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Exercise bands are one of the most useful tools in our facility, the Institute of Human Performance (IHP). We use three major lines of equipment when it comes to resistance band and pulley training; the Free Motion line from Ground Zero, the Versa Pulley from Heart Rate, Inc. and the various Lifeline tubing products. We use these lines because of their dedicated efforts to designing state-of-the-art equipment and staying on the front of research and development.

The Free Motion Line offers a full line of resistance training equipment. Free-Motion offers the club owner a “machine-per-body-part” format that is familiar to all users and user friendly in terms of utilization and exercise execution. Due to the pulley design of most of the equipment, it also offers unlimited exercise capability to any trainer well versed with this training approach; one can perform over 30 different exercises from the chest unit alone.

The Versa Pulley works on the rotary inertia principle. In essence, this piece permits one to pull on it with maximum concentric effort, winding up like a yo-yo. As the flywheel spins, it winds up in the other direction providing the equal force on the eccentric contraction as the individual provided on the concentric portion of the exercise. The Versa Pulley provides various levels of resistance along the FORCE / VELOCITY spectrum by training light and fast movements, as well as heavy and slow movements – all with a turn of a knob.

Finally, the Lifeline tubing bands provide three basic products I designed for them; the All Purpose Band, the Travel Band, and the JC Quad. We have broken every single band product on the market within 3 months of use – all except the Lifeline. Some bands are still going after 6 years of work.

Below I will introduce a pure exercise band / pulley workout. The purpose of this article is not to suggest that band and pulleys are all you need for comprehensive training. It is to provide various exercises we use to train various body movements. You can perform the entire workout or substitute any of these exercises with more traditional exercises. Experiment with this program and don't be afraid to think outside the box.



LUNGES - Lower body

When working the lower body, lunges are one of my favorite exercises. They are particularly effective at training deceleration and changes in direction. Since the warm-up section focused on going forward, the lunges provide excellent deceleration training.

Instructions

Use a weightlifting belt (or other appropriate method of securing the band to the waist) or use handles and hold the resistance with the hands (shown in picture). Attach the band or pulley from to a low attachment point in front of you. This will add to the forward momentum and to the pull of gravity. Holding onto the handles, walk back to add appropriate resistance and space for forward lunging. Stand straight and take a long step forward. Keep the body erect and core tight. Land with a full foot and lower your body to a lunge position. Explode back to a standing position. Repeat with other foot. We perform anywhere from 3-7 sets X 20 reps of this exercise within a single workout.

Notes:

There are several types of lunges you can perform. One of our favorite advance versions is the reaching lunge. Follow the above instructions but reach forward as you lunge to the front.

Equipment

We use the Free-Motion low pull (i.e. any machine with a low pulley), the Versa Pulley or JC Bands for this exercise. If you don't have any of these items, use a low-pulley from any high quality pulley or cable system.



STANDING PULLS – Upper body

Standing pulls are an excellent way to work the total body while emphasizing the posterior back musculature. They provide balance and stability training while pulling. In real life we always pull from our feet, therefore, the standing pull is one of the most functional exercises we perform.

Instructions

Attach the band or pulley to a low or mid attachment point in front of you. We prefer the low orientation since it is the most functional. Holding onto the handles, walk back to add appropriate resistance and space for the pulling motion. Stand straight and keep the body erect and core tight. Keep knees slightly bent and center of gravity lower than normal. Pull the cables or pulley handles to you as if you were doing a cable row. You can use simultaneous or alternating pulling patterns. We perform anywhere from 3-7 sets X 20-40 reps of this exercise within a single workout.

Notes:

There are several types of pulls you can perform. You can even add a forward reach to the movement, creating a compound row. With the alternating version, you can add foot pivots to further focus on hip rotation. The single leg version of this exercise is also very challenging.

Equipment

We use the Free-Motion mid or low pull (i.e. any machine with a mid or low pulley), the Versa Pulley or heavy JC Bands for this exercise. If you don't have these items, use an adjustable with mid or low orientation from any high quality pulley or cable system.



STANDING PRESSES – Upper body

Standing presses are an excellent way to work the total body while emphasizing the pressing or pushing motion. This exercise provides balance and stability training while pushing forward. In real life we usually push from a standing position, therefore, the standing press is very functional.

Instructions

Attach the band or pulley behind you, from a low or mid attachment point. We prefer the mid orientation to emphasize the core and a forward lean position. However, the low orientation is effective for focusing on the pressing movement. Holding onto the handles, walk forward to add appropriate resistance and space for the pressing motion. Stand straight and keep the body erect and core tight. We prefer the staggered stance since it provides more stability to the line of pull. Press the cables or pulley handles as if you were doing a bench press. You can also use the alternating pushing pattern, which resembles more a punching action. We perform anywhere from 3-5 sets X 20-40 reps of this exercise within a single workout.

Notes:

There are several types of presses you can perform. You can even add a forward step to the movement, creating a thrusting action. The single leg version of this exercise is also very challenging.

Equipment

We use the Free-Motion mid or low pull (i.e. any machine with a mid or low pulley), the Versa Pulley or heavy JC Bands for this exercise. If you don't have these items, use any adjustable high quality pulley or cable system with mid or low orientation.



Standing PNF extension

Standing PNF extensions are an excellent multi-planar core exercise. This exercise emphasizes the extension mechanism, but with a rotational component. Sports, such as tennis and golf, use portions of this movement – making this exercise very popular with our athletes and recreational sport participants.

Instructions

Attach the band or pulley to your side, from a low attachment point. Holding onto one handle with both hands, walk away from the point of attachment to add appropriate resistance and space for the extension movement. Stand straight and keep the body erect and core tight. We prefer the parallel stance since it provides more stability to the line of pull. Keep the arms straight and locked out in front of your chest. Rotate and flex down towards the point of the attachment, reaching down to load the body. Use a foot pivot on the outside leg during the downward flexion and rotation. This will allow maximum utilization of the entire body. Rotate and extend away from the point of attachment, keeping your arms locked out and in front of your chest at all times. Pivot on the inside foot as you rotated away from the resistance (see picture). We perform anywhere from 3-5 sets X 20-40 reps of this exercise within a single workout.

Notes:

You can also perform the opposite version of this exercise to train rotation and flexion. Use a high orientation of pull and chop downward as you rotate.

Equipment

We use the Free-Motion low pull (i.e. any machine with a low pulley), the Versa Pulley or heavy JC Bands for this exercise. If you don't have either these items, use an adjustable with mid or low orientation from any high quality pulley or cable system.



Standing ABC Crunch

Standing ABC Crunches offer excellent flexion training for the front of the body, while addressing flexibility of the posterior chain. The ABC pattern provides multi-planar training, especially for the hips.

Instructions

Attach the band or pulley in front of you, from a mid or high attachment point. Holding on the handles, walk away from the point of attachment to add appropriate resistance and space for the crunch movement.

Stand straight and keep the body erect and core tight. We prefer the parallel stance since it provides more stability for the rotational patterns of the ABC.

Keep the arms straight and locked out in front of you – at shoulder level.

Flex down as if performing a crunch while pulling down and in, until the band touches the shoulders. Come back up to the standing position. This is the “C” pattern.

For the “A” and “B” patterns, flex down as if performing a crunch while rotating and pivoting the foot on the opposite side of the crunch (see picture). This will bring the bands to the outside of the planted leg. Come back to the standing position and perform to the other side.

The foot pivots during the rotation and flexion really target the hips.

We perform anywhere from 3-5 sets X 15-30 reps of this exercise within a single workout.

Notes:

You can also perform the opposite version of this exercise to train rotation and extension. Use a low point of attachment - pulling and extending as you rotate. Use the same ABC pattern for multi-planar training.

Equipment

We use the Free-Motion mid or high pulley (i.e. any machine with a low pulley), the Versa Pulley or JC Bands for this exercise. If you don't have these items, use an adjustable with mid or high orientation from any high quality pulley or cable system.