

During the summer months, I am often asked how to maintain strength and core stability without sacrificing the love of outdoor activities. Indeed not many want to remain indoors while the beauty of Jackson's weather (which will last until mid October: Augie's predication) allows many opportunities for outdoor activities. However, come September a large percentage of participants who resume regular training fall short of a strong or maintained core for the next outdoor sport activity let alone overall fitness conditioning. Core strength usually takes a back seat to hiking, paddling, biking or simple enjoying an evening walk.

As a brief reminder, Dr. Ben Kibler and colleagues at the Lexington Clinic Sports Medicine Center in Lexington, Kentucky describe the following: "Core stability is defined as the ability to control the position and motion of the trunk over the pelvis to allow optimum production, transfer and control of force and motion to the terminal segment in integrated athletic activities".

One would think that outdoor recreational activities allow for the above to automatically occur. The core stability of a cyclist breaks down especially after 50 miles of riding in a day. The core stability of a hiker relies on leg endurance strength and low back stability to hike up to high elevation for a day. Bottom line, unless one is aware of core stability all the time, it inherently becomes lazy. The body will find the path of least resistance to accomplish the activity at hand. Paddling and rock climbing prove to help the core but more is still needed.

I will be the first to tell you that I get outdoors as often as possible but do have a maintenance workout two to three times a week. In addition, no one ever said the workout had to be performed indoors. Training to be Balanced offers an outdoor core workouts especially during the summer months. All you need is a little creativity to fulfill two objectives – working core and spending time outdoors.

Here are a few functional exercises for both indoor/outdoor fun:

Medicine Ball (Rock, Curve, Stool) Push Up:

Starting position begins in a push up position with one hand on a medicine ball and the other on floor. **Movement:** Lower entire body as a unit towards floor and hold for one second. Return to starting position and repeat nine more times. Repeat on other side. **Considerations:** Keep back and legs straight while also keeping the medicine ball stable in line with shoulder joints. Activate and maintain core throughout movement. You should feel your shoulders, chest, triceps, abs. If you don't have a medicine ball, use the suggested rock, side walk curve or a stool for outside use.

Single Leg Curl-to-Press:

Starting position begins in single leg stance. **Movement:** Curl one arm towards chest and press weight overhead. return to starting position and repeat steps with other arm. Repeat for three more times on each are and switch legs. **Considerations:** Maintain straight posture and stable core and avoid swaying or rocking. Ensure you have soft bend in knee of base leg. You should feel muscles in the balancing leg, biceps, shoulders, and core. Anything that weights your arms can be used, rocks, jugs of sand...etc.

Single Leg Deadlift:

Starting Position: Single leg stance with rear foot resting lightly on floor. Movement: Bend at waist and lower dumbbells or kettlebells (or groceries; backpack; child) until rear leg is parallel to floor. Use glutes and hamstrings to return to starting position by slightly shifting weight onto heel. Repeat for prescribed number of repetitions and switch legs. **Considerations:** Maintain a straight back and hips should not rotate to either side, they should remain level. Keep a soft bend in the base leg knee while shifting hips back. During step 1, keep dumbbells close to shins. **You Should Feel:** Balancing leg, hamstrings, biceps, shoulders, and core

Another avenue for core stability is Pilates. Pilates has long been a part of the exercise industry embraced by boxers, gymnasts, football players, and dancers but recently hitting the main stream at high regard by celebrities such as Madonna and Liz Hurley who swear by its results.

Holly Wooldridge, a certified Pilates instructor with a Masters in Dance states that, "Practiced faithfully Pilates can yields numerous benefits. Increased lung capacity and circulation through deep, healthy breathing, strength and

flexibility, particularly of the abdomen and back muscles, coordination-both muscular and mental, are all key components in an effective Pilates program. Posture, balance, and core strength are all heartily increased. Bone density and joint health can improve, and many experience positive body awareness for the first time. Pilates teaches balance and control of the body, and that capacity spills over into other areas of one's life.” The benefits of Pilates are so profound that we offer have a saying at T2BB, that “real men do Pilates”.

Remember, while playing outside, do a few exercises that will increase the strength of your core. Maintenance is important for not only during the summer activities but easily increases when the next seasonal sports comes about.