



The Swim

Before we get our feet wet we need to think about priming our bodies for the session to come. Most of us will go through some form of warm up routine made up of arm swings and limb shaking. But take lead from the best in the business. If you've ever seen a high performance swim squad train, they commonly have a 'Swim Ergometer' on pool deck for the swimmers to use before hitting the water. For most of us this isn't even an option, but there are other ways we can effectively 'switch things on'.

Here are just two of the exercises we can use to increase our range of mobility and strength for a powerful swim stroke.

PREPARE FOR EVERY SESSION

Pre swim/bike/run activations



1. RESISTANCE BAND PULL THROUGHS

A well-known exercise that can be performed anywhere with the aid of a resistance band and your swim paddles. Look at keeping your core stable throughout. Here you can see the athlete pulling both arms back together. It can also be modified to focus on the catch phase by moving one arm at a time. Try 3 sets of 20 reps to start with.



2. PULL APARTS

Using light to moderate tension, pull the band apart while squeezing your shoulder blades together. Slowly return to start position. This exercise strengthens your rear shoulders and back, specifically your rear deltoids and rhomboids, two muscle groups that get weak when you spend the day at a desk or in the car. Start with 3 sets or 10-15 repetitions.

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Time, as we all know, is a precious commodity. Once you have carefully and logistically planned your training around work, family, travel and daily life there is rarely a minute left over. I constantly hear athletes telling me that they know they need to start strength training but they simply don't have the time.

Well, in this article I am going to show you how you can start implementing some basic but highly effective exercises that can slot in nicely before you dive in the pool, jump on the bike or head out for a run.

PREPPING YOUR BODY

Activation is a key component within any training program. More often than not, thanks largely to modern day life, we find athletes with a lack of activation in the posterior chain - meaning the muscles at the back, such as hamstrings and glutes, are not working as well as they could be. As a result we find imbalances in running gait patterns and poor mechanics on the bike, which ultimately lead to sub-optimal performance or worse, injury.

What you have to remember is that your body is very efficient - it will always

look to conduct given work in the easiest way possible, and by using the least amount of energy. This often leads us down a dangerous path.

Activation of specific 'dormant' muscle groups is a learned skill and can take time. Athletes who have predominantly rely on certain muscles to do the majority of the work will find it difficult at the start to even feel these dormant muscle groups working. However, when the athlete recognises what it feels like to have the glutes firing on the bike and run, for example, this leads to an athlete feeling stronger and more stable.

THE (BASIC) SCIENCE

These early strength gains are the result of increased motor unit synchronisation and activation - a motor unit consists of a neuron (motor nerve cell) and multiple muscle fibers. As an athlete trains, they are increasing the number of motor units firing within the muscle fiber. Imagine the muscle group you are training as a 'light switchboard'. At present you are lighting up 50% of the lights, as a trainer our job is to light up or 'activate' the rest of the board.

Now if you only manage to do these activation exercises pre-session you're not going to be making monumental gains, compared to if you were doing 2-3 sessions a week, but 'something is better than nothing' is definitely my motto here, so get to it!

The Bike

As mentioned earlier, the majority of us will be frontal dominant and on the bike this means we are using our quadriceps more and not engaging our glutes. This can lead to all sorts of issues - especially if you have to get off the bike and straight on to the run! By including a couple of pre-session exercises you are forcing the body to engage all of its available musculature instead of just the most dominant.



3. SPLIT SQUAT

This exercise builds and strengthens the glute and upper leg muscles, which also provide additional support for the back. Ensure to sit back into the squat and avoid leaning forward to engage more glute and hamstring activation. Do 3 sets x 8/10 repetitions, on each side, with 30seconds rest in between.



4. GLUTE BRIDGE

A great exercises for activating and working the hamstrings and glutes. The distance your heels are placed away from you body will determine how much you target either muscle group. It can be done double or single legged, by lifting one foot and extending the leg straight out. Do 3 sets x 8/10 repetitions, 30seconds rest.

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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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The Run

Much like the bike most of us will be naturally using our quadriceps more than our glutes while running. By including these activation and strength exercises you will be improving the structural weaknesses in your body, whether they are in the muscles, joints or connective tissues. This is a great way to eliminate the source of most common niggles and injuries associated with running.



5. SINGLE LEG CHAIR SQUATS

This single leg exercise will highlight any weaknesses regarding stability and strength in each leg and improve that 'all important' power through the glutes. Remember to drive up through the heel to engage your posterior chain, avoid any weight through the toes. Do 3 sets x 8/10 repetitions, on each side, with 30seconds rest.



6. SINGLE LEG SPRINT HOLDS

This exercise helps to develop stability within the hip complex, as well as the knee and ankle joints, and the all-important proprioception needed for running. Success with this exercise should look smooth and effortless. Opposite arm to opposite leg, exaggerate the low to high body position. Do 3 sets x 8/10 repetitions, on each side, with 30seconds rest.



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