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A giant leap for foot strength

BY PETE ESTABROOKS, FOR THE CALGARY HERALD APRIL 29, 2010

STORY

PHOTOS (1)



Pete Estabrooks strengthens his feet using the AFX Ankle Foot Maximizer during his workout at Probodyes Health and Fitness.

Photograph by: Leah Hennel, Calgary Herald, For The Calgary Herald

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I would think the transition from winter running and activity to spring would be an easy one -- that those long slow runs slipping on icy trails and trundling over Calgary's less than stellar snow-plowed streets would have honed my feet and ankles into engineering units rivalling anything they would have thrown against the Six Million Dollar Man.

Unfortunately, such is not the case.

Come spring, there is the inevitable trail run where one foot or the other rolls over a rock, stump or root, and I tumble into gravity's hungry jaws.

This year, however, I have a tool in my repertoire that will relegate falls to the "yes I am uncoordinated, but man do I have strong feet" category.

What Is It?

The AFX Foot Maximizer is a foot and ankle strengthener. The solid bar, handles, resistance tubing and "foot bed" are put together in such a way that strengthening the muscles and tendons of the foot and ankle complex becomes a simple one-shop stop.

The Maximizer allows you to sit at home or in the gym and slip your foot into what is essentially an open-toed sock attached to rubber resistance tubing. You can then functionally practice every movement your foot can make, against a controlled resistance.

The foot is ground zero for most movement, so ensuring that it is capable of support and adaptation to movements such as inverting, everting, flexing, extending and rotating is paramount in keeping you upright, agile and ready for action.

Who Would This Appeal To?

As the feet and ankles are the foundations of all ambulatory movement, athletes of all ilk -- whether they walk, run, cycle or leap giant buildings in a single bound -- will appreciate the ability to strengthen and prepare their feet through a balanced plan of full-range-of-motion exercise against appropriate resistance.

Whether or not you consider activities such as walking, hiking, trekking and golfing (if you forgo that golf cart) athletic, they too would be well served by having a solid foundation underfoot.

Who Would Hate It?

If your preference for foot training consists of walking around on your tippy toes and picking up and sorting your laundry with your feet, you are going to hate giving all that up for a simpler, less entertaining method.

The Klutz Factor

The usual exercise cautions apply.

Introduce the exercises gradually using a resistance that allows for the full range of motion through the exercise you are performing. Use slightly less resistance than you think necessary and wait until the next day to see if you have the appropriate post exercise residual (and pleasant) ache.

Leave 48 hours between sessions to allow for complete recovery, make sure the tubing is never frayed and always ensure that when anchoring your equipment the anchor is solid.

The last thing you would want is to have really strong feet and a huge dental bill should that Maximizer ever be launched at you at 100 kilometres per hour because you weren't careful.

Where Do I Find It/ What Are The Costs?

Each AFX Foot Maximizer package is \$139 and comes with an introductory and training DVD as well as website support and comprehensive (regularly updated) online video and training programs at afx-online.com.



Questions can be addressed to: info@afx-online.com.

In Calgary, the Maximizer is available at Fitter First: 3050, 2600 Portland St. S.E. (403-243-6830).

Bottom Line?

This spring, strengthen your fitness program from the ground up!

Pete Estabrooks B. PE /The Fitness Guy is a personal trainer and writer plying his trade in Calgary at Pro-Bodies Fitness in Marda Loop and virtually everywhere in the world from petesclass.com.

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