

The Squat Exercise And The New England Patriots

By Tom Cross 1994 NSCA College Coach of the Year

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHNNY PARKER, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS STRENGTH COACH

On every team there are athletes, coaches, and trainers who question the value and the safety of the squat exercise. For these reasons, I've looked hard for many years to find something to replace it but have had absolutely no success!

The squat is the foundation of our program. It is the foundation of any leg sport program. The back squat exercise, when performed with proper technique, is the most productive exercise for total strength development. It is a must for hips and legs.

Question:

Coach Parker, what are your thoughts on bar placement?

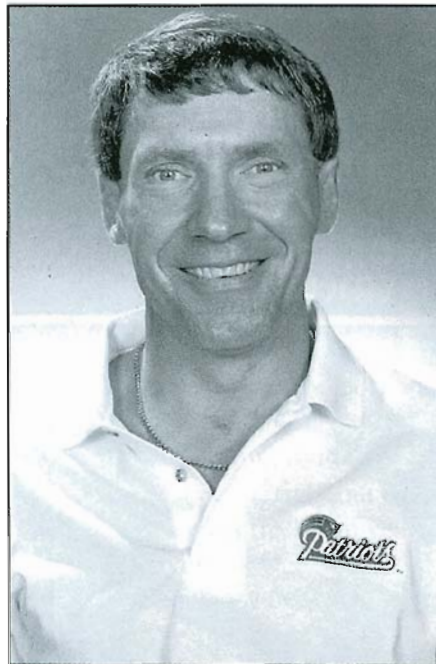
Answer:

I prefer the high bar olympic type squat because it is best for developing leg strength. Some athletes have difficulty with this method. We adjust and experiment to find a position where the athlete is able to achieve the most erect torso. The erect torso is my number one consideration in squat technique because:

1. It promotes good back position & relieves low back strain
2. It promotes leg strength
3. It promotes safety, keeps the

weight over the center of gravity

We do some special training to promote the erect torso such as the Smith Machine. Also, the extended squat using only a stick while pushing and pulling the athlete's body into the upright position. This also is helpful in developing hip flexibility.



Question:

Coach Parker, from your many years of squat experience, do you have other safety tips?

Answer:

I've already discussed the erect torso. Another factor is to keep the knees over the ankles! This is vital and can only be accomplished by keeping the weight on the heels!

Other important safety factors are enhanced by keeping the weight on the heels. These include:

1. Erect torso
2. Knees over ankles
3. Bar over COG
4. Helps reduce tendency of transferring weight forward during the ascent
5. Is the most powerful position the athlete can take

Another safety consideration is that good technique builds strong legs, too much weight is risky and weakens technique.

Question:

Coach Parker, Do you use any assistant squat exercises?

Answer:

Tom, we do a great deal. Probably the two best I think are the single leg down from a box, and the extended, or snatch squat. We use it especially for linemen. We also do the front squat to improve our Cleans and use other forms of single leg training.

Question:

Coach Parker, what influence does Coach Parcels have on your program?

Answer:

Coach says just do what we do on the football field and what prevents injury. Leave out the gingerbread and don't get them hurt. Coach Parcels believes in hard work and physical football. All the New England players squat, quarterbacks included. Leg work, abdominal work, and back work are the keys to developing the strength and power to play professional football. The rookies are always amazed at the speed of the game at this level. We try to help them develop to keep the pace. As we said at the beginning, the back squat is the foundation!!!!

We wish to thank Coach Parker and the New England Patriots for their support with this article.....□

