

THE PRAYER SQUAT POSITION

A few years ago I attended a strength & conditioning clinic held at Wake Forest University and had the privilege of listening to a presentation by Mark Rippetoe. Mark is the owner and general manager of the Wichita Falls Athletic club, former power lifter and has been a member of the National Strength & Conditioning Association (NSCA) for over 25 years.

Mark has the ability and expertise to describe and breakdown a movement with great detail, so that one will understand not only what he or she is doing but why. He is definitely one of the best! That day at Wake Forest, Mark was describing the importance of the “DeadLift”. In listening to Mark it wasn’t how he broke down the correct technique of the movement, but it was the movement or stretch that he demonstrated to prepare for the “Deadlift” --- that’s what got my attention!

I’m sure that you’ve been in a situation where you were presented a piece of information and after a while you either disregarded the information or you put the information to good use. Well, on this particular movement I put it to good use; I took the ball and ran with it and I’m still running!

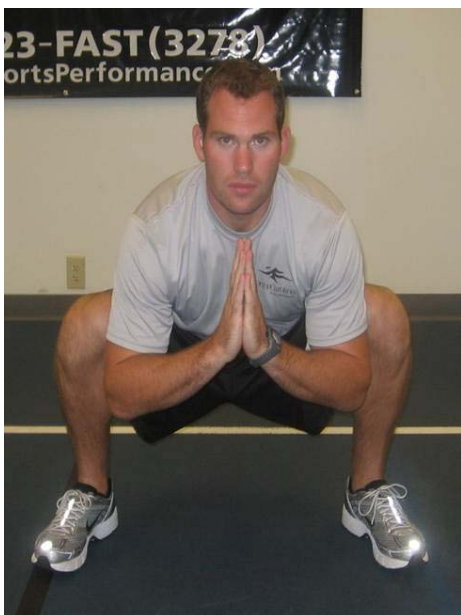


Figure 1.

The one thing that I can’t remember however was the official name of the movement that Mark called it (or if it even had one), but I just simply refer to it as the “Prayer Squat Position”. (See Fig. 1) We now use this exercise at OrthoCarolina Sports Performance regularly before each Speed & Agility or Weight Training session.

What I like best about the “Prayer Squat Position” and why we use it so much is because of the hip mobility that it creates. At our sports performance facility here in Charlotte, we work with a variety of athletes from middle school to the professional. So when we first introduced this particular stretch and movement over half of our athletes just simply could not get down into this position.

I would suggest however that before having your athletes get down into the “prayer squat”, first have them perform 1-2 minutes of some “dynamic stretching” or even some light static stretching of the hamstring and quad lasting for about 20 to 30 seconds each. We have found that by doing this type of warm-up first; will ensure that your athletes will have the best opportunity for success in performing this movement.

First, set your feet a little more than shoulder width apart.

Next, with your knees just slightly bent, lean over putting your elbows inside the knees and at the same time put your hands together making a fist. While getting into this stance the head is down and the hips remain high (as in fig. 2) for 1-2 seconds, then as the head comes up the hips come down. Hold this position for 20 to 30 seconds. While in the Prayer Squat Position be sure to keep the lower back slightly arched (banana spin) or a natural “lordosis” position.

As I mentioned earlier, this position creates not only good hip mobility but also helps create a great stretch on the hamstrings, quads and glutes. While in this position you can also make this movement more dynamic by bringing the hips up, holding that position for 2-3 seconds, then back down for another count of 2-3 seconds and repeat 2-3 more times.

You can also move in the sagittal plane (forward and backward) by taking one step forward, then another with the trail leg. Repeat for 20 seconds (See fig. 3). This can also be done by taking a backward step.

To move laterally (or in the frontal plane) take a step to the side with one leg followed by the other. (See fig. 4) Once again perform this movement for 20 seconds.

The “Prayer Squat Position” can be a great addition to your “movement preparation” before any multi-joint exercises such as squats or deadlifts. Believe me, you’ll feel the difference in your movement.

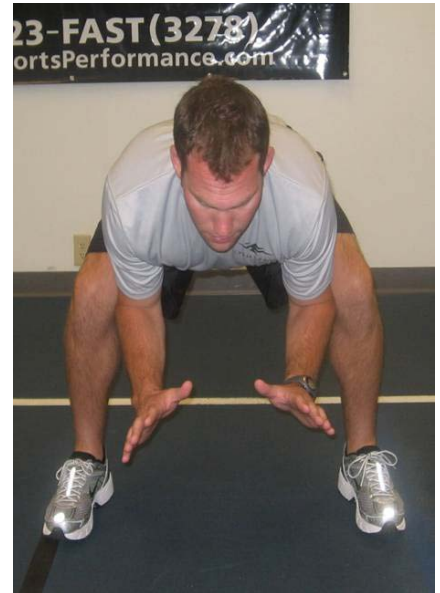


Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

By Chip Sigmon