Functional Off-Season Strength/Power Training Exercises for Soccer

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Lateral Strength and Power

One way of improving all lateral balance, strength and power is by performing The Lateral Leg Series, a progression of lateral “bounds,” first with only bodyweight, then with slight external resistance with a weighted vest. The following series of exercises can be performed as part of a more comprehensive strength/power program. The volume will mirror the plyometric or strength training phase you are currently in.

The procedure:

- **Single Load:** Assume an athletic stance and “load” one leg by transferring body weight onto this leg. The opposite leg is off the ground or slightly touching based on the athlete abilities. (Figure 1) Execute a slight triple flexion of hip, knee, and ankle, and push explosively off the involved leg. In performing the triple extension focus on simultaneous extension of the three joints. The force should be transmitted through the ball of the foot. NOT THE TOES. NOT THE HEELS. Land on the opposite leg in an athletic stance, but “stick” the landing and balance for at least two seconds. Walk back and repeat. Switch legs. Try and increase distance as the skill improves.

- **Continuous Load:** Next, load up again, push off, land, but continue on immediately 3 more bounds on the same leg. On the last bound, stick and hold. Walk back, repeat, and switch legs. Try and increase distance over time.

- **Continuous Load and Switch:** Repeat the above procedure, but after 3 “bound,” immediately switch legs and repeat 3 “bounds” the other way and stick the landing.

- **Ice Skaters:** From a standing position load up, push off at a 45 degree angle, stick on one leg and repeat the other way holding each stick 2 seconds. Create more distance each foot strike (Figure 2).

To improve lateral strength. Repeat the above procedure and add one to three sets of 10 repetition single leg squats. Start with body weight only and work up to using a weighted vest. This is preferable instead of a hand held dumbbell which can impede arm swing.

Single Leg Squat (Figure 3)

How To

- Stand on one leg with the opposite (non-supported) leg forward for balance.
- Squat on the supported leg proportionally bending the ankle, knee and hip. Keep weight distributed over the whole foot.
- Squat until the thigh just breaks parallel. Hold and return to starting position.

Common Errors

- Failure to proportionally bend all three joints.
- Weight forward on the ball of the foot rather than distributed evenly.
- Failure to bend at the waist.

There you have a few ideas for keeping your athletes true to the core!