

Bonus Focus Week 4--Hoedowns

Day 1

Ready to take this classic up a notch?!

First we'll focus on alignment--so grab a chair!

You'll be lightly hanging onto the chair, just enough to help with balance so you can focus on muscle activation and alignment. It's tough to go slowly when you're balancing on one leg! Go ahead and get into position--toes forward, bend knees, curl the core/tuck, ribs up and push knees out.

Let's say your chair is on the left side. So you will focus on lifting the right knee straight in alignment with the shoulder. Having a mirror or window glass handy is great!

Do this a few times. Now add focus on the foot--is it trying to come inward? (Weak core) Keep that ankle/foot out in alignment with the knee. If you don't have a window/mirror handy, lift the knee and hold it while you take your hand and lay your wrist against your knee and your hand down along the outside of your upper calf, keeping hand straight (not pointing inward). You should be able to connect totally with your outer calf--if you "lose" it down by your fingers, most likely your foot is drifting inward.

The opposite problem is your knee comes in and foot goes out. Focusing on aligning your knee with your shoulder should help. But **DO** find a way to make sure you are truly coming up in alignment--even if you have to drag a chair into the bathroom! :)

Kick out and switch sides! Let me know if you notice one side has more tendencies to be out of alignment than the other.

Day 2

Is that chair handy? Good!

Now we'll focus on the side lifts. Start with the set up: bend knees, curl/tuck, ribs up, shift weight into heels and off big toe. Now lightly hang onto the chair, get your other hand out "in position". But don't just flop that foot out there! Pivot!

Lift touch that foot (we'll say left) a few times then stop. Your foot is up on the toes as you just "touched". Thinking of a door opening out, pivot your left leg out using the toes on the floor as your "pivot point". Refocus your "bend/tuck/curl/ribs up".

Initiate the side lift with your core. Uh-HUH! Bend the right knee a bit more, keep knee to little toe and lift touch that left leg. As you touch refocus "ribs up". As you slowly lift again think to get your knee to its max, with optimal having it in alignment or slightly behind your left shoulder. It doesn't matter that you can do that--it matters that you go to your max!

Also focus on that knee to ankle alignment. Now it won't be a straight line down from the knee to the ankle, but neither should your knee be in alignment with your shoulder and your foot 2 feet in front of it! It takes what to get that knee ankle to the side without totally losing it? That's right--the CORE!

Practice a few sets of 4, kick out, and switch sides.

And don't forget to BREATHE!

Day 3

Going into the singles is the toughest part!

Keep that chair handy!

Let's take the right side first. Get set up. Doing it slowly will help but will also be TOUGH! You are using the chair to help with balance so you can focus on alignment.

Ready?

- Lift to the front (tighten glutes to help keep foot out)
- Touch foot to floor
- Hinge knee out like a door and initiate lift to the side with the core--bending standing leg a bit more and keeping it KLT
- Touch foot to floor
- Pivot back to the front but be sure to STOP at the shoulder (not letting knee come inward before you lift or you'll be off from the start of the lift!)
- Keep that standing knee KLT!
- Curl core/tuck/LIFT that knee and keep glutes tight
- Touch foot to floor...

Do 4 slow reps on one side, kick out and switch sides.

Keys:

- CORE!
- Ribs UP!
- Alignment of knee to shoulder/foot to knee
- Knee lifts waist high or aim for your best
- Standing leg KLT

NOW do it without the chair, not to dvd tempo but a bit faster while keeping the keys in mind!

Day 4

Now for the upper body and hands!

Keep that chair handy, too!

Get into position again, let's go with the left side. Go ahead and lift/touch for 4 to the front, with left hand out to the side in a mitten hand. (Is that thumb stretching?!)

Now, pivot out to the side. At the same time, bring the left hand in across the center of your body and as you jazz your hand think to also lift ribs a bit more before you start lift/touching to the side.

Keep that hand jazzed as you lift/touch 4 times.

Pivot to the front and left hand goes out into a mitten again (with stretched thumb). Repeat this process 2 more times.

Shake out and do the same on the right side.

Now let's do it again on each side, playing around with the hand positions. We'll do just 2 of each hand position.

First set of two: Stay in mitten hand with stretched thumb

Second set of two: Jazz hand

Third set of two: Bear claw to the side (fold fingers and stretch thumb) and keep bear claw as you come center--thumb will be pointing out/away from your body

Repeat other side.

Which hand position worked best for keeping that lat activation? Did you notice any other differences? Was one hand position better on one side but a different one on the other side?