

Race Walk Clinic Notes - 6/12/2010

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Topic: Using & Developing Your Glutes for Faster Walking

Your glutes, the muscles on & around your hips & butt, are the keys to developing powerful walking, avoiding fatigue and eliminating injuries caused by incorrect movements or repetitive stress. This area is the engine for all movement patterns. Using it properly to take the strain off of the quads (front of the leg), knees, adductors (groin), abductors (it band) & hamstrings (back of leg) will make your walking a more pleasurable experience. The purpose of this clinic is to give you some tools to use in your training which can build stronger, more efficient muscles and increase your performance on the track & the roads.

Teaching cues for using your glutes:

1. Toe up
2. Squeeze your cheek

Toe Up – This action, when initiated, makes the glutes react and reduces strain on the hamstrings. It “loads the spring” that is your leg and allows you to create maximum force upon contact that release it behind you to propel you forward, not upward.

Squeeze your cheek – Squeezing your “cheek” at contact with the ground will further develop the correct “motor pattern” for walking. This means you will be training your glutes to do the work that is often being done by your hamstrings, which then leads to injuries. Additionally, this will make your legs move faster from front to back which equals faster walking.

Development exercises:

1. Multi-planar Lunges
2. Deep Squats
3. Stiff-legged Walking
4. Clamshells

Multi-planar Lunges – These are lunges done in the 3 planes of movement. They will use all of your core, glute & leg muscles to do properly and help with balance & coordination. This is done in 3 parts: to the front, to the side, & diagonally backwards. Good posture is a requirement.

Deep Squats – These are helpful in opening up your hips & knees to create strength & flexibility throughout a complete range of motion. You are encouraged to hold onto something stable while doing them. Good posture is a requirement.

Stiff-legged Walking – This will work on the teaching cues from earlier. Take small steps and feel like you are almost bouncing. Good posture is a requirement.

Clamshells – This exercise will strengthen the outside of your hips and help avoid the hip swaying motion that everyone mocks us with. This motion also slows walking down significantly. To perform this, lay on one side completely flat. Good posture is a requirement. Bend the top leg @ the knee so your foot comes up to just below the other knee. You will now lift and lower your top knee by using the muscles on the outside of your hip. The foot should stay close to the bottom leg & only act like a pivot point.