

# EXERCISES TO INCORPORATE INTO YOUR SUMMER TRAINING

With the help of Darryl Nelson (USA Hockey's National Team Development Program strength and conditioning coach) and Brian Sipotz (owner, Advantage Strength), MiHockey has compiled a list of eight drills that are essential for your summer conditioning program.



## SUITCASE CARRY

The suitcase carry is an easy exercise to set up for. Take a heavy weight (dumbbell, kettlebell, a packed suitcase, etc.) in one hand and, while standing upright and tall, walk a certain length and then make the return walk with the weight in the other hand to work both sides.

"Picture yourself walking through the airport, carrying a suitcase on one side. Basically, what we're looking for there is to stay nice and tall, even though you have a heavy weight on one side. What that's gonna do for you is number one, you're using your core as it should be used... The function of the core is actually to keep you tall, so we're staying nice and tall with weight on one side and it's almost like a walking version of the side plank... You're working on your hand strength, as well, so you're gonna feel a lot of work on one side of your body. The way we do it is, you'll walk a certain length with the weight in one hand, switch up your hands and come back with the weight in the other hand." - **SIPOTZ**

## SINGLE-LEG SQUAT

Standing on an elevated platform with your hands out in front of you, squat down on one leg to a 90-degree angle and come back up. Repeat. To add load, you can grab a kettlebell in each hand or hold a dumbbell with both hands. There are other variations that can be done.

*Photos by Michael Caples/MiHockey*

"When we run or skate, we're pushing with one leg at a time, so all of our squatting is done single extremity, whether it's a split squat, one-leg squat... I really like the one-leg squats, too, because without the other foot providing any support, it really requires a lot of hip and core stability and strength. One-leg squats are a must-have in your training." - **NELSON**

"Another version of the one-leg squat, and this is actually one that's used quite a bit because you can add a significant amount of load to it, if you get a player or athlete that's strong enough to do a single-leg squat, you can put a certain amount of load on a single-leg squat, but if we take our back foot up and do what's called a rear-foot elevated split squat or also some people call it a Bulgarian split squat, you can add a significant amount of load. In the picture, we're holding a barbell and you can basically load that up if you get a player that's strong enough. It's a nice way to load the movement. It requires a little bit of balance and a lot of demand on the front leg, but it's something that can really get hips, knees and quads really strong in a hurry." - **SIPOTZ**



## STRAIGHT-LEG DEAD LIFT (SL-DL)

To perform a straight-leg dead lift, take a dumbbell or kettlebell with each hand and, while coming off one leg and letting it elevate behind you, bend over at the hip until your back is nearly parallel with the ground and stand back up. Despite the exercise being called a "straight-leg" dead lift, it is actually done with a slight knee bend to protect the lower back.

"It's teaching the athlete to keep their core tight and their spine straight and to move from their hip joint instead of

flexing and extending their lower back. Also, a great way to build strength in the posterior chain, so the hamstrings, your butt, into your back and your back to your shoulders, which is where unfortunately a lot of people are lacking because they spend so much time sitting down... The big catch there is you don't do it with your legs totally straight. You shouldn't be locked; you should have a small amount of knee bend. It'll protect your lower back." - **NELSON**



## PULL-UP

Using a pull-up bar (or even a high bar on a playground), with your palms facing away from you, grip the bar and use your back to lift your bodyweight up, bringing your chin up over the bar. Do not use momentum to swing yourself up.

"Pull-ups are extremely important, the back of your body is very important, but a lot of times, I think people forget about it because you can't see it. That kind of strength to have in your back, to have in your butt and the back of your legs is very important. So we use pull-ups with hands facing forward, but any kind of pulling pattern where you're pulling your head up toward the ceiling is gonna be really important for developing back strength, keeping great posture, your shoulders and that's something that a lot of times with screen time and school, a lot of athletes wind up rounding forward and they get in their gym class and they do a bench press on top of that... Back strength is actually a huge factor in shooting. We want to make sure we're balanced back there, so for every push we do, we're gonna do one pulling exercise and pull-ups are great for that." - **SIPOTZ**

## STABILITY-BALL LEG CURL (seen on page 15, top left)

Laying down on your back with your arms out at your sides, place your feet up on a stability/exercise ball in front of you. With your butt elevated, use your hamstrings and glutes to curl the ball inward toward your body before



extending the ball back out.

“Whenever we do any of our leg curl type exercises, try to avoid the weight machine-based leg curl where you’re laying on the bench face down, two fold there: one is people tend to arch their back and use their hip flexors when they’re laying face down, which is the opposite of what we want to happen and two, your leg faces down, your legs your glutes don’t have to fire, so if you lay on your back and face the ceiling when you do your leg curls, glutes have to fire to extend your hips and then your hamstrings flex and extend your knee joint, and that’s really important.” - **NELSON**

## TRX ROW

Lay between two handles of a TRX suspension system with your chest facing the ceiling and only your heels on the ground. Use your back to pull yourself up between the handles. Do not use your momentum to swing yourself up. This can also be done using a barbell on a Smith machine. “We use the TRX row because you can vary it to anyone’s ability level. The TRX row is sort of like a pull-up and in a pull-up you’re pulling your head up toward the ceiling. In a row, your chest is facing the ceiling, you’re pulling your chest up between the handles and what we look for there is just a nice complete pull so even at the top, you’re controlling it and pulling all the way up to the top. A lot of times what you’ll see is people who are weak in the back give one hard rip and their arms are relatively straight and just sort of fling themselves up in between their hands, but what we want to see is a full, nice even count, controlled movements here so you’re building strength throughout the full movement rather than giving one-hard pull and relying on momentum.” - **SIPOTZ**

## PUSH-UP

The key to a proper push-up is to keep your back flat while lowering and pushing off with control.

“The number one reason why we like push-ups is because, unlike bench press and other exercises, when you’re facing down, your core muscles also have to work, so you have to stabilize your lower back, so when you do push-ups, you want a flat lower back, no big scoop or arch where your hips are sagging to the floor, so it activates a lot more muscle fibers in your entire frame, from your shoulders all the way down to your core. It’s very easy to adapt push-ups to people that are stronger and more fit; elevate your feet, wear a weight vest, you can incorporate some sort of unstable surface, like hands on a medicine ball.” - **NELSON**

## STABILITY-BALL ROLL OUT

With the stability-ball roll out, start on the ground, upright on your knees with your hands on a stability ball in front of you. While keeping a nice, tall posture, lean forward and roll the ball outward as far as you can with your arms. Roll back in to return to the starting position.

“We’re looking to stay nice and tall and a cue we use a lot is, pretend you don’t have a hip joint, so you’re one piece from your shoulders straight down through your knees, so we’re looking to fall forward from your knees and push into the ball and bring yourself back up. Again, we’re looking at the core as a stabilizer because you’re gonna use your legs to produce power and you want all that power you’ve produced to come through a really solid core, so we’re gonna work on keeping that core nice and solid.” - **SIPOTZ**



Photos by Michael Caples/MiHockey