



STEF HANSON

PERSONAL TRAINING

I'm thinking about employing the services of a personal trainer to help compliment my triathlon training. I've worked out before, and I've had a personal trainer before. But that was prior to my introduction to the triathlon world. What would a typical training session involve?

My well behaved clients (you know who you are AND aren't) turn up thirty minutes early, ipod's in hand, do their own cardio/warm up, and stretch at the end of the session as a cool down. This way, we can spend the entire thirty to forty minute session together working on their goals, and I'm not seen to be propping up a treadmill while they sweat it out. A typical session set out for one of my triathlon clients will consist of functional core exercises with a focus on replicating similar movements to those of a triathlon. This will lead to strength and condition gains while reducing the probability of injuries, correcting muscle imbalances, and engaging the correct muscles in a fixed environment. Keeping this in mind, every client is unique and can present with different needs. So, I've decided to introduce you to Jack, who happened to be my very first triathlon client.

Jack walked into our personal training studio four years ago. He works in the Arboriculture Industry. Huh? What's that now? I had absolutely no idea what that meant at the time. But since meeting Jack I've learnt that he had spent years climbing trees, pruning, shaping, maintaining, and removing them. As a consequence, Jack was very physically active on a daily basis. His years of experience soon paved the way for him becoming the Managing Director of the business in Elsternwick. However, since attaining this role and cutting back his time spent outside and "being on the tools", his usual staple diet of Maccas, chocolate, coke, ham and cheese sandwiches, beer and choc wedges (not always in that particular order) started to take its toll. So walking into the studio that day, with his initial goal of getting fit and dropping weight (mainly the 15-20kg he had put on in the previous twelve months), he never thought that years later he would be gearing up for his third and probably most successful triathlon season.

Like most of us who push our bodies to the limits, Jack has experienced the odd injury over the years. The three injuries that have stood out mostly are:

- * Achilles Tendonitis: due to the repetitive nature of the sport and the increased kilometres in his running program.
- * Patella tracking/Patellafemoral Syndrome: Unfortunately a very common injury in triathletes. However, being the well behaved client that he is, he stretches a lot more these days, don't you Jack? And;
- * Damage to his right elbow after a jaunt in the trails of the Lysterfield Lake hills saw him spectacularly come off his mountain bike, and to top it all off, have to carry his bike back to the car.

At the moment, Jack's Achilles and Patella problems seem to be under control, so we are working towards avoiding these from reoccurring in the future. His elbow has prevented him from certain exercises and still impedes him from time to time. I don't like my chances of banning him from mountain biking, and nor would I want to try. So we work around his limitations depending on his level of pain and restriction. With these in mind a typical program would present like this (please check out my website for demonstrations of these exercises – www.stefhansontraining.com.au):

Single Leg Squat: I've mentioned the single leg squat in a previous article as one of my favourite exercises. In its purest form you don't need any equipment, and the movement is simple, but can yield fantastic results. It aims to train and help stabilise the body while in the frontal plane position. This involves engaging and strengthening muscles such as the gluteus medius, gluteus maximus, and the Vastus Medialis Obliquus(VMO), and of course the core. Jack utilizes this exercise to help prevent the reoccurrence of his patella tracking problems which often stem from a weakness and lack of control in these muscle groups. When performing this exercise, try to use a mirror so you can make sure that your hip, knee and ankle all stay in alignment. Keep your core muscles engaged and slightly lean forward through the hips, keeping your chest out. Lower yourself as deep as you can go maintaining control throughout those joints. Depend-

ing on Jack's level of fatigue, we introduce the half foam roller, wobble board or disc to upset his balance even more, and really make him engage those stabilizers throughout the different joints. This will also help improve the strength in his lower leg, by forcing him to control the movement in his ankle, which helps ward off the Achilles tendonitis from rearing its ugly little head.

Push Ups with Single Arm Row: Jack has developed a good amount of strength in his upper body and core, so I am always looking for ways to make the simplest of exercises that little bit tougher. I promise it's not because I enjoy my job having a hint of masochism, but purely because it's for his own good, I swear. The regular push up is fantastic for building upper body strength, and if performed correctly, your core will certainly get a good work out as well. However, adding in the single arm row presents more of a challenge. Grab yourself a set of light dumbbells before progressing to a heavier load. Set yourself up like you would a normal push up, but with your feet further apart than your shoulders, and with the dumbbells under your shoulders, for your hands to rest on. Engage your core and perform a push up, but once you've straightened your arms and are back in the starting position, slightly shift your weight to one arm, making sure your Lats are engaged and perform a one arm row with the dumbbell. Repeat this on the other side, making sure your hips stay still and that you haven't rocked from side to side when changing arms. The change to this will improve your shoulder stability and core/hip stability.

Straight Arm Lat Pull Down: Jack's mountain biking injury prevented him from performing a standard lat pull down because he struggled to flex and extend at the elbow joint. I introduced this exercise so that he could still work on building strength through his lats, shoulders and rhomboids. Attach a straight bar to the cable machine, standing in front of the machine with a slight bend in your knees, hold the bar at shoulder level with a slight bend in your arm. Maintaining correct posture, draw the bar down towards your hips by engaging your lats and rhomboids. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and down. Slowly release this position and bring the bar back to shoulder height, continuing to maintain that posture.

Bosu Ball Squat with D/B Shoulder Press: I like this exercise because it really is a full body workout. Squats are a great strength builder, but I like to throw in the bosu ball to create an unstable surface, and improve stabilizers throughout the body. Adding the shoulder press builds strength in the shoulders, makes him engage his core while moving his arms, but also just makes him sweat more, so that has to be a good thing right?

Barbell Superman Roll: This is a very advanced exercise. Do not attempt to do this unless you have a very strong core and stable shoulder girdle. You need a barbell where the weights can spin as you roll the bar along the floor. Begin by kneeling on the floor, your hands shoulder width apart and placed on the bar. Roll the bar forward until you are in the kneeling push up position. This is the start of your superman roll. From here, engage your core (so important!!!) and slowly allow the barbell to roll forward, making sure you keep your body in alignment and your shoulders and hips are moving simultaneously. Once you have reached your sticking point, and you feel like you can't keep your body in the correct position anymore, roll the bar back to the starting position by engaging your shoulders and lats as the primary movers. Phew! Nice work, now try it again!! This is fantastic for firing the core while moving your upper body, which is consistent with a good swimming technique.

Single Leg Calf Raise: By now we've utilized all the muscle groups, and while we've hit upon the achilles and calves in other exercises, we haven't focused solely on them. The single calf raise has provided Jack with good functional and neuromuscular efficiency, strength and stability at the ankle, which in turn has helped avert the achilles tendonitis from popping up again. Standing on one leg, raise your heel off the ground and try to keep your weight through your big toe and avoiding any inversion or eversion with the foot. If you find that you are lacking strength through the ankle joint, and your ankle is rolling out to the side, stop, rest, and then attempt it again. This is harder than you think to do correctly.

While anyone is welcome to introduce these exercises into their program, bear in mind, they have been designed in a program for Jack and his training structure. You will more than likely have both similar and different reasons for needing to do resistance work. So, if you're looking for a personal trainer to help you design an appropriate program, make sure they are fully aware of injuries, goals, and needs. Remember, as a triathlete, resistance training needs to compliment the rest of your program. Good luck!