

Distance Running – Core & Pelvic Stability

Originally published 27 July 2020 · fatchfitness.com



If you are capable of any form of running >40 yrs of age, then this is an excellent way of maintaining quality bone density and a high level of aerobic conditioning.

As outlined in an earlier article on training and [BONE DENSITY](#) - your body needs regular impacts to maximise bone density and running is a great way of generating these impacts and associated bone growth.

Hip Flexors & Anterior Pelvic Tilt

One challenge often seen with ultra distance athletes, particularly those athletes whom spend the majority of their time running with little other conditioning activities, is the development of a series of imbalances specifically through the core/pelvic region that can lead to the development of chronic issues over time.

I know I bang on about the hip flexors a lot in my blogs but particularly in ultra distance running, the hip flexors get a huge workout during training and the many km covered each week and as such it is very easy for the pelvis to quickly get out of alignment if there isn't the concomitant focus on developing the appropriate supporting pelvic musculature.



In particular, over developed hip flexors combined with under developed gluteals (typical of the ultra distance athlete) is a recipe for excessive Anterior Pelvic Tilt and all the associated issues with this pelvic position (excessive loading on the lower back, poorly developed abdominal muscles, etc).

I would strongly suggest that all distance athletes ensure that they have well developed core muscles that ensure that they are able to hold a neutral pelvic tilt which will ensure a more efficient stride (an Anterior Pelvic Tilt can reduce stride length) as well as deloading the lower back from the many 1000's of steps taken each year.

My go to core exercises that would apply to the ultra distance athlete include:

1. Reach for the Sky Situps
2. Extended reach for the sky swiss ball situps
3. Active Plank

These exercises maximise core strength whilst demphasising the use of the hip flexors.



See a recent [VLOG](#) clip for examples on how to perform each of these three exercises.

Strength@Range



This is a term I use for an athlete's ability to be strong away from their body. As an example, the ability to perform long stride lunges or walk up steep steps are examples of strength@range.

Unfortunately, as we age our strength@range decreases (largely due to the "use it or lose it" principle) – we just don't train outside a limited range with most of our activities.

Distance runners also can suffer from this deficit as distance running by its nature is quite a restricted strength@range activity.

The decrease in this attribute then starts to affect aspects of performance (decreased ability to maintain a decent stride during ascents) as well as an overall general loss of function as it becomes increasingly difficult to step up any height or walk up stairs without having issues with stability and control.

As per the exercise mentioned above, I would incorporate long walking strides into your routine weekly as this will not only improve your strength@range, it will also help regain some gluteal strength as well as maintain good knee integrity (as the knee is being taken through a larger range than what it is exposed to during running).

Gluteus Medius

Apart from a loss of Gluteus maximum strength, the distance athlete can start to lose Gluteus medius strength and this can result in a knee misalignment and the onset of tendon issues in this joint if the athlete isn't careful.



What can happen in this instance is that the athlete is unable to maintain a neutral femur at the point of ground contact resulting in an inward rotation (also called a valgus). This places the knee joint at a significant disadvantaged angle and can quickly result in inflammation resulting in a cessation of running.

There are many exercises that are good for training this muscle group – just by performing the above lunges or squats with a focus on keeping the knee aligned will begin to train the glut medius to function appropriately.

-
-
-

Additional exercises that could be incorporated to target the gluteus medius include:

1. Leg abduction with band (lying)



As the title suggests, you lie on your side, band around your thighs (either above or below your knee), keeping one leg on the ground, you try to lift your knee away (externally rotating your leg) which activates your gluteus medius.

-

2. fire Hydrants



Start on all 4's. Keeping your hips fixed, try to lift one leg directly out to the side (with knee at 90°). This is a strong gluteus medius exercise.

.

3. Band Walks



The band can be anywhere from mid thigh to the ankles.

Goal is to take steps (forward, backward or on the spot) and as you lift your leg off the ground don't let the band pull your leg to the centre (using your gluteus medius muscle to resist this movement).

SUMMARY:

If you are an active >40 yr old runner – well done on keeping up a high level of physical functionality.

Ensure that you don't ignore the importance of a strong and functional core (torso) which will maximise your capacity to continue enjoying this activity for many years to come.

By spending a little time each week working on core & gluteals, you will maximise performance and minimise the potential for overuse when clocking up a lot of km each week.

© Fatch Fitness. More articles and videos at fatchfitness.com