

# WORK ON YOUR Weak spots

## 6 exercises to prepare for your best season yet

By Joan Scrivanich | Photos by Tom Kimmell

**T**o become a better, lifelong athlete, you need to ensure your body is strong enough and balanced enough to handle your training and racing load. When fatigued during a long or intense training session, your form will break down. Strength and corrective exercises not only improve fatigue resistance, but also help you swim, bike and run more efficiently, increase your strength and power and decrease the risk of injury.

Triathletes are typically weak in three areas: the shoulder stabilizers, the abdominal and back area and the glutes. Performing exercises

to correct these imbalances and strengthen your weak areas will have you on your way to your best season.

Here are six corrective exercises to add to your routine. Incorporate them into your training plan two to three times a week, performing 2 to 3 sets of 12 to 15 repetitions of each exercise. If you find your form beginning to break down, stop to recover rather than pushing through with bad form. As you get stronger, you'll be able to perform a full set with good form.

### GLUTES



Glute and hip strength plays a vital role in injury prevention. Weaknesses can result in knee, shin and ankle injuries. These muscles also play an important role in correct running form.

#### SINGLE-LEG BOX SQUAT WITH HIP HIKE

**How to do it:** Start by standing on the side of a plyo box or step with one leg hanging off. Perform a squat and at the top of the squat raise the hip of the hanging leg.

**Tip:** While performing the squat, maintain good form by keeping your chest up.

#### COMERFORD HIP COMPLEX

**How to do it:** Lie on your side with your knees bent. Begin with the clamshell by raising your top knee while keeping your feet together. Next, perform a reverse clamshell by keeping your knees together and raising your top foot. Then lift your top leg and tap the top foot to the bottom foot. Keeping the knees bent, bring the top leg back so that it is in line with the rest of your body and tap the top foot to the floor behind you.

**Tip:** A common mistake is twisting the body or hips back as you lift your knee or foot. Keep your hips stacked on top of each other and generate the movement by squeezing the glutes. How much you're able to lift your knee depends on your skeletal anatomy, so work with your own range of motion.



## SHOULDER STABILIZERS

The rotator cuff and scapular stabilizing muscles are responsible for stabilizing your shoulders. Strengthen these muscles to prevent the risk of overuse injuries in swimming.

### SCAPULAR PUSH-UP

**How to do it:** Start in a plank position with a tight core. Slowly push your shoulder blades apart by lifting your upper back toward the ceiling. Keep your arms straight and lower your back, bringing your shoulder blades back together. Release the exercise and return to the starting position.



### YTWL

**How to do it:** Start by lying on your stomach on a stability ball, keeping your core tight. Bring your arms forward in a Y position with your thumbs facing up and raise your arms by squeezing your shoulder blades together. Next, bring your arms out to form a T with your palms facing the ground and raise your arms by squeezing your shoulder blades together. For the W, bend your arms to form a W with your palms facing down and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Lastly, bend your elbows so that your hands hang down toward the ground and your upper arms are parallel to the ground forming an L. Twist your forearms forward so they are parallel to the ground.

**Tip:** While performing the Y, T and W, focus on generating the movement by squeezing your shoulder blades together.

## ABDOMINALS

Strengthening the abdominals and obliques helps with good form in both running and swimming.



### V-SIT TWIST

**How to do it:** Sit on the ground with your knees bent. Hold a medicine ball, raise your feet off the ground and lower your back slightly, making sure not to contact the ground. Twist side to side while tapping the medicine ball to the ground near your hip.

**Tip:** If you're having trouble staying balanced or keeping your feet off the ground, perform the exercise without weight and work your way up.

### STABILITY BALL SAW & CIRCLE

**How to do it:** Start in a plank position with your elbows on a stability ball, making sure to keep your core tight and body straight. Move your arms forward and backward in a sawing motion, then move your elbows in a circle to the right, then a circle to the left.

**Tip:** It's common, especially when fatigued or weak, to either raise or drop your hips in order to compensate, so pay close attention to keeping a straight body.



Thank you to elite triathletes **ELI HEMMING** and **JOHANNA GARTMAN** for demonstrating the exercises at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. **JOAN SCRIVANICH** is a USA Triathlon and USA Track & Field Certified Coach, Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist and owner of Rise Endurance LLC.