

## Spring 2016 Week 4: Core Strength

Developing core strength is one of the most important parts of a training program for soccer. A strong core helps a player avoid injury, build agility, and get faster. It helps the upper body and lower body work in unison, rather than be out of balance.

Regular soccer movements such as kicking, running, and cutting can place uneven demands on the body. For example, it's normal for a typical right-footed soccer player to have a more developed right leg. Core strength keeps a body balanced so that all muscle groups are similarly developed and working together. Without a strong core, players can develop lopsidedness in their bodies, which tends to lead to instability and injury.

There are different types of core exercises, which all improve different parts of your athletic ability. All of them serve different purposes, and all are equally important.

### 1.) Crunches

Crunches will help your abs, or stomach muscles. This will help you most when you need to bend at the waist, like when you're throwing the ball in or heading the ball.

### 2.) Rotating/Twisting

Any time you are twisting and turning, you are working the rotational muscles in your core. It also helps target the muscles on the sides of your core, called your obliques. The stronger you can rotate, the faster you will be at changing directions. Even more important, rotational core exercises will help you to kick the ball even harder.

### 3.) Planks

Planks, or when you are holding a position for a period of time, help increase the stability and balance in your entire body. This helps you most when you are sprinting, because you need to keep your upper body from twisting when you run. Planks will also strengthen you for when you need to hold your position from an opponent.

### **Reading Questions:**

- 1.) What are the benefits to having a strong core?**
- 2.) Why does having a strong core help prevent injury?**
- 3.) What are 3 types of core exercises?**
- 4.) How will rotational core exercises help you as a soccer player?**
- 5.) Why are planks important?**