

**Prevention is better than cure.** Performance Enhancement Specialist Kristian Manietta is back this issue with a series of simple exercises which can be incorporated into your regular training routine. Performed regularly, they will reduce the likelihood of injury, increase mobility and efficiency of movement and improve your overall performance.

# GET MOBILE

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISTIAN MANIETTA 📷

The topic of mobility might not be as sexy as pumping out a solid session of time trials but it is a majorly overlooked aspect of our health and fitness.

A little attention to mobility could save you from niggling aches and pains all the way to full blown surgery, therefore keeping your hard earned cash in your bank account.

Mobility drills are a fantastic addition to your warm up and can be specific to the training session you are about to undertake. As a starting point I recommend following these drills daily for 21 days if possible.

In this article I will show a couple of movements for each of our mobility centric joints, which are our ankles, hips, thoracic spine and shoulders.

## ANKLES →

How your foot functions affects the rest of your biomechanics. Most people suffer from poor ankle mobility, which is really a lack of dorsiflexion. This means people have trouble decreasing the distance between the top of the foot and the shin. Think the opposite to putting your foot on the gas.

With limited dorsiflexion we transfer the load elsewhere. This means the tissue between the joints (calves) takes more of a beating and the next joint will be stressed more. As a result knee and even hip issues can develop from loss of mobility at the ankle joint.

It's pretty obvious that ankle mobility is crucial for triathletes and is needed across all three disciplines.

## CALVES



- Sit on the ground with the GRID positioned on your soleus (calf) about 7-10cm up from your ankle. Make sure your posture is open and your knee is extended. Place your opposite leg on top for a little more compression
- Now come up with the knee approx 2-4cm and then push back down, repeat 4 times then rotate foot in circles two times both directions
- While maintaining compression, rotate the leg inwards (toes/knee should be pointing inwards) repeat as above
- Finally rotate the leg outwards and repeat as above

## ANKLE MOBILISATION DRILL



- Stand in a split squat position facing a wall or pole. Push the knee of your front leg as far as possible and come back. You will feel the stretch in the front of your ankle
- Aim to keep the heel of the front foot on or close to the ground
- The position of your back leg doesn't matter, as the aim is to get a dynamic and functional range of motion in your front foot
- Do 10-15 reps per leg

## HIPS

Most of us sit way too much and this shortens our hip flexors and deactivates our once powerful glutes. These two areas can become both weak and tight and when this happens our lower back takes over and our lower back is meant for stability not mobility!

## WHY WE NEED IT

Injury fix or prevention aside (as if that's not a good enough reason) we will greatly improve the power we can generate when we are able to fully engage our posterior chain. So what does this mean in English? You will be faster, stronger and more powerful.

## QUADS



### SOFT TISSUE WORK

- Lying face down in a GI Joe (commando) position place the GRID a few centimetres up from the knee cap on the straight leg
- Incrementally roll up towards the hips by going 2 inches up, 1 inch back



### VMO

- In the same GI Joe position place the GRID under the bent leg just above the knee as pictured. Incrementally roll up towards the hip as per rolling the rectus femoris

## SQUAT TO STAND



- Stand with feet slightly wider than shoulder width and toes slightly turned out
- Push your hips back and bend down to grab your toes
- Now push your hips down and back and at the same time push your knees out over your toes as you descend into the deepest squat you can do
- Pause here, then extend both arms overhead drawing shoulders down and back
- Stand up and return to start position
- Repeat 10 times

## THORACIC SPINE →

Do you have shoulder pain, lower back or neck pain? Chances are they may be caused by a loss of thoracic spine mobility. Our thoracic spine or mid to upper back is meant to rotate, flex and extend while being highly mobile. When we lose mobility here due to our bike position or to sitting in a chair for long periods of time, we tend to twist, rotate and flex from our lumbar spine (lower back) instead and this can be bad news. Our lumbar spine is meant to resist excessive twisting so it can be a stable platform for power transfer.

This loss of mobility forces our bodies to move in ways not intended and this increases the chances of injury. Working on thoracic mobility will improve posture, technique, help you avoid lower back and neck injuries, prevent shoulder injuries and allow you to breathe better thus allowing for better performance.



### Thoracic Spine Mobilisation (mobility)

- Start with 2 x TP therapy massage balls in the TP2 bag or even tied off in a compression sock. Place them in the middle of your back (start of your ribs)
- Arch your back over the 2 TP Massage Balls or GRID
- Cross your arms over your chest and do 3 slow little crunches then with your arms beside your body slowly raise them over your head until you hit your end range
- Bring your arms back to your sides and repeat 3 times
- Roll up a few inches and repeat crunches and arm movements as above
- Continue this until you pass your scapulas (shoulder blades)

## 90-90 STRETCHES

- Lie on your left side with your right hip and knee flexed at 90°, your left leg straight and your left arm perpendicular to your body
- Rest your left leg on the GRID so you can't rotate at your lower back and place your right arm on top of your left arm
- Push your right leg into the GRID (this will stop rotation at lower back) while taking your right arm through range of motion reaching for the floor behind you
- Repeat 10 times per side



**TRIGGER POINT:** Performance Therapy rollers are like toothbrushes! Use them daily to prevent injuries and keep your muscle tissue in optimal condition. TP Rollers are available from [www.trispecific.com](http://www.trispecific.com)



## SHOULDERS →

Shoulders are the most complicated joints and have the greatest range of motion. This and modern day postural concerns lead to big opportunities for injury. I know a ton of triathletes who get rotator cuff problems, shoulder impingement, inflammation and loads of pain, and I have suffered from these myself. But with simple drills like those shown below you can keep those shoulders healthy and functioning.

Whether or not you have shoulder problems you should consider doing the drills on the following page. They can easily be worked into one of your swimming warm up routines.

## SOFT TISSUE WORK



### Pec Minor/Major

- Place a TP Massage Ball on your chest next to the armpit and below the collarbone
- Place the TP Ball in the back of your palm on the side of the body you are working first
- Use both hands and arms to apply pressure to the TP Ball
- Take slow deep breaths in and out to allow TP Ball to penetrate the muscle
- Rotate the TP Ball in small passive circles over the area for 30-60 seconds
- Repeat on the other side

## SHOULDER DISLOCATIONS



- For this exercise you will need a broomstick, thin PVC pipe or a mini band
- You'll feel a stretch in your chest. Keep going until the bar hits your back/hips
- Squeeze your shoulder blades and come back up
- Start with the widest grip possible. Switch to a narrow grip as your upper body mobility improves
- Keep your arms straight from start to finish. If you're unable to keep your elbows locked, widen your grip
- Squeeze your glutes to prevent hyperextension of your lower back which puts pressure on your vertebrae.
- Keep your chest up and shoulders back – make a big chest and keep it up, pull your shoulder blades back and down

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