

Using The Turkish Get-Up In Team Sports

As a strength and conditioning coach in a team sport setting, I admit that I was hesitant about the Turkish Get-up when I first started to learn about it. I viewed it as an exercise that would be too difficult to implement in my coaching situation as it looked like an exercise that seemed too complicated to teach to a large group of athletes. (We have 23 players on our hockey team).

I first learned and practiced the Turkish Get-Up at a Perform Better 1 Day Seminar in Los Angeles a few years back. To say that I was humbled by an 8k kettlebell is an understatement. Dr. Mark Cheng was my instructor during the hands-on portion of the seminar. I was coached by him through all of the 7 steps of the Kalos Sthenos method. From my 5 minutes spent with Dr. Cheng, I realized that this was an exercise where proper form was critical. Dr. Cheng was critiquing my every move as I tried to do a Get Up successfully. This was the first time that I realized that our players needed to be doing the Get-Up. I felt that this was a total body exercise that would be beneficial for our team. What I really learned during my learning experience was that performing the Get Up with less than adequate technique really exposes issues such as weakness and tightness to some of the muscles that are involved.

Along with learning from Dr. Cheng at the seminar, another resource that I have found helpful in learning the Turkish Get-up is "Kettlebells From the Ground Up" by the previously mentioned Dr. Mark Cheng, with Gray Cook and Brett Jones. This is a great manual that outlines the 7 steps of the Get-Up in a specific way. One of the quotes from Dr. Cheng in the manual is "Get-Up is an all-purpose strength and stability exercise, as a corrective exercise, and as a movement screen". I agree with him 100%. An all purpose strength and stability exercise that is a corrective exercise and a movement screen at the same time? This is an exercise that our players need to get really good at, just like any other exercise in our program.

In our off-season program, we have added our progressions for the Get-Up into our program twice per week. We will do a progression during each of the 3-week phases of the program as part of our workouts on days 1 and 3. We will start the off-season with phase 1 of the Get Up and we will be performing full Get-Ups by the end.

During the in-season phase, we do core circuits 2-3 times per week. These consist of 6-8 hip and abdominal exercises done twice in a circuit-like fashion. We have added the Get Up progressions to the core circuit. These are done in a progressive format over the course of the season in 5-6 week phases which start with the easiest version in phase 1. By the end of season, we are doing full Get Ups.

Along with the Turkish Get Up, we have been implementing kettlebells with other traditional exercises. Exercises such as Swings, 1-Leg Straight Leg Dead lifts, Goblet Squats, and Slideboard Split Squats have become parts of our program. I must say that although we use kettle bells as a tool, I am not certified by a kettlebell organization as I write this article. However, I am registered to attend the RKC in August of 2011 where I know I will benefit from more coaching. Most importantly, my athletes will benefit from me learning more about kettlebells as well. I feel that what I have learned from resources such as the "Kettlebells From

the Ground Up" and other publications such as "Kettlebells From The Center" have given me enough confidence in implementing these lifts with my athletes.

In our situation, I felt it was necessary to break the Turkish Get-Up down into 4 steps instead of 7. This is what works for us in our situation.

Here is how we progress:

Phase 1- Get Up to Hand. We are really focusing on stabilizing with the lats and "packing" the shoulders down. We will also emphasize movement from the thoracic spine. We can really see lack of thoracic spine mobility during this phase, especially on one side compared to the other.

Phase 2- Get Up to Hip Extension. This is a phase that is beneficial from a screening perspective. With some hockey players having tight hip flexors and rectus femoris', the inability to extend the hips is visible right away during this phase. From here we can identify those players who need some extra soft tissue work, stretching, or both to the hip flexors, rectus femoris, and TFLs. This part of the Get-Up, combined with all of the glute bridging and hip flexor lengthening that we do, is imperative for our guys in maintaining healthy hips.

Phase 3- Get Up to Kneeling Position. This phase requires coordination, balance, and stability all throughout the body.

Phase 5- Full Get Up. This is the last phase and the finish to the Get-Up. By now we have established a base and have progressed to this.

One of the key aspects of the Get Up is returning to the starting position during each phase. We must exhibit proper body control and eccentric strength to complete the movement.

From a practical perspective, over the course of the season, I have seen the progressions listed above help our players tremendously. When we started, the form during each phase didn't look so good across the board. Now, as we have put all the parts together, our players have been figuring out strategies to be more efficient. For example, they have figured out that the movement is easier with a locked-out elbow versus a slightly bent elbow. Our guys now look really smooth performing the Get Up.