

By Joseph A. Arangio, M.S., C.S.C.S.

Pigskin Workout

Master these 8 football-specific moves to improve power and quickness

Autumn means cool nights, falling leaves and, well, pickup football. When it's time to step away from the big-screen TV, dust off the vintage cleats, and put your money where your mouth is, most gym-fit armchair quarterbacks are an Ickey Shuffle away from a preventable joint injury. Reason is, most guys are not prepared for the explosive nature of a straight-ahead sprint, let alone a "friendly" game of pigskin. But if your opponents live by the mantra: Second place is the first loser—you better be ready.

Many popular bodybuilding exercises will do little good to maximize your performance on the field. (Particularly when you're trying to fend off a bone-crushing tackle from an overzealous opponent, "Hey man, gasp, it's only a game.") So skip the 45-minute arm workout, Popeye. Instead, do this four-week (no more than twice per week) power program to build the agility, reflexes and explosiveness you need to silence the trash-talkers and hold your own on the turf.

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CORE

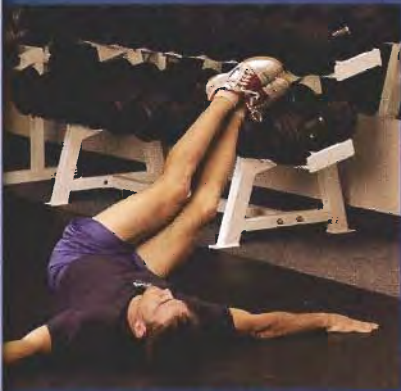
Upper thighs, abdomen and low back are collectively referred to as the body's core. A strong and stable core is essential for the rapid change-of-direction critical to most sports. In other words, mere floor crunches won't cut it. A solid strength foundation will help you perform the tackle-breaking power exercises featured below. Do three core circuits; that is complete 20 reps of each exercise without a break. Rest 45 seconds between each circuit

JUMP TRAINING

To ready your football muscles for the rapid acceleration, deceleration and change-of-direction essential for a Pro Bowl performance, you need to leave the ground, says Colin B. Hoobler, M.P.T., M.S., owner of C.H. Physical Therapy and Personal Training in Portland, Oregon. Jump training, or plyometrics, is the structured and progressive training style proven to help you to school the neighborhood sandlot football wannabees. Due to the aggressive yet effective nature of this style of exercise, use caution. Do only three sets of four reps of each move and rest for 90 seconds between sets. Any more plyometric training may lead to an overuse injury.

TOTAL BODY

Create a powerful physique by focusing on exercises that involve many muscle groups, not just the ones that look good in a tank top. Forget about heavy weights and concentrate on speed of movement here. Your goal is to move the bar as quickly as possible. Perform three sets of four explosive repetitions, resting for three minutes between sets to ensure maximal recovery.



SUPINE TRUNK ROTATION



MEDICINE BALL STANDING TRUNK ROTATION



STABILITY BALL PRONE HIP EXTENSION



SQUAT JUMP



BOX JUMP



SINGLE-LEG STRIDE JUMP



BARBELL CLEAN FROM FLOOR



BARBELL STANDING PUSH PRESS

