

Advanced Training Information

For those of you who are training diligently and working to become an elite bowler-athlete, this month is dedicated to you. This month we bring you some advanced training information to enable you to take your training a step further. Nowhere else in our industry will you find this information, so we at BTM are giving you the most advanced and innovative sport science materials to enable you to become the greatest of bowler-athletes to ever dawn the Earth.

Another Look at Lumbar Extensions

The low back, often referred as the lumbar spine, is one of the most easily injured parts of the body and one of the most crucial to the successful deliver of a powerful and accurate shot. It is hard to strengthen, due to its awkward position on the body (can't be visually seen), and it often neglected by even the most dedicated of exercisers. The low back can only be strengthened through proper exercise dedicated to it and directed at it.

In sport science, we teach the low back extension to all beginner and intermediate exercisers who want to train their lumbar spine. In The Bowling-Specific Training Program (Diagram of the cover), we have outlined and demonstrated it for you. In case you don't have your copy handy, follow these simple instructions to perform this exercise. I suggest performing 1-2 sets of 8-12 repetitions of lumbar extensions 3 times a week. Train your lower back and it will not let you down in the time of need.

Ly prone on the floor (face down) and place your chin in your hands (Diagram 1). Clasp the hands under the chin as a base of support; however, avoid pulling with the hands on the chin. To begin this exercise, contract the low back and slowly raise the upper torso upward to your peak or highest point while keeping the lower abdominals and hips in contact with the floor (Diagram 2). Relax the legs and concentrate on the low back contacting and doing all the work. Hold the peak range of motion, or your highest point possible, for 1-2 seconds, and then return to the starting position.

This exercise requires direct contraction of the quadratus lumborum (low back muscle), hip extensors, glutes, and the hamstrings, all of which support and assist the low back while bowling and during everyday life. In my opinion, the lumbar extension is the best exercise for those with weak low backs. If there was ever any one exercise you should do for bowling, other than the lunge and forearm curls, it's the lumbar extension.

Question from a Reader

Please explain, which would be more beneficial to me, adding reps with the same weight or adding weight with lower reps?

A multi-faceted questions with an enormous and lengthy answer. However, to conserve time and energy, do BOTH.

There are several training principles that abound in sport science. Training principles differ from training philosophies so follow closely.

A training philosophy, differing from a training principle, is the driving force behind your actions. Training principles are the specifics of training, while training philosophies are the reasons and answers to why. The training philosophy is partially your motivation, as well as your path, your guideline, your framework, and your map to a new and improved bowler-athlete... a more functionally efficient bowler-athlete. That's what you are striving for, to become a better bowler-athlete.

A training philosophy is a fundamental belief in the need for, the practice of, and the benefits from training on sport performance. It is an athlete's mission and vision statement all rolled into one. Bowlers too need a personal training philosophy. Not a way to practice on the lanes, although that could be incorporated in the larger scheme of things, but a philosophy reasoning the need and justifying the act of bowling-specific training.

Though that didn't entirely answer your direct question, for the here and now, alternate your training so that you are performing both multiple sets with lesser strenuous resistance, and fewer sets with greater than normal resistance. As a beginner, and that you are by sheer definition, you will want to start rather subtly, to avoid Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness (DOMS) as much as possible, which is one of the leading causes of disengagement during the first 6 months of a training program.

I would suggest NOT pushing yourself, no matter what you do, for the first 6-8 weeks. You must allow your body to acclimate to the training, to the new movements, to the change in your overall daily schedule. That acclimation will reduce your risk of injury, properly prepare your body and mind for more serious training, greatly reduce any DOMS you may experience, and provide subtle increases in your physical and functional fitness. Jumping into a program will only kill you and greatly reduce your chances of maintaining your frequency of engagement over the long haul.

Why One Set of Training?

There are literally dozens of training principles available to athletes and active exercisers. Some of them would be: Rest-Pause, Super-Setting, Tri-Setting, Push-Pull, Pre-Exhaust, Muscular Endurance, Strength-Training, Pyramiding, Drop Sets, etc. The most common and most frequently used training principle to teach a beginner or intermediate exercisers is the Pyramid Set Scheme. In The Bowling-Specific Training Program, that principle is what you are performing. As you advance as an exerciser, you might eventually learn another training principle or two switching back and forth.

The Strength-Training Principle requires only one set of training to failure. When considering teaching bowlers how to train in the gym, it is best to consider time constraints, learning capacities, accessibility, and several other factors. Beyond those, there has been a tremendous amount of sport science research that has proven single set Strength-Training is as equally effective at building strength as Pyramid Training. Therefore, why teach someone to do three sets of training, when one will suffice, if the training principle is performed correctly.

Performing Cardiovascular Training

Do it before your strength training. Use your cardiovascular training as a means to warm the body before the more strenuous resistance training. I would encourage you to slowly continue to increase your time on the bike to work the cardiovascular system and to exercise your legs, since you have been restricted to do so with resistance equipment. You do want to improve your legs and back, so one way you can partially achieve that is through your cycling. Though it is not a direct strength or resistance training exercise, cycling works the legs and the cardiovascular system simultaneously.

Rest vs. Over-Training

Over-training happens to many serious athletes in many many sports. It happens to recreational exercisers who train virtually everyday. In a simple nutshell, if you trained every day, you would be over-training and fatiguing the body beyond repair, a form of Over-use syndrome. However, bowling-specific training only requires you to train 3 days a week alternating every other day. If you train on alternate days, then you would be allowing for enough rest and recuperation to suffice for the next training session. This assumes you eat healthy, rest healthy or enough, and don't party or do other things to inhibit your daily bodily functions.

Muscle Soreness

Regular muscle soreness is caused by the newness of the training. Your body will acclimate in a week or two, and then the soreness should subside. Beginning your training though, go slow, be cautious of your form, and don't overly push yourself these first few weeks. Ease into the training and program, then when you are fully acclimated, you can really start to push yourself.

The next couple months will include information on training at home, real life examples of professional bowlers who training regularly, and a word or two more on tendonitis.

See you then.