

PARTNER RESISTANCE EXERCISE (P.R.Ex.)

BY

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The Technical Journal was asked by a reader if there was any way we could trace an old article from the hard-copy days of the magazine. The subject was Partner Resistant Exercise and was written by the then Midland Division Technical Administrator, Keith Bonser. Fortunately he still had a copy of the issue (Spring, 1996) and kindly scanned it for it to be sent on.

I read the piece before passing it on and thought immediately that it could be of use to the many coaches who do not have weights and would not use them if they did – so the article is reproduced here for the benefit of the ‘new’ internet readership. Old hands may still have their own personal hoard of hard copies of the Technical Journal, but many will not.

If this (Probably meaning that the previous article in 1996 was about weights at the elite rugby level – Ed.) is an indication of practice at the top end of the game, then the probability is that weight training will not feature too highly in fitness and development programmes at lower levels. Of course, weight training is difficult. It requires expertise, or at least experience; it ought to be specific to positions and even more precisely to individuals. There is also the possibility that, without common sense and due care and attention, accidents could happen.

But weight training is of considerable benefit to rugby players and, despite difficulties, coaches and, more specifically, players, certainly those with aspirations, should acquire the knowledge and find the facilities. These need not be at the club, for such facilities are everywhere nowadays, at leisure centres, sports centres and fitness clinics.

There is, however, an alternative if this is perhaps too much. Clubs and coaches can start to use Partner Resistance Exercises (P.R.Ex), also known as Manual Resistance, in which, as its name clearly states, a player works against the resistance provided by a training partner in order to increase muscular strength and endurance.

P.R.Ex has advantages. No equipment is required; large groups can train together (partners should remain constant as far as possible, chosen for size, weight and position) and the degree of resistance can be adjusted throughout the exercises. There are, conversely and naturally, disadvantages. The player must perform the exercises correctly and in good form if the effect is to be beneficial; the partner must work with care, react quickly, apply appropriate resistance and, of course, the pair of them could agree to ‘cheat’.

Before looking at a circuit of Partner Resistant Exercises that are applicable to rugby, there are some important first considerations.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

- During the first work-outs, both the lifter and the partner will be learning. Maximum resistance must not be used. When the players feel comfortable with all the exercises, then the following considerations will apply.
- One set of exercises – one circuit only – should be completed. After the first lifter has completed an exercise, the partner will do so. They should both rest as necessary in the early work-outs. The 12 exercise circuit should eventually take 30 – 35 minutes.
- Each exercise must be performed 12 times or for 60 seconds. The partner should apply sufficient resistance for this to occur. It takes practice. After 12 repetitions have been completed or the 60 seconds worked, the particular muscle group should be exhausted.
- The lifter and the partner must communicate throughout the work so that adequate resistance, more or less, as required, is applied.
- The exercises should be performed smoothly and evenly and the partner provides resistance in both the active and return phase of the action.

The lifter must

1. Communicate constantly with his partner.
2. Keep tension in the muscle group throughout the exercise. This is hard work and it needs an all-out effort.
3. Pause at the completion of the lift and allow four seconds to return to the starting point.

The partner must

1. Communicate constantly with the lifter.
2. *Not* apply maximum resistance during the first repetitions. He must provide enough resistance to allow the lifter to work for 60 seconds or to complete 12 repetitions.
3. Adjust the resistance as the lift is in progress – at the strongest position a little more, at the weakest a little less – and keep resistance on during the return stage of the exercise.

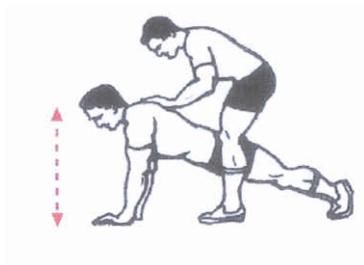
With these considerations firmly in mind, let's look at a circuit of Partner Resistant Exercise that is appropriate to rugby.

THE CIRCUIT

1. PRESS UPS.
2. SIT UPS.
3. LEG EXTENSIONS.
4. BICEP CURL.
5. ONE LEG SQUAT.
6. UPRIGHT ROWING.
7. ABDOMINALS.*
8. SEATED PRESS.
9. LEG CURLS.
10. BENT-OVER ROWING.
11. ABDOMINALS.*
12. BENT-ARM FLYS.

*You could repeat the Sit Ups as prescribed or use an alternative exercise in these 2 slots.

1. PRESS UPS (Chest, Shoulder, Triceps)



Starting position:

- Normal.

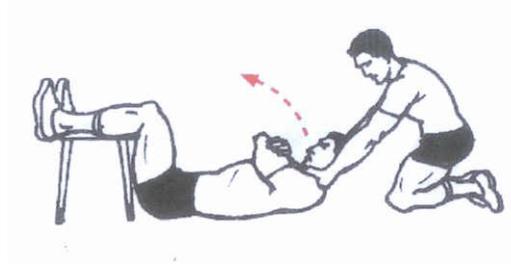
Action:

- Normal.

Partner resistance:

- Straddle the 'lifter', place both hands on the shoulder blades to apply resistance.

2. SIT UPS (Abdominals)



Starting position:

- Back lying on floor, thighs raised to vertical.
- Calves resting on chair or bench.
- Arms folded, chin on chest.

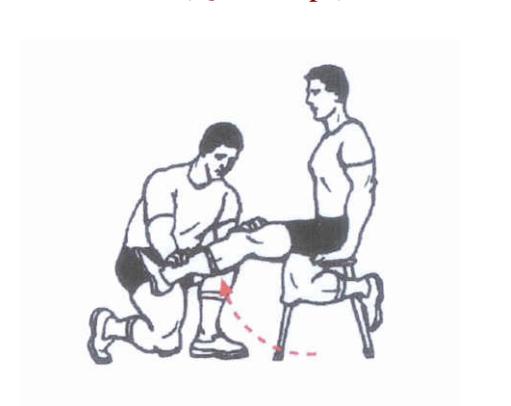
Action:

- Raise torso to thighs.
- Pause, return to starting position.

Partner resistance:

- Kneel behind 'lifter'.
- Resist, if required, by holding shoulders.

3. LEG EXTENSION (Quadriceps)



Starting position:

- Seated on bench or chair, with feet *not* touching the floor.

Action:

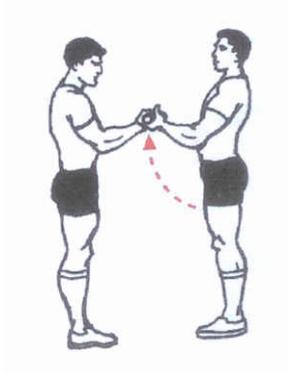
- Straighten the right leg to the horizontal.
- Pause then return to the starting position.

Partner resistance:

- Kneel alongside the 'lifter', one hand on right thigh above the knee, the other pressing on top of the ankle to provide resistance to leg extension.

Repeat the exercise with the left leg.

4. BICEP CURL (Bicep)



Starting position:

- Standing with back against a wall, arms extended, holding a bar with hands shoulder- width apart.

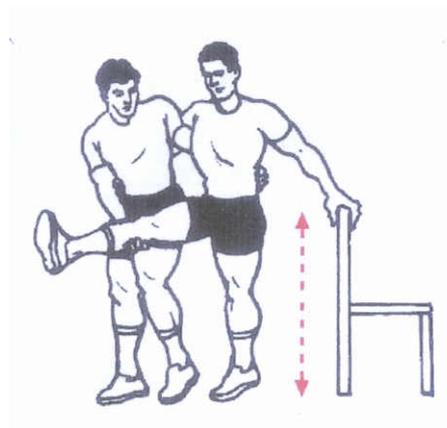
Action:

- Bend the elbows fully to raise the bar to chest.
- Pause then return to starting position.

Partner resistance:

- Stand in front of 'lifter'.
- Resist upward movement of the bar with hands placed between lifter's hands on the bar.

5. ONE LEG SQUAT (Legs, Buttocks)



Starting position:

- Standing upright on left leg with right leg extended forward to the horizontal.
- Keep balance by placing right arm around partner's waist and holding onto a fixed object with the left hand.

Action:

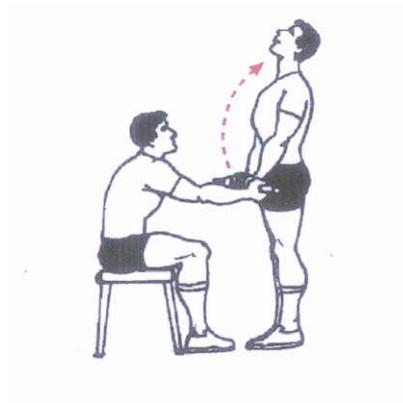
- Bend the left knee till the thigh is parallel to the floor.
- Return to the starting position.

Partner resistance:

- Stand alongside the 'lifter' and grasp under his right knee with the right hand.
- Hold the 'lifter' around the waist with the left arm and, if required, offer resistance with left arm.

Repeat the exercise with the right leg.

6. UPRIGHT ROWING (Deltoids, Trapezius, Bicep)



Starting position:

- Standing, arms extended downwards, holding a bar in both hands with a narrow grip.
- Feet shoulder-width apart, head looking skywards.

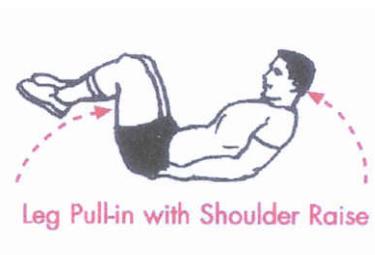
Action:

- Pull the bar upwards to touch the chin.
- Pause then return to the starting position.

Partner resistance:

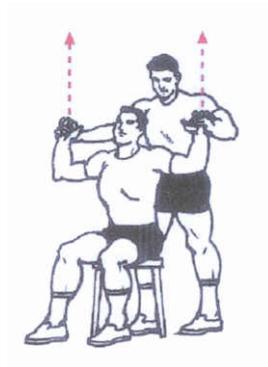
- Seated under the 'lifter', holding the ends of the bar to provide resistance.

7. ABDOMINALS



Either repeat Sit Up as in 2, or Leg Pull-in with shoulder raise for 60 seconds.

8. SEATED PRESS (Deltoids)



Starting position:

- Seated on a chair, arms in bench press position.

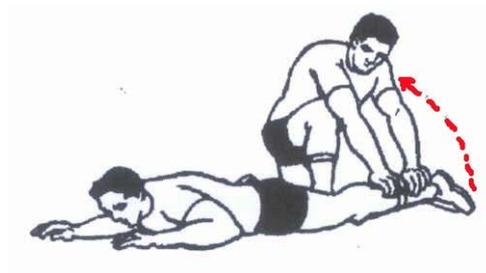
Action:

- Extend arms fully to lock-out.
- Pause then return to starting position.

Partner resistance:

- Hold 'lifter's' hands, with thumbs interlocked.
- Apply resistance throughout upward and downward movement.

9. LEG CURL



Starting position:

- Lying face down on floor, legs extended, toes pointed.

Action:

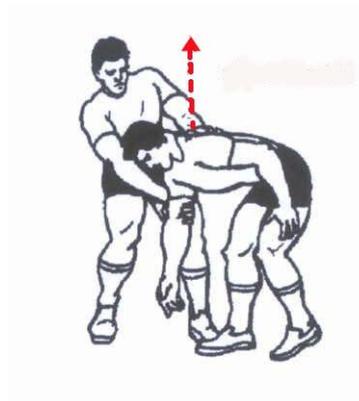
- Keep the right thigh on the floor.
- Raise the right heel as close to the buttock as possible.

Partner resistance:

- Kneel alongside the 'lifter', applying resistance against the heel.

Repeat the exercise with the left leg.

10. BENT OVER ROWING
(Latissimus Dorsi)



Starting position:

- Bent forward at waist so that upper body is parallel to the floor, feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, with left forearm on thigh to stabilise the body. Right arm fully extended downwards.

Action:

- Raise the right elbow upwards to a position above the upper body.
- Pause then return to starting position.

Partner resistance:

- Stand on right-hand side of 'lifter'.
- Place left hand on shoulder blade.
- Grasp his right arm above the elbow, resisting the upward movement.

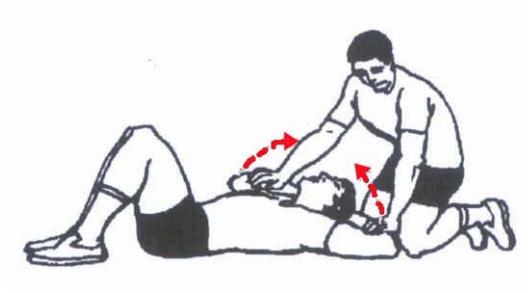
Repeat the exercise with the left arm.

11. ABDOMINALS



Choose one of (i) repeat Sit Up as in Exercise 2 or (ii) Leg Pull In with Shoulder Raise (7) or (iii) Sit Up with twist for 60 seconds.

12. BENT ARM FLYS (Chest, Anterior Deltoids)



Starting position:

Lying on back with knees bent and feet flat on floor.
Hands behind head.
Elbows on floor.

Action:

Raise elbows in front of face, keeping hands behind head.
Pause then return to starting position.

Partner resistance:

Kneel behind 'lifter's' head.
Apply resistance against the inside elbow.

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This is **hard work**. It needs common sense and it needs control, both on the part of the coach, who must ensure correct techniques in the exercises, and the players, who must want to help each other.

Don't try it if you have fools among the group.

Partner Resistance Exercise routines can be used as part of the pre-season training to improve the levels of strength and/or strength endurance and as part of the general club programme throughout the season to maintain those levels.