

6 Libero Strenght Movements

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When developing young athletes the first step should be to develop a proper foundation of movement patterns that will allow them to successfully move into higher levels of training.

From there, the athlete is better prepared and physically capable of acquiring a higher skills set. Training should be both specific and nonspecific, but rich in movements that improve coordination, body control and awareness (proprioception).

In this article, we'll focus specifically on the libero position. Here are six drills that will help increase strength for athletes who play this demanding position.

1. **OVERHEAD STICK SQUAT**This is a great exercise to develop lower body strength, improved knee, ankle, hip flexion and, most importantly, increased flexibility of the back. Most stretching movements focus on anterior flexion of the spine. The overhead stick squat focuses on improving extension along the spine and increasing range of motion about the shoulder girdle as well. Use both wide and narrow grips for variation of the movement. Do 2 sets of 10-15 reps at a slow tempo.
 - a. Hold the stick with hands outstretched wide above and slightly behind the head. Feet should be shoulder width apart and straight ahead.
 - b. Slowly descend into a squat. Maintain arm position with the head and chest upright while keeping the knees over the toes. Stop when your thighs get below parallel to the floor or when your heels come off the floor. If you cannot maintain your upper body position, stop at that point. Work to increase squat depth while maintaining proper body position. The close grip variation will decrease the depth of squat for most people until the upper back becomes more flexible.
2. **HULA**This aptly named exercise focuses on the ankle and hip mobility and knee stability and lower body strength. Do 2 sets of 16 here. You can add dumbbells to increase the strength factor.
 - a. Start from a square, shoulder width stance
 - b. Push your hips to one side and then rotate the shoulders and hips the opposite way sitting down slightly to load the legs and extend the arms.
 - c. Go back to the center
 - d. Push the hips the opposite way, rotate the shoulders and reach again. Continue back and forth and do the hula.
3. **HOT HANDS IN & OUT**

This exercise works upper body strength and power as well as core and shoulder stability. Using a small ring helps coordinate and direct movement, but is not necessary. Do 3 sets of 5-8 reps, or for short-timed intervals of 10-20 seconds.

1. Start with the hands directly under the chest in a push-up position.
2. Quickly move the right hand laterally outside of the ring.
3. Move the left hand laterally outside of the ring.
4. Move the right hand back into the ring.
5. Move the left hand back into the ring. You have completed one rep. Repeat for at least 4 more reps. Try and move the hands as quickly as possible. For variation, move the hand forward and back or in diagonal patterns. Basically, any pattern will work. Be sure to maintain a solid core during the exercise.
4. **LATERAL LUNGE AND ANTERIOR REACH**This drill develops great lower body strength and flexibility to improve digging position. Keep your head and chest up to see the ball. Do 2-3 sets of 8-12 reps per side. Add a dumbbell to increase strength or go at various tempos to work on deceleration and explosiveness.
 1. Start from a standing position
 2. Do a lateral lunge
 3. Drop deeper into the lunge and extend the arms to a digging position.
5. **VARIOUS SKIPS**
Skips of any kind develop coordination, rhythm, timing and power. Keep good form with the knees and toes up and good "L"s at the elbow. Variations are as many as your imagination. Forward, lateral, backward, crossover lateral, even combinations will work to improve coordinated movement and the ability to apply force to the ground in multiple directions. Do this as part of a dynamic warm-up—3-4 different skips done with purpose.
6. **REACTIVE X-BOX**

This is not the video game kind. This is a drill to improve reaction time and execution of direction. This drill will also increase lower body strength and power and agility. All sports require the ability to recognize and respond to stimulus and then execute the proper response. The stimulus can be visual, audible, tactile or any combination of the three. Set up four cones about 15 feet apart in a square. Have the player stand in the center to start. The coach or partner then directs the athlete to a different cone direction using either visual (hand) or audible (voice) commands. You should do 6-8 calls or 8-12 seconds. The reaction should be explosive and decisive for the entire set. Stops should be hard and the direction changes should be abrupt, not rounded. Add in digs and stabs with or without a ball to make the drill more specific.

1. The athlete responds and reacts to the coach's direction with an explosive first step.
2. The athlete moves to the directed cone and sets up for "action."
3. The athlete moves back to the center and prepares for the next direction.
4. The athlete makes the next direction change with another explosive first step. Continue for four more calls or until you are timed out. The effort should be all-out, but still in control.