

Soccer Strength Conditioning Program

Soccer players are notorious for wanting to skip the strength training and just wanting to play with a ball. Stay motivated. **Keep the end goal in mind.** The commitment to strength training will go a long way towards your personal and team success.

In fact, the right kind of strength conditioning can turn an average soccer player into a truly superb athlete and a significantly better performer on the field.

The Benefits of Strength Training

- Increased speed and acceleration
- Improved agility - stopping, starting, turning and decelerating
- Greater ability to hold the ball up and resist challenges
- Increased jumping power to win more headers, score more goals and make more saves
- Reduced risk of injury both chronic and acute
- Superior kicking power – greater range of passing, more powerful shots
- More forceful tackles
- Less prone to injury
- Greater short-term endurance

This program is not just about lifting weights and muscle mass. That is bodybuilding. **You will be focusing on soccer specific strength training.** Furthermore, the progression of the program is important to peak performance. **You only need to do strength training 1-3 days a week.**

You will use 3 different techniques for strength conditioning: (1) Foundational (2) Maximal (3) Endurance Circuit

FOUNDATIONAL:

- To prepare the joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons for more intense work in subsequent phases
- To strengthen underused stabilizer muscles
- To balance the right and left side of the body
- To redress the balance between the flexors and extensors (soccer players, for example, are notorious for having over-developed quads from repetitive kicking actions (which may account for the prevalence of hamstring injuries in the game)).
- This phase should also heavily emphasize developing strength and power in the muscles of the trunk region.

Never skip the Foundational phase. This can lead to injury.

MAXIMAL strength conditioning is designed to increase overall strength to develop explosive power and strength endurance. It is important to think of maximal strength conditioning as a step towards better game performance. Don't get stuck in this phase. Bulk does not mean better soccer. Think of this phase in the strength training plan as a means to an end. **Becoming the best soccer player you can is not about how much weight you can lift, it's about how powerful you are and how well you can apply that level of power over and over again on the pitch.**

ENDURANCE CIRCUIT conditioning helps you tolerate fatigue. The higher the level of soccer you play the greater demand for strength endurance.

A higher number of repetitions with a lower weight is used to develop muscular endurance. Even more relevant to sports like soccer is lifting lighter loads for set periods of **time** rather than a set number of repetitions.

One of the best modalities for developing strength endurance is circuit training. Circuit training is simply a series of exercises performed consecutively – as opposed to performing several sets of one exercise before moving on to the next.

Weight lifting basics:

- Don't try to lift too much too soon.
- Perform a warm up consisting of light aerobic exercise and dynamic stretching before starting a strength training session.
- Lift with a smooth and even rhythm. Pause for a second at the top of the lift and then lower the weight in a controlled manner.
- Remember to breathe. Most people find it easiest to breathe out on the exertion or the actual lift and breathe in as the weight is lowered or returned to the starting position.
- Increase the weight gradually over time as the exercise becomes easier and easier. Once you can comfortably perform the set number or repetitions increase the weight by the smallest amount i.e. 2.5kg or 5lbs.
- For bodyweight exercises such as push ups and crunches increase the number of repetitions as the weight cannot be increased.
- Remember that although a strength program should get progressively harder, it does so in a series of peaks and troughs. Don't try to increase the weight every single session.
- Use a buddy/partner when using free weights.

Selecting the Correct Load/Weight to Lift

Developing maximal strength, strength endurance and explosive power requires different weights or loads to be selected. Load is often expressed as **repetition maximum** and is simply defined as "the most amount of weight you can lift for a set number of repetitions". For example, **one repetition maximum** (1-RM) is the most amount of weight you can lift once and no more. If you can lift a weight for ten repetitions and no more that is your **ten repetition maximum**.

To develop strength endurance you should aim to select weights that you can lift at least fifteen to twenty times. To develop **maximal strength** (see below) choose a weight that you can lift no more than five or six times or your **5-RM**. There are lots of ways to determine your one rep max. Always have a spotter when determining your one weight max. Better yet, work with a professional trainer or the weight lifting teacher at school. Here is a link to a web site that can help you determine your one rep max: http://www.webefit.com/Calculators/Calc_OneRepMax.html

FOUNDATIONAL STRENGTH: (FEBRUARY-MARCH / 8 WEEKS 2-3 sessions per week.)

Exercise	Load	Repetitions	Sets	Rest Interval
Dumbbell squats OR Lying leg presses	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Barbell bench presses OR Dumbbell bench presses	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Back extensions on ball	Bodyweight	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Dumbbell lunges	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Front pull downs	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Crunches	Bodyweight	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Dumbbell shoulder presses OR Military presses	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Standing machine calf raises	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Barbell upright rows	30-50% 1-RM	12-15	2-3	90 seconds
Side bridges	Bodyweight	10-30 seconds	2-3	90 seconds

Dumbbell Squats

- 1) Grasp dumbbells and let arms hang down at sides.
- 2) Start position: Stand with feet slightly wider than hip width apart. Knees should be slightly bent.
- 3) Lower body by flexing at the hips and knees. Upper body can flex forward at the hips slightly (-5°) during movement. Be sure to "sit back" so that knees stay over the feet.
- 4) Once thighs are parallel to floor, return to start position.
- 5) Remember to keep head and back straight in a neutral position - hyperextension or flexion may cause injury. Keep weight over the middle of foot and heel, not the toes.
- 6) DO NOT allow knees to go past the big toe or deviate laterally or medially throughout movement. Keep abdominals tight throughout exercise by drawing stomach in toward spine.



Lying Leg Presses

- 1) Sit in machine and place your legs on the foot plate about hip width apart.
- 2) Release the safety stops and band your knees towards your chest.
- 3) When your knees are at right angles, extend your knees until your legs are almost fully extended.



Barbell Bench Presses

- 1) Lie on back with head underneath bar, eyes aligned with bar, and feet flat on floor.
- 2) Position hands on bar slightly wider than shoulder width.
- 3) Start position: Lift bar off rack with bar directly overhead.
- 4) Lower bar to chest at the nipple-line. Press bar up to starting position.



Dumbbell Bench Presses

- 1) Sit in an upright position on a flat bench with a dumbbell in each hand. (You may rest each dumbbell on the corresponding thigh.)
- 2) Start position: Lie onto your back and bring the dumbbells to your shoulders. Press the dumbbells up directly above the chest with palms facing forward.
- 3) Lower the dumbbells keeping your forearms perpendicular to the floor and your hands aligned at the nipple line.
- 4) Let your upper arms go slightly past parallel to the floor and press the dumbbells up to the start position.



Dumbbell Lunges

- 1) Start position: Stand with feet hip width apart. Grasp dumbbells and hang arms down at sides.
- 2) Step forward 2-3 feet forming a 90° bend at the front hip and knee. DO NOT allow front knee to extend past the big toe.
- 3) Pushing off front foot, return to start position and repeat with the other leg.
- 4) Remember to keep head and back upright in a neutral position. Shoulders and hips should remain squared at all times.
- 5) Watch for proper knee alignment - do not let front knee extend past big toe or deviate laterally or medially. Back knee should not come in contact with floor.



Back Extensions on Ball

1. Lie face down on a stability ball positioned under your hips and your feet on the floor.
2. Hold a light weight within your crossed arms and held against your chest.
3. With your upper body parallel to your hips, hyperextend slowly and raise your shoulders up towards the ceiling.
4. You should only move a couple of inches and there is no need to forcefully hyperextend or extend past your bodies range of motion. You will only risk injury.
5. Return to the neutral or parallel position and repeat.



Front Pull Downs

- 1) Adjust seat or knee pad height so that knees are secured while seated.
- 2) Grasp bar with an overhand grip wider than shoulder width apart and sit with knees secured in pads.
- 3) Start position: Fully extend arms with elbows facing out with back straight (you may lean back at hips approximately 5-10°).
- 4) Pull bar down to upper chest area and squeeze shoulder blades together at end of movement.
- 5) Return to start position.
- 6) Remember to keep torso stationary throughout movement.



Dumbbell Lunges

- 1) Start position: Stand with feet hip width apart. Grasp dumbbells and hang arms down at sides.
- 2) Step forward 2-3 feet forming a 90° bend at the front hip and knee. DO NOT allow front knee to extend past the big toe.
- 3) Pushing off front foot, return to start position and repeat with the other leg.
- 4) Remember to keep head and back upright in a neutral position. Shoulders and hips should remain squared at all times.
- 5) Watch for proper knee alignment - do not let front knee extend past big toe or deviate laterally or medially. Back knee should not come in contact with floor.



Standing Military Presses

- 1) Stand with feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent.
- 2) Start position: Position barbell to ear level with an overhand grip (palms facing forward).
- 3) Press hands up above head keeping wrists over the elbows and arms moving parallel to body at all times.
- 4) Return to start position. Remember to keep back and head straight in a neutral position.



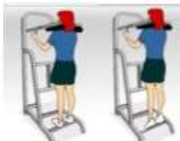
Front Pull Downs

- 1) Adjust seat or knee pad height so that knees are secured while seated.
- 2) Grasp bar with an overhand grip wider than shoulder width apart and sit with knees secured in pads.
- 3) Start position: Fully extend arms with elbows facing out with back straight (you may lean back at hips approximately 5-10°).
- 4) Pull bar down to upper chest area and squeeze shoulder blades together at end of movement.
- 5) Return to start position.
- 6) Remember to keep torso stationary throughout movement.



Standing Machine Calf Raises

- 1) Step into provided shoulder pads. Adjust lever arm so that plates do not touch when lowering the weight.
- 2) Stand with feet hip width apart on the balls of feet with heels hanging over edge. Toes should be pointing forward.
- 3) Contract calves by pushing off balls of feet to raise heels up in air (standing on toes)
- 4) Lower heels and repeat.
- 5) Remember to keep knees slightly bent throughout movement to prevent any knee strain. Adjust weight load accordingly.



Barbell Upright Rows

- 1) Stand with feet shoulder width apart
- 2) Start position: Grasp barbell with an overhand grip (palms down). Arms should hang down to front with elbows slightly bent.
- 3) Raise barbell by pulling elbows towards the ceiling and pull barbell to chest level.
- 4) Return to start position.
- 5) Remember to keep back and head straight in a neutral position.



Side Bridges

Start on your side and press up with your right arm. Form a bridge with your arm extended and hold for 10-30 seconds. Repeat other side.



MAXIMAL STRENGTH: (APRIL-MAY / 8 WEEKS 2-3 sessions per week.)

Exercise	Load	Repetitions	Sets	Rest Interval
Barbell squats OR 45% Leg Presses	75-85% 1-RM	6-8	2-3	3-6 minutes
Barbell bench presses OR Dumbbell bench presses	75-85% 1-RM	6-8	2-3	3-6 minutes
Lying hamstring curls*	70-75% 1-RM	8-10	2-3	3-6 minutes
Front pull downs	75-85% 1-RM	6-8	2-3	3-6 minutes
Seated knee extensions	75-85% 1-RM	6-8	2-3	3-6 minutes
Seated dumbbell shoulder presses	75-85% 1-RM	6-8	2-3	3-6 minutes
Standing machine calf raises	75-85% 1-RM	6-8	2-3	3-6 minutes
Oblique crunches	Bodyweight	15-20	3	90 seconds

Barbell Squats

- 1) Grasp bar with overhand grip (palms forward) and slightly wider than hip width apart. Step under bar and position bar across posterior deltoids at middle of trapezius (as shown). DO NOT rest bar on neck. Lift elbows up, pull shoulder blades together, and lift chest up to create a "shell" for the bar.
- 2) Start position: Using the legs, remove bar from rack. Stand with feet slightly wider than hip width apart. Back should be straight in a neutral position.
- 3) Lower body by flexing at the hips and knees. Upper body can flex forward at the hips slightly (~5°) during movement. Be sure to "sit back" so that knees stay over the feet.
- 4) Once thighs are almost parallel to floor, return to start position.
- 5) Remember to keep head and back straight in a neutral position - hyperextension or flexion may cause injury. Keep weight over the middle of foot and heel, not the toes.
- 6) DO NOT allow knees to go past the big toe or deviate medially or laterally throughout movement. Keep abdominals tight throughout exercise by drawing stomach in toward spine.



45% Leg Presses

- 1) Sit in machine and place your legs on the foot plate about hip width apart.
- 2) Release the safety stops and bend your knees towards your chest.
- 3) When your knees are fully bent extend your knees until your legs are fully extended.



Barbell Bench Presses

- 1) Lie on back with head underneath bar, eyes aligned with bar, and feet flat on floor.
- 2) Position hands on bar slightly wider than shoulder width.
- 3) Start position: Lift bar off rack with bar directly overhead.
- 4) Lower bar to chest at the nipple-line.
- 5) Press bar up to starting position.



Seated Knee Extensions

- 1) Sit in machine and place your shins behind the pad.
- 2) Extend your legs by pushing into the pad until the legs are parallel to the ground.
- 3) Return to the starting position.



Seated Dumbbell Shoulder Presses

- 1) Sit in upright position or stand with feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent.
- 2) Start position: Position dumbbells to ear level with an overhand grip (palms facing forward).
- 3) Press hands up above head keeping wrists over the elbows and arms moving parallel to body at all times.
- 4) Return to start position. Remember to keep back and head straight in a neutral position.



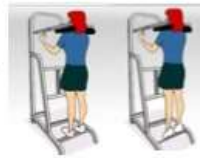
Lying Hamstring Curls*

- 1) Lie face down on bench with pad adjusted to fit behind ankles. If machine does not angle upper torso downward, it is recommended that a pillow be placed underneath stomach.
 - 2) Start position: Position knees below bottom edge of bench or pad. Legs should be straight with knees aligned to the lever arm axis of motion and hands grasping handles or side of bench (if applicable).
 - 3) Raise lever arm by flexing at the knees past 90°
 - 4) Return to start position. Remember to keep hips in contact with bench at all times. Do not hyperextend the low back during movement.
- *Weights are lighter as hamstrings are a weaker and more injury prone muscle group



Standing Machine Calf Raises

- 1) Step into provided shoulder pads. Adjust lever arm so that plates do not touch when lowering the weight.
- 2) Stand with feet hip width apart. Toes should be pointing forward.
- 3) Contract calves by pushing off balls of feet to raise heels up in air (standing on toes)
- 4) Lower heels and repeat.
- 5) Remember to keep knees slightly bent throughout movement to prevent any knee strain. Adjust weight load accordingly.



Front Pull Downs

- 1) Adjust seat or knee pad height so that knees are secured while seated.
- 2) Grasp bar with an overhand grip wider than shoulder width apart and sit with knees secured in pads.
- 3) Start position: Fully extend arms with elbows facing out with back straight (you may lean back at hips approximately 5-10°).
- 4) Pull bar down to upper chest area and squeeze shoulder blades together at end of movement.
- 5) Return to start position.
- 6) Remember to keep torso stationary throughout movement.



Oblique Crunches

- 1) Start by placing your left foot over your right knee and place your hands behind your head (but not your neck).
- 2) Lift your shoulders up off the ground and twist so that your right elbows tries to touch your left knee.
- 3) Return to the starting position and repeat according to the required repetitions.
- 4) Repeat with the other side.



ENDURANCE STRENGTH: (JUNE-JULY / 8 WEEKS 2-3 sessions per week.)

Exercise	Load	Station Time	Rest (exercises)	Rest (circuits)
Squat jumps	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Push ups	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Mountain climbers	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Sit ups with twist	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Box steps with knee drive	40-50% 1-RM	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Dips	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Lateral bounds	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds	60-90 seconds	
Alternating supermans	Bodyweight	30-60 seconds		2-3 minutes 2-3 circuits

Push Ups

- 1) Lie face down on the floor with hands palm down, fingers pointing straight ahead, and aligned at the nipple line.
- 2) Place hands slightly wider than shoulder width, and feet should be at hip width with toes on floor.
- 3) Start position: Extend the elbows and raise the body off the floor.
- 4) Lower your entire body (legs, hips, trunk, and head) 4-8 inches from the floor.
- 5) Return to the start position by extending at the elbows and pushing the body up.
- 6) Remember to keep the head and trunk stabilized in a neutral position by isometrically contracting the abdominal and back muscles. Never fully lock out the elbows at the start position and avoid hyperextension of the low back.



Squat Jumps

- 1) Stand with feet shoulder-width apart, trunk flexed forward slightly with back straight in a neutral position.
 - 2) Arms should be in the "ready" position with elbows flexed at approximately 90°.
 - 3) Lower body where thighs are parallel to ground.
 - 4) Explode vertically and drive arms up.
 - 5) Land on both feet and repeat.
- Prior to takeoff extend the ankles to their maximum range (full plantar flexion) to ensure proper mechanics.



Mountain Climbers

- 1) Start by getting on your hands and feet in a prone position.
- 2) Keeping your body parallel to ground drive your knees up towards your chest alternating back and forth.
- 3) Repeat this movement for the required number of seconds.



Sit Ups with Twist

- 1) Start position: Lie back onto floor or bench with knees bent and hands behind head. Keep elbows back and out of sight. Head should be in a neutral position with a space between chin and chest.
- 2) Leading with the chin and chest towards the ceiling, contract the abdominal and raise shoulders off floor or bench. As you come up twist one shoulder towards the opposite knee.
- 3) Return to start position and repeat with the other shoulder.
- 4) Remember to keep head and back in a neutral position.



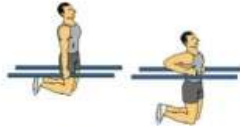
Box Step with Knee Drive:

- 1) Stand behind box (about 12-15" high) and place one foot on top of box, heel close to the closest edge. Hold a dumbbell in each hand.
- 2) Push off the box and explode vertically and drive your other knee up towards your chest. Complete the prescribed number of reps.
- 3) Repeat with other leg.



Dips

- 1) Step up on foot platform (if available) and position hands on dip bars.
- 2) Start position: Remove feet from platforms and suspend the body with slightly bent elbows. Lean forward slightly so that your elbows are slightly past the plane of your back and knees slightly bent.
- 3) Lower your body until your upper arms are parallel to the floor.
- 4) Return to starting position by extending the elbows to a slightly bent position.
- 5) Remember to keep the trunk bent forward, head neutral, and chest up.



Lateral Bounds

- 1) Stand side on to a box approximately 8-12 inches high.
- 2) Standing on one leg (furthest from box) dip down and jump up to box landing with opposite foot.
- 3) Land softly on one leg and repeat keeping a fluid motion throughout.
- 4) Repeat for the other side.



Alternating Superman

- 1) Lie face down on floor with arms extended overhead. You may place a rolled towel under forehead to clear face from floor.
- 2) Raise right arm and left leg 4-8 inches off floor.
- 3) Lower and raise alternate opposite arm and leg. Remember to keep head and back in a neutral position. Shoulders and hips should remain squared throughout movement.

