

LEG DAY! ARE YOU READY?

By Tyrone Irby, Owner of The Choice Performance Center

The following is the Top Definition for “Leg Day” in the Urban Dictionary:

“The worst day of the week sucks because you would rather be hitting arms, or shoulders, or chest, or even back, but you are stuck working the part of your body that shows the least; usually involves a large amount of walking around, stalling, and hype. If you skip leg day, you will be deemed a b&8^% and be called such from then on out. Best pump, but usually involves the most work.”

The two words “Leg Day” will either spark dread or excitement depending on whether you embrace the concept of dedicating one full gym session to just the lower body. Everyone has their own version of leg day. But what exercises are the best overall and in combinations remains to be seen.

A true leg day should combine the elements of stability, strength, and power, in that order. A proper warm up for leg day should be a minimum of 15 minutes. A true leg day is torturous, exhilarating, and mentally exhausting. Though the day is tough, the 48 hours afterwards is even tougher.

For every training session there should be an objective. Leg Day is no different. If your goals are mass, your training will be different than a marathon runner. If you are a marathon runner, your goals are different than a sprinter. If you are a sprinter, your goals are different than an Iron Man. Regardless of your goals, Leg Day, should indeed be legendary and should challenge you both physically and mentally.

Here is an example of our LEGendary Workout- you cannot spell LEGENDARY WITHOUT LEG DAY.

Note: there are no exercises in this leg workout that use or require machines. Machines, including the Smith Machine, Hack Squat, and Leg Press decrease functional movements as your body does not move naturally. In addition, the “numbers” do not accurately determine your strength. 8 plates on a lying leg press DOES NOT translate to 8 plates for a barbell back squat.

Foam Rolling (10 minutes)

Self-myofascial release is a critical part of a properly warmed up leg day. S.M.R. addresses adhesions and knots that may affect your ability to perform the lifts to a full range of motion. Each movement for leg day should be a full R.O.M. movement. Strength can only be achieved if every part of the movement (concentric, isometric, and eccentric) is performed fully. We recommend 6-12 minutes of SMR with a focus on calves, IT Band, glutes, and quadriceps.

Single Leg Stability Work (12 minutes)

In all sports, especially running, each leg works independently for all movement patterns. Single Leg (S.L.) work is the missing link for a lot of Leg Day training. Beginning with single leg staples such as S.L. Deadlifts, S.L. Squats, and S.L. Split Squats, prepares your lower body for the heavier resistance and for the primary lifts.

Light Strength (16 minutes)

For light strength work, the focus will be on the squat, hinge, and loaded carry movement patterns. Before beginning your working sets, always warm up with the same movements with body weight or a light weight to get your body used to “feeling and controlling the weight.” For squats, KB goblet squats, Strength Bag squats, and light barbell squats are recommended. For the hinge movement, KB Single Arm deadlifts, MB Wood Choppers, and light kettlebell swings are all good options. For the loaded carry, BW Step Ups, BW Walking Lunges, and Bulgarian Split Squats are great options.

Heavy Strength w/ Power (24 minutes)= 52 minutes

As stated above, the primary movements for a quality Leg Day are squat, hinge, and loaded carry. With those movements as the principal piece of your training sessions, pare down to one primary strength movement and one primary cardio/power movement per session.

For the last part of your training and to get the most bang for the buck, we recommend pairing strength with cardio/power, which peaks the metabolism and allows for active rest. Here is an example of our LEGendary Primary Workout.

Single Leg Loaded Walking Lunges w/Jump Rope (3 sets 30r/60s)

A heavy loaded walking lunge is a great way to begin this last part of your workout. Using KB, DB, or WP, each set can be different. Try one set holding the resistance overhead, one set holding the resistance goblet style, and one set holding the resistance in “suitcase” style. Lunge for 30 total steps and pair each set with 60s of jump rope.

Barbell True Deadlifts + KB Power Swings (3 sets 12r/20s)

Working the back of the body is a key to symmetry and injury prevention. A properly performed barbell deadlift is the top lift for glutes and hamstrings. Deadlifts also will work the core and upper/lower back making it a very functional exercise. Pairing the deadlifts with 20s of heavy KB Swings, gives you double the results for your hips and glutes.

Barbell Bench Squats + BW Power Squat Jumps (3 sets 8r/5r)

Range of motion is always an issue for barbell back squats, which is why we recommend using an 18” high (or lower) weight bench as your target. The focus on these squats is to “control the weight” on each rep. Rather than bouncing off the bench, lightly tap the bench under control for each rep. Keep your entire body rigid during the lift from start to finish. Follow this lift with power squat jumps. Focus on generating power from the hips for a high and explosive jump. Perform one jump every 5 seconds for best results. Load and explode. Make sure to land softly utilizing the hips to absorb the blow from the jump.

Leg Day will likely be your most challenging strength session of the week (and it should be!) For best results, perform a light leg day at the beginning of the week and a more intense session later in the week. If you are a runner, take a run after the workout on the same day or the next day to prevent the dreaded “48 hour” dead legs.

We are never proponents of isolated muscle lifts (unless you are a bodybuilder or fitness competitor) but a true leg day gives you an opportunity to identify weaknesses (right/left or front/back) and put your body in the best position for success. If you are training, the focus should be on improving the quality of your movement patterns, not the numbers on the lifts. A person is stronger who can complete a full

ROM back squat, versus one who completes a half rep with heavier weight. Try our leg day once per week to Get: Stronger and Faster.

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