Cycling Specific Weight Training

This 3x25 Cheat Sheet is designed in 2 parts:

- **Description** of the cycling specific weight training exercises
- **Considerations** for the various sub-periods in 3 x 25 for weight training

Consult a strength training expert if you have any questions or concerns about your form — that goes for every exercise. Be VERY conservative, both when starting a new strength training regimen or when increasing weight. Don’t risk a weight injury that can keep you off the bike — or worse — for a long time.

### Exercise Descriptions

#### Squat

Squats are called the “king of exercises” because they engage so many muscle groups. They’re also very dangerous if you don’t do them properly.

- Start with feet shoulder width or wider. The width depends upon your hip anatomy.
- Toes pointed straight or slightly outward; again, depends on your anatomy. Comfort is key.
- Lower yourself, maintaining a straight back, chest pushed forward, eyes and head up, until your thighs are nearly parallel with the floor.
- Your knees must not project forward of your feet. For example, if you look down, you should see your feet; they should not be obscured by your knees.
- Push up through your heels to a standing position.
- Remember to stretch your quads and calves between sets

#### Leg Sleds

Squats are your “big set” exercise, but Leg Sleds focus specifically on your quads and your glutes to help maximise your climbing and sprinting

- Start with a back that’s flat against the back support. During the exercise, don’t allow your lower back to lose contact with the pad; if you do, you’re allowing the weight to come towards you too much.
- Don’t start with the feet positioned too high. You should have a slight bend to the knee at start.
- Through the lift, keep the knees tracking straight. Don’t let them collapse in or drift wide.
Seated Rows

Cycling requires pulling motions rather than pushing motions. You pull on the bar when sprinting and climbing. Seated rows strengthen that ability, as well as your back and core when you maintain good posture while doing them.

- Keep a straight back throughout the lift and while lowering the weight between reps. If you can’t, the weight is too much.
- Don’t lock out your knees here. You should have a slight bend. Sit comfortably.
- Bring your elbows all the way back to your sides to complete the motion.

Hamstring Curls

Hamstring Curls are not performed with heavy weights in this regimen: only light weights and high reps. This exercise will help smooth out and add power to your pedal stroke, especially in combination with Single Leg Drills during the Foundation period.

- However you do hamstring curls (i.e. on a machine as pictured or with another device or ankle weights) don’t “max out” at the top and bottom of the movement. Keep even tension throughout.
- Slow to moderate speed. Good form.
- Contract your glutes (butt muscles) as you bring the weight toward you.

Calf Lifts

Calf lifts — another low weight / high rep move — can also be done standing in a squat rack, raising up on the balls of your feet with a bar across your back. They are good for developing ankles that track well, ultimately supporting a better pedal stroke.

- Just like hamstring curls, keep a straight back throughout the motion.
- Apply pressure through the ball of the foot.
- Seek to get maximum range of motion for the ankle.
- Don’t rush. Take your time. Get good, solid contractions.

Lat Pull Downs

Seated rows help your ability to pull on the bars, so do Lat Pull Downs. Lat Pull Downs do more than help you pull, however. They help you maintain a solid position on the bike — assuming your well-fitted to your bike.

- You have options: a straight bar (pictured) or a dual pulley (not pictured, but this machine allows for it.)
- If you’re using a straight bar, keep the back straight, but lean back slightly, and pull directly in front of the chest
- If you’re using dual pulleys, sit up straight, and pull down even with your ears
- You may want to alternate if you have both options.

Incline situps (with twist)

Core, core, core. Inclines with a twist (and ultimately, added weight) benefit your ability to endure on the bike and your ability to push out maximum power.

- Incline situps, when done as pictured can turn into a leg workout if improperly executed. Focus on contracting the abs with each and every situp.
- Don’t simply pull yourself forward with your legs.
- Start in a laying-prone position. Cross arms on the chest, hold a weight plate, or use a medicine ball.
- As you near the erect position, twist fully to one side. Aim to touch your shoulder to a knee.
- Return to near-prone. Repeat without pausing.

Standing Rows

Strong shoulders help in bike stability, endurance, and recovery in the event of the dreaded broken collarbone. Standing rows (or as they’re sometimes called, “upright rows”) also help build grip strength.

- Start with shoulder-width feet, and good posture.
- With hands on the bar about as far apart as you’d grip a handlebar, pull up to the collarbone, elbows out.
- Contract your glutes and core to maintain good posture during the lift.
Period-specific Weight Considerations

Each of the sub-periods in 3x25 require that you address weight lifting in specific ways. This guide will add detail to the guidance provided in the 3x25 video.

Weeks 1 – 3: Get Ready

The three weeks that are called “Get Ready” are just that for your weightlifting: time to prepare your body and your mind for the rigors of what’s to come in more challenging phases.

You’ll be doing two things during your gym sessions in this period:

1. Determining your 1 Rep Max, from which all your recommended loads will be calculated. Here are the instructions from the video for your convenience:
   - For each exercise, do a warm-up set with very low weight, or even no weight at all
   - Next, load weight that you think will allow for no more than 10 reps
   - Do the exercise 'til you absolutely can’t do another rep. It must be less than 10 reps
   - Consult this: http://www.exrx.net/Calculators/OneRepMax.html
   - Note your 1 RMax and other key percentages as shown in the chart below for each exercise

2. Starting work on the cycling specific circuit, with low-weight (no more than 50% of 1RM) but high repititions (3–5 sets of 20–30).

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<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>1 Rep Max</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>15 rep weight</th>
<th>8 rep weight</th>
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NOTE: if you’re a total newcomer to weight training, you might consider skipping this phase, and advancing instead to the instructions for Weeks 9 – 11. The heavy weights of this phase could cause injury if you’re not acclimated to the demands of weight training. A previous season’s history of lifting through the Get Ready and lighter Foundation phases should suffice to prepare you for heavy weights.

Weeks 4 – 5: Foundation (Building)

The first two weeks of the Foundation period are to help you prepare for the heavy weights of weeks 6 – 8.

After three weeks of high repitition, low weight work, you’re ready to start putting some tension on those muscles, but not ready to move up to the intense weight that will allow no more than 8 reps per set.

1. Estimate your weights for the exercises shown. Experiment to determine the maximum amount of weight you can lift NO MORE than 15 reps for the following exercises and write it down on the chart provided on the previous page:
   - Squats
   - Leg Sleds
   - Seated Rows
   - Standing Rows

2. Balance of exercises stay light. The rest of the exercises in our circuit remain at the lighter weights and higher reps of the Get Ready phase. (No more than 50% of 1 RM, 3–5 sets of 20–30 reps.)

Weeks 6 – 8: Foundation (Heavy)

NOTE: if you’re a total newcomer to weight training, you might consider skipping this phase, and advancing instead to the instructions for Weeks 9 – 11. The heavy weights of this phase could cause injury if you’re not acclimated to the demands of weight training. A previous season’s history of lifting through the Get Ready and lighter Foundation phases should suffice to prepare you for heavy weights.

1. Do 3–5 sets of the following exercises at weights that allow no more than 8 repetitions. This usually won’t exceed 85% of your 1RM:
   - Squats
   - Leg Sleds
   - Seated Rows
   - Standing Rows

2. Balance of exercises stay light (i.e. the Building phase of weeks 4 – 5)

3. Always start with an easy warm up set.

4. Stretch the muscles being worked during your rest period between sets (1 – 3 minutes)
Now we move into the period where you start to focus more of your weekly effort on the bike. Soon, you’ll shift into harder interval workouts. You don’t want to lose the strength you’ve gained during these first 8 weeks, however. With this phase, the amount of weight you’re lifting will ease, but in conjunction with your on-bike time, your strength should be well sustained.

1. **Find your 70% of 1RM for the following exercises.** You’re staying with the 3 – 5 sets regimen for all exercises, but these go to 10 – 12 reps:
   - Squats
   - Leg Sleds
   - Seated Rows
   - Standing Rows

2. **If you can exceed 12 reps,** then you can add additional weight. No more than 5% added weight per lifting session, though.

3. **Balance of exercises stay light.** The rest of the exercises in our circuit remain at the lighter weights and higher reps of the Get Ready phase. (No more than 50% of 1 RM, 3–5 sets of 20–30 reps.)

**Additional Considerations**

- **If you’re male and under 40 years of age you may opt to devote your training exclusively to on-bike time starting with Week 12.** This may be advantageous if you’re able to devote considerable hours to training (i.e., over 14 hours on the weeks with the heaviest hourly commitment.).
- **Men over 40 and all women should,** regardless of weekly hours, devote at least one session per week in the gym following week 12, maintaining the 70% regimen for major muscles.

* I advise ALL athletes, regardless of age or gender to stay in the weight room at least once per week. The benefits of regular, consistent weight training far outstrip even its performance benefits to your riding. Regular resistance training benefits metabolism, maintaining optimal weight, recovery, balance, and general well-being.