

Squats For Immediate Leg Growth

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I recently went on a 2-week trip to St. Louis, MO. Unfortunately I was not able to take my Kettlebells with me so I cruised through past issues of Muscle Media to find some ideas from Pavel. Not long ago he published an article on Squats and a kicker of a squat workout. I figured it was a good one to try, so I went at it. The results were amazing! In 2 weeks my legs got HUGE! I wish now I had used a tape measure so I could tell you the measured difference. My pants showed the difference though and it was obvious when I looked in the mirror. By the way, this will work wonders for you ladies out there who want to get better legs. Here are the particulars.

Warm Up

Though Pavel is not fond of warming up per say, he does tell readers to do three sets of three reps (3x3) of "Limbo Lunges". Pavel and I first learned these from Coach John Davies at the Kettlebell Instructor Course. Here's how to do it. Have someone hold a broom handle out at about waist height. Stand on one side and step under the handle while squatting at the same time. The movement is strictly down and to the side, under the bar, and back up. Reverse to end up on the same side of the bar that you started on. That is one rep. Lower the bar a bit each set. Coach Davies had us use a Kettlebell, but for the average person, you are in for enough pain as it is! This is a great exercise to open up the hips and prepare the joints for the coming onslaught.

The Squat Rack

Now that you are done with the Limbo Lunges, turn your attention to the squat rack. DO NOT head for the smith machine! Free weights are far superior and safer in the long run. Set the bar at a height that allows you to remove the weight properly, effectively, and efficiently.

What about weight? For weight, you are going to follow a "Linear Cycle". To do this you need to know what your 1 Rep Max is. Then cut it in half. So if your 1RM is 200lbs, you will start with 100lbs on day one.

Now, you will squat this weight for 10 Sets of 5 Reps each. If you have the energy left at the end you can do your favorite Calf exercise. Personally, after the first few days, I didn't have much energy.

From here you will do this workout three times a week; Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Each day you will add 5lbs to the weight and do the same Set/Rep scheme. A few days into it you will begin to really feel it. The first few workouts will feel light. Cherish that feeling because it won't last! Here is what it looks like for the above example:

Limbo Lunge: 3 Sets x 3 Reps

1RM= 200lbs

Start Weight= 100lbs

Day 1: 100lbs x 10 x 5 (weight x sets x reps)

Day 2: 105 x 10 x 5

Day 3: 110 x 10 x 5

Day 4: 115 x 10 x 5

Day 5: 120 x 10 x 5
Day 6: 125 x 10 x 5
Day 7: 130 x 10 x 5
Day 8: 135 x 10 x 5
Day 9: 140 x 10 x 5
Day 10: 145 x 10 x 5
Day 11: 150 x 10 x 5
Day 12: 155 x 10 x 5
Day 13: 160 x 10 x 5
Day 14: 165 x 10 x 5
Day 15: 170 x 10 x 5
Day 16: 175 x 10 x 5

This is a 16-workout cycle because after 16 workouts, a structured routine like this will reach a point of diminishing returns. If you wish to continue up you need to drop back by about half (135 or 140 lbs) and start again.

Lets examine this from a Russian Volume standpoint. To do this we multiply the weight x Sets x Reps to find the total pounds or Tonnage lifted. At your 1RM you were only lifting 200lbs. On Day 1 you lifted 5,000lbs. By Day 16 you lifted 8,750lbs. But it doesn't stop there! You see, in reality, we did only 5 reps, but you cold have done 10. In fact I could have done 10 at the end Day if I had only done a few sets. Using a guide written by Tudor Bompa, PhD, if you look up 175lbs in the 10RM column, you will find that your 1RM has suddenly jumped to 235Lbs! Staying as fresh as we could through out the work out is what allowed us to make these phenomenal gains. You would not be so lucky if you trained to failure.

Now, don't expect a continual dramatic jump like that every time. Experienced lifters know that 35lb jumps are usually a thing beginner's experience. Years of training later, many lifters are ecstatic to make a 10-pound increase. But that's another issue for another time.

Take the time and effort to try this out and reap the rewards. Ironically enough, I have not noticed any negative effects on my running or swimming with this workout. I also did not get sore like I normally do with a good squat workout. Normally I can't walk, but like Kettlebells, this work out left a slight and very deep down soreness that doesn't impede on your ability to function. If anything it made me feel good and ready to take on the world. I attribute this to the fact that low reps cause less Lactic Acid build up and a decent rest interval lets your body scrub out the crap that gets dumped into the tissues during hard work. I took 1-2 minute rests between sets and that seemed to work just fine.

Technique Notes

Most people don't know how to squat correctly! Follow these guides to correct your form and avoid injury.

-When you get under the bar, there is a natural space that is located just under where your traps meet the shoulder. You will know when you have it because even the heavy weights don't cause discomfort. Pads and towels are more likely to slip and cause injury. Find the sweet spot!

-DO NOT wear running shoes or any other fitness shoe for that matter. Most gyms won't let you go barefoot so wear deadlifting slippers or the thinnest wrestling shoes you can find. The padding in other shoes will shift causing instability in the ankle, knee, and hip. Avoid these shoes at all cost!

-When you find the sweet spot, position yourself under the bar, feet shoulder width apart, knees bent, back straight. Take in a breath of air and squeeze your Glutes while contracting your abs as if bracing for a punch. Hold that breath and stand up with a short hissing exhalation. Don't relax or let it all out. Now that you have the load you must rely on Power Breathing, and Abdominal Tension to keep your spine straight. Move back a foot or so and position your feet shoulder width apart or slightly wider. Feet may be straight forward or toes pointed to the 2 and 10 O'clock position. Just be sure your legs track properly and that your legs don't bow in.

-Lock your legs, squeeze your Glutes and tuck your pelvis forward, squeeze your abs while inhaling. Now, use your Hip Flexors to Pull you down and back. To understand this feeling, put the edge of your hands in the creases where your legs and pelvis meet and push back and slightly down. You will notice that as you bend your knees the weight shifts to your heels. If you are not careful you will lose your balance to the rear. This is the line you must walk as you descend into the squat. This keeps your shins as vertical as possible during the lift which is good for your knees and ankles. You will find this very difficult at first and you may need to lighten the weight at first. Concentrate on that PULLING motion to bring you into the "Hole". Be sure to be looking UP, not down or forward. The body follows the head.

-When your legs are parallel to the ground, squeeze your Glutes hard and begin Power Breathing on the way up and concentrate on keeping the weight on your heels. Lock out at the top with your Glutes and abs tight and your pelvis tucked forward. You may quickly release the air you have left and inhale again to maintain a tight core. Repeat until you have completed five reps. ENJOY!