

Three “Little-Known” Exercises To Make You As Strong As a Bull on the Wrestling Mat!



By Steve Preston

If you want to gain a strength advantage over your competition, and don't have a lot of fancy equipment, don't worry. Here are three tried and true “unique” strength training exercises that can help get you stronger for the mat – FAST!

1. Bottom Squats - Bottom squats are incredible for developing hips and gluteal strength. In laymen's terms, that would be working your rear-end. Ok, have a quick laugh, and then get to work. These are a perfect addition to your wrestling strength training routine. Here's what you do. With an Olympic barbell, you perform a regular full depth squat. This means you descend until the top of your thighs break parallel with the floor. Instead of standing straight up, you come up only half-way. You pause in the half-way up position, descend to below parallel, and repeat. I would throw them in about once or twice a month, to keep the muscles “confused”. This forces the muscles to respond by getting stronger. In fact, you might want to perform a regular barbell squat or machine squat during the first workout. The next workout you might perform a barbell or trap bar deadlift. The third workout might be a bottom squat. Just perform each exer-

cise with 100% intensity (with a spotter at all times) and seek to improve strength over successive workouts.

2. Negative-Only Chinups - This one is fantastic for developing the kind of upper body strength you need for the mat very quickly. Why? Because performing negative repetitions incorporates many more muscle fibers than the positive part of the repetition. In other words, you are 40% stronger lowering a weight than you are raising a weight. To apply this to chinups do the following: Grasp a chinning bar with a close, underhand grip. (Using this grip is much more effective than a wide grip for developing the latissimus dorsi muscle. The “lats” work with the biceps when you are performing a single or double-leg takedown.) By standing on a high bench or chair, hop up so that your chin is over the bar, and hold for 2 seconds. Slowly lower yourself under control until you reach a hanging position where the “lat” muscles are stretched. This lowering should take a good 8-10 seconds. Hop right back up to the starting position and again lower in 8-10 seconds. Repeat until it is impossible to lower with control. You may have to use additional weight around your waist if using body weight only gets too

easy. Keep an arch in the middle back area when performing to force the back muscles to work harder than the biceps.

3. Negative-Only Dips - Just as the last exercise works the back and biceps muscles hard, this one works the antagonistic (opposite) muscles to them. This one will get the chest, shoulders, and triceps stronger fast. To perform you lock out the arms and support yourself at the top on a dipping bar. Keep the chin tucked into the chest to force more work from the chest muscles, and less emphasis on the triceps. Lower until the chest is fully stretched. This will take 8-10 seconds. Repeat. When you can't lower in at least 6 seconds, the set is over. At this point take a much needed breather and get a drink.

Negative only training is very taxing on the body. I would do it for no more than three weeks at a time, about four times a year, to help push past a sticking point in your training. These three exercises can be performed by any wrestler. If a wrestler is young and hasn't reached physical maturity, perform the squats with bodyweight only. For older, more mature wrestlers, go for broke. If you aren't huffing and puffing, and can't wait to get out of the gym, you didn't work hard enough.

Discover the power of negative only training and watch your performances improve almost overnight.

Editor's Note: Steve Preston is a Sport Performance Specialist in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He has helped thousands of wrestlers, coaches, and parents improve mat performance with his high-intensity strength and conditioning methods, as well as his advanced nutritional techniques. For a FREE copy of Steve's e-book, [64 Strength, Conditioning, and Nutrition Tips for Wrestlers](http://www.wrestlingstrengthtips.com) go to www.wrestlingstrengthtips.com. For information on how to train with Steve online or in person go to www.wrestlingstrengthtips.com.



New York State Championships - 145 lbs. J.P. O'Conner over Phil Lombardo 11-4. Photo by Jack Stanboro.