

Learn, watch and create – **tactical athlete training**

By Tyler Christiansen

**Learn the past,
watch the present,
and create the future.**

— Jesse Conrad

Strength coaches often watch sports practices to come up with training ideas or find weaknesses that need to be developed in strength and conditioning. The same thing should be done with tactical athletes. Sit back and watch tactical athletes in their respective environments (fire rescue, law enforcement, military, etc.). For example, during hostage rescue training (HRT) the tactical athlete will be in the high or low-ready position for extended periods of time,

depending on the mission. In this position, the operator's feet will be shoulder-width apart and staggered (no more than toe to heel), the knees are slightly bent and the weapon is in the firing position (high or low depending on standard operating procedures and situation). This position will put a lot of stress on the shoulders, core, quadriceps, hamstrings and calves. Thus, it is ideal to train these areas with specificity in mind.

Shooter squat

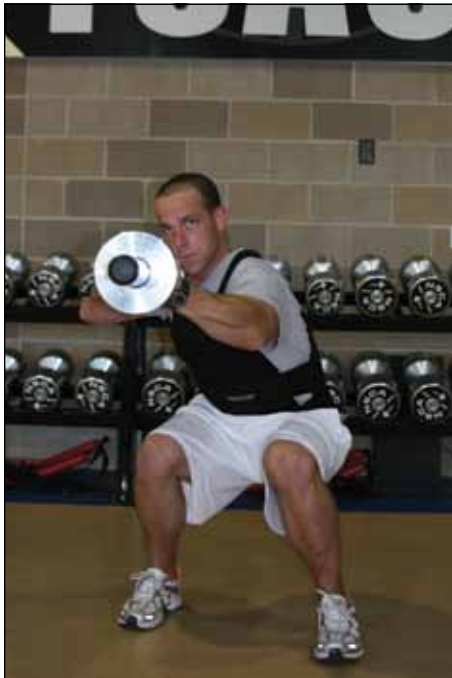
To assist the tactical athlete in becoming efficient in the stressful ready position, the use of the shooter squat and variants are deemed necessary. Feet are shoulder-width apart and staggered, just like the ready position in HRT. Start the movement at the hips by pressing the hips back into a staggered squat position at 90 degrees, focusing on keeping the weight back on the heels. The core must remain strong to keep the torso upright and not hunched forward. It is important to train the dominant shooting side as well as the non-dominant side, which can be done by alternating the lead foot and rear shoulder.

Traditional weights can be added for resistance in the form of a barbell, dumbbell, medicine ball or weighted vest. Non-traditional implements that may be used to substitute holding a weapon include a fake rubber weapon, a standard curl bar with light weights added to the far end as needed, or a standard 18-inch bum-

per plate (starting around 5 kg). While maintaining the ready position with the substitute weapon, be sure not to let the

barrel of your weapon drop at the bottom of the squat.





Shooter squat and sweep

The shooter squat and sweep will overemphasize the ready position and includes sweeping for hostile targets in the tactical athlete's sector of fire. With this exercise, the same techniques from the shooter squat will be applied but the tactical athlete will be sweeping the room in the down-squat position. To sweep the room, pause in the down position and shift the hips from a neutral position to the left and right.

Barbells are not recommended as a training aid in this exercise, but using a weighted vest with substitute weaponry can be an effective training method.

Forward and rear lunge

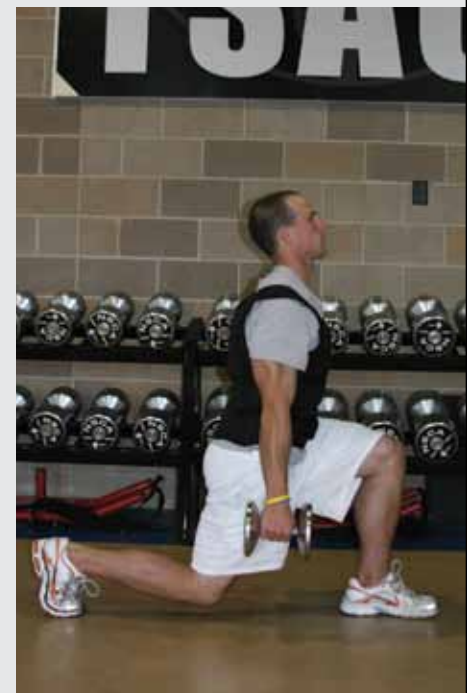
The purpose of this exercise is to strengthen and reinforce the proper form for kneeling behind cover or "taking a knee" in a supported firing position during tactical operations. A rear or forward lunge will prepare the tactical athlete for missions during which he will have to stand and kneel multiple times.

To do a forward lunge, the tactical athlete will step forward with most of his weight on the heel of the forward foot and kneel to a double "L" position with toes pointing forward at all times. The double "L" refers to the front leg being at 90 degrees with the foot flat on the ground, and the rear leg being at 90 degrees with knee on the ground. While in the down position, make sure that the forward knee stays behind the toes and in front of the heel and that the torso is upright, not hunched forward. At this point, the athlete can return to the starting position or continue forward into another lunge while utilizing the opposite leg. When stepping

forward into another lunge, it is important not to stutter step. Once again, the athlete will want to ensure that his weight is on the heel of the forward foot at all times.

To do a reverse lunge, take the same stance, except execute the first step to the

rear while the weight stays on the heel of the forward foot. To add resistance to this exercise, add a 40-pound weighted vest to simulate the tactical athlete's kit. Other implements would be a barbell or dumbbell.





Shooter's circuit

The purpose of the shooter's circuit is to fatigue the shoulders *before* holding a weapon. This gives the tactical athlete an exhausted feeling from holding and maintaining the high-ready position for an extended period of time. After completing ten repetitions each of a front raise, lateral raise, upright row, scarecrow and reverse fly, have the tactical athlete maintain a high-ready position for 30 to 60 seconds while completing the shooter squat with a 40-pound vest and a heavier-than-usual substitute weapon.

This exercise can be done at the shooting range, with the consent of the safety personnel on the range, to have a "stress shoot" experience. This would also be a great tool for the tactical athlete to experience a fatigued shooting sensation and visualize where the rounds end up downrange on the target.



Summary

Training ideas are developed by “watching practice” and learning from observations. When weaknesses are exposed, they must be corrected and developed so the tactical athlete may continue to improve. The exercises described in this article will assist the tactical athlete in job-specific tasks. Take time to learn from the past, as it will provide the base foundation; watch the present to make the necessary corrections; then, create the future. ◀◀

About the author

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