



## Strength Training Tips

### Lee McDonald

When it comes to the weight room, keeping your core muscle groups conditioned is important. Your quadriceps, glutes (buttocks), hip flexors, groin and abdominals must be strong yet flexible. The focus of any strength and conditioning program for kickers and punters should be on building a strong core power area while increasing balance and flexibility. Start with less weight that allows you to focus on perfecting your technique. *Then*, increase the weight. Finally, your ability to squat 350lbs. has nothing to do with kicking or punting a football! Do not get caught up in competing with a linebacker or lineman to see how much weight you can lift. Kickers and punters need to focus on less weight and more repetitions.

Remember to vary your routine from time to time to prevent a plateau effect and be sure to stretch before every workout. Also give your body the time it needs for rest and recuperation between workouts. Note that your biggest strength gains should be made in the off-season (January through June) while the pre-season (July and August) and in-season (September through December) are for strength maintenance. Stay focused and keep an intense pace during your workouts and remember that success is earned in the off-season! *Please note that the following exercises should be done under the direct supervision of a professional strength coach at all times.*

***Front Squats (Upper and Lower Legs - 3 Sets of 10):*** Similar to the back squats only the bar is placed in front of you, just above the chest. Fold your arms across your chest and the bar to help keep your balance and the bar in place. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, your chest and buttocks out, and a slight bend in your knees. Slowly descend by pushing your hips back and flexing at your hip and knee joints, going down until your thighs are parallel to the ground. *TIP:* Use less weight for the front squats and focus on improving your balance.



***Hip Flexor Squats (Hip Flexors & Quads - 2 Sets of 6 Each Leg):*** Place your right leg on a bench behind you with your left foot firmly on the ground. Lower your hips until left thigh is parallel to the ground. Rise After a prescribed number of reps, repeat exercise with opposite leg. *TIP:* In the down position, drive your heels into the ground and keep your abdominals and glutes tight.



***Split Squats (Upper and Lower Legs – 2 Sets of 6 Each Leg):*** Similar to the back squat only your legs are split. Position the bar on your lower neck area and keep your focus up and out in front of you. Grip the bar close to shoulder width with your elbows pushed up and in. Stand with your feet split apart, your chest and buttocks out, and a slight bend in your knees. Slowly descend until your lead thigh is parallel to the ground. Raise up and after a prescribed number of reps, repeat exercise with the opposite leg in front. *TIP:* Your lead leg should not pass your toes.



***Squat Holds (Upper and Lower Legs – 2 Sets of 10):*** Position your feet shoulder width apart and lower your body until your thighs are parallel to the ground. Hold this position for two seconds. In the down position drive your heels into the ground and keep your abdominals and glutes as tight as possible. This exercise can also be done with a physio ball against a wall. ***TIP:*** If the exercise becomes too difficult, stand up and reposition yourself.



***Ball Leg Curl (Hamstrings – 2 Sets of 10):*** Place your feet on top of a physio ball. Keep your upper back on the floor, raise your hips and mid-section off the ground. Drive your hips up and roll the ball in towards your body while keeping your feet on the ball. ***TIP:*** Make sure your feet stay firmly on the ball while your hips must move up and back before you curl the ball towards your body.



**Ball Hip Extension (Hip Flexors – 2 Sets of 10):** Place your feet flat on top of a physio ball. Lying on your back with your legs at a 90-degree angle, drive your hips up. Lower your body to the starting position and repeat. *TIP:* Keep your feet firmly on the ball, which should remain close to your body.



**Bridges (Body Core / Legs – 2 Sets of 10):** Put your upper back on a physio ball with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Keep your hands out at your side for balance and extend one leg so that it is parallel to the ground. Hold for a 2 count and bring your leg back to the starting position. Repeat the same movement with the other leg. *TIP:* When extending your leg, keep your core and glutes tight.



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