

Medicine Ball Functional Training

*By Rob Lasorsa, M-F Athletic,
USATF Shot Put Development Chairman*

To be successful in today's track and field environment, athletes must work on a variety of components of athletic ability.

Flexibility, strength, speed, power, agility, balance, technique, kinesthetic awareness, endurance, psychological development and injury prevention are all areas that need improvement for an individual to become a successful athlete. As individuals become more athletic their performances will equally improve.

Because of time restraints, and athlete will usually only concentrate on one or two areas. For example, a discus thrower may only work on strength (by spending a great deal of time in the weight room) and technique (by taking a large volume of throws). The discus thrower is bypassing many significant training areas that are equally important to their success. Optimum performance level is never fulfilled.

It is virtually impossible to select each individual component of athletic ability and improve each component by isolating activities for just that area. There is simply not enough time. Therefore, coaches and athletes must use activities that will "cross train" many areas at the same time. This is the importance of medicine ball "functional" training.

Following are some medicine ball drills that will allow the athlete to work on many components of athletic ability at the same time including balance, kinesthetic awareness, agility, speed & power, strength, endurance and flexibility. A proper training program "housing" all these areas of athletic ability will decrease the possibility of injuries.

[Medicine Balls](#) come in a variety of sizes and weights. In most cases, athletes should start out with lighter medicine balls, and as higher athletic ability levels are obtained, increase the weight of the balls. The standard "rule of thumb" is to always use a medicine ball whose weight allows the correct technique of the drill to be performed. Using a ball that is too heavy will cause breakdown in skills. Sets, reps and recovery time are also important and are specific to the athlete's individual needs. Too many sets or reps, or not enough recovery time could cause fatigue and improper skill performance. In general we suggest use of basic sets and reps. (For example: 3 sets of 8 reps or 4 sets of 6 reps is an excellent place to begin). It is also important to perform each drill with both sides of the body.

Medicine Balls that we recommend and why:

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First Place Medicine Balls:

- Bounce well and are great for working out alone or with others.
- Inflate more for a higher bounce.
- Textured surface provides excellent grip.
- Sizes range from volleyball to basketball size as weight increases.

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First Place Core Medicine Balls:

- 2 handles make it excellent for core and torso work
- Throw against wall to develop power or on field for distance throws.
- All weights are 11" diameter.

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Nemo Medicine Balls:

- Compact – easy to grip and throw.
- Less bounce than the First Place Med Ball.
- Smaller balls (1,2,3kg) are approximately volleyball size.
- Larger balls (4,5,6,7,8kg) are slightly larger than basketball size.

§ Converta-Balls:

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Use with rope for swinging, chopping, rotational drills.

- Use without rope as a traditional med ball.
- Bounces well – inflate for higher bounce.
- Ball diameter increases proportionally with weight.

§ Power Medicine Balls:

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Grasp handle for rotary drills, dumbbell simulation, throwing & running movements.

- Improve explosive power by throwing underhand, overhand or sidearm
- Soft, does not bounce
- All weights are the same size.

§ D-Ball Medicine Balls:

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Soft and easy to grip, catch and throw.

- Do not bounce.

- o Diameter ranges from 3.5" to 10.6" from smallest to heaviest weight.

Suggested Medicine Ball Drills:

§ **Modified Hammer Throw:** Start with ball on hip opposite of throw/delivery side. Start transferring weight from backside to delivery side by turning back foot, while twisting body's core. Finish by throwing/delivering ball at shoulder height with your weight balanced over delivery side. This throw can also begin at shoulder height, instead of by hip.

§ **Side Throws:** Begin at 90 degrees to wall, with ball on hip, and more weight on that leg. Deliver ball at hip height, with weight now transferred to front leg. Catch ball and repeat.

§ **Puts:** Start with ball behind one hip with more weight on that leg. Throw ("Put") the ball while turning and reaching towards the direction of the throw. Finish the drill in a balanced position.

§ **Russian Twist:** Start with ball at belly button height, arms length away from body, behind right or left hip. Start by moving ball to the right or left. Keep core tight and turn/rotate your back foot to allow greater range of motion.

§ **Single Leg Russian Twist:** Same as above, but when weight is off of back leg, take it off of the ground.

§ **Diagonal Chops:** Start with ball behind and above ear. Move ball diagonally across body, ending near opposite knee. Return with the same pattern. Rotate/turn back foot to increase effective range of exercise.

§ **Single Leg Chop:** Same as diagonal chops, but balance on one leg while performing the exercise.

§ **Chops:** Start with ball overhead at arms length. Chop down and stop when ball is between your feet.

§ **Figure 8's:** Begin with ball at ear level, but with arms extended away from body. Move the ball through a figure 8 pattern continuously – in front of and beside your body from left to right.

§ **Circles:** Begin with ball overhead and move ball in a circular motion as big as possible around your body.

§ **Med Ball Squat:** Keep ball at arms length while performing a squat. A variation: start ball at chest and press up or out when squatting – returning ball to chest on ascent.

§ **One Leg Squat:** Begin with ball at arms length straight in front of body. Squat on one leg, keeping ball held out in front as a counterbalance. Leave free leg in front. (You can also leave the free leg to the side or the rear). Variation: Ball can start from belly button and be pressed out when squatting.

§ **Med Ball Lunge I:** Begin with ball at belly button level. Take a step

forward with one leg while moving the ball to the side of the lunging leg. Continue alternating legs by either walking or switching in place.

§ **Med Ball Lunge II:** Begin with ball at belly button. While lunging forward raise the ball up overhead. Either leave the ball overhead while continuing to lunge or return the ball to belly button on each lunge.

§ **Sagittal or Front Reach:** Begin with ball at belly button. Step forward and extend arms towards front foot. Return and repeat in place with same foot or alternate feet.

§ **Frontal or Side Reach:** Begin with ball at belly button. Step and reach laterally to one side. Continue reaching and stepping to one side or alternating legs.

§ **Transverse or Rear Reach:** Begin with ball at belly button. Open (turn) and step/reach between 90 and 180 degrees to the rear. Return to start and repeat with same leg or opposite leg.

§ **Med Ball Push Up:** Position ball under one hand and perform a pushup. Try doing one pushup with hand on ground, pushing hard enough to catch yourself on the ball for next rep. Begin to roll ball across to opposite hand between reps if you want a bigger challenge.

§ **Two Arm Wall Pass:** Begin facing wall about an arm's length away. Keep hands above head initially keeping throwing range short. Work towards arms being bent and further away from wall. You can also do this with one arm only.

§ **Slams:** Begin with ball overhead. Throw ball down, using your core. You can also do this with one arm only.

§ **Knee Throw to Push Up:** Begin on knees, with ball in front of chest. Throw ball forward and follow it with upper body. When your body extension is complete, catch yourself in a push up position. This can also be beginning from an overhead ball position.

§ **Wall Throws:** Stand 6-8 feet from wall. Swing ball to an overhead position, stretching upper extremities. Throw ball, aiming 1-2 feet above the bottom of the wall, using your core.

§ **One Step Wall Throws:** Start with ball at belly button. Swing ball to an overhead position, and step forward with one foot towards the wall. Shift weight completely over front throwing leg, using core to throw. Aim 1-2 feet above bottom of the wall.

§ **Squat Throw:** Start with ball at chest or overhead. Quickly squat lowering ball to calf level. Jump and throw the ball as high as possible directly overhead. Let the ball bounce once, reposition and repeat drill.

§ **Over the Back Toss:** Start with the ball overhead and bring it forward and down to knees. Begin throw as soon as ball gets to knee level. Throw by extending ankle, knee, hip and delivering the ball overhead backwards, keeping toes on ground. This is a great total body power test.

§ **Single Arm Throw:** (great with Core Ball or Power Ball): Start bent holding ball with one hand between feet. Throw ball as high as possible,

straight overhead (not backwards) by extending at knee, ankle and hip. Ball should move close to body for best height.

*Please note these drills are condensed for this article. The entire medicine ball exercise sheet is included with each medicine ball purchase you make, and can be downloaded in their entirety from our sister site PerformBetter.com by clicking here: [Link to Exercise Sheets](#).