

UNSTABLE RESULTS

How unstable training may cause unstable performance



Original Research

Cressey, H., et al.
The effects of ten weeks of lower-body unstable surface training on markers of athletic performance.
Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research 21:561-567, 2007.

TRAINING ON UNSTABLE SURFACES IS SAID TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE. THE RESEARCH WOULD INDICATE THAT IT UN-STABILIZES YOUR TRAINING GAINS.

Walk into any gym and it might look like people are training to perform in the circus - doing various exercises on stability balls, rubber discs, and other unstable surfaces. Where did they get this idea from? From athletes and professional strength coaches and their training approaches. The idea is that, by doing exercises on an unstable surface, you will enhance performance by improving balance and proprioception (awareness of where your limbs and other body parts are). This type of training is also believed to reduce risk of injury by enhancing the simultaneous contraction of agonist (the muscle doing the primary contraction, like the quadriceps in a squat) and antagonist (the opposing muscle, like the hamstrings in the squat) muscles, which is supposed to enhance joint stability. Finally, unstable training is believed to enhance muscle contraction of the core muscles (like the abdominals), which might also play a role in enhancing performance and preventing injury. While unstable training has been shown to be useful in injury rehabilitation, there has not been much research on healthy, trained athletes.

Power Key: unstable training, stretch shortening cycle, athleticism