

Exercise of the month – Free Weight Squats

The squat is an awesome exercise that increases leg and butt strength. Not only does the squat build strength, but when performed correctly increases trunk strength and stability. There have been many “myths” about the risk of performing squats in the gym – these are unfounded when the exercise is performed with correct technique. I will not deny that people have been injured whilst performing a weighted squat, however, it is always due to excessive load and/or improper technique (coming from either nil or poor instruction). It is always recommended that you have your exercise technique analysed by a qualified professional to ensure your safety.

Before performing the squat, ensure that you have adequate flexibility to achieve correct positioning. Important muscles include calves, hamstrings, glutes, hip flexors, quadriceps and groin. You may also have to stretch your chest and shoulders to allow your hands to get into the correct position on the bar. If you are inflexible, invest 4-6 weeks of your time to improve prior to starting squats in your program – trust me, your back will thank you for it!

Technique (see photo's)

1. Rest the bar across your shoulder blades (not on your neck), and take a stance slightly wider than shoulder width, eyes will always be looking forward.
2. A perfect squat will have simultaneous bending of the hip, knee and ankle joints. This is very important as it ensures that the load is dispersed through all joints equally, thereby minimising the chance of oversteering any particular joint.
3. Throughout the descent, the bar should not transcend forward, rather straight down. You will feel that the weight is evenly centred through the feet as opposed to being on your toes or heels. The descent should feel natural – not forced, you should be able to maintain neutral posture throughout (keeping your chest up will help – along with not looking down).
4. The depth of your squat will be determined by your posture – any alteration to the curve of your spine (flattening, rounding, or arching) may lead to injury. So it is imperative that you stop your descent immediately prior to this point. Check that at this point your knees are in line with your third toe – not pointing in towards each other, or pointing outwards.
5. Once you have reached your individual “bottom position”, you start the ascent, again not allowing the weight to transfer to your heels or toes. Again, chest remains high to help with maintenance of neutral posture.
6. Your trunk should be braced – especially throughout the bottom half of the descent, and the first half of the ascent.
7. Breathing is important when squatting, you should breathe in upon descent, hold your breath through the bottom part of the movement, and exhale through pursed lips throughout the ascent.



Squat Start



Squat Mid Point



Squad Rear View



Squad End Point

Congratulations! You have just learned one of the most beneficial exercises that any gym has to offer. Not just in terms of increasing leg and butt strength, but also for strengthening and improving your posture.

For more information on improving your golf through physical interventions, our double CD "Better Body...Better Golf" will give you all the answers you need. We take you through the 10 most common swing faults and teach you how to assess yourself and which exercises are right to fix your individual faults. You can read more about this sensational product at www.thegolfathlete.com

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