

Functional Training for the Posterior Chain

Mike Gough, B.Sc., CSCS, CFC

Functional training of the posterior chain is important when dealing with training programs for athletes. The posterior chain is the series of muscles along the posterior or back of the body that function in a chain and allow proper movement patterns to be performed along with strength and stability of the body itself. The posterior chain is often forgotten when training as the “mirror” muscles, the muscles we can see are often the prime focus in a training program. This often leads to severe muscle imbalances between muscle groups which often hinders athletic performance and can lead to possible injury. Athletes enlist my services wanting to improve speed, vertical jump and explosiveness and upon a review of their training I quite often discover that the posterior chain has been trained inappropriately or neglected completely. A weak link in the chain can lead to decreased performance of a movement and can make the athlete susceptible to injury. Thus a proper training program design to make the chain function as a unit and not as individual parts is important.

The Chain

The Posterior Chain is important when trying to enhance speed, acceleration and deceleration of the body. I like to view the Posterior chain as the hamstrings, gluteals, and the erector spinae of the low back. These three muscle groups anchor and stabilize the body. These provide the propulsion necessary for running and cycling. The back stabilizers are the foundation that the hamstrings and glutes act off of for efficient movement. The posterior chain allows for hip explosion, acceleration and deceleration, key for athletic performance.

The Exercises Here are some great exercises to fire up your posterior chain:

Reverse Hyperextension



Hamstring Curl on Stability Ball



Overhead Press Lunge



Deadlift



Romanian Deadlift



Glut Ham Raise



Exercise Prescription The above exercises will work your posterior chain, by strengthening each muscle group while having them function as a complete unit. Try implementing some of these into your program. In addition to these functional movements, a comprehensive flexibility routine should be included to stretch out the hamstrings, gluteals, and the low back. This will allow for the chain to function through a full range of movement with strength and muscular coordination.

Often looked over by athletes, the posterior chain is a key element in sports performance. A strong and functional chain will enhance performance and decrease the risk of injury.

