

# Core Training

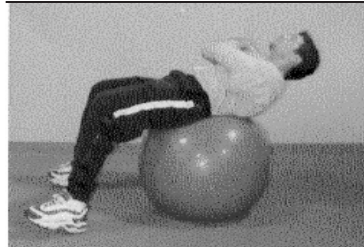
How can you get your players to be faster or improve their balance? How can you help them develop more power in their shots? How can they improve their lateral movement and ability to change directions quickly? If these are areas you would like your players to improve then this article is for you.

There is an area that your players are probably neglecting to train. This area is the foundation for all of the movements described above as well as most other movements, whether they are sport specific or everyday activities. This region is known as the core and is made up of the abdominal and lower back muscles. The core is basically the body's center of power and is a link to all the other major muscle groups. The only problem is that more often than not, it is a weak link.

Most people neglect to train their abdominals and lower back or do so incorrectly or inefficiently. A strong center of power should be the base of any training program. This does not mean that everyone should do 500 sit-ups every day. The abdominals can be trained in a short amount of time if the correct exercises are used. One of the best ways to work the muscles of the abdomen and the low back is with the use of Swiss balls. Swiss balls are large rubber balls that are great as a training device because they are not stable the way a bench or a seat is. Anytime you sit, lay, or lean on the ball, your stabilization muscles are automatically recruited.

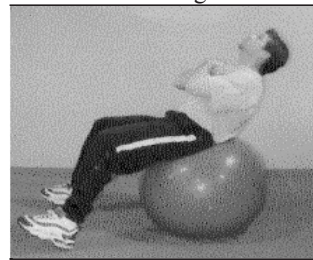
An exercise you can easily perform on the ball that is great for your abs is crunches. The exercise begins by simply sitting on the ball. (notice that sitting on the ball naturally places you in a correct sitting posture.) Place both feet flat on the floor in front of you. Your knees should be bent at an angle of about 90 degrees or just as they would if you were sitting in a

chair. By slowly leaning back and walking your feet forward you can roll the ball so that it is positioned somewhere between your hips and your shoulders.



Your knees should remain at 90 degrees. The beginner should choose a position with the ball closer to their shoulders while the more advanced movement has the ball closer to the hips. Once the ball is in the correct position you are ready to do the exercise.

Cross your arms and tuck your chin to your chest. Slowly curl your body forward so that your shoulders are moving in the general direction of your waist. You should feel your abdominal muscles tighten as you come farther forward.



When you have reached the point where your abs are maximally contracted slowly lower your shoulders and return them to the starting position. Repeat this movement a total of 10 repetitions. Complete two more sets of ten reps on the ball.

Another good core exercise can be done using just a bench and a stick. You should position yourself on the bench as shown in the photo. A strap that secures you to the bench around your waist is helpful in keeping you from sliding off the bench.



Grasp the stick with both hands and fully extend your arms above your head. Have a partner give resistance as you pull the stick toward your waist. Your arms should remain extended with a slight bend at the elbows. Most of the force will be supplied by your arms while your abs will be

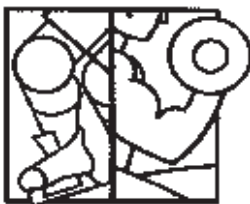
assisting by contracting isometrically. You should continue to pull the stick until your hands are above



your chest. At this point return your hands to the starting position by reversing them through the same path you just pulled them through. Continue this for 10-15 repetitions. Try this for a few more sets with your partner varying the resistance for each set.

*This article was contributed by physical therapist John Czarnicki of "The Training Room", a fitness center and physical therapy clinic specializing in training hockey players.*

*"The Training Room" is the off-ice training and rehabilitation facility of the two-time Stanley Cup Champion Detroit Red Wings.*



**THE  
TRAINING  
ROOM**

1819 E. Big Beaver Rd.  
Troy, Michigan  
(248) 619-1733