

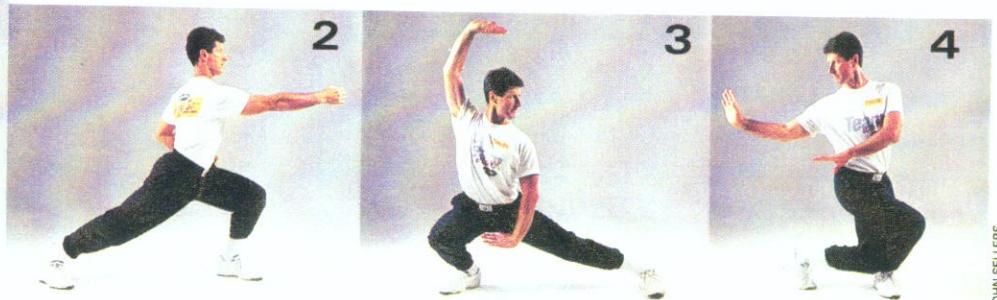
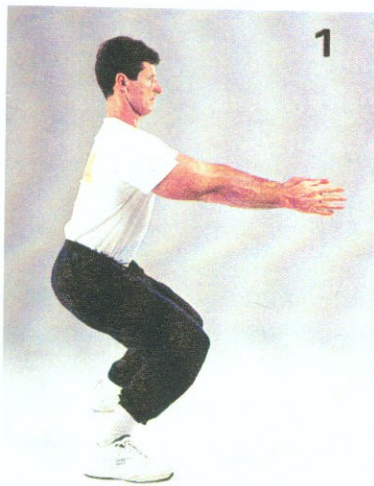
REGIMEN

Hoop Stances

By ADRIAN CROOK

I am frequently asked which exercises are best for developing the leg strength that's ideal in active sports such as basketball. Without hesitation, I always recommend "stances."

These ancient Chinese standing exercises develop tremendous ankle strength and flexibility while promoting the sturdiness of the knees. They also improve body alignment and posture, and heighten your awareness of weight distribution.



"Stances" are derived from ancient Chinese concepts of strength and flexibility, but they're excellent for enhancing your skills in modern sports like basketball.

JOHN SELLERS

TECHNIQUE

Strength vs. Power

Let's say you can bench-press 200 pounds. That makes you strong, right? Right. And it makes you powerful, right? Not necessarily. You see, strength depends on only one physical parameter: force. The more force you can exert, the stronger you are. But power is a function not only of force but of velocity—how fast you can *move* an object, such as a tennis racket or your hips as you leap for a rebound.

Although strength is one component of power, increasing your strength doesn't automatically increase power. This is because often when you increase a muscle's strength

you also increase its size. Thus you have to accelerate a heavier limb, which requires more muscle force. In fact, serious weightlifting can cause gains in size that actually exceed the gains in strength. This results in a decrease in power.

So, how can you build power? First, cut back on your use of medium-to-heavy weights done for eight to 10 repetitions at a slow pace, the typical weightlifting regimen.

Instead, incorporate lots of low-weight/high-repetition work into your training. For example, if you're looking to become a better rebounder in basketball, try three sets of squats done with light weights at a quick pace, at least 15 to 20 reps until failure. This approach will add some muscle fiber, but mostly it will engage

This type of training can promote impressive strength gains, as well. Stances exercise most of the body components that determine your quickness, vertical leap, and ability to maintain a low center of gravity. In short, this training technique dramatically strengthens the foundation upon which almost every movement in the game of basketball is based. Here, we will discuss four of the eight classic stances.

◆ We begin with the "horse" stance, which is the primary posture, as every stance begins and returns to the horse. Stand with your feet flat, parallel, and shoulder-width apart. Keep your back straight, arms extended, and hips underneath you. Now bend your knees, keeping them between your ankles.

The object is to bend your knees until your thighs are almost parallel to the ground [figure 1]. Don't allow your feet to move, and keep your hips underneath you and your back straight. At first,

and train muscle fibers that already exist—they'll become more "synchronous," as trainers say.

This technique is far more productive with "compound" exercises, those that involve more than one joint, rather than simple, one-joint exercises like the dumbbell curl or leg extension. Another example of a compound movement is a dumbbell bench press in which you also rotate your hands inward or outward as you raise and lower the weight. These compound exercises mimic the complexity of the movements you make in the sports you perform.

This high-rep/light-weight principle can be applied in other contexts. In the pool, jumping or sprinting in the water, using only the water as

resistance, is guaranteed to recruit power-producing muscle fibers. On dry land, sprinting will do wonders for your legs and calves. (When was the last time you really sprinted?)

Stretch tubing is another excellent and convenient way to gain power. The tubing exerts constant pressure against your movements, because it doesn't develop momentum as you lift it, unlike a traditional weight. Spri Products, at (800) 222-7774, produces inexpensive sport-specific devices for increasing power, such as a tennis racket handle attached to a tube. Simply swing the handle against the resistance. With all of these strategies, you have nothing to lose and lots of power to gain.

—Gerald Greenspan, M.S.