


CONVICT CONDITIONING

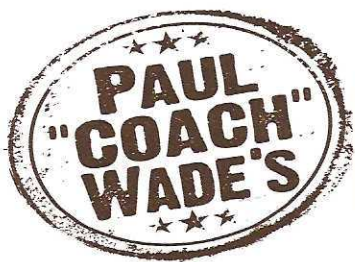
VOLUME II:

THE ULTIMATE BODYWEIGHT SQUAT COURSE

WITH BRETT JONES AND MAX SHANK

FILMED ENTIRELY
AT
ALCATRAZ
ON LOCATION AT





CONVICT CONDITIONING

VOLUME II:

**THE ULTIMATE BODYWEIGHT
SQUAT COURSE**

**WITH BRETT JONES
AND MAX SHANK**



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**THE ULTIMATE BODYWEIGHT
SQUAT COURSE**

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DISCLAIMER!

Fitness and strength are meaningless qualities without *health*. With correct training, these three benefits should naturally proceed hand-in-hand. In this book, every effort has been made to convey the importance of safe training technique, but despite this all individual trainees are different and needs will vary. Proceed with caution, and at your own risk. Your body is your own responsibility-look after it. All medical experts agree that you should consult your physician before initiating a training program. Be safe!

Despite this, the author maintains that all the exercise principles within this volume-techniques, methods and ideology-are valid. Use them, and become the best.



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CELL 1

SQUATTING
THEORY



elcome to the second DVD in the Convict Conditioning series.

These DVDs are based on the bodyweight strength system first presented in the Dragon Door book *Convict Conditioning*, written by Paul Wade. The Convict Conditioning system represents the most powerful, efficient distillation of the best hardcore prison bodyweight training methods ever to exist.

Many of these older, very potent solitary training systems are on the verge of dying out behind bars, as American prisoners begin to gain access to weights gyms, and modern “bodybuilding thinking” floods into the prisons. That’s why we chose to shoot these groundbreaking DVDs in Alcatraz. Back in the day, The Rock was the biggest, baddest jailhouse there was. It seemed like the right place to show you the most powerful prison training techniques there are.

In this system, no matter what kind of movement we’re working on, we focus on a chain of ten progressive exercises. When you master one exercise, you move on to the next, and so on. Because the later exercises build on the earlier ones, they are sometimes called the “ten steps”. When you reach the tenth exercise, you will be just about as strong as it’s possible for a human being to be in that movement. For this reason, the tenth exercise in any chain is called the “Master Step”. How this all works will be crystal clear if you’ve picked up a copy of the *Convict Conditioning* bodyweight book. This DVD is pretty self-explanatory as it goes along. For right now though, don’t worry about getting too tied up in terminology and numbers. In this second DVD of the series we’ll focus on the classic bodyweight movement for lower body strength—squatting.

Importance of leg training.

Leg training is vital for every athlete. Pushups and pullups are great, but they’re not enough. Even somebody who knows nothing about working out understands that a well-trained, muscular upper body teetering around on skinny stick legs is a joke. If you want to complete your basic, abbreviated prison strength routine, you need to get training your legs hard. Squats are the answer to your prayers. They’re up next.

Benefits of squats.

Squats are sometimes likened to “pushups for the legs”, but squats are much more important than that. Squats train virtually every muscle in the lower body, from quads and glutes to hips, lower back and even hamstrings. If you squat deep, as we’ll teach you, you will also increase your flexibility and ankle strength. All functional power is transmitted through the legs, so without strong, powerful legs you are *nothing*—that goes for running, jumping and combat sports as much as it does for lifting heavy stuff. You’ve got to do those squats.

The squat series.

Most athletes understand the benefits squats offer, so pretty much everybody who has picked up a training magazine or visited a gym has at least seen a squat. Most trainees learn how to squat on two legs, and then make the exercise harder by slapping a barbell across their back. In prison, this way of adding strength wasn’t always available, so cell trainees developed ways of progressing using only bodyweight versus gravity. The best way to do this is to learn how to squat all the way down to the ground and back up on just one leg. Not everybody who explores prison training will have the dedication and drive to achieve strength feats like the one-arm pullup, but the legs are much stronger than the arms. If you put in the time and work hard, the one-leg squat will be within the reach of almost every athlete who pays their dues. But the one-leg squat still requires very powerful muscles and tendons, so you don’t want to jump into one-leg squatting right away. You need to build the joint strength and muscle to safely attempt this great exercise. We’ll show you how to do that safely, using ten steps, ten progressively harder squat exercises. We’ll explain these ten exercises you need to master in order, and then we’ll summarize things when we get to the end. We’ll even show you some alternative exercises you can use along the journey. The beauty of DVD is that if you don’t get any of the finer points of technical form straight away, you can pause and go back as many times as you want. We’ll have you squatting on one leg in no time. So let’s get started.



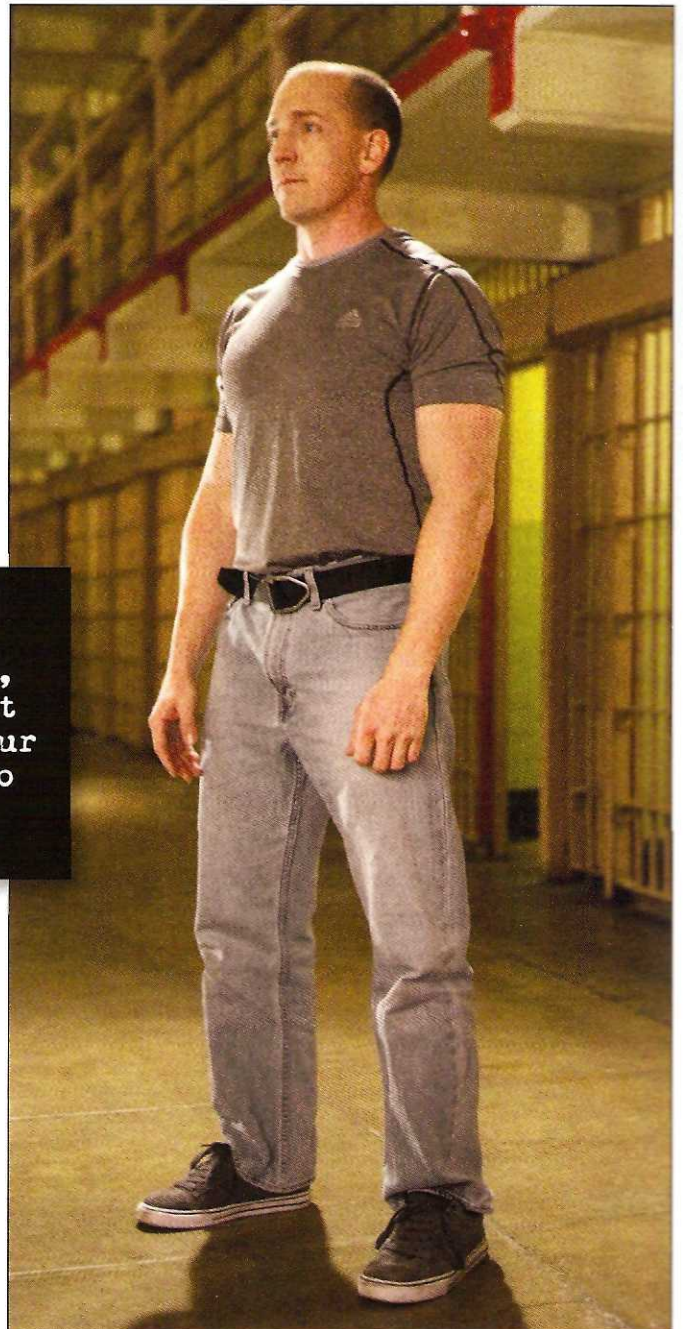
THE TEN SQUAT COMMANDMENTS

If you've seen the first DVD of this collection, the prison pushup DVD, you'll know that before we launched into the ten steps of the pushup series, we spent a few minutes re-educating ourselves in the basic principles of good form. Squats are a fundamental exercise for all strength athletes, so we're going to show them the same respect. Here are Ten Commandments we want you to apply on all squats you perform as part of the Convict Conditioning system.

COMMANDMENT I: ANGLE YOUR FEET!

Whenever you get set to squat, the first things you need to look at are your feet. Just as the arms follow the hands, the structure of the legs will follow feet positioning. This is why you need to pay attention to your feet when you squat. Let's see how to set your feet.

You should start by ensuring that your feet are symmetrical, and adopting a slight outwards point in your toes-around thirty to forty degrees out.



You should start by ensuring that your feet are symmetrical, and adopting a slight outwards point in your toes—around thirty to forty degrees out, but experiment and see what’s comfortable—your knees will follow, angling out slightly on their axis. They shouldn’t be pointing straight forwards, parallel to one another. That might look tidy, but it’s not the way Mother Nature intended your lower limbs to work. When you angle the feet out slightly, you angle them relative to one another; so the concept of angling the foot out becomes meaningless when you’re squatting off one leg. Just get in a comfortable, natural position. Whether you are squatting on one or two legs, keep the hips in their natural positioning; don’t curl them forward. Your legs should be fully extended. They don’t need to be kinked at the top of a squat—the knees are designed to take the body’s weight all day, so they can and should be extended as is normal when you stand.

COMMANDMENT 2: FEMORAL TRACKING!

The knees are angled slightly outwards throughout the squat movement, no matter how deep you go. The best way to ensure your knees track outwards is to adopt the slight foot angle we showed you. This is because your leg bones, your femurs, will tend to follow, or “track” the toes outwards. Unfortunately, many athletes have proportionately weak outer hip muscles, and this causes their knees to track *inwards* during squatting. Inwards tracking is bad news.

“Inwards tracking” of the knee can put grinding pressure on the knee joint, so avoid it at all costs. If you’ve ever had an ACL tear, you’ll understand the importance of avoiding inwards tracking to keep the knee as strong and stable as possible. If your ligaments are torn or completely missing, the entire knee can pop out of joint and become dislocated during inwards tracking. But when your leg angles slightly out, the knee is in an incredibly strong position. Even guys who have injured their knees badly and possess no anterior cruciate ligaments can squat very safely if their lower bodies are proportionately strong, and their legs follow their natural tracking path.

COMMANDMENT 3: NATURAL SPINE!

Okay, that's the feet and legs taken care of. What about the rest of the body? The key here is to remember that, whatever squatting technique you are working on, you should keep your back naturally straight. Now, in bodyweight work, you will often hear or read the phrase "keep your back straight". In fact, the spine has three natural curves in it. "Keep your back straight" doesn't mean we want you to iron out those beautiful, natural curves. They are there for a reason; to organically mould to the neck, trunk and hips, and also to act as a shock absorption system. We don't mean "keep your back *upright*"; you can keep your back naturally *straight* even during jackknife squats, where your torso is parallel to the floor. When we say "keep your back straight", what we really mean is don't *round* the spine forwards, in that lazy slumping posture most people seem to adopt.

To keep your spine upright while retaining its perfect curvature you don't need to adopt any obscure or painful positions. You just need to do two things. Firstly, keep your sternum, the bone in your chest, raised slightly. Secondly, open the neck vertebrae. You do this by imagining that the centre of your crown is attached to a string, which is holding you up.

These two elements of perfect spinal posture will be well known to martial artists, as well as students of movement systems like the Alexander Technique. If you follow these two simple rules, your spinal posture will be perfect. Round shoulders will also sabotage good posture, so wherever you put your arms—crossed, out in front, on a platform, on the hips—make a conscious effort to keep those shoulders spread nice and square.

To keep your spine upright while retaining its perfect curvature you don't need to adopt any obscure or painful positions. You just need to do two things.

Firstly, keep your sternum, the bone in your chest, raised slightly.

Secondly, open the neck vertebrae. You do this by imagining that the centre of your crown is attached to a string, which is holding you up.

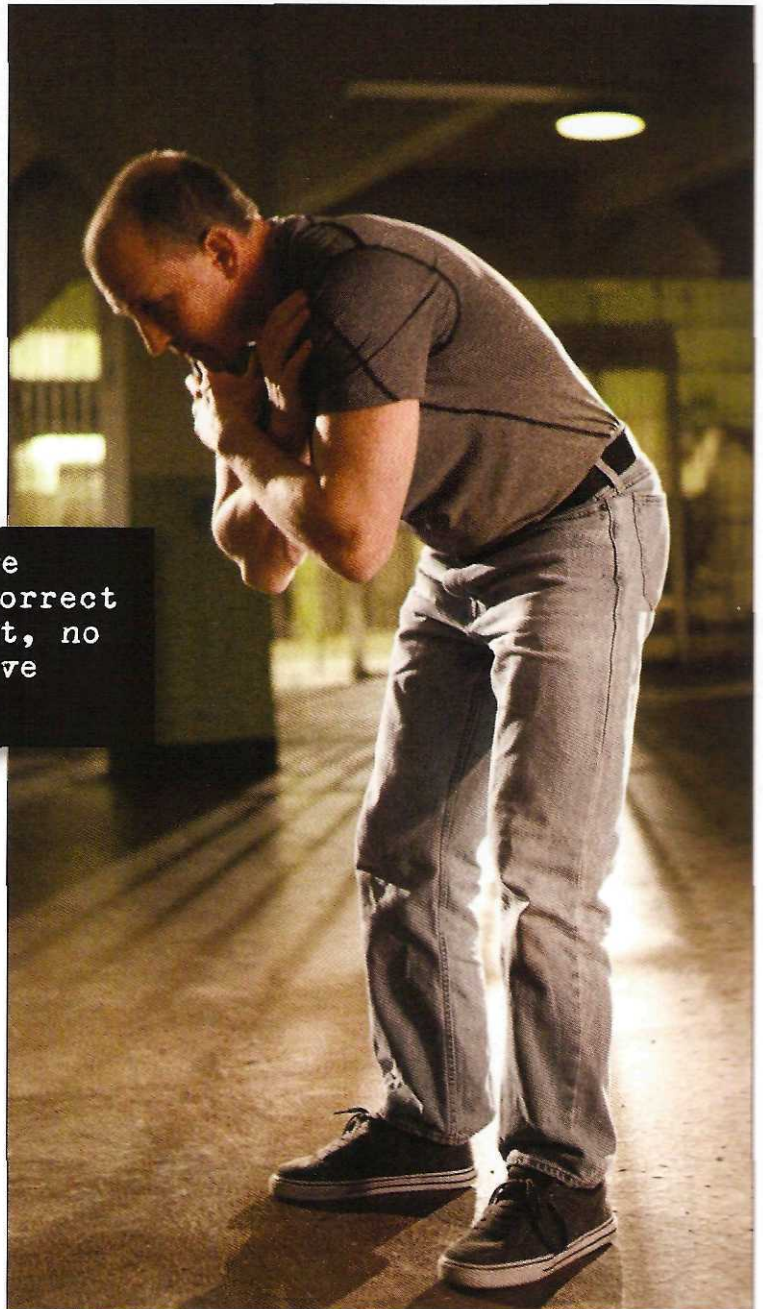


COMMANDMENT 4: LEAD WITH THE HIPS!

A lot of athletes have trouble finding the correct groove when they squat, no matter how long they've been doing it. The problem becomes worse when they try to squat deep. You see a lot of barbell squatters leading the exercise with their shoulders; they bend their legs a bit, then bend down, almost like a good morning.

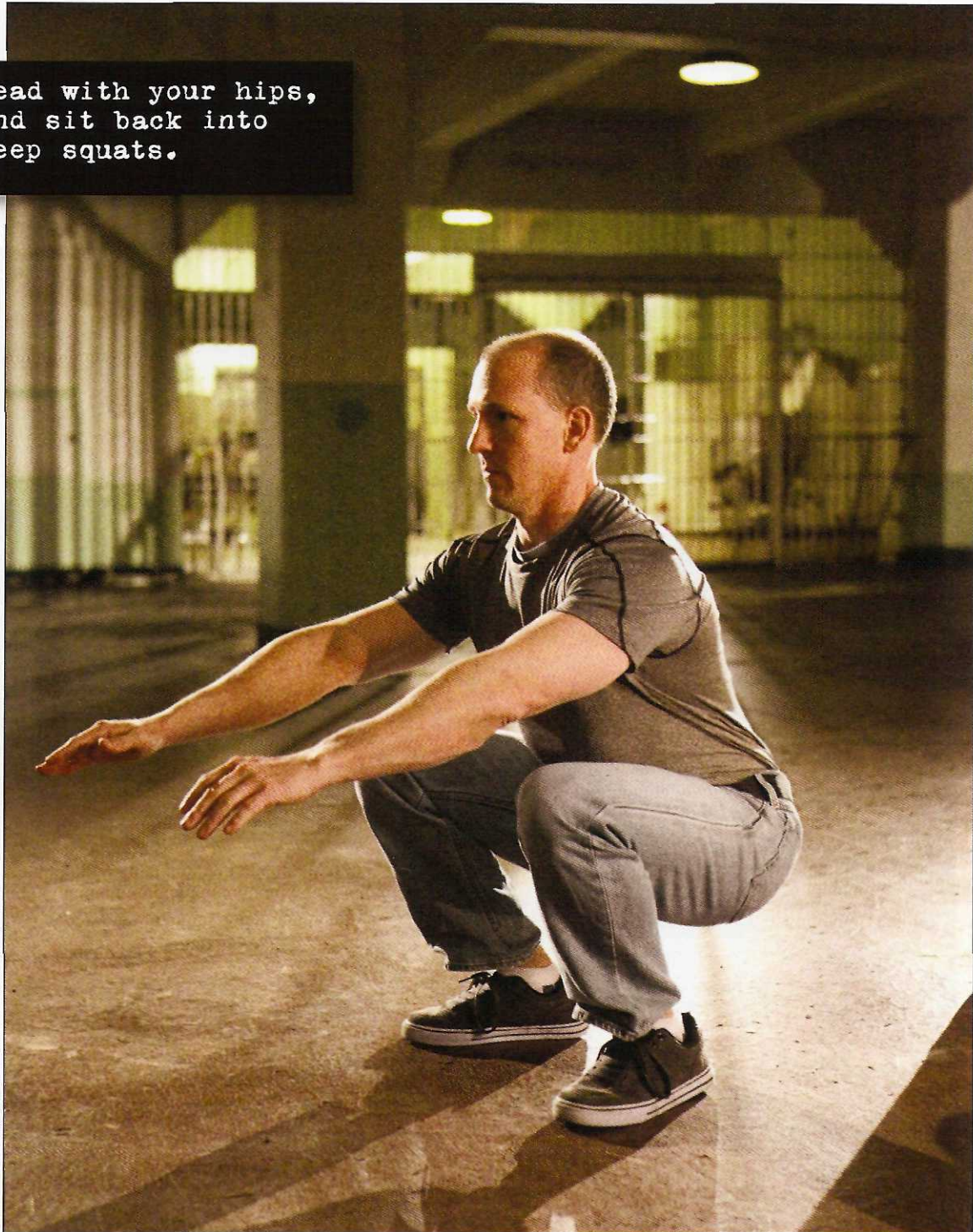
A lot of athletes have trouble finding the correct groove when they squat, no matter how long they've been doing it.

It looks like they just don't know how to find the path down. This is because they are leading the move with their *shoulders*, not their *hips*. If you have trouble finding your groove in the bottom position, it helps to think of yourself *sitting* down rather than squatting.



This “sitting” naturally shifts your weight backwards, which ties in well with the pressure that should be running through your heels. It will also help you keep your spine upright. Your spine will naturally tilt forwards a little as you squat. That’s cool, but you don’t want to get into the kind of *bowing* motion some people get into. This is a sign that your centre of gravity is too far forwards, and makes the exercise too hip-based, robbing the legs of their share of work. Lead with your hips, and sit back into deep squats.

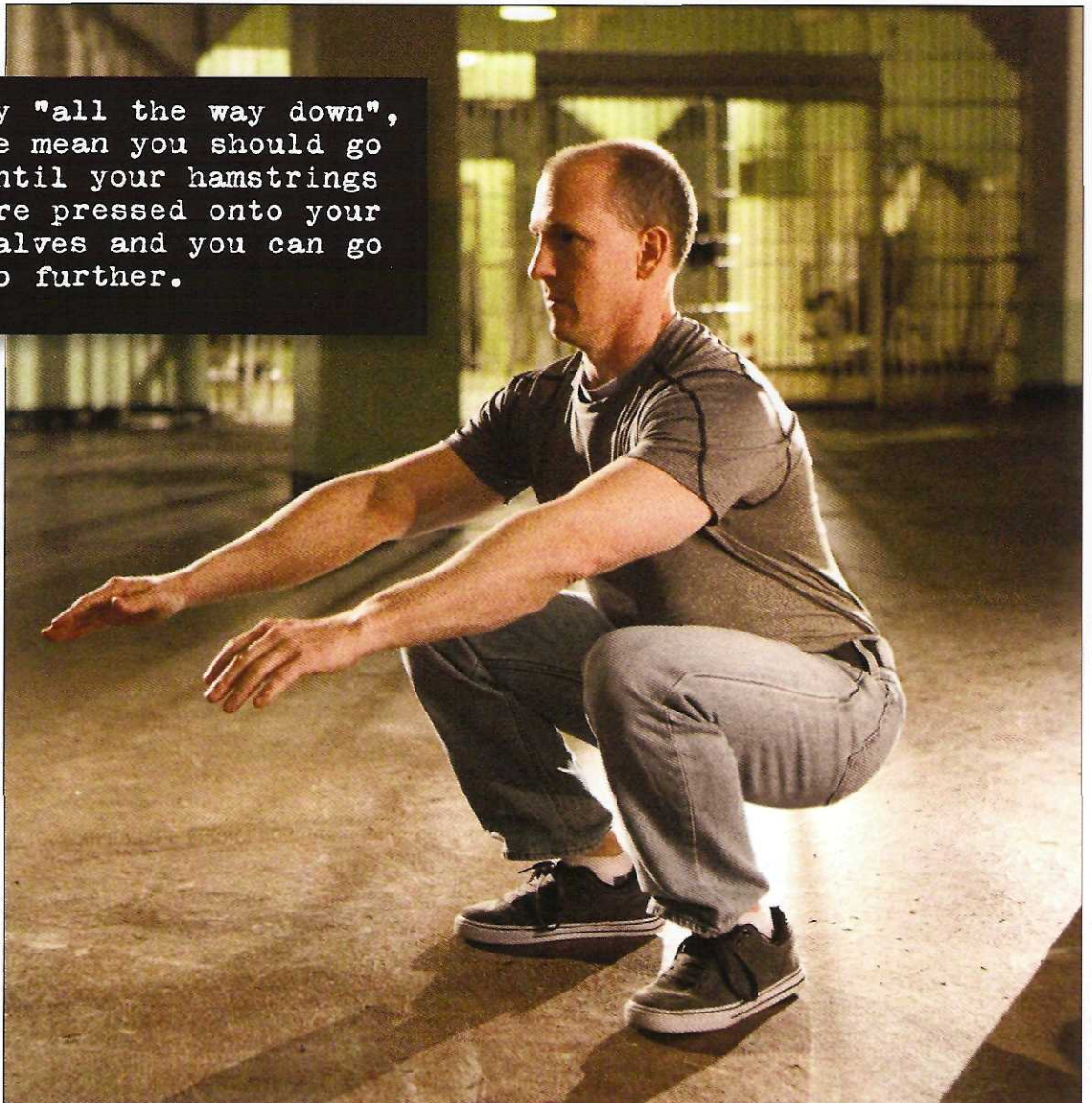
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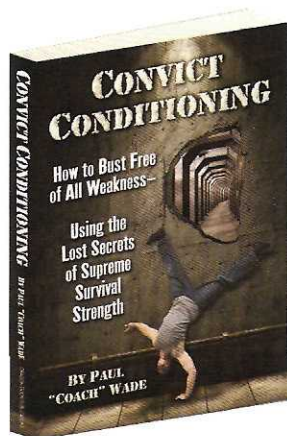


COMMANDMENT 5: GO DEEP!

When you squat, you should use a full range of motion. By this, we mean that you should go all the way down, and come all the way up. By “all the way down”, we mean you should go until your hamstrings are pressed onto your calves and you can go no further.

By “all the way down”, we mean you should go until your hamstrings are pressed onto your calves and you can go no further.





Provided you have built up a good strength-flexibility base, you should actually feel very little tension in the bottom position, because your body is well compressed. If you are shaking and trembling at the bottom of the rep, you aren't going deep enough! The bottom position should almost feel restful. In parts of Asia, many rural people will just sit around and shoot the breeze in this position. In the West, we are taught to rely on chairs from a young age, and as a result most people are far too stiff for that. But with practice, you'll get used to deep squatting very quickly. Providing you get there gradually, squatting deep strengthens the knees. It improves leg flexibility. Most importantly, it activates practically all the muscles of the lower body; not just the

quadriceps at the front of the thigh, but also the hamstrings at the back, as well as the hip girdle, the ankles, the tibialis, and the inner thigh muscles. The *Convict Conditioning* book discusses the subject of squatting anatomy in more depth, but for now let's just say that if you want to work practically every muscle from the solar plexus down, you need to do your squats, and do them deep. Some special exercises we'll show you call for half or partial squats; but where these exist, they only exist as stepping stones to strengthen you for full movements, and they should always be accompanied in your workout with full range squatting movements. Full range squats are king!

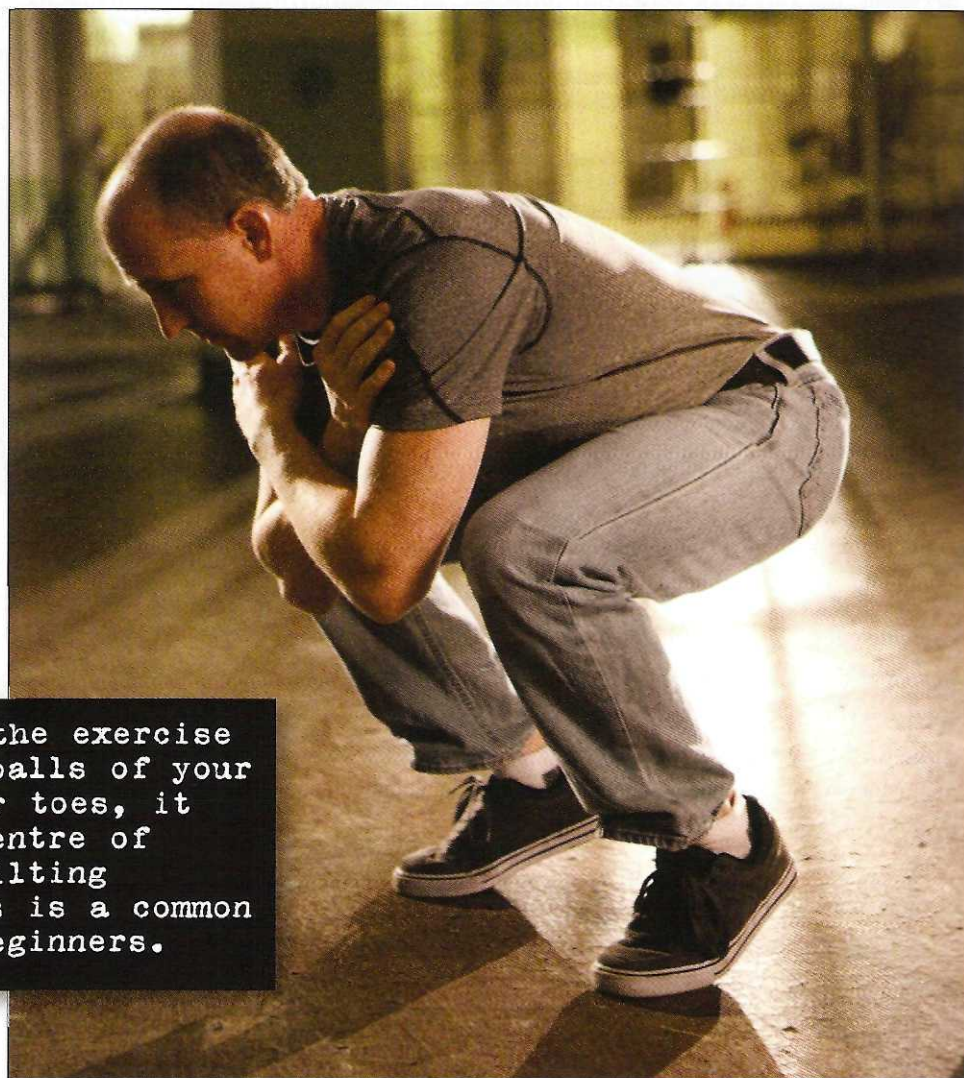
COMMANDMENT 6: NEVER BOUNCE OUT!

Something important to say about the bottom position now. A lot of guys try to generate extra energy for their squats by dropping down and bouncing out of the bottom position. This is a bad, bad mistake. Bouncing, rolling or rocking out of the hole places a lot of stress on the soft tissues of your knees, especially the cartilage of the knee joint, the meniscus. Once your knee cartilage is torn, that's it. It won't heal. Bouncing up also requires less effort than pushing yourself up under muscular power. For this reason, never bounce out of a squat. A good way to eliminate bouncing and extraneous momentum from your squats is to institute a nice, clean, one-second pause at the bottom position.

Control your descent using muscle-power. Never allow gravity to take over so you just drop. Although the bottom position is restful, don't pause too long. Stay down for a moment, just to ensure that all the momentum is taken out of the exercise, and to make certain you don't bounce out of the squat. No rest for dedicated athletes like you guys. Once all momentum has dissipated, it's time to go back up.

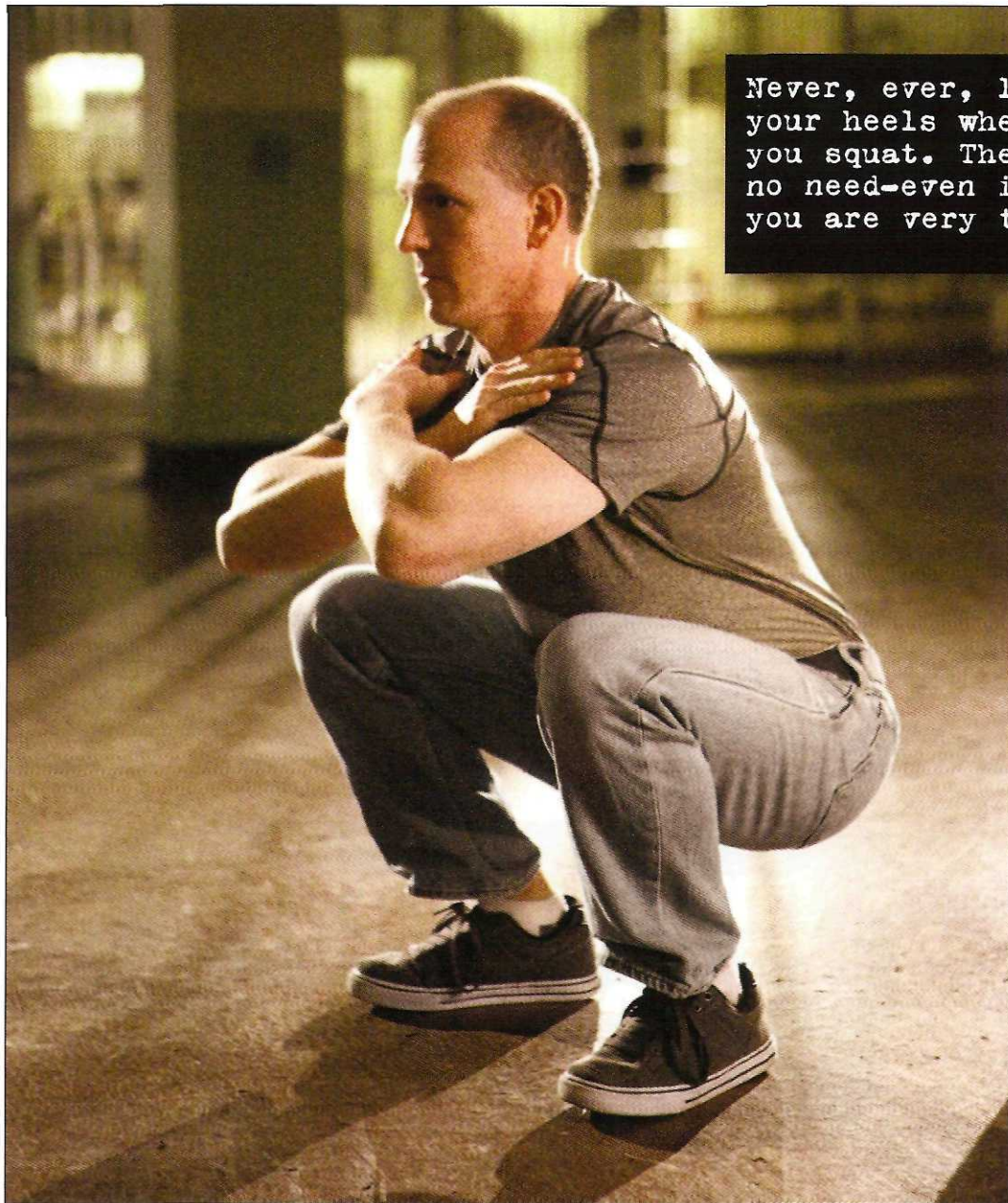
COMMANDMENT 7: PRESS THROUGH THE HEELS!

While we're on the topic of correct pressing out of the squat, it's important that you feel the bulk of your weight going through the *heels*, not the toes. Feeling the squat through your heels helps ensure that your hip positioning is good. If you feel the exercise through the balls of your feet, or your toes, it means your centre of gravity is tilting forward. This is a common mistake in beginners. It encourages excessive forwards lean, and places too much force through the knees. Often, squats wind up looking like this.



If you feel the exercise through the balls of your feet, or your toes, it means your centre of gravity is tilting forward. This is a common mistake in beginners.

If you have trouble shifting the weight through your heels, try gently lifting your toes up, to get the idea of what I mean.



This trick will also help you keep your heels flat as you squat. Never, ever, lift your heels when you squat. There's no need—even if you are very tall. If you have to lift your heels when you descend, it's purely due to a lack of ankle mobility and flexibility in the Achilles' tendon. You can try to speed up your flexibility by performing specific calf and ankle stretching, but the best and safest way to gain this kind of flexibility is by gradually working into flat footed squats using lighter squatting techniques such as jackknife squats and supported squats, which we'll demonstrate shortly. Lots of reps will teach your body what it needs to do, without any severe stretching work.

COMMANDMENT 8: USE SYNCHRONIZED BREATHING!

If you want to be a great squatter, you need to synchronize your breathing right. We discussed the subject of breathing when we went over the pushup commandments on the first DVD, so we won't cover the same ground here. The basics to remember are: breathe out on the way up, breathe in on the way down.

If you need to take extra breaths at the bottom or top, do so. If you feel dizzy and need more breaths, take them. Find a pattern that works for you. Breathe deeply but don't force it, and try not to hold your breath when you train. A lot of powerlifters hold their breath during training, but they tend to do single or very low rep sets. You'll be doing much more. You need to make that lovely oxygen work for you!

COMMANDMENT 9: BRACE THE CORE!

Tied in to the art of breathing is the skill of *bracing your core*. Don't tense your midsection unnecessarily, but keep your gut sucked in and tight when you squat. Squatting causes a normal rise in intra-abdominal tension, and keeping your stomach wall tight automatically acts as a protective belt around the waist. This focus on bracing the core also works the vital internal midsection muscles, muscles like the diaphragm and transversus, which are just as important to health and fitness as the biceps or quads.

COMMANDMENT 10: APPLY “SYMMETRICAL CAPPING”!

One last point before we move on. One of the key factors in injury and bad movement patterns is uneven body strength. One side is stronger than the other, and this affects your alignment. When a piece of clothing, maybe a pair of jeans, rips under pressure, it always rips at the seams. Why? Because the seam is the weakest point. Likewise, if you put your own muscular system under pressure, your weakest areas become injured first. If one side of your body is a good way stronger than the other side, you had better be prepared to get injured more. Avoiding weak links and creating a finely-tuned, *symmetrical* muscular system is the absolute best thing you can do to avoid unnecessary injuries. In reality, most people have a weaker side of their system, and their body intuitively understands that this is dangerous. So to prevent injuries, most people favour their strong sides in lifting or moving, even if they do this unconsciously. Unfortunately, this is the worst thing you can do. It amplifies the problem, by making the strong side stronger, and the weak side weaker. The correct way to eliminate weak links is to ensure you move your body with symmetry of output. When you perform bilateral movements on both feet, always ensure you move with symmetry. When you perform uneven, or one-legged squats, use the technique of “symmetrical capping”; always start your workout with your weakest leg. Doing this gives you an automatic power default rep level. If you started with your strongest leg, you probably couldn’t then do as much work with the weakest leg, and any inherent power imbalances would start to manifest. Starting with the weakest leg eliminates this risk. It also allows you to give your weaker limbs your best energy, while you’re at your freshest and most focused.

This is a technique you should apply to all unsymmetrical strength work you do. We’ve mentioned symmetrical capping in the pushups DVD and we’ve repeated it here so it sinks in. We won’t waste time repeating it any more in this DVD series, but it bears remembering that you should apply symmetrical capping on your pullups and handstand pushups too—as well as your regular pushups and squats. Use it on any exercise once you’re at the stage where you are working the limbs separately.



**CELL 2:
THE
SQUAT
SERIES**



Plenty of ideas about the theory of good bodyweight squatting form there, enough to get your mental training batteries charged up! What we've just covered isn't all she wrote though. Remember, there's a lot more to learn about squatting—even world class experts will tell you there's something new to learn about movement and exercise every time you train. The best bodyweight athletes are intelligent athletes, and never quit learning. If you want to start becoming really advanced in the science of movement, I'd recommend picking up some of the Functional Movement material available from Dragon Door. You should never stop acquiring new ideas.

But that's enough squatting theory for now. Time for the practice! Let's look at the actual techniques. As with all Convict Conditioning, each movement has ten basic steps, which start easy but get harder until they lead to the final Master Step—which in this case is the one-leg squat. The basic steps can be further subdivided into smaller "hidden steps". This DVD will show you everything you need to know, starting right at the beginning; step one.

STEP I: SHOULDERSTAND SQUATS

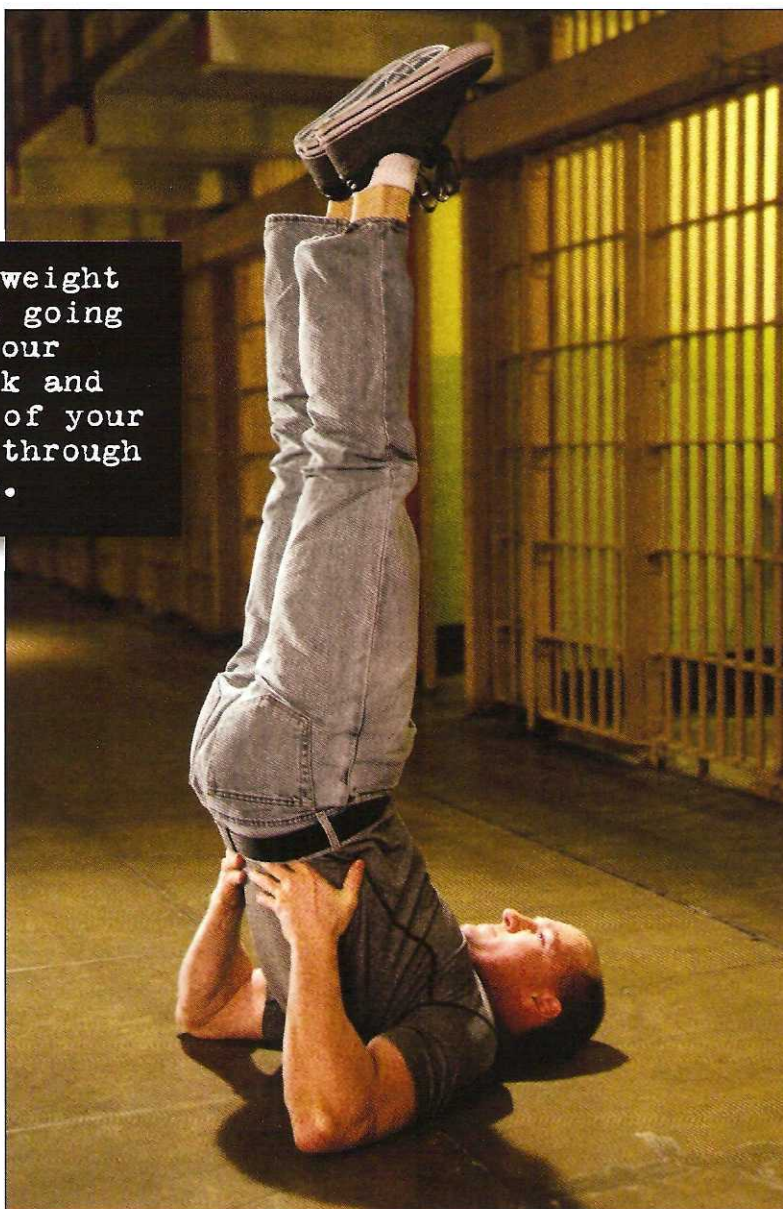
OVERVIEW

The first step is shoulderstand squats. They're basically upside-down squats. Because you're upside-down, you can move your legs without your bodyweight running through the hips, knees and ankles. This allows you to gently condition your joints by removing adhesions built up there, and gently stretching your soft tissues, particularly the trouble spots like knees and lower back, until they are conditioned into the perfect squatting range of motion. This means that even if you're a rank beginner, very out of shape, or injured and coming out of surgery or a long layoff, you can still start your training.

BASIC POSTURE

- Lie on your back with your knees bent.
- Kick against the floor and push down with your hands until your legs are vertical.
- Place your hands on your back for support.
- Your bodyweight should be going through your upper back and the rear of your arms—not through your neck.
- Your torso and legs should be stretched out as straight as possible.

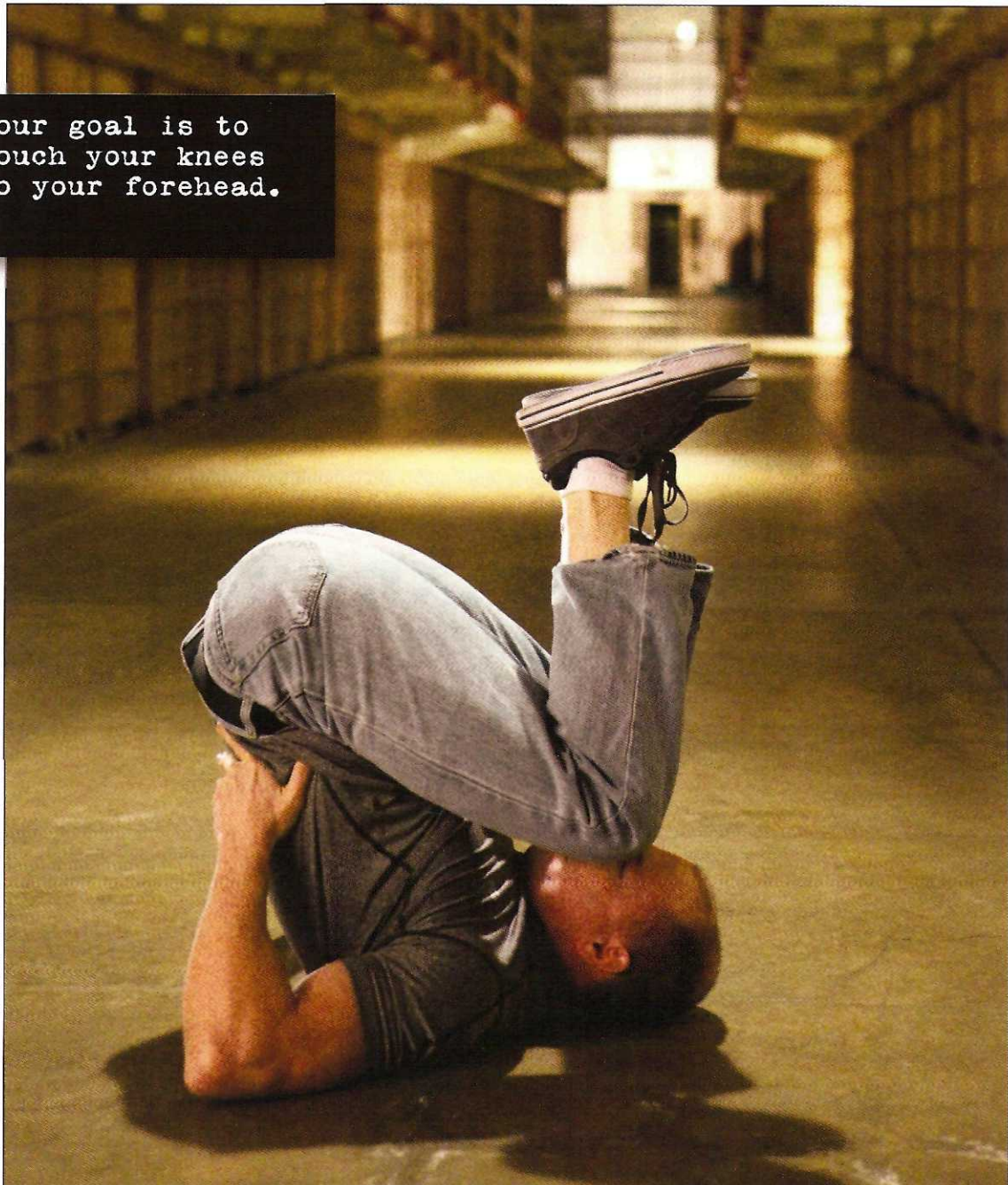
Your bodyweight should be going through your upper back and the rear of your arms—not through your neck.



NEGATIVE

- Bend at the knees and hips.
- Bring your knees down as low as you can.
- Your goal is to touch your knees to your forehead.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.

Your goal is to touch your knees to your forehead.



POSITIVE

- Smoothly reverse the movement and extend your legs back up.
- Stop when your body is locked vertical and perfectly straight again.
- Hold this top position for a one count, then repeat the exercise.

“HIDDEN STEPS” **SHOULDERSTAND SQUATS**

- Improve your depth of motion over time
- At first, bring your knees down halfway
- Add range from workout to workout until your knees touch your forehead

PROGRESSION LEVELS **SHOULDERSTAND SQUATS**

- BEGINNER STANDARD: 1 set of 10 reps
- INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: 2 sets of 25 reps
- PROGRESSION STANDARD: 3 sets of 50 reps

STEP 2: JACKKNIFE SQUATS

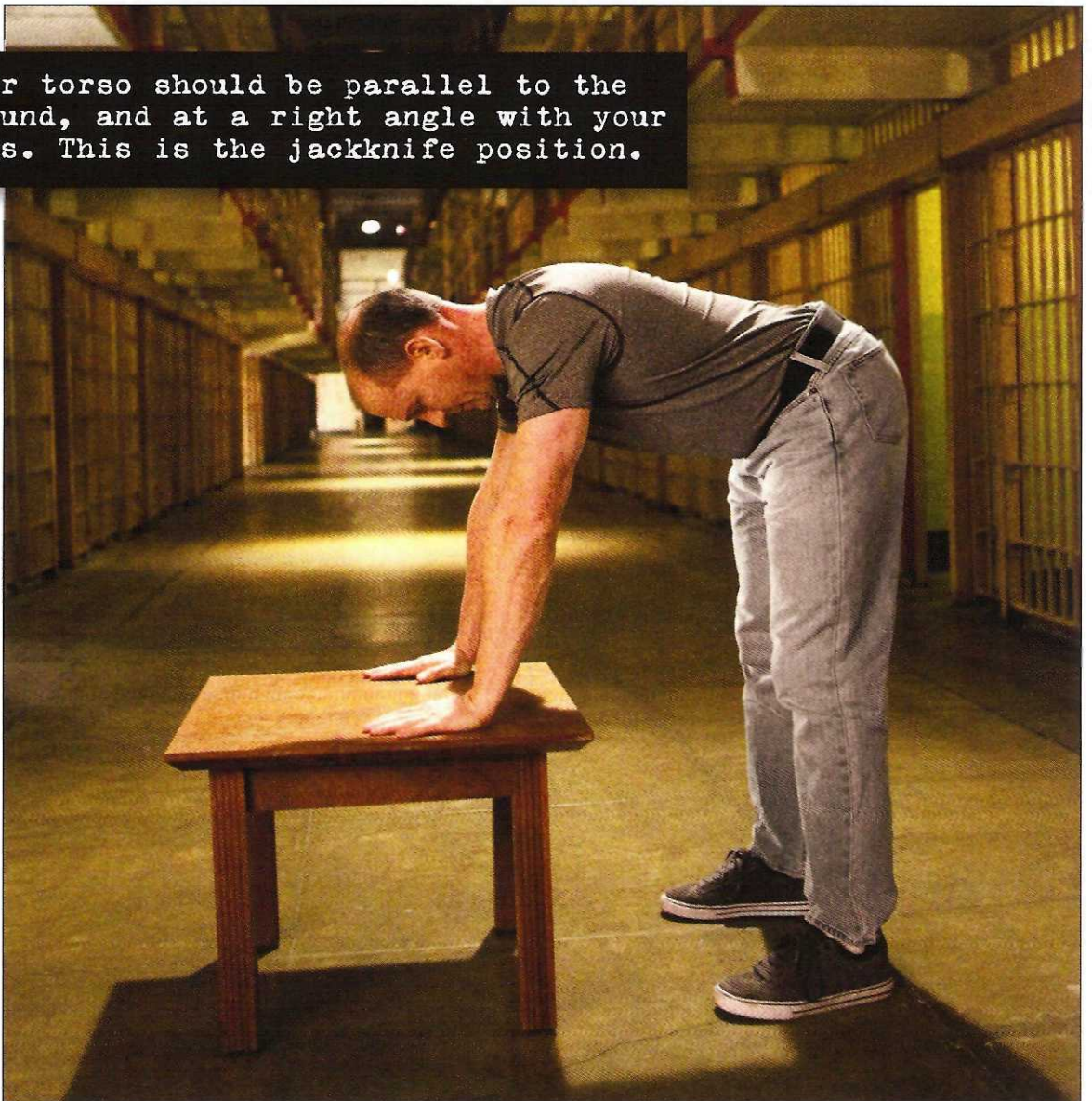
OVERVIEW

Once you can do three sets of fifty shoulderstand squats, with a good range of motion and no discomfort, the joints, muscles and ligaments of your legs will be fluid and possess a good level of vascular and cellular fitness. You're ready to begin putting some weight through those legs. Jackknife squats help you work your lower body joints with a full range of motion—the range you developed doing shoulderstand squats—but only using a percentage of the body weight. This will continue your conditioning.

BASIC POSTURE

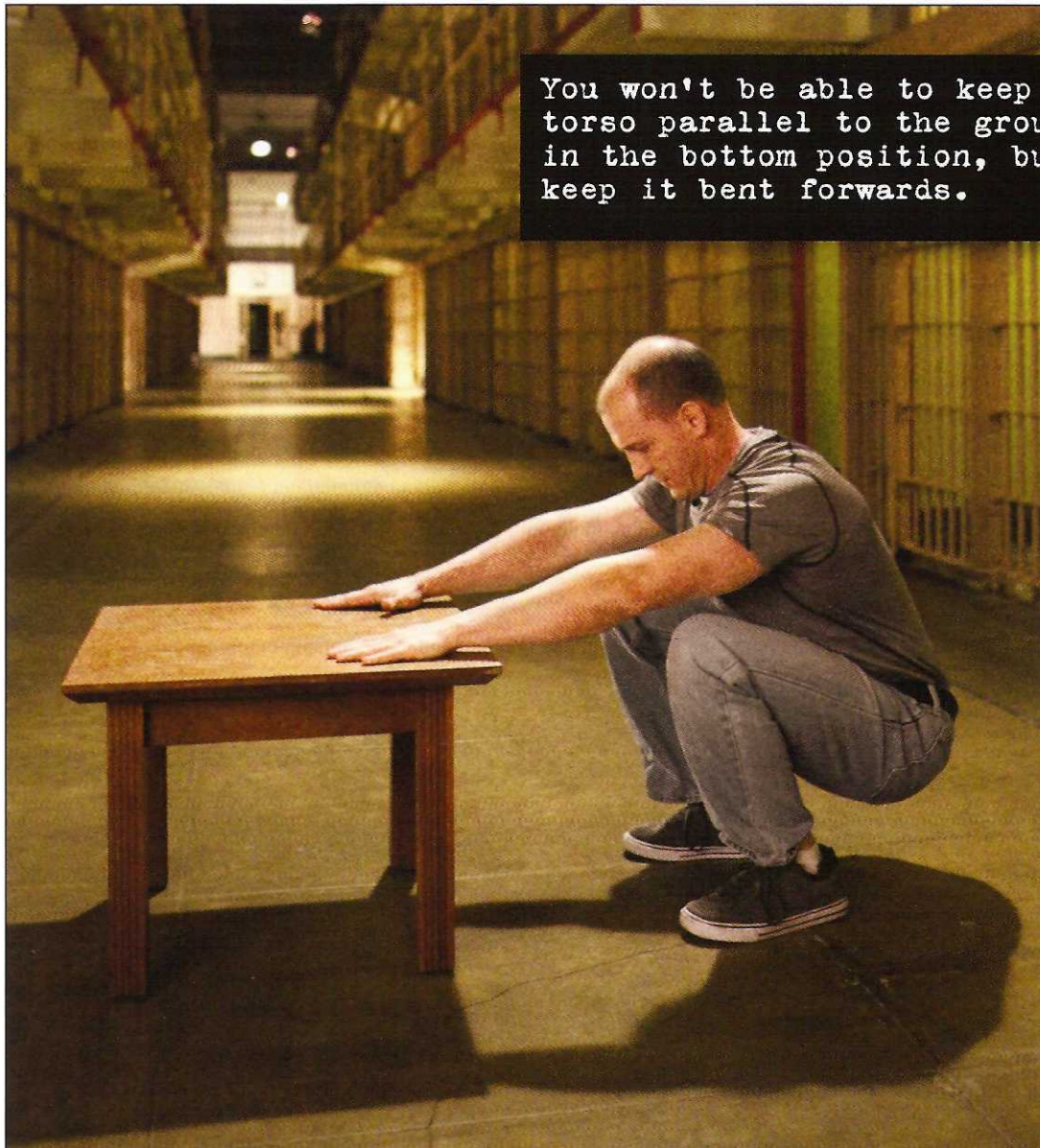
- Approach a sturdy object which reaches approximately knee-height. A bunk, low table or chair are all good options.
- Bend at the hips and place your hands on the object for support.
- Your torso should be parallel to the ground, and at a right angle with your legs. This is the jackknife position.
- Your legs should be straight, and shoulder-width apart or a little wider.
- Your bodyweight should be going through your hands and feet.

Your torso should be parallel to the ground, and at a right angle with your legs. This is the jackknife position.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend at the knees and hips, keeping pressure going through your hands.
- Continue descending until your hamstrings are resting on your calves.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor as you move.
- You won't be able to keep your torso parallel to the ground in the bottom position, but keep it bent forwards.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.



You won't be able to keep your torso parallel to the ground in the bottom position, but keep it bent forwards.

POSITIVE

- Reverse the movement and push back up through your legs and hands.
- As you ascend, bend your torso until it is parallel to the ground, so that you can put more of your bodyweight through your hands and upper body.
- Stop when you are in the jackknife position again, and repeat the exercise.

"HIDDEN STEPS" **JACKKNIFE SQUATS**

- To make the exercise easier on the lower body, press harder through the palms
- As you become stronger, only push gently through the palms

PROGRESSION LEVELS **JACKKNIFE SQUATS**

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • BEGINNER STANDARD: | 1 set of 10 reps |
| • INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: | 2 sets of 20 reps |
| • PROGRESSION STANDARD: | 3 sets of 40 reps |

STEP 3: SUPPORTED SQUATS

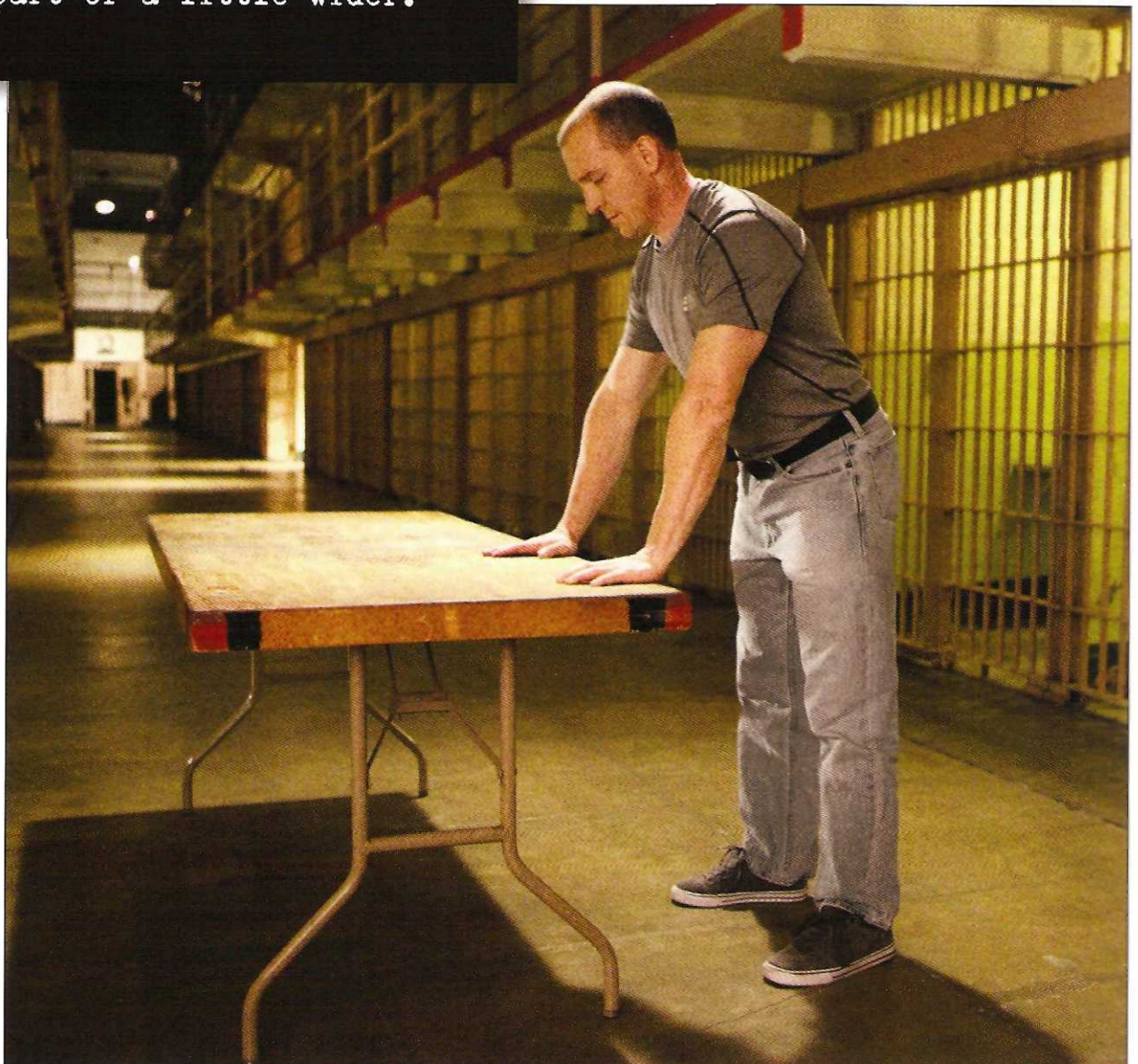
OVERVIEW

With shoulderstand squats you conditioned your lower body using high rep movements with very little resistance. For jackknife squats you pushed your bodyweight up, but using a significant amount of help from the upper limbs. In the next step, supported squats, the majority of the pressing work will be done by your *legs*—with only a minor amount of help from the arms during the most difficult part of the rep. The hardest part of the bodyweight squat is getting out of the bottom position. This is also the point where the knees and lower back are most vulnerable, especially if they're naturally stiff or if you're not so well conditioned in bodyweight mastery. Supported squats help you break through this inherent barrier. When you're coming up, push down through your hands over the first third of the movement—then take pressure off.

BASIC POSTURE

- Approach a sturdy object which reaches approximately hip-height. A desk, table or chair-back are possible options.
- Stand up straight and place your hands on the object for support.
- Your legs should be straight, and shoulder-width apart or a little wider.

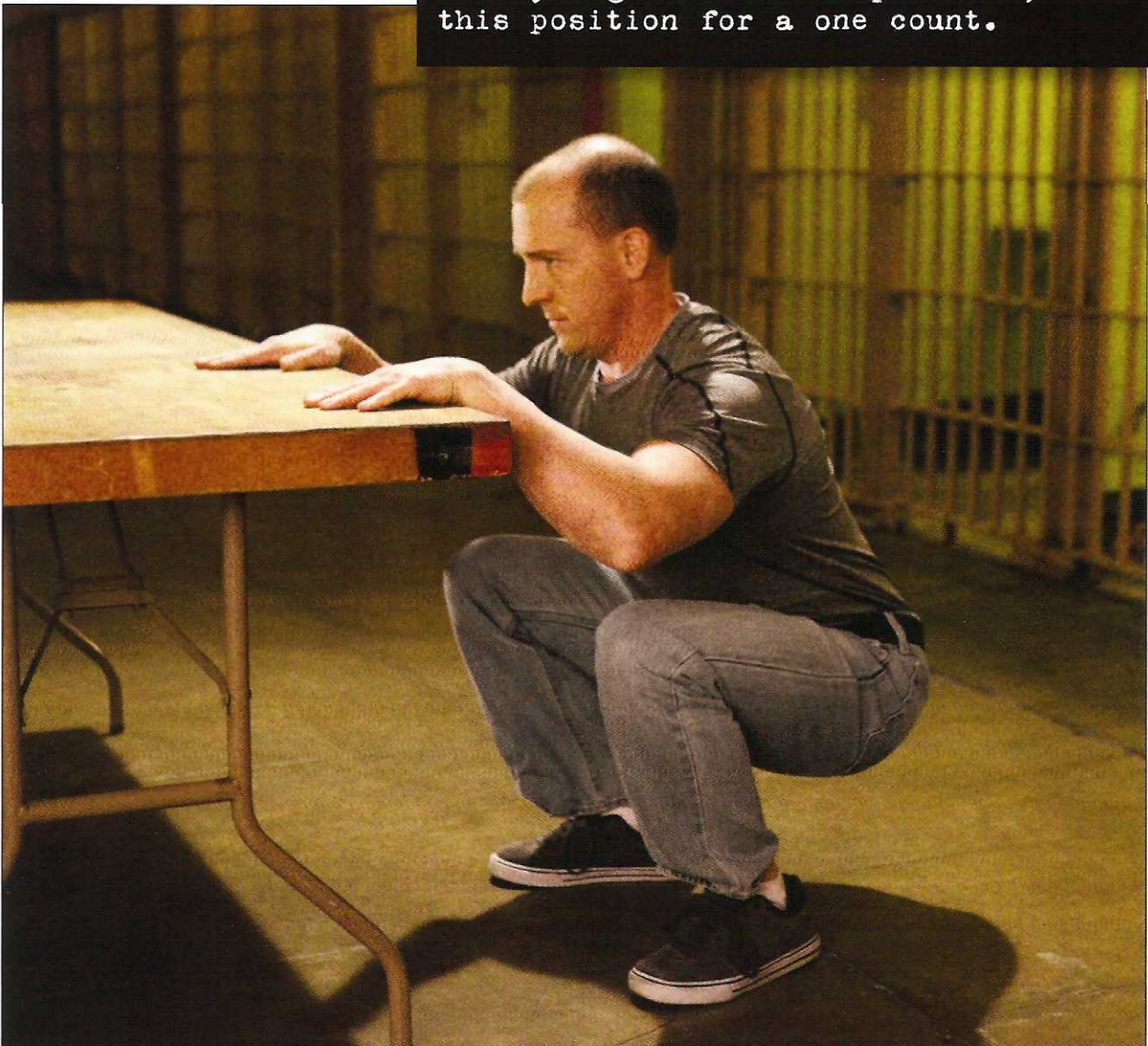
Your legs should be straight, and shoulder-width apart or a little wider.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend at the knees and hips, keeping hold of the object for stability.
- Try to keep your torso fairly upright as you go down.
- Continue descending until your hamstrings are resting on your calves.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor as you move.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.

When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.



POSITIVE

- Reverse the movement and push back up through your legs.
- Pull down on the object to help yourself back up out of the bottom position.
- Try to keep your arms fairly straight throughout the exercise.
- Stop when you are standing straight again, and repeat the exercise.

“HIDDEN STEPS” SUPPORTED SQUATS

- To make the exercise easier on the lower body, pull down harder with your upper body
- As you become stronger, push yourself up using more leg power
- If the exercise becomes easy, only push down with one palm (switch palms halfway through the set)

PROGRESSION LEVELS SUPPORTED SQUATS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • BEGINNER STANDARD: | 1 set of 10 reps |
| • INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: | 2 sets of 15 reps |
| • PROGRESSION STANDARD: | 3 sets of 30 reps |

STEP 4: HALF SQUATS

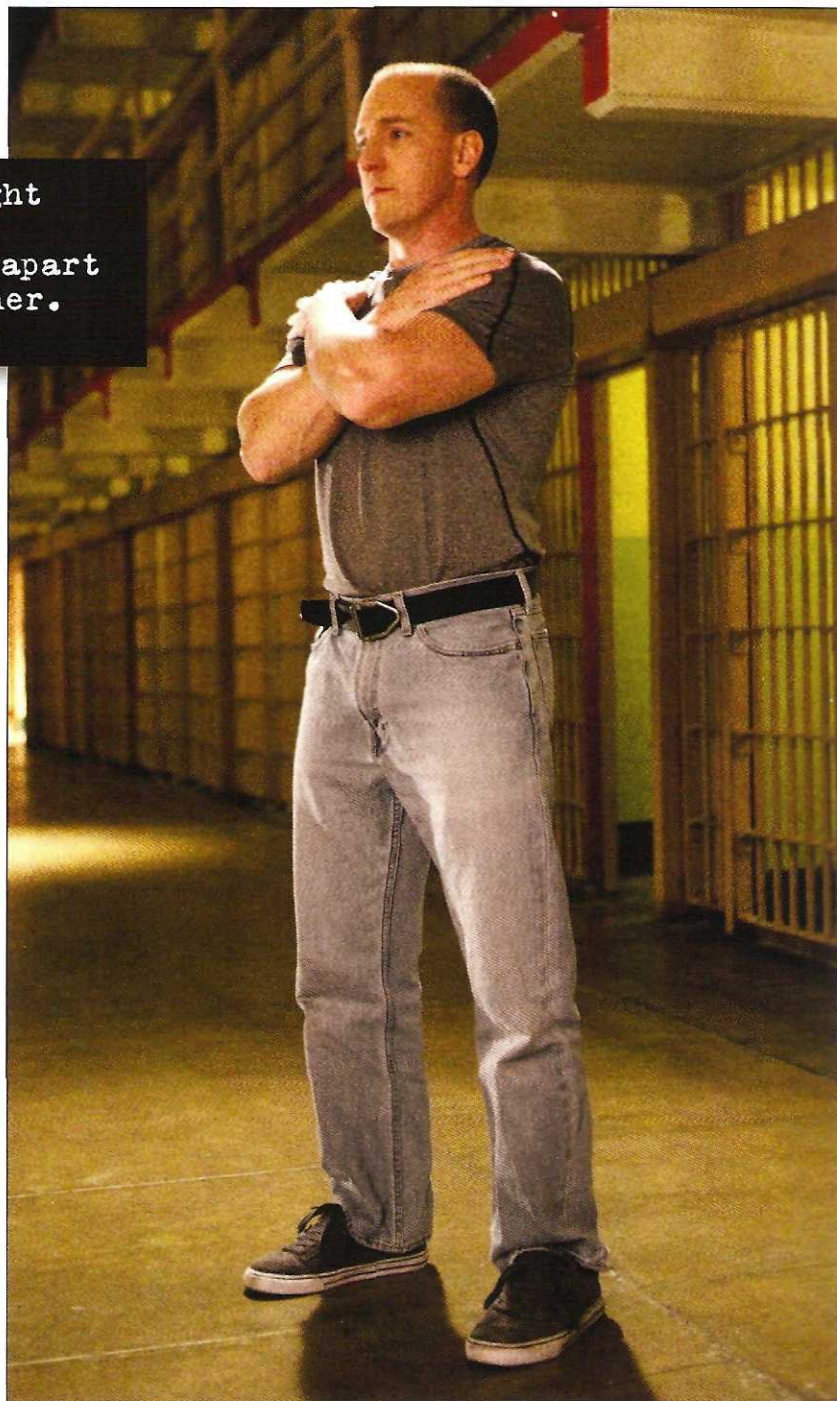
OVERVIEW

Now we've mastered *assisted* squatting movements, it's time to move to an important step in the series, half squats, where the lower limbs exclusively take the full load of the body under flexion. It's also important for wannabe bodyweight squatters, because it's the first "hands free" exercise in the squatting series, meaning you have to learn the basic balance and equilibrium necessary if you want to confidently master later steps. Once you move beyond the half squat, it still works as a great low-impact lower body and knee warm up for more intense leg training exercises. It's a wonderful, functional movement. But as great as half-movements are, remember that they only exist as a build-up to full movements. Don't lose what you've already gained. If you've just come to this exercise from working supported squats, the internal muscles of your legs and hips will be well conditioned to deep squatting by now. Your hips and ankles will also be nice and flexible under load. To keep that tension-flexibility while working on half squats, always finish your half squats workout with a single set of either jackknife or supported squats..

BASIC POSTURE

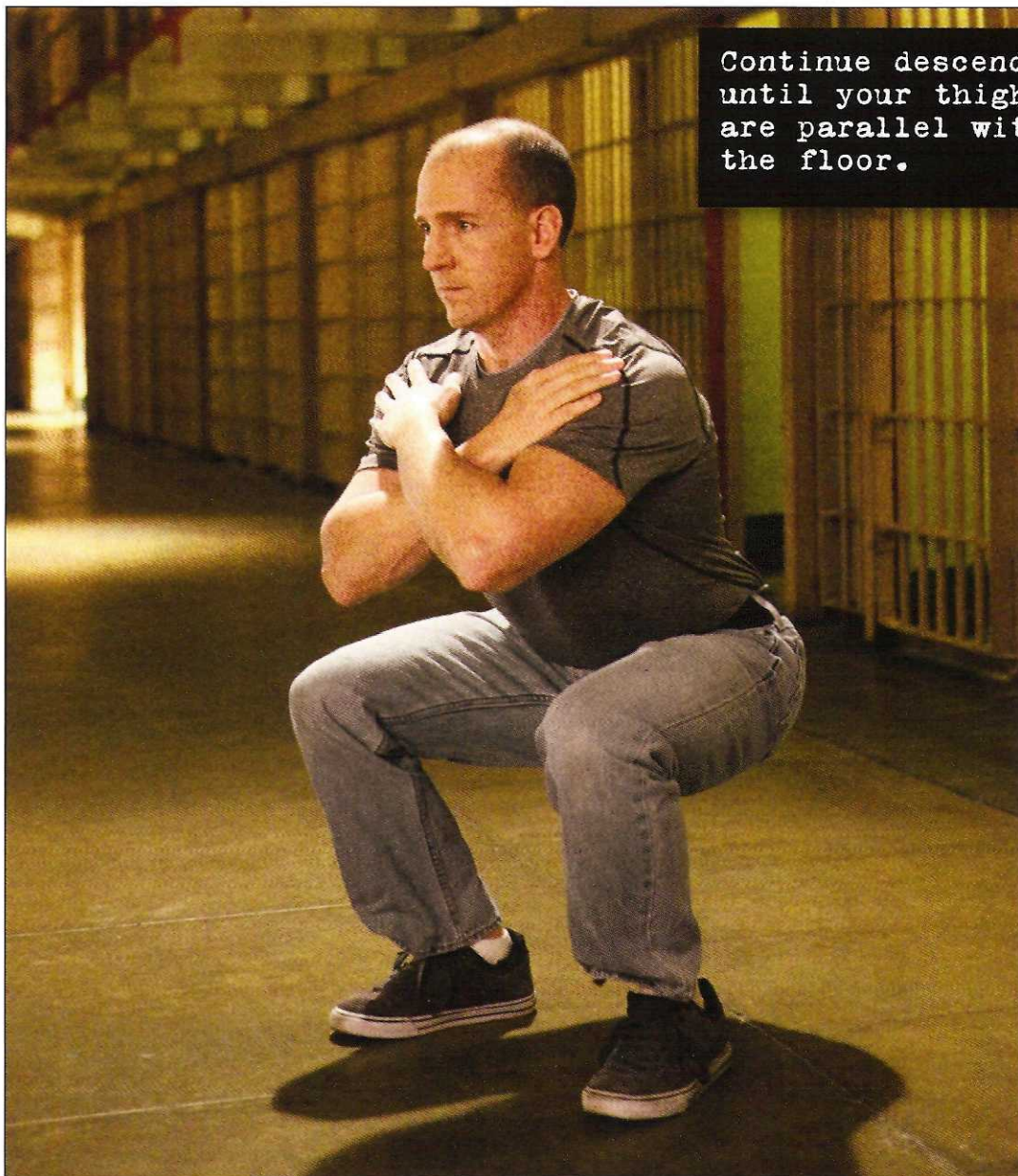
- Stand up straight with your legs shoulder-width apart or a little wider.
- Point your toes slightly outwards.
- Cross your arms in front of your chest.

Stand up straight
with your legs
shoulder-width apart
or a little wider.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend at the knees and hips.
- Try to keep your back straight as you go down.
- Continue descending until your thighs are parallel with the floor.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor as you move.
- When you get to the half squat position, hold for a one count.



Continue descending until your thighs are parallel with the floor.

POSITIVE

- Smoothly reverse the movement and push back up through your legs.
- Focus on pressing down through your heels rather than your toes.
- Stop when you are standing straight again, and repeat the exercise.

“HIDDEN STEPS” HALF SQUATS

- If you find half squats difficult, work into them with a reduced range of motion
- Begin with quarter squats, and build to high reps (20+)
- Every workout, increase your range of motion slightly until you are performing true half squats to parallel

PROGRESSION LEVELS HALF SQUATS

- BEGINNER STANDARD: 1 set of 8 reps
- INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: 2 sets of 35 reps
- PROGRESSION STANDARD: 2 sets of 50 reps
- REMEMBER! FINISH your half squat training
WITH SUPPORTED squats or JACKKNIFE SQUATS

STEP 5: FULL SQUATS

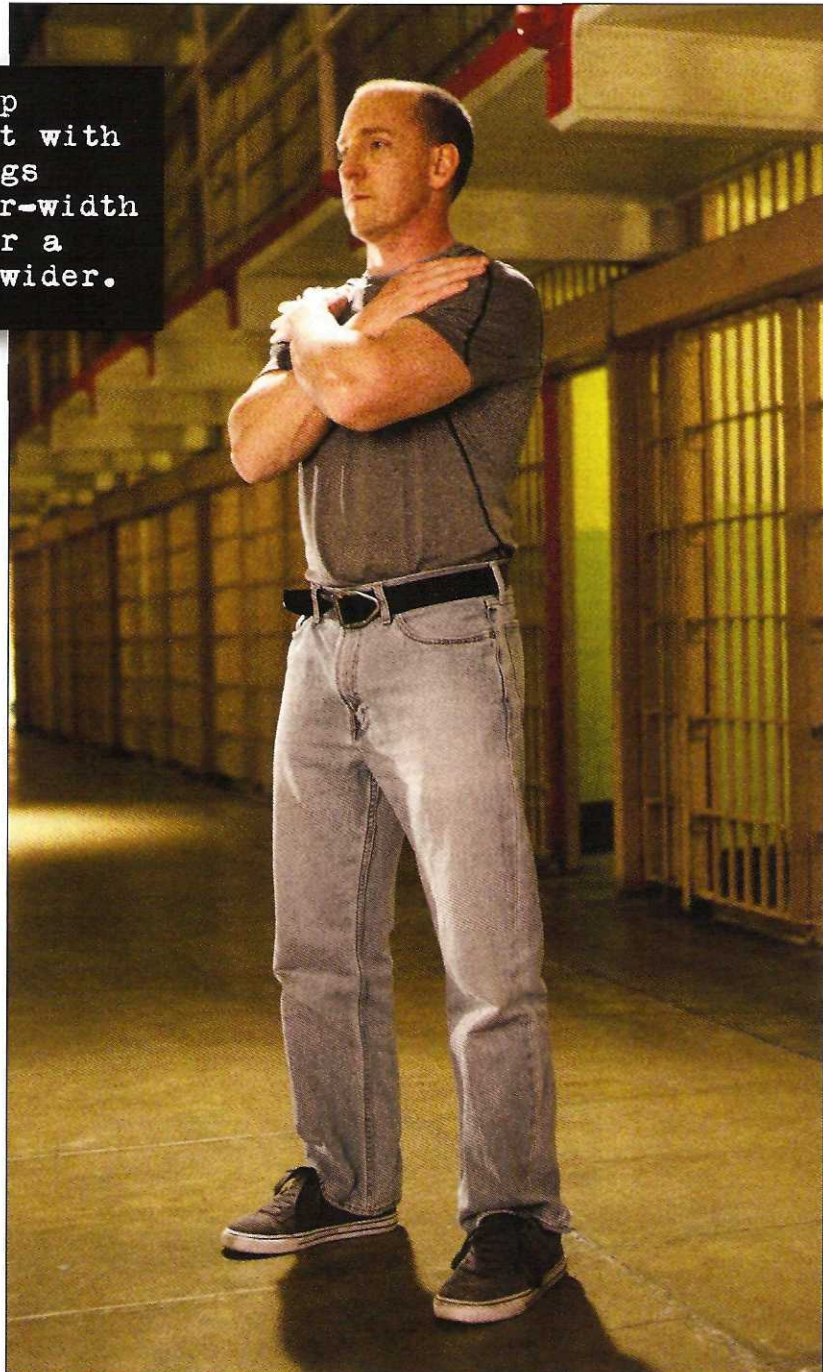
OVERVIEW

The last four steps were really preliminary exercises to build a great base for true bodyweight squatting. They not only help heal pre-existing injuries and build aerobic fitness and flexibility, but the higher volume will also force you to develop your ideal squatting movement pattern. This is a crucial part of bodyweight strength training, but it's something a lot of trainees, even coaches, often overlook. Some people say, "well, why wait until step five to get to proper, free-standing bodyweight squatting?" and the answer is that the longer you take acquiring a basic movement pattern, the more deeply that pattern is ingrained in your mind, body and nervous system. Once you've acquired movement patterns, they are really hard to shift or alter—so that's why, if you want to become advanced at bodyweight exercise, you should begin slowly and with lots of repetitions. Squatting is a *skill*. I want you to have *perfect* technical patterns hardwired into you, for life. It's another great reason to carefully study this DVD series—watching these movements is a much more efficient way of absorbing faultless movement patterns.

BASIC POSTURE

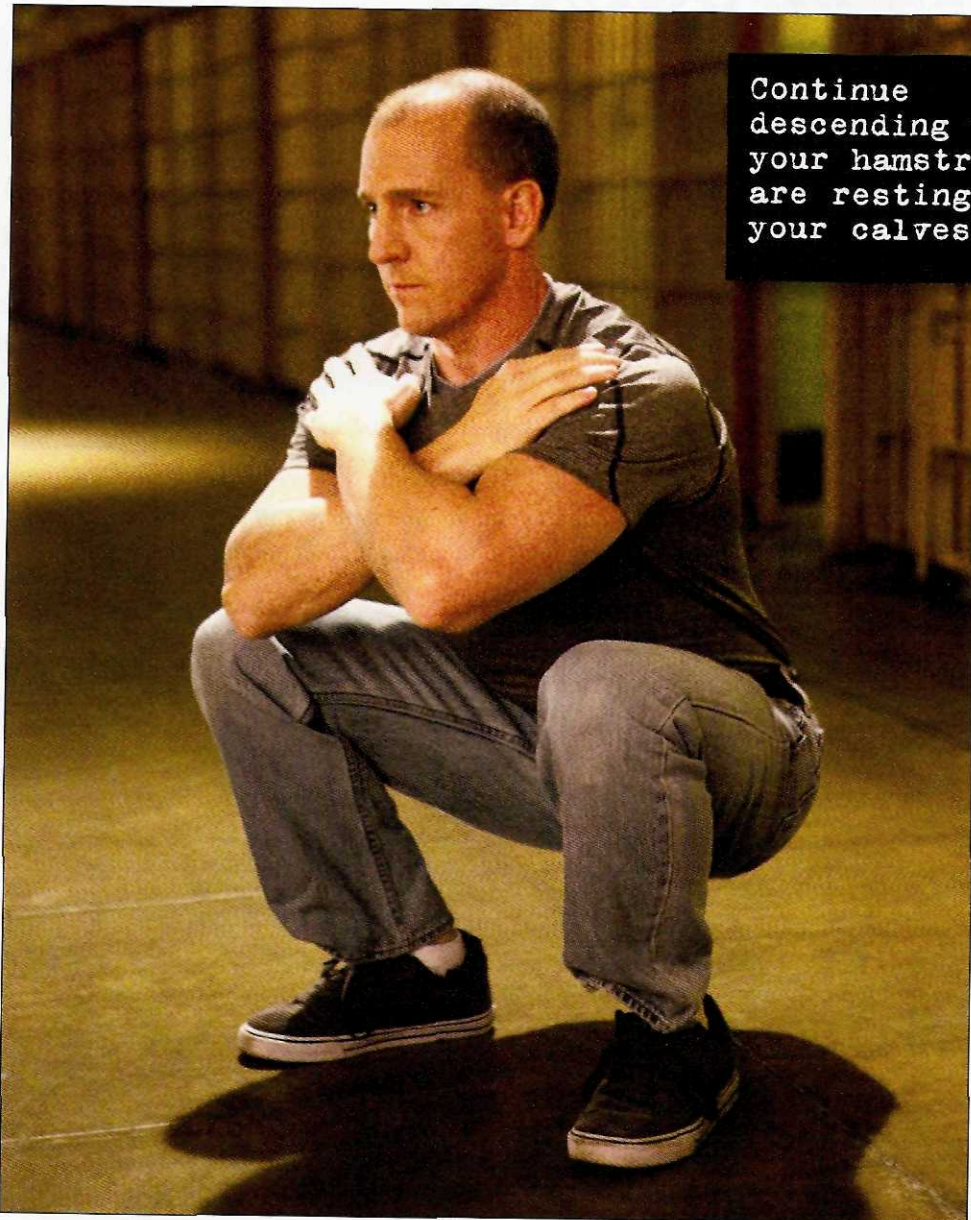
- Stand up straight with your legs shoulder-width apart or a little wider.
- Point your toes slightly outwards.
- Cross your arms in front of your chest.

Stand up
straight with
your legs
shoulder-width
apart or a
little wider.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend at the knees and hips.
- Try to keep your back straight as you go down.
- Continue descending until your hamstrings are resting on your calves.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor as you move.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.



Continue descending until your hamstrings are resting on your calves.

POSITIVE

- Smoothly reverse the movement and push back up through your legs.
- Focus on pressing down through your heels rather than your toes.
- Stop when you are standing straight again, and repeat the exercise.

“HIDDEN STEPS” FULL SQUATS

- Begin with $\frac{3}{4}$ depth squats, a depth in-between half squats and full squats
- Build a rep base of 20+ reps
- Add an inch or two of depth every time you meet this goal, until you are performing full squats

PROGRESSION LEVELS FULL SQUATS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • BEGINNER STANDARD: | 1 set of 5 reps |
| • INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: | 2 sets of 10 reps |
| • PROGRESSION STANDARD: | 2 sets of 30 reps |

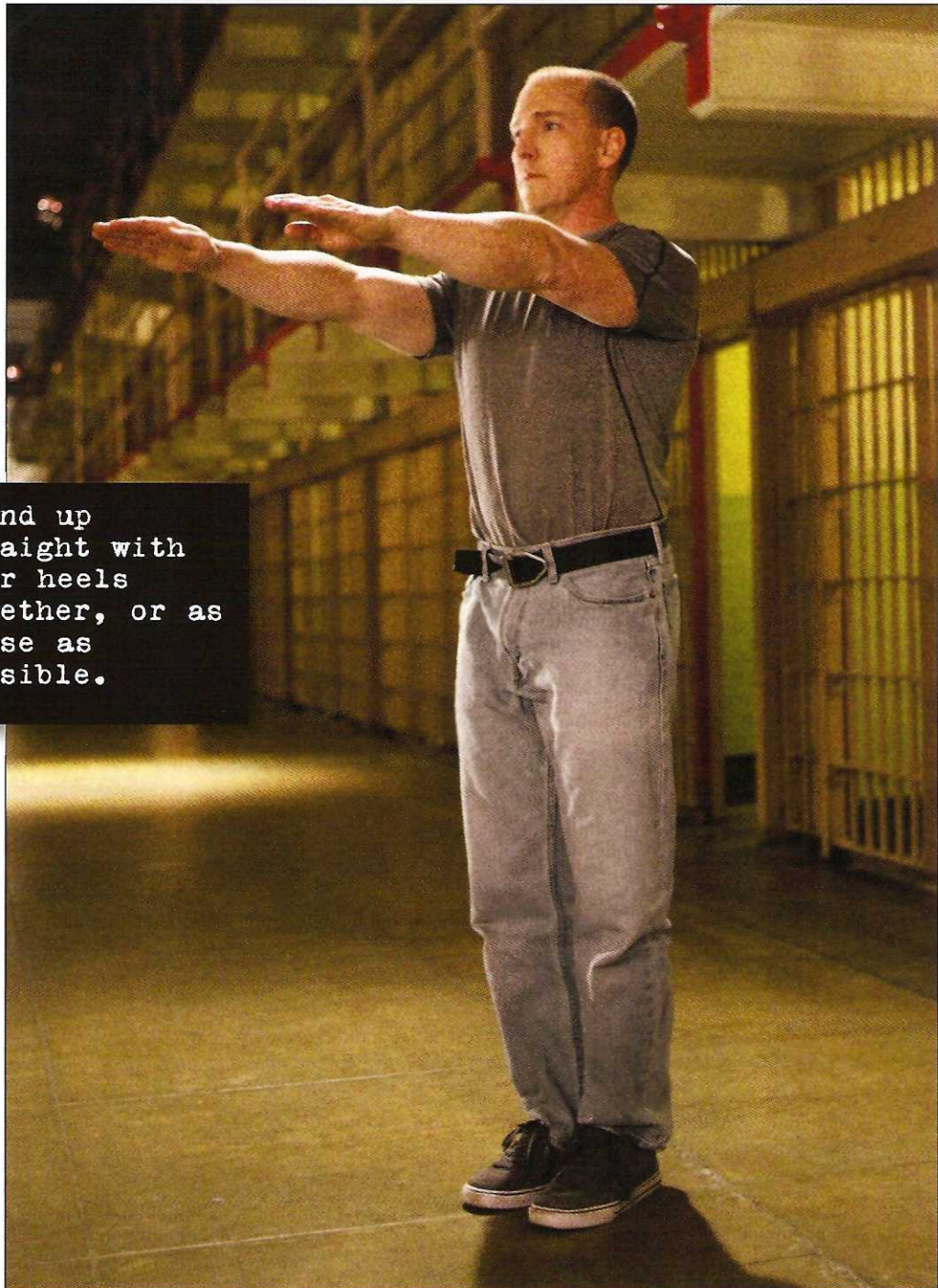
STEP 6: CLOSE SQUATS

OVERVIEW

The next four exercises, the next four steps, are advanced techniques that, when mastered, will easily make you the best one-leg squatter you can be. Pretty soon you'll be ready to move to specialist transitional techniques, which will help you go from two-leg work to one-leg work. But before you're ready for that, you need more *strength*. You need to continue your journey towards iron muscles and bulletproof tendons, with an exercise which will smoothly give your well-prepared joints more work. That's what step 6, close squats, is all about. Close squats are full squats, but with the feet together. Putting the feet close makes the squat movement much harder. This variation places much greater emphasis on all the leg muscles, but particularly the quadriceps at the front. This adds functional strength and muscle. Due to the angle of the shin, the exercise also requires good tension-flexibility in the ankles. The exercise will build powerful glutes, and radically strengthen the knee joints and surrounding muscle and soft tissue.

BASIC POSTURE

- Stand up straight with your heels together, or as close as possible.
- Point your toes slightly outwards.
- Straighten your arms out in front of your shoulders for balance.

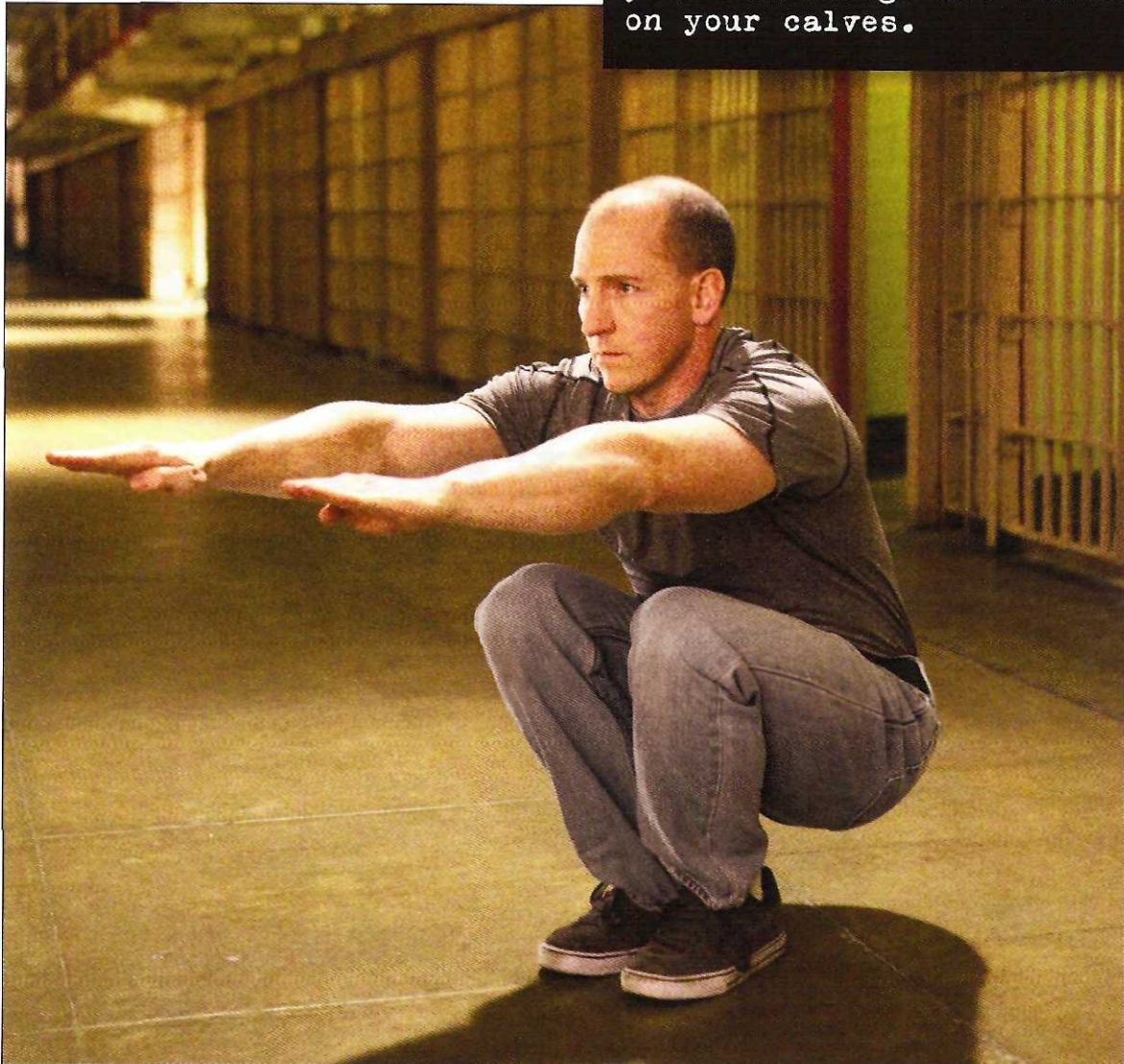


Stand up straight with your heels together, or as close as possible.

NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend at the knees and hips.
- Try to keep your back straight as you go down.
- Continue descending until your hamstrings are resting on your calves.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor as you move.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.

Continue descending until
your hamstrings are resting
on your calves.



POSITIVE

- Smoothly reverse the movement and push back up through your legs.
- Focus on pressing down through your heels rather than your toes.
- Stop when you are standing straight again, and repeat the exercise.

“HIDDEN STEPS” CLOSE SQUATS

- Continue with regular full squats
- Every workout, bring your feet one inch closer together (use a rope or string to measure your stance)
- Continue bringing your feet together every time you can get 20 reps, until you are performing close squats

PROGRESSION LEVELS CLOSE SQUATS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • BEGINNER STANDARD: | 1 set of 5 reps |
| • INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: | 2 sets of 10 reps |
| • PROGRESSION STANDARD: | 2 sets of 20 reps |

STEP 7: UNEVEN SQUATS

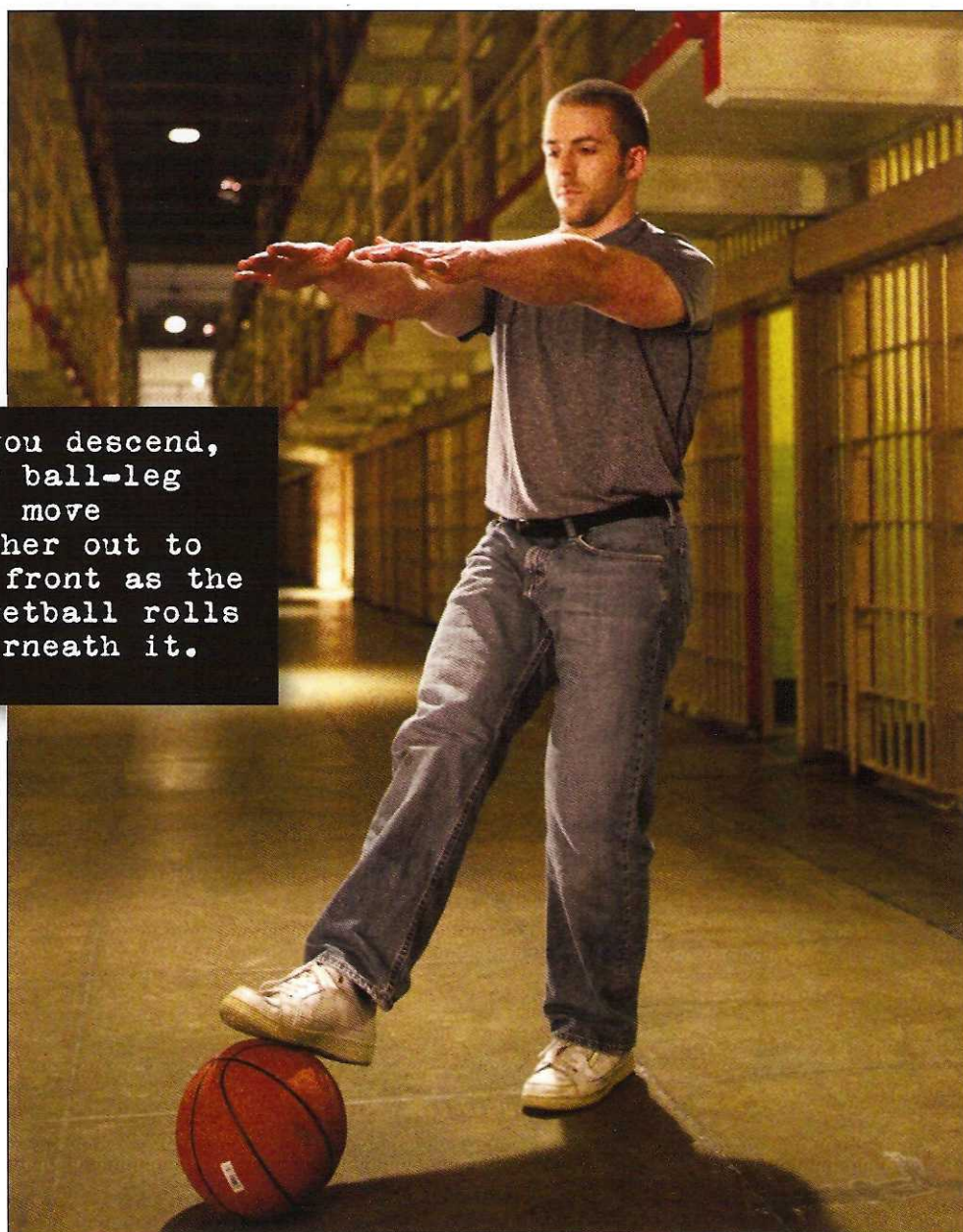
OVERVIEW

If you've followed the squatting series so far, your legs will be flexible, healthy, and very strong. But even most close squatters still can't attempt a full one-leg squat, for two reasons. Firstly, they lack the strength to get out of the bottom position on one leg; and secondly, their hips aren't strong enough to hold the working leg up in front of them. So what athletes need at this stage is a transitional exercise which allows them to perform one-leg squats *but* with some assistance to get them out of the bottom position, as well as providing some support for their non-working leg. That's what the uneven squat does.

BASIC POSTURE

- Stand up with one foot flat on the floor, and another resting firmly on a basketball straight out in front of you.
- Your leg on the floor should be straight and vertical, and your ball-leg should be straight and diagonal.
- Your feet should be shoulder width apart or a little wider.
- Straighten your arms out in front of your shoulders for balance.

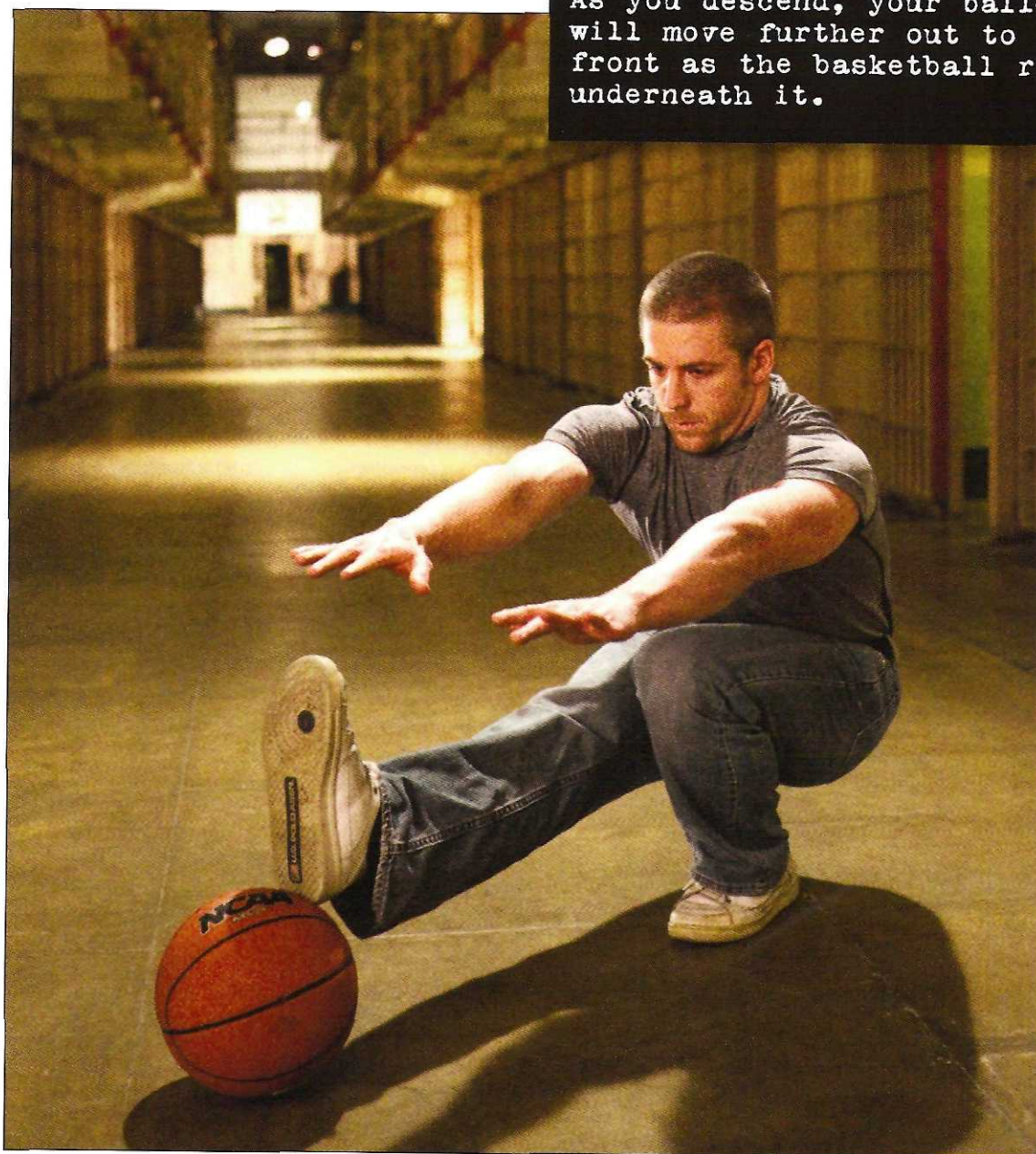
As you descend, your ball-leg will move further out to the front as the basketball rolls underneath it.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend your working leg.
- As you descend, your ball-leg will move further out to the front as the basketball rolls underneath it.
- Continue descending until the hamstring of your working leg is resting on your calf.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.

As you descend, your ball-leg will move further out to the front as the basketball rolls underneath it.



POSITIVE

- Press hard through the floor with your working leg.
- To help get yourself out of the bottom position, press down through your heel and the basketball with your assisting leg.
- Keep your ball-leg as straight as possible throughout the exercise.
- Continue until you have pushed yourself back to the starting position, and repeat.

"HIDDEN STEPS" **UNEVEN SQUATS**

- Begin by using stable objects which are lower than a basketball (like a step; perhaps the first step on a stairwell)
- As you become accustomed to the uneven squat, try higher steps until your foot is the same height as if it was on a basketball
- Now attempt the basketball again

PROGRESSION LEVELS **UNEVEN SQUATS**

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • BEGINNER STANDARD: | 1 set of 5 reps |
| • INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: | 2 sets of 10 reps |
| • PROGRESSION STANDARD: | 2 sets of 20 reps |

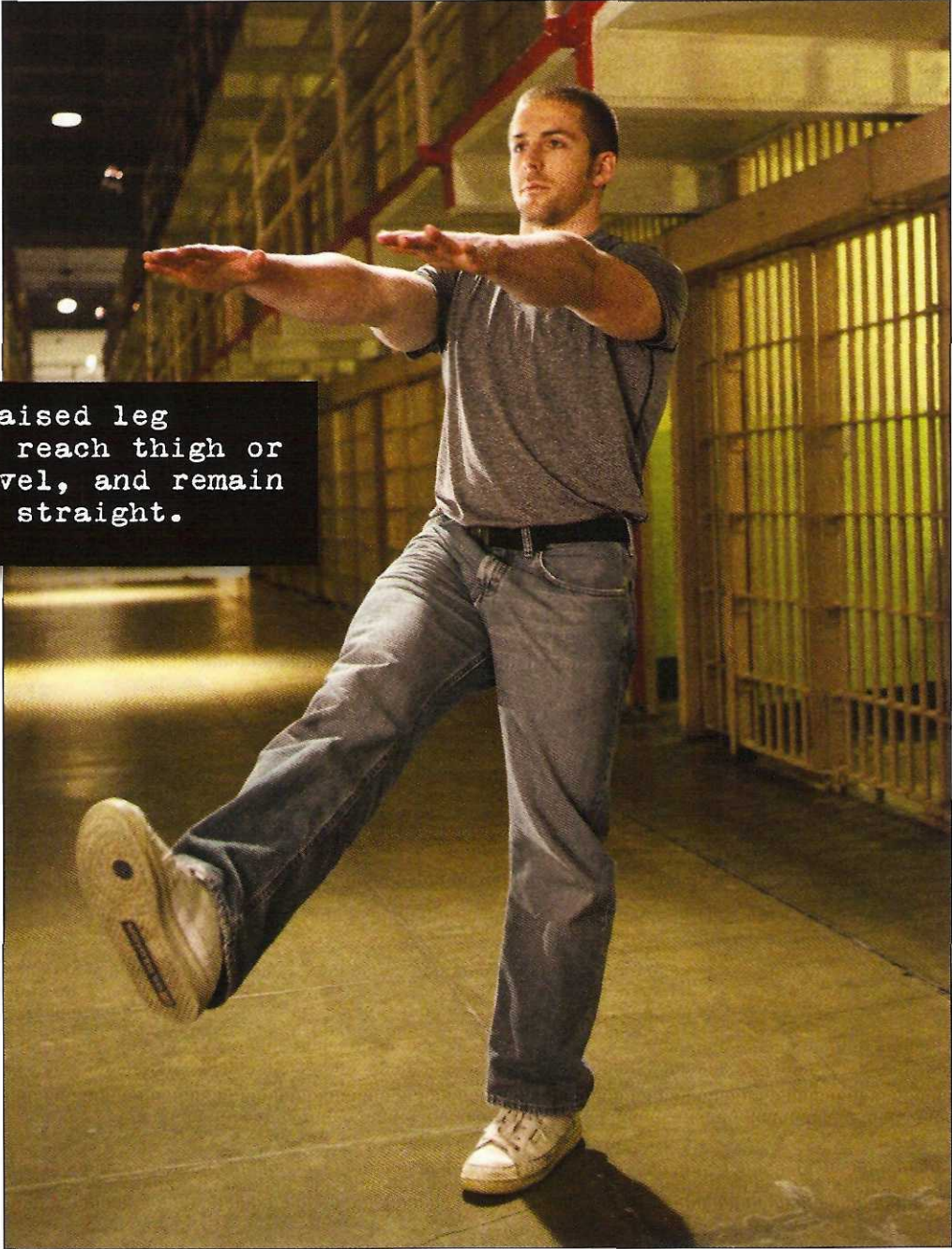
STEP 8: ½ ONE-LEG SQUATS

OVERVIEW

A lot of students of the system ask why ½ one-leg squats replace uneven squats at a higher point in the squatting series, even though many athletes find uneven squats harder. First off, it's important to say you at this level you should continue performing uneven squats; so ½ one-leg squats don't *replace* uneven squats. You should think of this step as a skill builder, an exercise which bulletproofs your weak links rather than a plain old basic strength exercise. This exercise is an advanced one designed to specialize in three technical areas. The first is correct balance. This is the first exercise where you're squatting completely on one limb, and you need to spend some time getting your equilibrium and groove right. The second factor is the ability to hold your non-squatting leg high off the ground. The third element is lower leg strength; this exercise will turn your feet, arches and ankles into steel, which is necessary for safe one-leg squatting.

BASIC POSTURE

- Stand up straight with your legs shoulder-width apart or a little wider.
- Straighten your arms out in front of your shoulders for balance.
- Lift one leg up out in front of you.
- Your raised leg should reach thigh or hip level, and remain fairly straight.

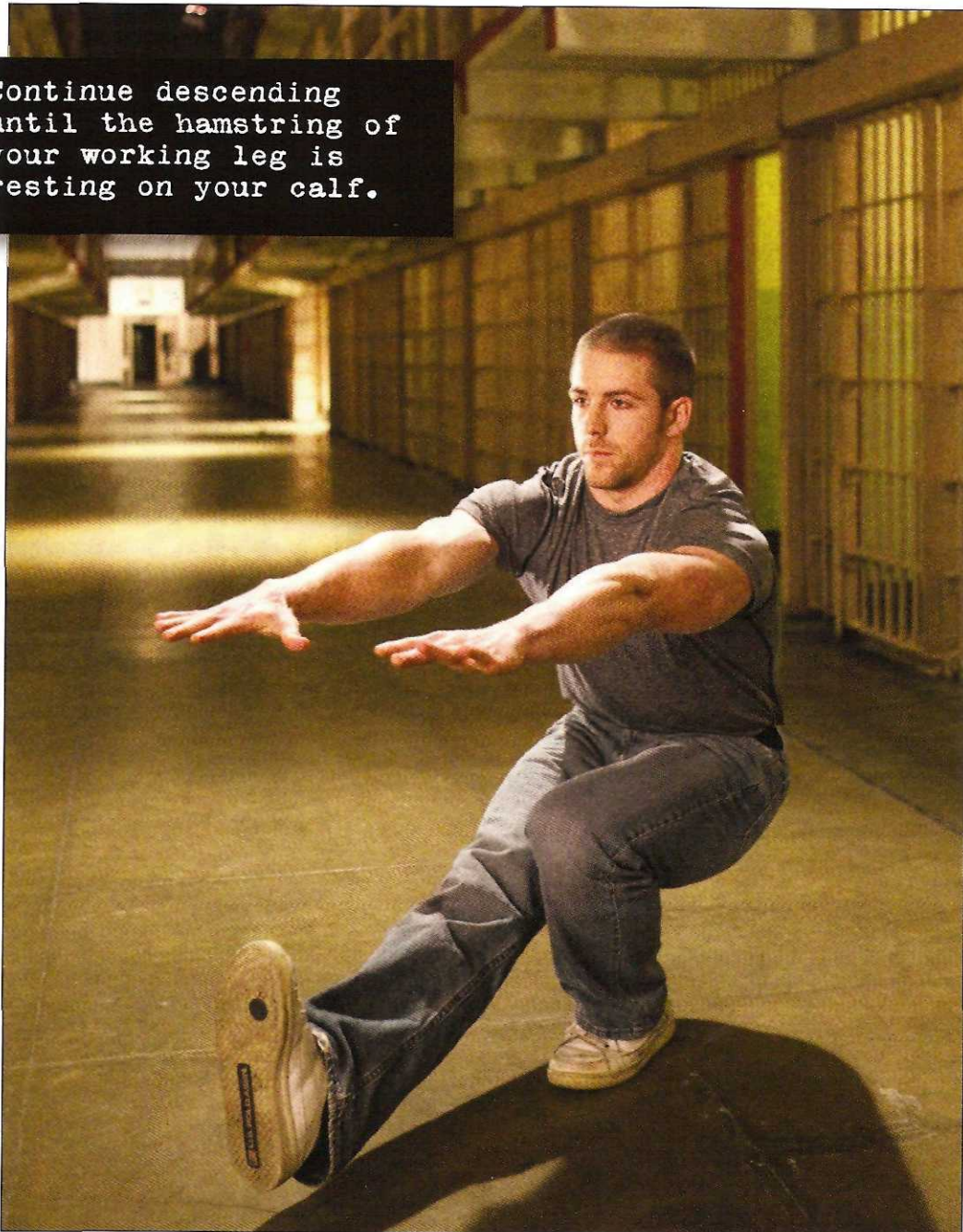


Your raised leg should reach thigh or hip level, and remain fairly straight.

NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend your working leg.
- Continue descending until your working thigh is parallel with the floor.
- Keep your foot flat on the floor as you move.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.

Continue descending until the hamstring of your working leg is resting on your calf.



POSITIVE

- Smoothly reverse the movement and push back up through your working leg.
- Focus on pressing down through your heel rather than your toes.
- At no point should your raised leg bend or touch the ground.

“HIDDEN STEPS” 1/2 ONE-LEG SQUATS

- If you find half squats difficult, work into them with a reduced range of motion
- Begin with $\frac{1}{4}$ one-leg squats, and build to high reps (20+)
- Every workout, increase your range of motion slightly until you are performing true $\frac{1}{2}$ one-leg squats to parallel

PROGRESSION LEVELS 1/2 ONE-LEG SQUATS

- BEGINNER STANDARD: 1 set of 5 reps
- INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: 2 sets of 10 reps
- PROGRESSION STANDARD: 2 sets of 20
- **REMEMBER!** FINISH YOUR $\frac{1}{2}$ ONE-LEG SQUAT TRAINING WITH CLOSE SQUATS OR UNEVEN SQUATS

STEP 9: ASSISTED ONE-LEG SQUATS

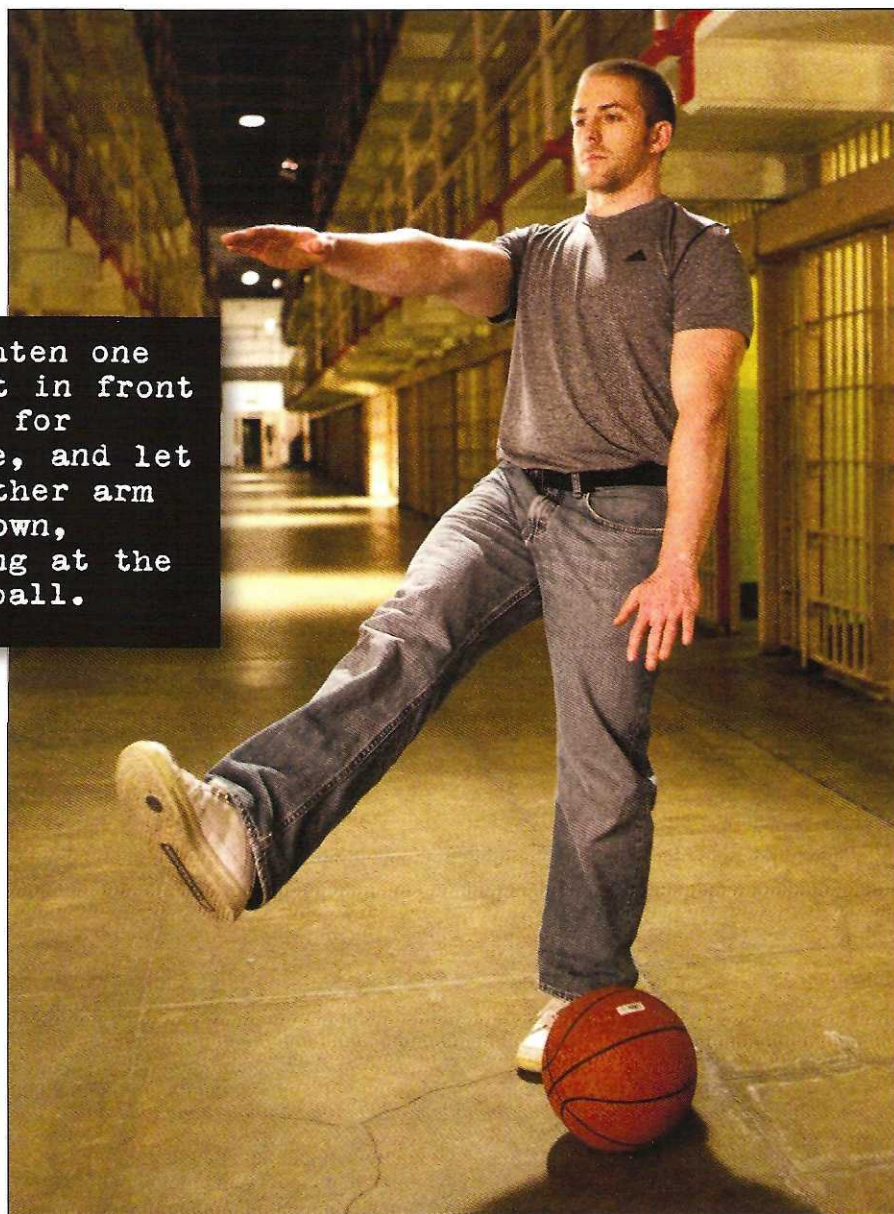
OVERVIEW

So now you can at least squat halfway down on one leg—possibly more. Rather than have you work full one-leg squats and risk the possibility of straining yourself, what the athlete requires at this point is some kind of exercise which allows them to perform a good one-leg squat, but with just a small amount of assistance over the first few inches coming out of the hole. That's what step nine, assisted one-leg squats, are all about. I'm going to show you how to learn full one-leg squatting patterns with only a small amount of functional support—right at the basement level, where you need it.

BASIC POSTURE

- Take a basketball and set it next to the outside of the leg you are about to squat with.
- Stand up straight with your legs shoulder-width apart or a little wider.
- Straighten one arm out in front of you for balance, and let your other arm hang down, pointing at the basketball.
- Lift your non-squatting leg up out in front of you.
- Your raised leg should reach thigh or hip level, and remain fairly straight.

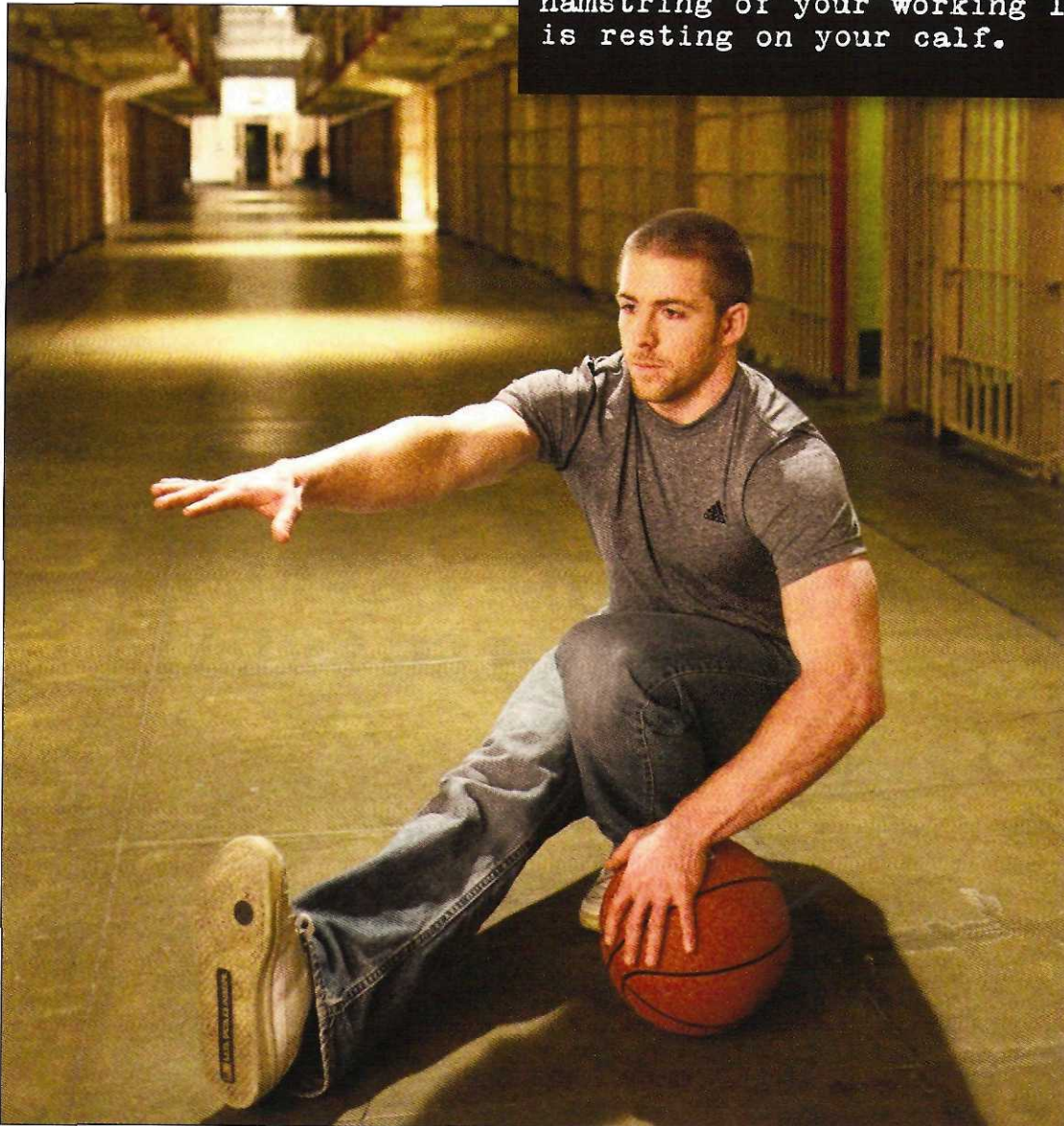
Straighten one arm out in front of you for balance, and let your other arm hang down, pointing at the basketball.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend your working leg.
- Keep your foot flat on the floor as you move.
- Continue descending until the hamstring of your working leg is resting on your calf.
- As you reach the bottom position, place your palm firmly on the basketball.
- Hold this bottom position for a one count.

Continue descending until the hamstring of your working leg is resting on your calf.



POSITIVE

- To help the beginning of the ascent, press down through the basketball with your hand.
- Keep pushing yourself back up using pure leg power as your hand leaves the ball.
- Continue until you have pushed yourself back to the starting position, and repeat.

“HIDDEN STEPS” ASSISTED ONE-LEG SQUATS

- Pushing off something higher than a basketball will allow you to use your arm over a longer range, and make the exercise easier
- Pushing off two objects—one either side of you—will also make the exercise easier by improving balance
- Over time, attempt the basketball again

PROGRESSION LEVELS ASSISTED ONE-LEG SQUATS

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • BEGINNER STANDARD: | 1 set of 5 reps |
| • INTERMEDIATE STANDARD: | 2 sets of 10 reps |
| • PROGRESSION STANDARD: | 2 sets of 20 reps |

STEP 10: MASTER STEP ONE-LEG SQUATS

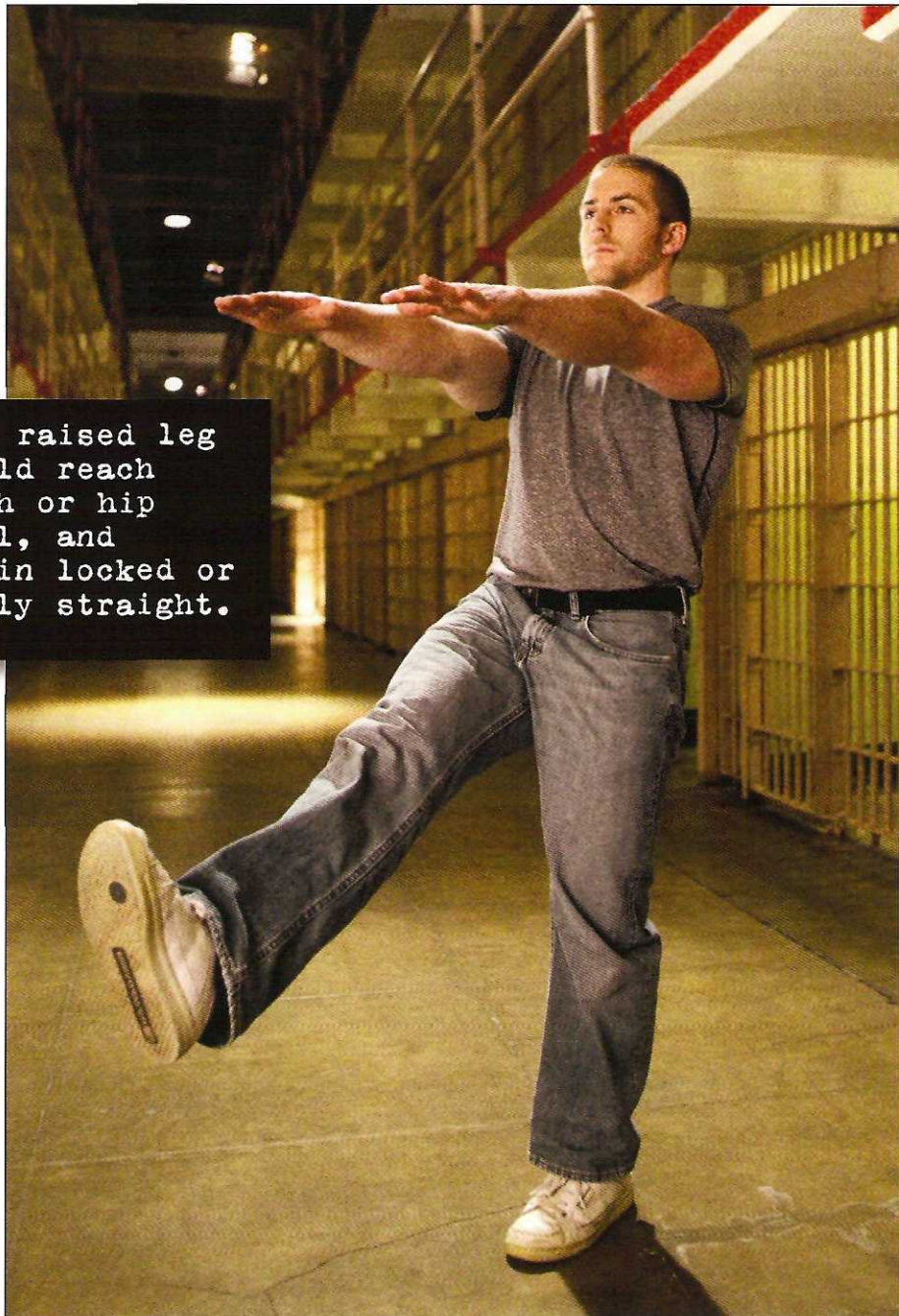
OVERVIEW

One-leg squats are the Master Step of the squatting series. Once you get to the level where you can do full, butt-to-the-ground one-leg squats for reps, you will have functionally stronger legs than ninety-nine percent of the world's population. Even the vast majority of serious athletes can't do one-leg squats—and the ones who can do it usually don't do it right. Certainly most bodybuilders, very big men, can't even attempt the exercise. Standard bodybuilding increases the cross-section of the muscles, but it doesn't do much for tendon strength, tension-flexibility, or the kind of total body muscle synergy you need to do one-leg squats. Virtually every sport and athletic art on earth requires unilateral strength transmission; strength through one leg. Running, jumping, lunging, climbing and kicking are all examples. So if you want safe, real world strength for a sport, martial art or event, one-leg squatting is the best kind of training there is.

BASIC POSTURE

- Stand up straight with your legs shoulder-width apart or a little wider.
- Straighten your arms out in front of your shoulders for balance.
- Lift one leg up out in front of you.
- Your raised leg should reach thigh or hip level, and remain locked or fairly straight.

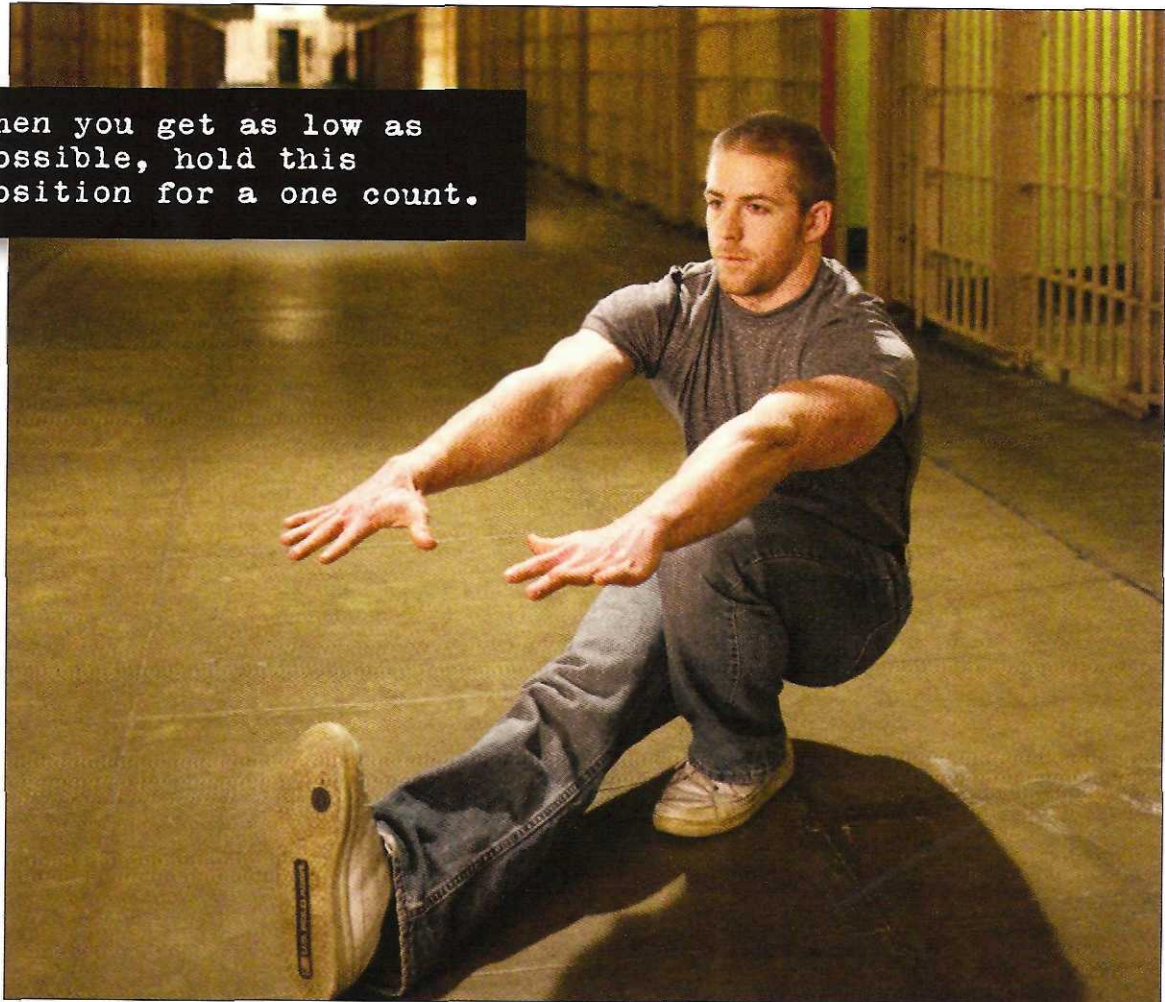
Your raised leg should reach thigh or hip level, and remain locked or fairly straight.



NEGATIVE

- Smoothly bend your working leg.
- Try to keep your back straight as you go down.
- Continue descending until the hamstring of your working leg is resting on your calf.
- Keep your foot flat on the floor as you move.
- When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.

When you get as low as possible, hold this position for a one count.



POSITIVE

- Smoothly reverse the movement and push back up through your working leg.
- Focus on pressing down through your heel rather than your toes.

SQUATS SERIES SUMMARY

For ease of reference, let's take a look at the ten steps of the squat series all together.

STEP 1: SHOULDERSTAND SQUATS

Step one: Shoulderstand squats. Build to three sets of fifty. Then begin;

STEP 2: JACKKNIFE SQUATS

Step Two: Jackknife squats. Build to three sets of forty, then begin;

STEP 3: SUPPORTED SQUATS

Step three: Supported squats. Build to three sets of thirty. Then begin;

STEP 4: HALF SQUATS

Step four: Half squats. Build to two sets of fifty. Then move to;

STEP 5: FULL SQUATS

Step five: Full squats. Build to two sets of thirty. Then begin;

STEP 6: CLOSE SQUATS

Step six: Close squats. Build to two sets of twenty. Then start;

STEP 7: UNEVEN SQUATS

Step seven: Uneven squats. Build to two sets of twenty. Then move to;

STEP 8: $\frac{1}{2}$ ONE-LEG SQUATS

Step eight: $\frac{1}{2}$ one-leg squats. Build to two sets of twenty. Then go to;

STEP 9: ASSISTED ONE-LEG SQUATS

Step nine: Assisted one-leg squats. Build to two sets of twenty. Then finally advance to;

STEP 10: MASTER STEP ONE-LEG SQUATS

Step ten, you've reached the Master Step: One-leg squats.

CELL 3:
THE
VARIANTS



CELL 3: THE VARIANTS

W

e've just worked through the basic ten steps of the squatting series. These exercises, along with the "hidden steps" within them, make up all the core techniques you'll ever need to master the best calisthenics leg strength feat there is—the one-leg squat.

Prison athletes understand that having good strength in your legs just isn't enough. If you want to become a supreme raw athlete, you need to build in some other qualities like explosive power, endurance and agility.

We're going to show you how to unlock these skills and perform a few of the best variant lower body drills. You don't have to perform these exercises as a part of Convict Conditioning, but you can explore them whenever you want to. These are for you to put into your tool kit.

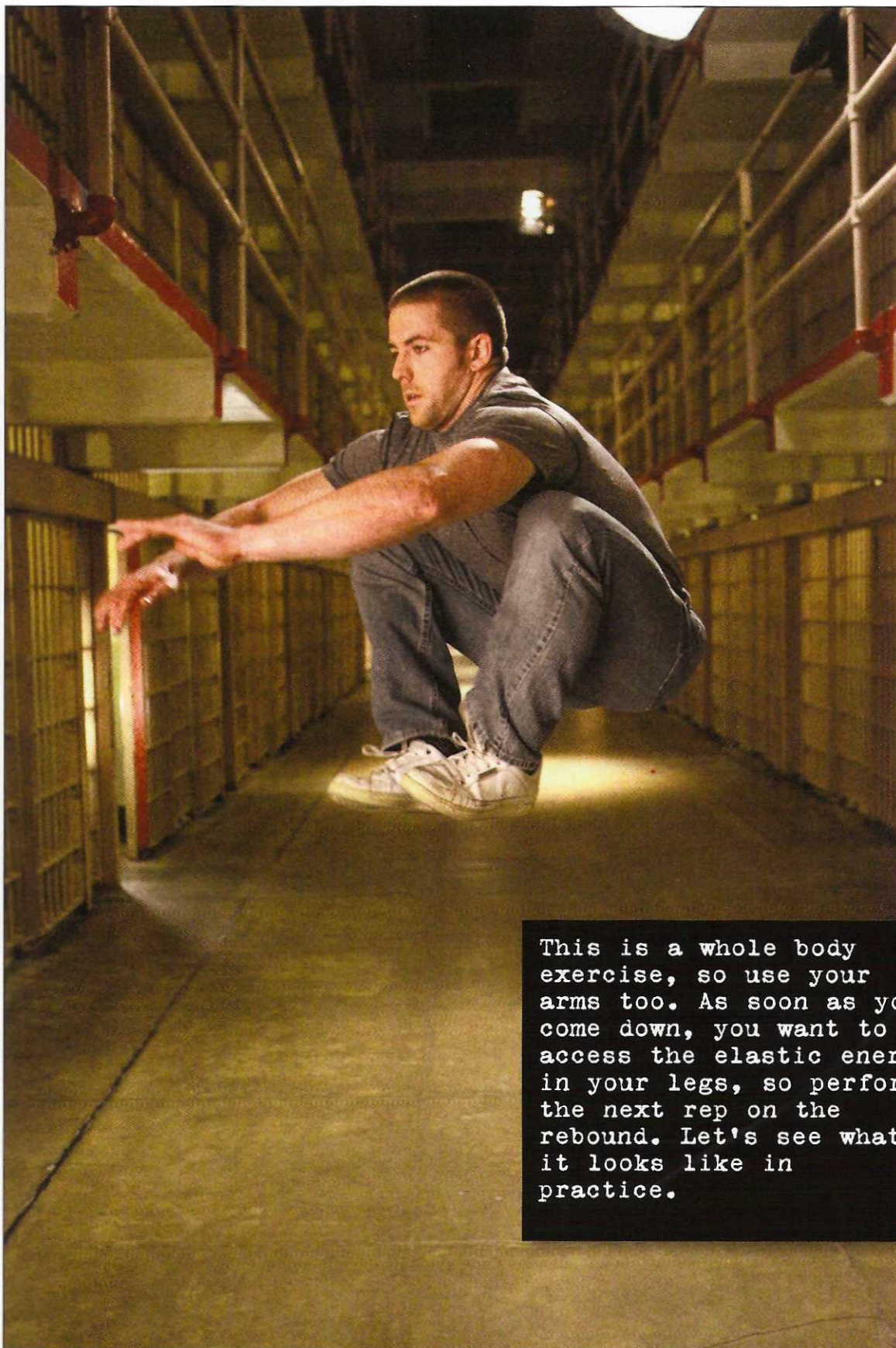
TUCK JUMPS

OVERVIEW

Once your legs gain some strength, it's important to learn how to use that strength quickly, explosively. All trainees should think about throwing some plyometric exercises into their leg training, even if it's just a few sets of five jumps for height performed at the end of a session. Right now we're going to show you a basic two leg jump that's popular behind bars because it doesn't require any equipment; the tuck jump. Bend your knees into about a half squat, and spring up as high as you can, drawing your knees as far into your chest at the top as possible. This is called a "tuck" position, because your legs are tucked in. This is a whole body exercise, so use your arms too. As soon as you come down, you want to access the elastic energy in your legs, so perform the next rep on the rebound.

TRAINING IDEAS

This is a nice, symmetrical squatting jump that's easy to learn. It fires up the legs, calves, hips, abs and even the arms—it's a total body exercise and a great way to start adding some simple plyometrics, or explosiveness training into your program. Because this is a low skill drill, you can work on height while using fairly high reps. Two or three sets of ten or twenty hard tuck jumps at the end of a workout will go a long way to giving you extra springy energy for combat and sports. Doing jumps before your squats can also help fire up the nervous system and improve your workout. It's intense cardio, too. If you're intermediate or advanced, you can consider adding your own plyo or agility session to your weekly workouts.



This is a whole body exercise, so use your arms too. As soon as you come down, you want to access the elastic energy in your legs, so perform the next rep on the rebound. Let's see what it looks like in practice.

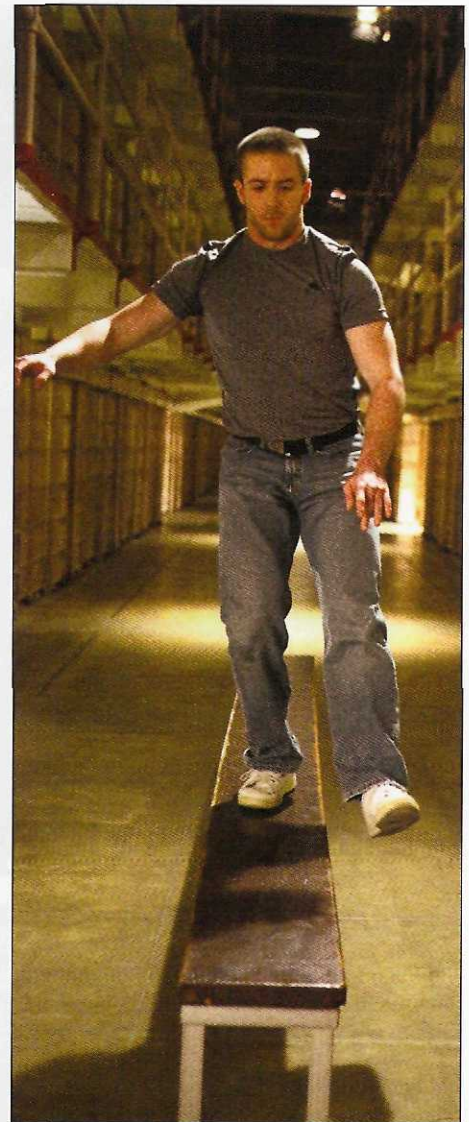
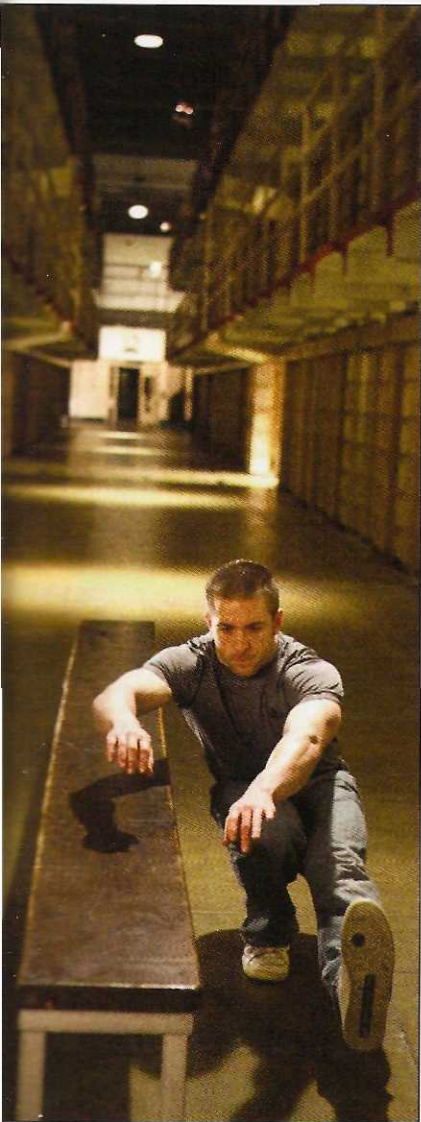
UNILATERAL BASE JUMPS

OVERVIEW

Once you've adapted to tuck jumps, or any kind of two-legged jump, one fundamental way to increase intensity and take your lower body explosiveness to the next level, is to begin practising your jumps unilaterally; using just one leg at a time. We're going to show you a basic one-leg jump onto a box, but you can use anything stable as a base or platform; a bench, a stool, a table or whatever. To minimize injury, approach from the side and just leap up with one leg, drop down and repeat on the rebound. You don't need to go too deeply into the one-leg squat to push off. For power, about parallel is best.

TRAINING IDEAS

This philosophy of progressing from two-leg jumps to one-leg jumps is common in prisons, where space is a limitation. One leg jumping, whether in vertical or horizontal leaps, really limits the space you need, because you can't go as far as you can with two legs. One leg jumping not only increases speed-strength and the demands on the joints, but it's also very functional. Most sports or activities involve pushing off one leg at a time; sprinting and kicking are two good examples. You can work with this exercise just like you would for tuck jumps, but ensure your knees are well warmed-up first.



To minimize injury, approach from the side and just leap up with one leg, drop down and repeat on the rebound. You don't need to go too deeply into the one-leg squat to push off. For power, about parallel is best.

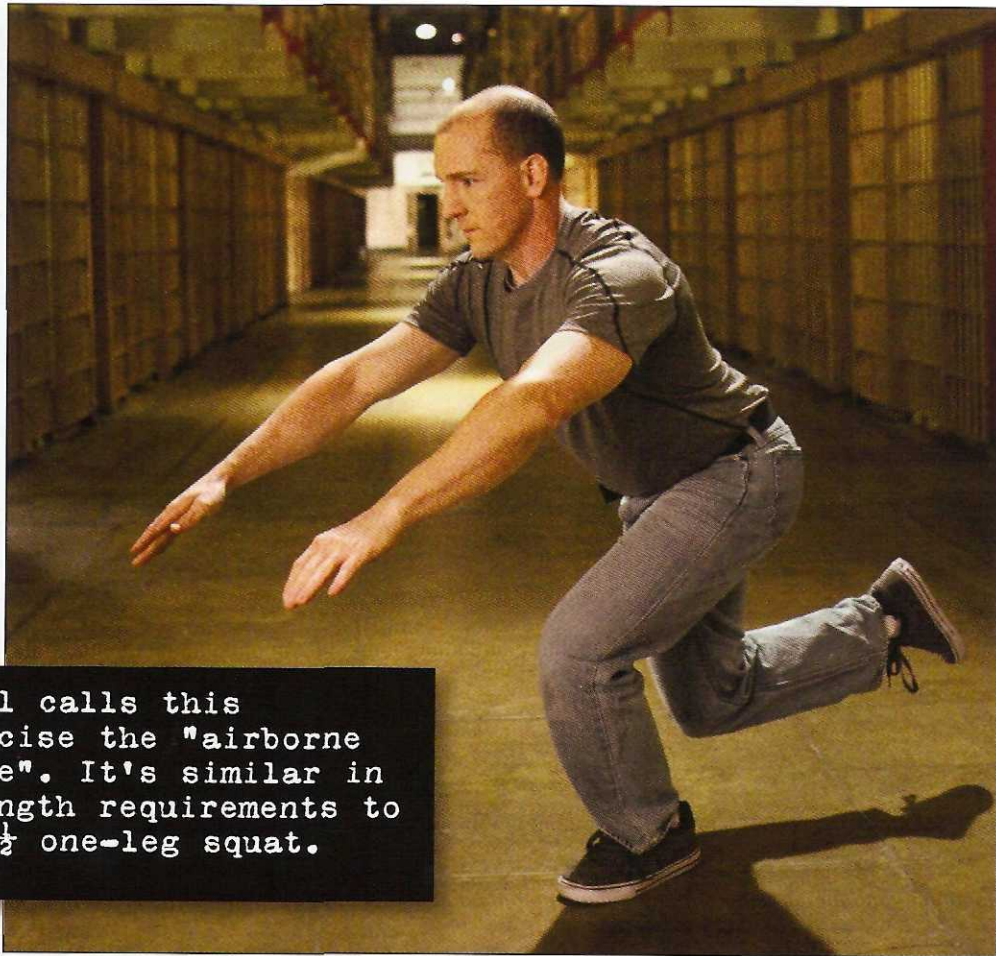
KNEE SQUATS

OVERVIEW

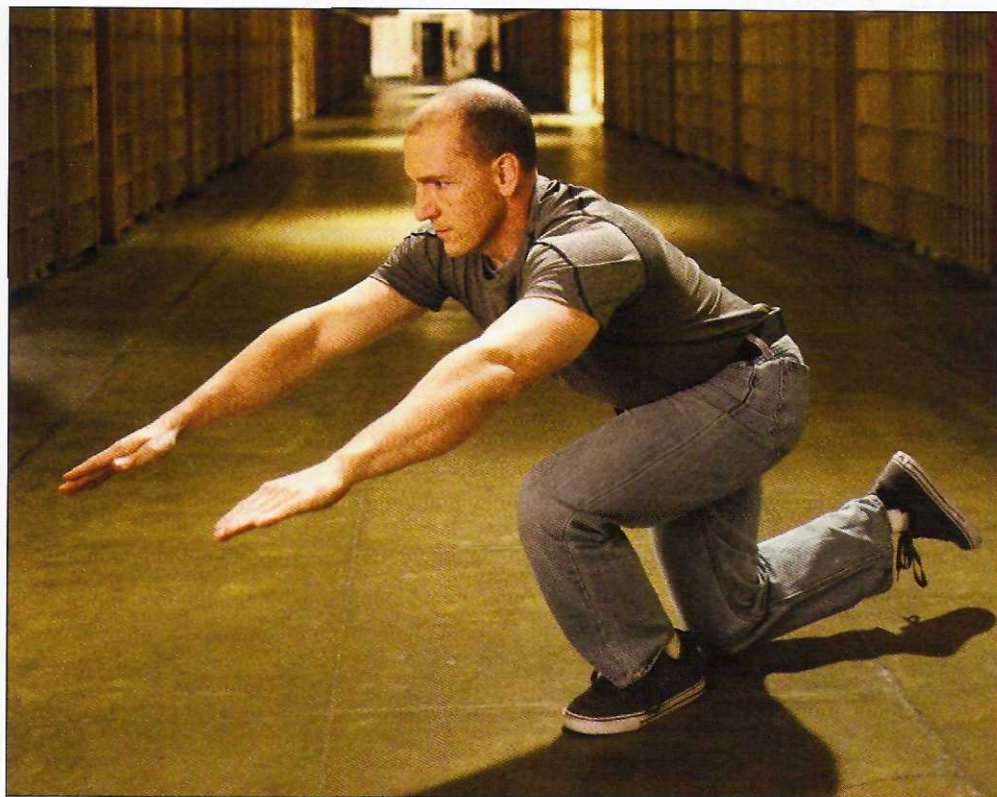
One of the major goals of the Convict Conditioning squat series is learning the ability to squat on one leg. Once you've learned to squat properly on two legs, there are several useful transition exercises you can use to move over to using just one leg. Uneven squats, $\frac{1}{2}$ one-leg squats and assisted one-leg squats are the exercises we've shown you so far, but there is another useful transitional exercise you might want to try. That's the knee squat. With the knee squat, you squat about halfway down on one leg, and gauge the correct depth by touching your opposite knee to the ground.

TRAINING IDEAS

Pavel calls this exercise the "airborne lunge". It's similar in strength requirements to the $\frac{1}{2}$ one-leg squat. It's not a replacement for the $\frac{1}{2}$ one-leg squat because it doesn't teach you the raised leg position, and also because of the leverage of the bent knee you are forced to lean forwards rather than maintain a straight back. But this is an interesting exercise to use for variety once in a while as it works the quads well and it forces you to go to the correct depth every single rep.



Pavel calls this exercise the "airborne lunge". It's similar in strength requirements to the $\frac{1}{2}$ one-leg squat.



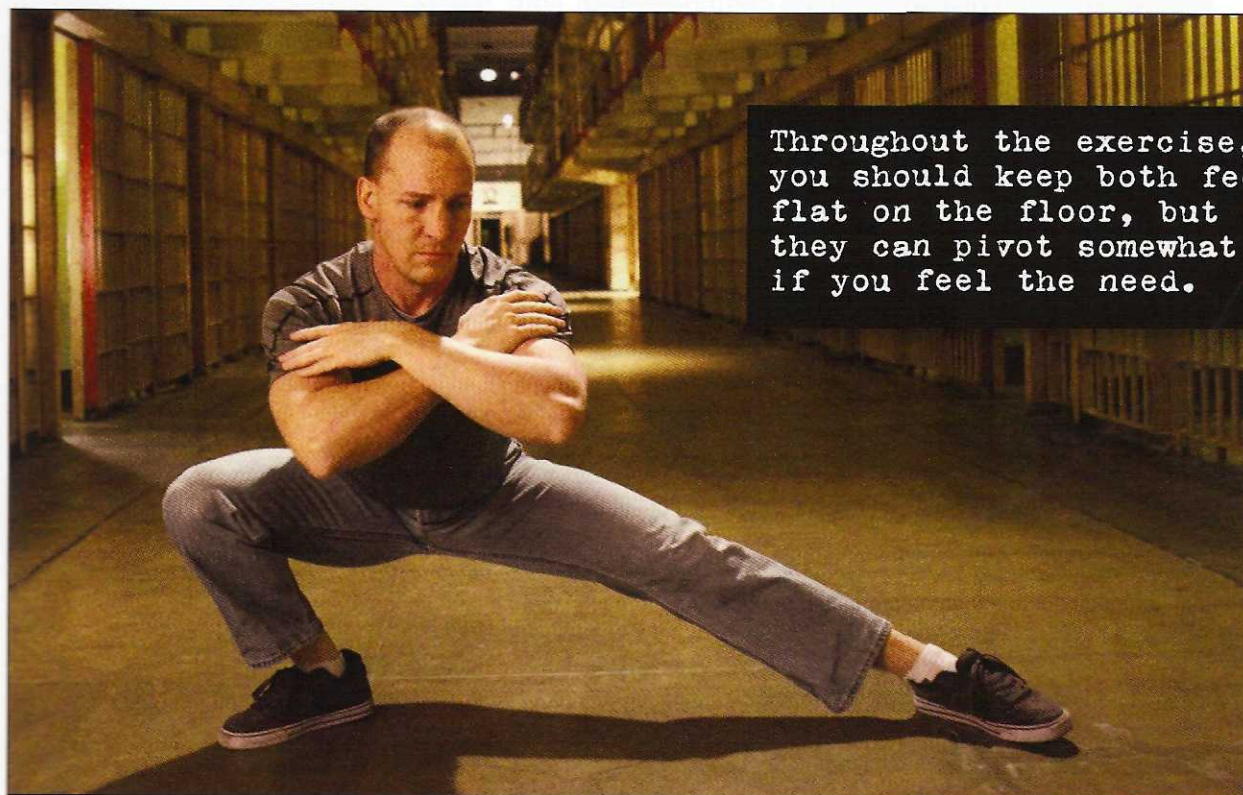
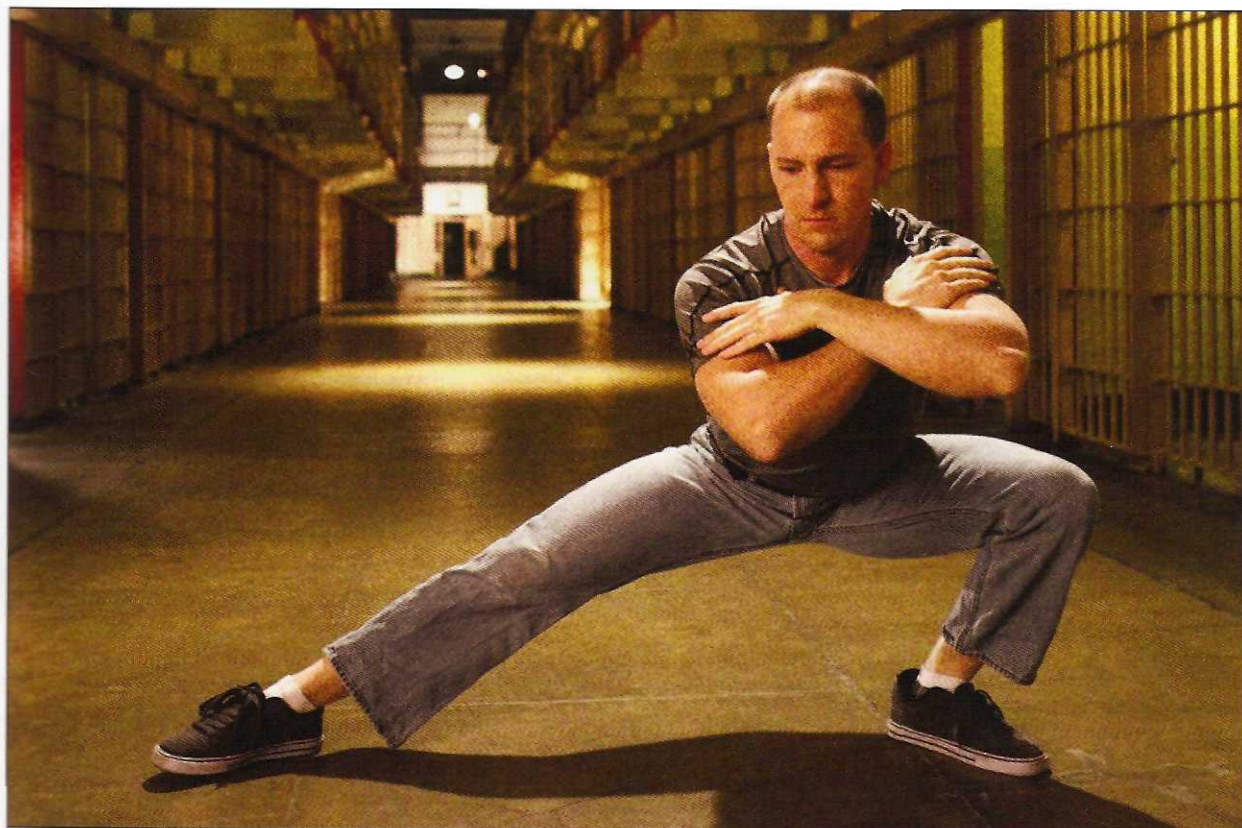
SIDE SQUATS

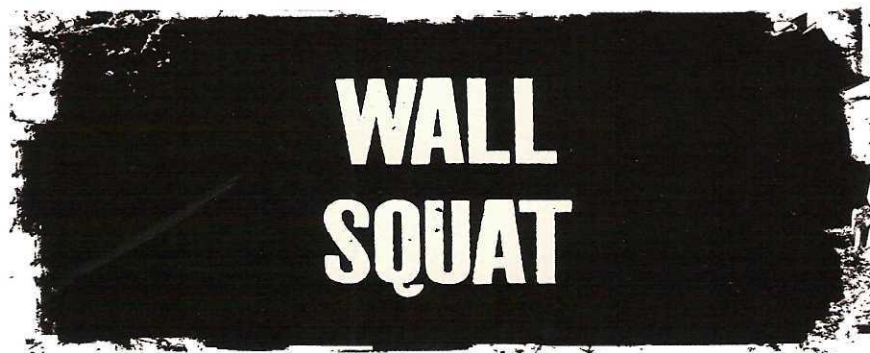
OVERVIEW

Side squats go by several names; side lunges, kung fu squats, split lunges and so on. They're a great way to open up the hips and work the inner thigh, while building towards one-leg squatting. They're also great for adding flexibility to your lower body. Place your feet wide; about double shoulder width. Lean down to one side. Go all the way down until you are as far down as your body will allow, keeping your opposite leg as straight as you can. Throughout the exercise, you should keep both feet flat on the floor, but they can pivot somewhat if you feel the need. Hold the stretch for a second, then reverse the movement, and squat down on the other side. Continue like this, alternating sides, until the set is over.

TRAINING IDEAS

Once you've got a full range of motion on side squats, it's hard to make them progressive. But that doesn't really matter as most athletes use this as a tension-flexibility exercise to loosen up the tight leg and hip muscles and joints, rather than as a power or strength technique. It works well as part of a warm up, for variety, or in between sets to stay loose.





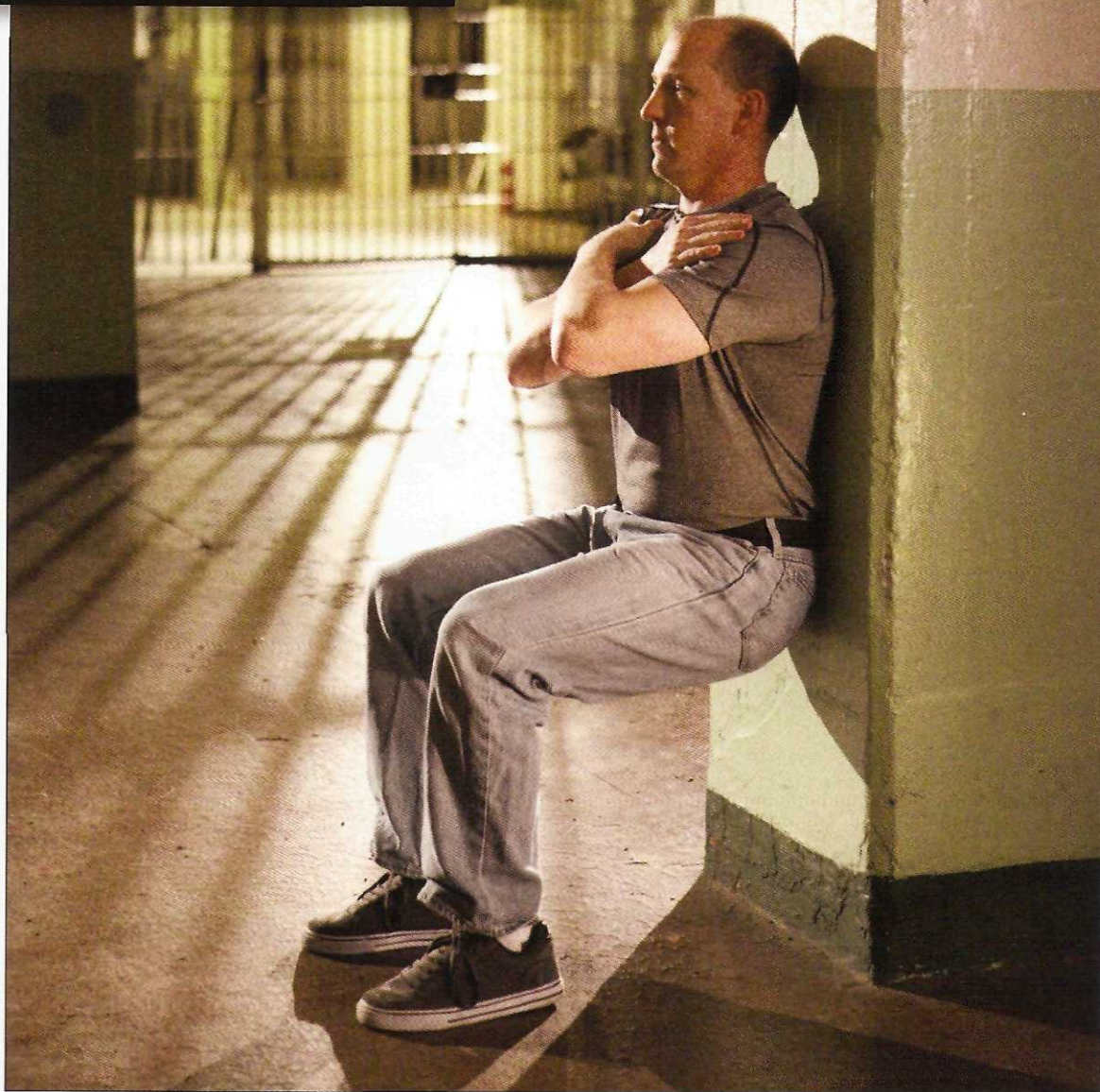
OVERVIEW

The wall squat is an excellent static hold for the legs. Just lean against a wall and slide down into a half squat position from there. Don't press your hands against the wall for help; make things harder by folding your arms over your chest. Focusing on your breathing will take your mind away from the pain after a while. The old-timers sometimes called this classic exercise "Samson's seat" after the Biblical strongman.

TRAINING IDEAS

Wall squats are great for keeping conditioning in your thighs, perhaps if you have a nagging injury which stops you doing full range of moving squats for a while. Because it burns up the legs, it's also a great finishing movement after a hard workout. Just hold the position for as long as you can take the pain. If you want to be progressive, you can go a little lower than parallel, maybe into a $\frac{3}{4}$ squat position. If even this becomes easy over three minutes, you can perform the exercise with only one leg. That's a really demanding endurance exercise. Just remember to start with your weakest leg and match the time with your opposite leg to keep your performance symmetrical.

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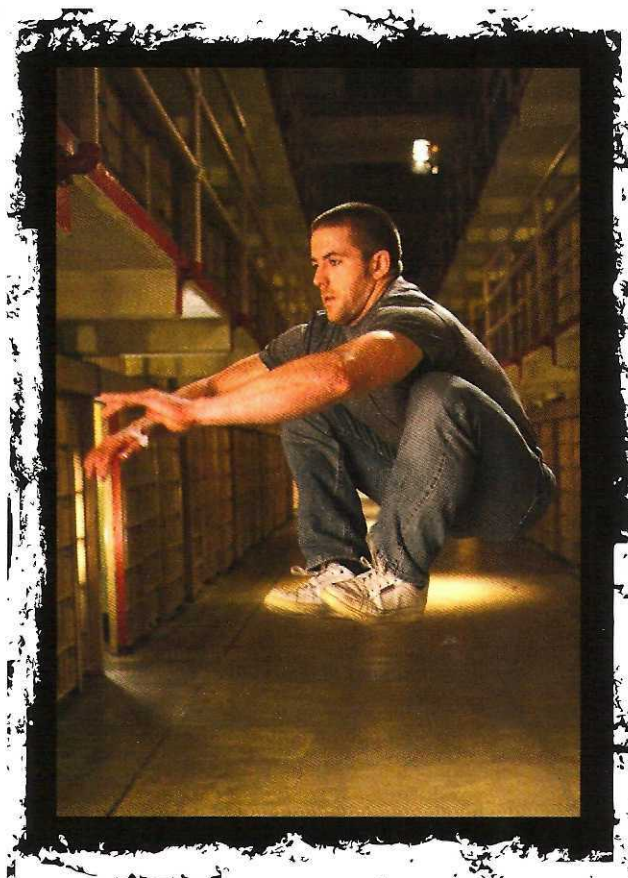
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