

# Strength Training and Cyclists

*By Terri Gooch*

## Introduction

During what I call the period of “between-seasons”, I usually recommend to my clients no more than two or three times a week for strength training, which is plenty considering that cyclists will also be riding outdoors, stuck on the stationary trainer, or even cross-training during the week. You need to have a day or two off and we don’t want you to burn out. Also, strength training for cycling is not bodybuilding and should not be treated as such. Strength training for cycling should only be moderately heavy at most, as well as non-impact, let’s begin to talk reps and sets

Let’s talk reps first. Every coach has a different opinion on strength training and how to go about it. But for the most part, all good coaches are on the same sheet of music. With that said, I recommend repetitions of any exercise to be slightly in the higher range (possibly, between 12-20 reps per set). Now, when we talk how much weight to use, we’ll talk using the perceived exertion scale of 1-10. If you’re new to strength training, I would recommend using a weight that would feel like a 3 or a 4 on the scale, or easy to moderate weights. If you’ve been lifting for a while and you may be a little on the stronger side, then I’ll recommend something in the realm of a 5 or 6 on that scale, but no more than that. I prefer my athletes to work on higher weight and higher repetition at the same time, but not highest in either category. We’ve all heard of “high rep/low weight”, but I feel that you’re just wasting time by doing too many reps with a really light weight. No reason for it. If you want to be used to the stresses of hard riding, then you’ll need to be used to the stresses of hard weight training. For sets, I only recommend 2 sets of any exercise. After 2 sets, you’re only making a 2-3% strength and size gain and you’re tearing the muscle down further than it needs to be.

Since I’m on the subject about strength training, I have to touch on the importance of flexibility. Yes, you have to stretch and stretch well. And I’m talking about more than just pulling your foot to your butt to tease your quadriceps before a race. I suggest doing the same thing I tell the athletes I coach: become Gumby. Stretching should be a form of training that takes more than just a few minutes after 40-mile hammer or a race. Stretching should be long and static, and should last for AT LEAST 15 minutes. This would be to ensure that all major muscle groups are stretched out with each stretch lasting a minimum of 30 seconds. And when I talk about major muscle groups, again I’m talking about all of them and not just your leg muscles. Yes, your back and arms need to be stretched as well. When was the last time your low back felt great after a century ride or 70-mile road race?. You’ll begin to notice the difference after about a good month of flexibility training. Stretching will keep the body good and loose, and help prevent injury. Tight muscles can lead to muscle strain, and that’ll keep you off the bike for a long while.

## Chest Press

Targets - Pectoralis Major

Synergiests- Pectoralis Major Clavicular, Anterior Deltoid, Triceps, Biceps,

Good – Flat bench press ups with weights



Better – Chest Press up with Physioball - adds core as stabilizing muscles, glutes, and enhances balance.

For Both:  
Start



Finish



Balance with upper back and shoulder on physioball or bench.

- Abs should be tight and lifted
- Knees should be together
- Feet should be directly under knees
- Shoulder blades should be drawn down and together
- Press weights straight up, extending arms until there is only a micro bend in the elbow
- Keep glutes tight and pressing up to ceiling throughout exercise – don't let your butt sag toward the floor!
- Neck is relaxed and gaze is toward ceiling

Repeat 15 times with a weight that is challenging by repetitions 10-15. Repeat set of 15 repetitions two times with no longer than 90 seconds between sets

## Pull Down or Pull Over

Targets - Latissimus Dorsi

Synergists- Biceps, posterior deltoid, infraspinatus, rhomboids, levator scapulae, trapezius, pectoralis minor, triceps

### Good - Lat Pull Down

Start



Finish



Sit down at Lat Pull Down Machine

- Choose wide over hand grip
- Choose a weight that you will be able to complete 15 repetitions
- Grasp bar in both hands with overhand grip and sit down on seat, knees under pad
- Sitting tall with abdominals firm, shoulder blades pulled down and together, feet under knees and in full contact with the floor.
- As you exhale bring bar down to top of collarbone
- Elbows should travel straight down and out to the sides, with hands, elbows and shoulders on the same plane
- Hold for a moment at the bottom of the movement, focusing on squeezing shoulder blades down and together
- As you inhale slowly allow arms to straighten. Slightly resist as the bar moves back to the start position
- Continue to keep shoulder blades down and together, even as you extend your arms back into the start position

**Better – Pull Over on Physioball** – adds core as stabilizing muscles, glutes, and enhances balance.

Start



Finish



Balance with upper back and shoulder on physioball

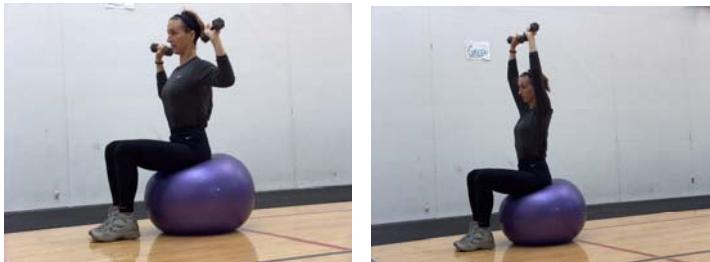
- Abs should be tight and lifted
- Knees should be together
- Feet should be directly under knees
- Shoulder blades should be drawn down and together
- Grasp one weight or medicine ball in both hands
- Slight bend in elbows
- Slowly lower arms/weight over head – shoulder blades remain down and together even as you lift your arms over your head
- Pause when arms are fully extended and lift back to starting position
- Arms do NOT need to go below shoulders
- Keep glutes tight and pressing up to ceiling throughout exercise – don't let your butt sag toward the floor!
- Neck is relaxed and gaze is toward ceiling

For both exercises: Repeat 15 times with a weight that is challenging by repetitions 10-15. Repeat set of 15 repetitions two times with no longer than 120 seconds, but at least 90 seconds between sets.

## Shoulder Extension

Target – Anterior Deltoid

Synergists – Lateral Deltoid, Supraspinatus, Triceps, Trapezius, Pectoralis Major, Serratus Anterior



This exercise can be done on bench, physioball or standing.

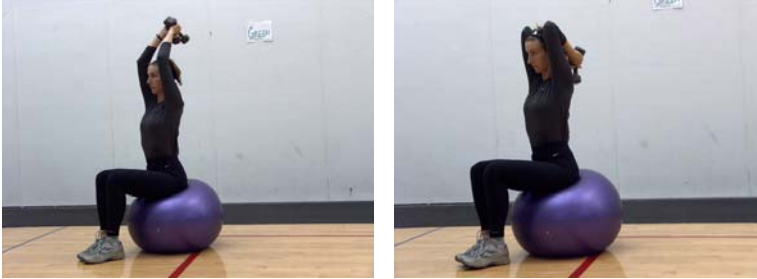
- If on ball or bench, sit tall with abdominals firm, shoulder blades retracted and depressed
- If standing, stand tall with abdominals firm, slight bend in knees, shoulder blades retracted and depressed
- Grasp handweight and position dumbbells to each side of shoulders with elbows below wrists.
- Press dumbbells until arms are extended overhead. Lower and repeat.

For both exercises: Repeat 15 times with a weight that is challenging by repetitions 10-15. Repeat set of 15 repetitions two times with no longer than 120 seconds, but at least 90 seconds between sets.

## Triceps Extension with dumbbell

Target – Triceps

Stabilizers- Anterior Deltoid, pectoralis major, wrist flexors



This exercise can be done on a bench, the physio ball or standing

- If on ball or bench, sit tall with abdominals firm, shoulder blades retracted and depressed
- If standing, stand tall with abdominals firm, slight bend in knees, shoulder blades retracted and depressed
- Position one dumbbell overhead with both hands under inner plate (heart shaped grip).
- With elbows overhead, lower forearm behind upper arm by flexing elbows. Flex wrists at bottom to avoid hitting dumbbell on back of neck. Raise dumbbell overhead by extending elbows while hyperextending wrists. Return and repeat.
- Position wrists closer together to keep elbows from pointing out too much. Let the dumbbell pull the arm back to maintain arm position.

For both exercises: Repeat 15 times with a weight that is challenging by repetitions 10-15. Repeat set of 15 repetitions two times with no longer than 120 seconds, but at least 90 seconds between sets.