

BALANCE Do What?

So you can balance standing on your head, can you? Can you really? Try it, do a headstand...it's a lot harder than you think! In sports, especially "team sports" balance is the least taught skill. Balance is taken for granted and assumed that we can all do it when called upon. Not so...it takes practice just like any other skill that is essential for optimal performance in your particular sport.

We are volleyball players, not gymnasts or circus acrobats...or are we? Well, we do take off and fly high in the air at times and in awkward positions. You may say that we overload one side or the other. We don't roll over and play dead for a treat, but we do hit the ground running (literally) and roll out of it. To some people it may look like a circus trick!

In the sport of volleyball we are required many times to play the ball outside our "midline"(the center of our body)and therefore create the need to stay balanced or controlled in order to properly "better the ball".

Practicing being "off balance" or creating an unbalanced situation is a great way to learn how to stay in control of ones body. Here are some exercises to help one become a "better-balanced athlete".

PARTNER MEDICINE BALL THROW ON BOSU:

One partner stands on the bosu ball, round side down keeping knees slightly bent to take pressure of the lower back. The other partner will stand on the floor a few feet away. The ball will start with the partner standing on the floor chest passing the medicine ball to the partner on the bosu. This catch and throw is repeated several times, maybe one set of 20 throws and switch. Each throw

needs to be different. For example, throw to the side, throw low at the feet, throw high in the air. Make it challenging....kind of like playing “king or queen of the hill”.

NOTE: For beginners, it may be advisable to start the exercise with just a volleyball, a basketball, a weighted setters volleyball and then work up to a medicine ball.

ONE LEGGED BOSU SQUAT WITH BENCH:

The athlete will start with one foot centered on the bosu , (round side up) and the other foot on the bench straight behind. Both knees will be bent. The athlete will descend into a squat and return to start position. To help balance, the arms should be held straight out in front of the athlete. When introducing this exercise, it may be beneficial to have a partner standing in front of the working athlete, with their palms up so that in case of loss balance the athlete can use the partners hands to regain composure and restart the exercise. Again this exercise can be done for time or in sets with reps.

PARTNER INCLINE SIT UP WITH MEDICINE BALL THROW

One athlete will start lying with their back on the incline sit up bench while the other will stand a few feet away. The ball will start with the athlete standing, throwing the ball to the athlete on the bench as they rise up into a sit up position. The working athlete should catch the medicine ball at the peak point of their sit up, bringing the ball back into their “midline” then chest passing the ball back to the standing athlete. This catch and throw will repeat as the standing athlete should challenge the working athlete by throwing the ball to the each side as well as throwing the ball high. Again, for beginners, it may be advisable to start the exercise with just a volleyball, a basketball, a weighted setters volleyball and then work up to a medicine ball.

STEP UPS WITH DUMBELL BICEP CURL AND SHOULDER PRESS:

Technique is everything! Starting weight will depend upon each individual, but start light. 5 to 10 lbs. will due. Start with one foot on top of bench, no more than 18 inches high, a dumbell in each hand down by the athletes side. If the athlete has the right foot on the bench it will remain on the bench for the duration of the exercise. Pushing off the left foot, the athlete will raise themselves on top of the bench curling the weights (bicep curl), then pressing the weights above their head (Shoulder press). The athlete will then return the weights to the curling position and finally to the starting point down by their side. A good introduction would be 20 reps per leg. Again this exercise can be done for time as in a circuit drill or in sets with reps.

A variation of this exercise would be to use only one dumbell at a time, overloading one side at a time.

STABILITY BALL A-Z:

Here is a fun little balancing exercise for the core! The athlete will place their forearms on top of the stability ball and their feet directly behind. Keeping the abdominals engaged or tight (make sure they still breath) using only the forearms, make the entire alphabet A through Z. It's a killer!!

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