



Strength Training

The off season is a great time to work on strength and flexibility. As the year progresses, we cut back the strength training and focus more on swimming, biking and running. Below is a basic strength workout that I recommend. This work out hits all the major muscle groups, particularly for triathlon, and can be done in about 25-45 minutes. Of course, you must warm-up at the beginning of the workout, unless you are coming directly from another workout, then you might not need to. Otherwise, at least 5 minutes of walking, jogging, or cycling and light stretching before you start and a few minutes of stretching the worked muscle groups after the strength exercises.

During the early off season phase, this workout can be done 2-4 times per week depending on how you feel. As you move into early season training, perform strength training no more than twice a week. After that, perform strength training once a week or not at all.

The goal of the work out is to build over all body strength with an increase in power and force, we're not trying to develop bulk. The goal is to work from higher repetitions with good form, not lifting tons of weight, to lower repetitions more weight (gradually after several weeks), but still maintaining good form. This work out is designed to be done quickly with minimal rest (20-30 seconds) between sets. In each exercise, keeping good body alignment is critical. Stop each exercise if your form starts to suffer. Doing the exercise without good alignment and form develops your muscles to move in an incorrect manner – we are looking for quality not quantity.

Workout

- 1) Crunches or other abdominal/core exercises can use incline (I do different 1-2 kinds 15-20 each)
- 2) Pull ups (these can be assisted as needed) - Up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions each
- 3) Lat pull downs – If you are not able to do many pull ups well – do some lat pull downs (balance the number with the pull-ups). If you can do lots of pull ups then you don't need to bother with lat pull downs. Pull ups involve more of your body so are preferable than lat pull downs if you have time constraints.
- 4) Twisting crunches or other abdominal/core exercises, can use incline
- 5) Dips (these can be assisted as needed) - Up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions each
- 6) Leg lifts on the sit up bench or Roman chair or more core/abdominal
- 7) Squats or Incline Leg Press - Up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions each
- 8) Calf Raises - Up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions each
- 9) Leg Curls (hamstrings) - Up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions each
- 10) Push ups (knees down if needed for proper body alignment)- Up to 3 sets of 15 repetitions each
- 11) Hip adductor, abductor and gluteus exercises. There is a series you can do with a large rubber stretch band or a cable machine at the gym. The hip stabilizers can be weak because they are often not strengthened enough through swimming, biking and running alone.

Once you are comfortable doing three sets for each exercise (take quite a few weeks to work up to this point), add weight and slowly decrease sets to 1 set of 10 repetitions. Increase your rest between sets. Do these repetitions extremely slowly, never relaxing your muscle. Don't take less than 40 seconds to do 10 repetitions. Once you can do 10 repetitions in 80 seconds you can add more weight.

The idea behind low slow reps at a decent weight is to get the most bang for the buck in the gym. This does not bog you down doing tons of reps and make the workout take too long. Also, by doing 1 set of reps until failure, you are training power, not endurance. All your other training is geared towards endurance already.

There are all kinds of other fabulous strength exercises. We could spend lots more time on strength; if you have favorite exercises you can try to work them into your schedule. As triathletes we are spreading our workout time across swimming, cycling, running, strength, and flexibility – we have lots to accomplish! These basic exercises will help you in our sport.

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