

CORE TRAINING FOR RUGBY PLAYERS – A QUICK GUIDE



Nowadays, excelling on the rugby field involves more than just practicing once a week and turning up on game day. Where rugby does rely on skills and technique it also requires players to be in prime physical condition, to be fit, strong, quick, and agile whilst also preventing injury. This is achieved through hours of specific strength and conditioning, both on and off the pitch.

To complicate the matters even further for coaches, each on-field position has a different set of requirements, prop forwards' training for example will be orientated towards power training, for scrummaging, whereas back 3 players (wingers and fullbacks) will focus more on explosivity and speed, for avoiding tackles and beating defenders' ball in hand. Having said that one element is common across positions in a rugby team: a strong core.

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WHY IS A STRONG AND FUNCTIONAL CORE SO IMPORTANT FOR RUGBY PLAYERS?

Core training for rugby players is crucial because it's used and is the foundation for all movements in the game; from passing or kicking the rugby ball to jumping in lineout or scrummaging, it is the one element all rugby players should train. Not only does it allow players to gain a strength advantage over their opponents, but it is also key in other aspects of a players' fitness.

FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH

Training abdominal muscles and core in an effective way through functional exercises will allow rugby players to improve their kinetic chain. Effectively this means that you are improving your movement patterns and how your different muscle groups are able to work together to generate more power in a more economical way.

An example of this is in running or sprinting, often when training for speed many will focus on the leg movement without looking at the whole picture. Rather sprinting should be seen as a movement produced by a chain (bones, muscles, ligaments, and tendons) working together as a system to create the movement. In this case, creating a stable core able to work in synchronization with your legs and arms will drastically improve your speed.

INJURY PREVENTION

A strong and stable core is one of the most important things you can do to improve body balance and help prevent injuries. Acting as a sort of suspension for your body, strong abdominal muscles will help you stabilize your body whilst absorbing part of the impacts that occur when running, jumping, or getting tackled in rugby. As a result, the pressure on knees and hips is significantly reduced whilst the amount of strain put on your lower back is also diminished. (Williamson Medical Center)

HOW TO TRAIN CORE FOR RUGBY PLAYERS?

Abdominal muscles and core training for rugby players can be broken down into two sections:

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CORE STRENGTH

Core strength is the ability of the torso and middle section to generate force and create movement. In rugby, this happens when you wrestle for a ball, fight in contact, lift & catch the ball in a lineout or pass a ball.

CORE STABILITY

Core stability is the ability to resist unwanted movement at the torso, whilst high levels of force are being applied elsewhere. In other words, core stability is the process of controlling and stabilizing your core musculature in order to then be able to generate force through your arms and legs.

In rugby, this happens in almost every movement. For example, in a scrum, if you are unable to stabilize your core and your position you will not be able to generate power through your legs to push. Even in running it has been demonstrated that having improved core stability has a positive effect on running economy and speed.

By now you get the idea, rather than focusing on the aesthetics of a 6-pack working on core strength and stability should be the focus for rugby players. Every player will have a different profile with a different physique and past injuries however we would recommend doing core training one to two times a week in-season and up to three times a week during off-season.

THE BEST EXERCISES FOR CORE TRAINING FOR RUGBY PLAYERS

PLANKS (FRONT & LATERAL, STATIC & DYNAMIC)

DEADBUGS

BANDED ANTI-ROTATION HOLDS

CABLE WOOD CHOP

MEDICINE BALL THROWS

PALLOF PRESS

LANDMINE ROTATIONS

SPRINTER SIT UPS

EXAMPLE CORE WORKOUTS FOR RUGBY PLAYERS

THE PLANK CIRCUIT

1 MIN FRONT, LEFT AND RIGHT PLANK

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1MIN REST

45S (Seconds) FRONT, LEFT AND RIGHT

45S REST

30S FRONT, LEFT AND RIGHT

30S REST

20S FRONT, LEFT AND RIGHT

THE TABATA STYLE CORE CIRCUIT

3-5 ROUNDS WITH 1 MINUTE REST BETWEEN ROUNDS

20S BOWL HOLD

20S LATERAL LONG LEVER V-SIT – LEFT SIDE

20S LATERAL LONG LEVER V-SIT – RIGHT SIDE

20S FLUTTER KICKS

20S TOE TAPS

20S CRUNCH

20S CRUNCH HOLD AND ROTATE

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