

Developing Power (and Much More!) with *the Plyo Bar*

A revolutionary way to safely incorporate plyometrics and other great exercises into your athletic program

BY KIM GOSS



When I was serving in the Air Force in the '80s, I was approached by one of the best tennis players in the military who wanted to know more about plyometrics. I happened to have a videotape on the subject that demonstrated many box jumping exercises, and I loaned it to him so he would have a good introduction to one effective form of this type of training. I hoped that after he viewed the video, we would come up with an appropriate workout for him. He couldn't wait.

The next day this athlete showed up at work with one of his legs heavily bandaged. He explained that he'd gotten so excited about box jumping and what it could do to improve his quickness on the court that he'd tried box jumping that evening. Not having any boxes, he'd decided to try jumping

on his car instead, first on the hood and then on the roof. The roof was a little too much for him, and he'd missed...crashing through the front windshield. The result was a bloody mess that required a considerable amount of glass to be removed from his leg.

Although this failed example of plyometric training is extreme, safety should be a key concern with this type of conditioning. That is why, for example, all our BFS plyometric boxes are solid, rather than open, so that if an athlete misses an attempt they will slide safely down the edges. But there are many other types of effective plyometric exercises that don't require boxes, and at BFS we decided to see if we could design an apparatus that was especially safe. What we came up with was the BFS Plyo bar.



Plyometrics at Its Best

The Plyo bar enables athletes to perform a variety of effective exercises, including plyometrics, with the highest level of safety. The apparatus consists of a round crossbar that is set inside an 8-foot-by-6-foot platform with a nonslip rubber surface. The crossbar is adjustable in one-inch increments to accommodate all users, and a mechanism is attached to minimize vibration as the athlete exercises.

The apparatus is called the Plyo bar because it is perfectly designed to enable athletes to perform lateral jumps while holding on to the bar for balance. This is the signature exercise of the Plyo bar, and it develops lower body power and,

when performed for longer durations, improves muscular endurance. In fact, we've found that even when the crossbar is set at its lowest height, it is difficult for any athlete to perform lateral jumps for more than one minute – and you really have to try it to appreciate how great a workout this is.

Besides using the Plyo bar for plyometric movements, you can use it to improve upper and lower body strength. For example, few athletes can perform a single-leg squat, but it's easy using the Plyo bar, as the upper body can be used to give you just enough assistance and stability to enable you to complete the movement.

In addition to its uses in strength

training, the Plyo bar can be used to perform many effective upper and lower body stretches. Dancers know the value of using a ballet barre to help them achieve high levels of flexibility. Likewise the Plyo bar can be used for the same static exercises performed on a ballet barre; but because the Plyo bar is not anchored against a wall, many more effective dynamic stretching exercises can also be performed.

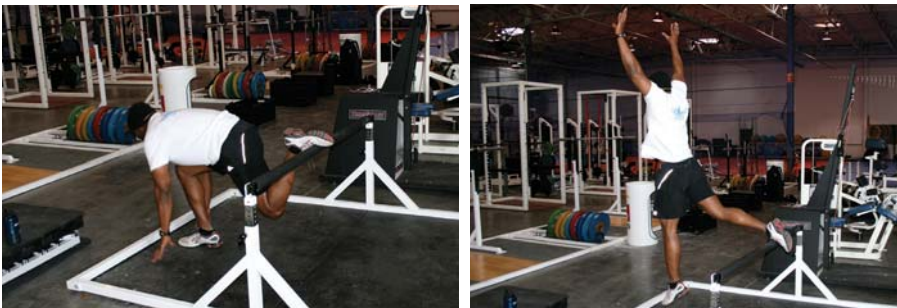
In future articles we will outline many effective exercise routines that can be performed with the Plyo bar. In the meantime, here are a few examples of the unique exercises that can be performed on this great piece of equipment.

LOWER BODY PLYOMETRICS



SIDE-TO-SIDE JUMP

Holding on to the crossbar, the athlete jumps side-to-side, as shown, as quickly as possible. Start by holding the bar with a parallel grip, and jump over the bar with both feet at the same time. Beginners should start with the lowest height and increase the height as they become comfortable with the exercise and can easily clear the crossbar.



SINGLE-LEG SQUAT JUMP

Face away from the crossbar and place your back foot on the crossbar, with your hands on the floor as shown. Using the power of your front leg, jump as high as possible and throw your hands overhead; return to the start. For maximum stability, you should touch the floor between repetitions.

UPPER BODY PLYOMETRICS



PLYOMETRIC PUSH-UPS

In addition to performing incline push-ups, which are much easier than conventional push-ups and as such are ideal for many young girls, you can perform plyometric push-ups for upper body power. With the arms on the crossbar in a push-up position, press upward aggressively so that your hands release at the top; catch yourself as you return and immediately repeat the movement. As an even more advanced version, you can hop side-to-side, with both your upper and lower body leaving the ground at the same time.

UPPER BODY STRENGTH

HORIZONTAL PULL-UPS AND CHIN-UPS



Vertical pull-ups and chin-ups are a challenge, and many athletes cannot do a single repetition. However, the crossbar enables you to perform horizontal variations of these exercises, which are much easier, as you do not have to lift your entire bodyweight and can use your legs to assist you.

To increase the difficulty of the exercise, place your feet on a low plyo box or perform the exercise with various grips, even with one arm.

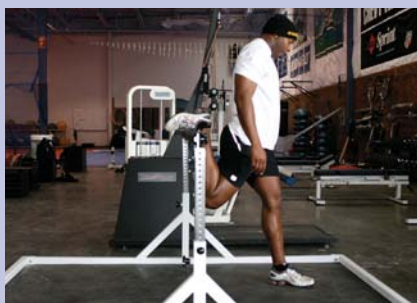
LOWER BODY STRENGTH



SINGLE-LEG SQUAT


By holding on to the crossbar, you can use your upper body strength to easily perform a single-leg squat. As you progress, you can let go of the bar as you squat down, only using the bar to assist you on the way up. Soon you will be able to perform the exercise on your own without any assistance.

STATIC STRETCHING



UPPER AND LOWER BODY

Using the crossbar for stability, you can perform many effective stretching exercises on the BFS Plyo bar. Shown are two for the lower body (hamstrings and hip flexors) and two for the upper body (lats and biceps).

Plyometrics are a great form of exercise to give you an edge. The Plyo bar not only will enable you to safely perform countless variations of plyometric exercises but also will enable athletes at any level to perform many effective strength training and stretching exercises. It's certainly a step up from jumping onto cars! 



DYNAMIC STRETCHING

DUCK UNDERS

Side-to-side “duck unders” are a popular exercise, especially among football players, to stretch the inner thigh muscles dynamically. To increase the difficulty of this effective exercise, simply lower the crossbar. Shown is a variation of this exercise in which the athlete catches and throws a medicine ball between repetitions.



Demonstrating these Plyo bar exercises is Ivan Radcliff, a member of the US Bobsled Team who has participated in four

World Cup events. He currently trains in Park City, Utah, and has evolved from being a pusher to a driver. Good luck to Ivan in his pursuit of making the 2010 Winter Olympic Team.





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