

Squat and Deadlift Variations

By Martyn Girvan

When you have limited resources you are often forced to be creative and find new ways or variations of how to do things. Being in Australia we are far from everywhere. The internet has helped with a lot of sharing of information but often you are left to put your own slant on things.

Here are a few ideas that you may or may have not seen. These are variations on exercises that I have had success with. They have contributed to developing greater totals for most that I worked with. If anything, give these a try for some variation and hopefully you should see some progress.

EXERCISES FOR THE SQUAT AND DEADLIFT:

THE TWO BAR GOOD MORNING:

This is a variation of a standard good morning. It can be done with a close or wide stance. The difference here is that the second bar held in chains will swing away from the body during the eccentric phase of the movement. As the distance of the bar changes, so does the loading pattern. The cool thing with this exercise is that you can vary how you load the bar. You can load both the top and bottom bars. Also the top bar can be substituted with a safety squat bar and you can use any combination of chains and bands. I have had weight and bands on the top bar as well as chain and bar weight on the bottom bar.



It is important in the initial set up that you adjust the chain to have the bottom bar resting on the upper to mid thigh region. I have seen the mistake of the bar slamming into the knees on the way up or worse still, hitting the nads. Take care with this setting up and start light. This really builds the erectors, hamstrings and glutes.



SIX WAY BAND SQUAT:

I came up with this one by accident. It was half way through doing a research paper on how bands can effect motor learning patterns while squatting. One of the participants hurt his back (not while squatting but doing some Brazilian man wrestling). I was struggling for participants in the first place so I could not afford to lose any. I had to come up with a way that he could still squat and have minimal spinal load. It was the downward compression while squatting is what was giving him the grief. Six weeks without putting a bar on his back, a max squat was done a nice pr was set. You can use this as an assistance exercise to build the squat or as a form of rehabilitation when suffering from back injury.

The set up for this one can be a little confusing, so here goes:

- Large bands are attached to the power rack and go around the hips.
- A mini is doubled around just below the knee.
- A small band is looped through the belt and goes under each foot.
- Two medium bands are placed on either foot and around the neck.

Forces are coming from all directions; this will show up where your weaknesses may lie. These are normally done for reps but what has also worked well is to do these for time. That is do three reps every within 10 seconds and rest for the remaining period. If you last for more than a couple of minutes you are doing well. This is a great way to increase work capacity or use as an alternative to regular squatting if you don't want to put a bar on your back.



THE RAT TRAP:

This was first named the mouse trap. When a few people did this for the first time they got flung over not unlike being pinned in a mouse trap. Most of the guys who I got to perform these were a lot larger, so it became known as the rat trap (not a reflection on character).

This one of my favourites for the posterior chain. Not only does it build the erectors, hams and glutes but gives the traps a nice beating. This is best used when new guys come into the gym and tell you how much they can squat. It will teach the meaning of humility very quickly.



It is performed on the 45 degree hyper. A safety bar is used out of the monolift. Bands are used as resistance which I normally double through the cross supports of the monolift. The angle of band set up is important with the bands being angled at 45 degrees and not from the bottom of the monolift. Start with mini bands and work from there. The most I have seen used is the large blue bands by one of my training partners who is a mid 800 lb squatter.



EXERCISES FOR THE BENCH PRESS:

BAR OFF SET:

This is a great exercise to help build stability when pressing and prevent injuries. It works the lats and rotator cuff muscles. The trick to this movement is to start with the bar over the belly. Transfer the weight to the side to the point where you feel it won't come back, when you do the exercise you will know what I mean. It is important to move the bar without rolling your body. This will ensure that most of the load is taken by the lats and rotators.



PLATE CABLE ROW:

This is a great exercise that builds the lats and upper back. Hook up a plate so that a small bar placed through the hole to hold the plate in place.



You will have to hold the weight of the plate as well as having the resistance of the cable weight stack. Therefore you have forces working against you on the downward vertical as well as horizontally against the weight stack.



THE BRO ROW:

This exercise was introduced to me by one of my training partners, Shaun Bostock (he has 600 lb bench). Shaun is a kiwi (New Zealander) so he calls everyone 'bro'. So the name stuck. It is a variation of a face pull but done on a lat machine. The start of the motion is performed by pulling the bar to the top of the head.



Then rotate the bar backwards so that the arms finish in the upright position. This builds the traps, upper back and rear delts. This is one exercise that has assisted with improving stability while bench pressing.



CONCLUSION:

With all of these exercises I would suggest to use common sense and start light. The potential for injury on these can be quite high if caution is not taken. Most of the squat/ deadlift exercises can be used as a maximal effort exercise but I have found that they have been more effective when used for more repetitions. These can be thrown in to add some variation in your training schedule or used specifically to target weak areas. Give them a try for a few weeks and see what you think.

MARTYN GIRVAN

www.elitesportsperformance.com.au

Martyn has a degree in Exercise Science, also a Degree in Psychology. He currently works as a strength coach for an AFL team in Australia and innovates with odd powerlifting on his website -www.elitesportsperformance.com.au . Check it out!