



Training for Sportives to help you boost fitness and complete the distance - leg strength

The thing to do with all your exercising or training is to make it specific. This way, you will maximise the benefits, cut training time and ensure that you are working specific muscle groups and body systems.

Here, I talk about leg exercises that will develop muscular endurance and strength - ideal for bike riders. They are simple exercises, often overlooked and place a big load on the muscles worked so, stretching afterwards is a must. For instance, I have a bad historical adductor tear that doesn't like lunges so I have to be very careful with this exercise and ensure a very gentle stretch is carried out for a few days afterwards during the evenings and on rest days.

You also need to consider knee, ankle, hip and back issues with all these exercises. If it doesn't feel comfortable, stop. As with all exercises, core stability is especially important when performing these exercises and will help you to get them right and perform them safely. Squats are actually one of the best exercises going for engaging the deep core.

On bike training

The only on-bike training I can advise here is climbing whilst standing as much as you can. This uses the big muscles of the legs and if you can get used to this and develop muscular endurance for climbing whilst standing, the legs will be in great shape and you'll be a more versatile climber.

Session:

I tend to use a triple set (a group of 3 exercises) for these exercises and often a quadruple set (a group of 4 exercises) performing all of them in one session. Choose the 3 or 4 that you want to do from the list below and add/subtract as necessary. Again, to make this specific perform them with no rest in between exercises or sets. You can do three sets if you feel up to it but start with two and build up. Listen to your body. If you're doing this for the first time, be prepared for jelly legs and for the stairs to feel a whole lot harder for a day or two afterwards.

Start with a warm up for around ten minutes. Walking quickly, gentle cycling or some dynamic stretches are all good here.

Exercise	Time	Effort
Squat	1 min	Body weight or weighted
Lunge	1 min	Body weight or weighted
Dead lift	1 min	Weighted
Single leg squat	1 min each leg	Body weight
Star jumps (optional)	1 min	Body weight
Skipping (optional)	1 min	Body weight
Warm down	7-10 mins	
	8 - 12 mins + warm down	

These exercise are all quite technical so do make sure you are performing them correctly. I could describe them in detail over several pages but Youtube will be a quicker reference.

The Athlean X channel on Youtube is always good and you should find good examples of all these exercises there - <https://www.youtube.com/user/JDCav24>

The basic rules for these exercises are:

Squats: Straight back, chin up, chest out, shoulders open, KNEES BEHIND TOES when squatting. Aim for 45 degree bend in knees. Keep core solid. Throw your bum out behind you.

Lunges: Keep torso upright, head up, chest out, shoulders open, keep KNEE BEHIND TOES when lunging (take large step). Keep core solid. Keep back knee off ground and use front leg to push off, not back leg to drag yourself back up.

Dead lift: Straight back, chin up, chest out, shoulders open, core solid. Slight bend at knee, more bend at hips. Use glutes, hams and quads to thrust forward on way back up.

Single leg squat: Straight back, chin up, chest out, shoulders open, KNEES BEHIND TOES when squatting. Aim for 45 degree bend in knees. Keep core solid. Hold wall for balance if needed.

Warming down is as important as warming up. Warming down removes waste products from the muscles and helps return blood from the legs to the rest of the body. This prevents blood pooling and can prevent feeling faint and even fainting. This all helps to prepare you for your next training session. This is especially important on the legs as

they have to hold you up in the days after this set - they will be feeling tired. I would avoid doing this session, within 2 days of a planned ride unless you are sure your muscles can cope.

Remember a drink and heart rate monitor if you use one and, before starting any training regime, if you have a concern, historical injury or medical condition, seek medical advice **before** starting.

Finally, when you're cooled down or, like I do, in the evening before bed, gently stretch the muscles used. A foam roller can be a great help too, especially if you have specific, historic injury sites within the muscles - I have a tear in a calf that is now scar tissue. Foam rolling is a great help in breaking this down and helping with muscle flexibility. It is not fun though and can be quite uncomfortable.

If you would like to discuss fitness training, training plans, support, motivation or advice, get in touch. I'd be delighted to help you get where you're going. Faster.

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