescribed rest, treatment and rehab, you are still doing the same band exercises that you were given a year ago.

### Injury to Full Fitness Timeline



*It is important that we see the strength training stage as ongoing. Being maintained as a regular feature of your training week.*



The general steps I will work through with a client such as in the case study will consider the following. Have you factored this into your training?

#### KEY FOCUS POST PHYSIO - PRE PERFORMANCE... AND BEYOND!

**ROM** - Full (pain free) range of motion within the hip complex, by assessing your competence with a variety of squat variations and mobility exercises. Identifying the 'problem' areas such as tight or restricted muscles and tissues.

**Activation & Re-education** - By doing simple body weight exercises, such as the squat or lunge we can observe any weaknesses, which are often highlighted through overcompensation. This is when an experienced set of eyes will come in handy! Education plays an important role in this step, as we need to ensure that the athlete has a basic understanding of why they are doing these exercises and what they feel like. Being conscious or aware of the muscle group that you are targeting is one of the most important tips regarding activation work. So the key is body awareness and focus through the movement.

#### Strengthen through Progressive Overload

- By selecting exercises designed to bring balance and structural strength to the target area we can achieve strength that is both functional and supportive. Initially it is best to choose a load that is closed chain (using a load that is fixed at one end like a cable machine or simply the ground.) This will provide a degree of stability and guidance through the range of motion as your confidence builds and you become stronger. Once this has been achieved we can introduce free weights (dumbbells, barbells etc.) followed by gradually increasing to a weight or resistance that will challenge you.

*\*Adding intensity through progressive overload in the return to sport and competition is vital.*

### Case Study



A recent client approached me to help with a strength program. Aged in his 50's he had ongoing problems with his lower back, constant discomfort and a painful Achilles yet had soldiered on through his weekend miles and Ironman races for as long as he can remember.

On assessing his basic functional movements it became obvious that he had some significant muscular imbalances and lack of mobility when performing a bodyweight squat, twisting his body to achieve the simple task of sitting down and standing up. Consequently this had caused additional stress on the joints through his lower body, such as the recent Achilles issue.

After the all clear, we addressed his movement patterns. In other words retraining his body on how to move up and down in a functional and correct way.

Any time where you have tried to resume your pre-injury training load/intensity you seem to suffer.

- To increase the strength of the area ready for our 'usual training' we need to work progressively and consistently, by adding a sufficient weight or load. You can't successfully jump from light band exercises straight into a race pace training session.

If either of these sound familiar, you need to take a step back and re-evaluate the efficiency of your body. We need to take measurable and logical steps towards recovery and return to performance. How can you expect your body to perform at the same intensity it once did, if that previously injured area has lost its ability to move correctly and with any reasonable force?

# Strength Exercises

Below are some examples of progressive exercises that I would have my athletes perform. I would expect the athlete to be able to execute the band exercises comfortably and efficiently before moving onto the strength exercise equivalents.

These sets/reps are sufficient for the reintroduction of strength to the area. But remember a training program must 'progressively overload' the athlete to illicit any neural or physiological change. Therefore once you are confident with these numbers you will need to reconsider your training parameters (take a look at our recent Program Design Series to help workout what weights you need to be working at)



**1** **2**  
**BANDED CRAB WALKS**  
**4 SETS OF 3-METER DISTANCE (OUT & BACK)**  
 Stay in a half squat position, step sideways with lead foot before following with other foot, ensuring you keep the band tight throughout for resistance.



**1** **2**  
**CLOSED CHAIN – LEG PRESS / SINGLE LEG PRESS**  
**4 SETS OF 10/12 REPETITIONS (EACH LEG)**  
 Keep your back and butt firmly on the pads, starting with your knees bent at 90 degrees, drive through your heels to full extension.



**1** **2**  
**STRENGTH EXERCISE – KETTLE BELL / BARBELL DEADLIFT**  
**3/4 SETS OF 6/10 REPETITIONS**  
 Keep the weight close to your feet, with shoulders back, drive up through your heels whilst maintaining straight arms and back.



**1** **2**  
**STRENGTH EXERCISE**  
**SINGLE LEG SQUAT (USE BENCH OR BOX)**  
**– 3/4 SETS OF 6/8 REPETITIONS EACH SIDE**  
 A key exercise for establishing single side weaknesses, sit down and stand up from a seated position using just one leg.



**1**  
**STRENGTH EXERCISE – SINGLE LEG GLUTE BRIDGE (ELEVATED)**  
**– 3/4 SETS OF 8/10 REPETITIONS (EACH SIDE)**



**2**  
**STRENGTH EXERCISE – SINGLE LEG GLUTE BRIDGE (ELEVATED)**  
**– 3/4 SETS OF 8/10 REPETITIONS (EACH SIDE)**

## Kriss Hendy

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Seeing the need for better athlete education and understanding with regards to Strength & Conditioning for the Endurance Athlete. Kriss works with a variety of athletes from Age Groupers to Professionals, developing programs that support and heighten their endurance performance. Kriss is based in Byron Bay with his wife (Professional Triathlete) Polly Hendy. He has both a local & International client base that use his Online Strength Training Packages.

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**Kriss Hendy**  
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Online Strength Training Packages for Endurance Athletes

Bringing the fundamentals of Strength & Conditioning to the Endurance Community



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