

Limping Into December, Part I

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Twelve weeks of pain
by Ian King

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In case you've just stumbled onto this site, put some ice on your head while I do a quick recap of what's happening here. Australian Wunder Coach Ian King has devised a 12-week leg program that's among the most unique — and the most effective — that I've ever experienced. The first four workouts were posted in "Limping Into October" [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) and "Limping Into November" [Part I](#) and [Part II](#). They're meant to be alternated for a period of three weeks, after which you'd progress to Parts I and II of the second three-week phase (Part I of which appears below). Got it?

This particular workout is Part I of the third stage of the workout. Part II will follow next week. These two workouts will take us through weeks 6 to 9, after which we'll publish the last two parts of the workout (remember, it's a 12-week program).

The time has come to see the fruits of your labor. Fasten your seatbelts and get ready for the turbocharger to kick in! We've bashed the *muscles* in the previous workouts, but now it's time to bash the *neural* system. The end result? Hugeness!

I expect this stage to bring you to new levels of strength, which will go nicely with your new levels of muscular development. This program is based around the highly effective *load alteration method* for neural (strength) enhancement that Poliquin and I learned from Eastern European weightlifting methods in the early 1990s. It uses a form of neural disinhibition but, at the end of the day, I expect that you will be more interested in how to do it rather than why it works.

Before we get into the workout, I want to take a sidebar to chat about recovery methods — more specifically, the ratio of *work to rest weeks*. I usually recommend no longer than 12 weeks of continuous training before taking a full rest week. There are some who don't even bother with rest weeks, but whether these individuals opt to take a rest week depends on recovery factors including age, lifestyle, nutrition, supplements, drugs, etc. I want to make it very clear, though, that it's not a matter of how much training you can do...rather how much is *optimal*. Most contemporary sports-training methods have been influenced by programs where the state provided the "vitamins." It's simple, if you're going to follow these same training methods, you'll need the same "vitamin program." If you aren't using these drugs or the same dosages, you'll burn out — unless you *modify the program accordingly*.

For the average, drug-free, "got a job/go to school" person, I recommend that you consider taking a recovery week after two stages (after six to eight weeks or two three-week blocks). For the older trainee or those whose recovery ability is stressed by work, lifestyle, etc., I recommend using a recovery week after every three to four weeks of training. Radical? No, just smart. How do you know which option to use? Easy. Think about your previous training

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programs. If, for example, you recall burning out and "getting weaker" after only three weeks of training, you either need to lower the training load or use a recovery week after three weeks, or both.

So before you start with this third stage, ask yourself if you, indeed, got weaker or burned out after the previous cycle and resolve this issue. Most err on the adventurous side (e.g. "I don't need a rest week now") and learn the hard way by having their results diminish at some stage during the next block of training. Hey, even the experienced make this mistake — I won't mention which T-mag person I'm referring to! Making this mistake isn't a problem, but failing to learn from it is a problem. And, considering that many of you have been making the same mistakes for the duration of your training career, is there much hope for the voice of reason to dominate?

Of course, this is the benefit of having a coach, someone to take the emotion out of the decision....

If you don't take that recovery week now, and burn out during the next training block, you'll have learned a valuable lesson which I hope you'll apply in your subsequent training.

Enough chewing the fat, let's get into it! The following is the quad dominant — or Part I — of the two-part leg workout for the third stage of the 12-week program. (Remember, I suggest that most of you spend three weeks on each of the four stages.) Look for Part II to follow next week. Alternate the two workouts in the same fashion as recommended in the first two stages. And, if you haven't done the first two stages, go back and do them!

Medium-bar, medium-stance, medium-grip squats

We're going to use the same width stance as we did in the previous stage (shoulder-width, toes slightly pointed out). The main difference will be that we're going to place the bar on the back to what I call the medium-bar position, the most comfortable and most commonly used position. In other words, rest the bar on the middle of the upper traps and use a slightly wider handgrip on the bar. The speed will also be different — use about a 201 or 301 speed (three seconds to lower, and one second to lift).

I gave a description of the technique that I recommend using in this squat in the previous "quad dominant" workout ([Limping Into November, Part II](#)). In addition, I spent some time recently at T-mag headquarters shooting footage for a video on how I perform lower body exercises, so keep an eye out for its release.

Stretching for the Squat

After the perfunctory 10-15 minutes on the stationary bike (or similar) and 20-30 minutes of conventional lower

body stretching, do the following:

Unresisted or light-resistance knee extensions: Use no load and a controlled speed up and down for 20 reps. I find isokinetic or semi-isokinetic machines to be superior for this purpose. The nature of their resistance seems "softer" on the joint and appropriate for warm-ups.

However, any machine will work to some degree and, in the absence of leg extension devices, sitting on the edge of a prone bench and slowing extending/flexing the lower leg is effective.

Assisted squats: Hold onto a vertical frame (a power rack). Squat down only part way on the first rep and use your arms to assist the lift by pulling up with them. On each of the subsequent reps, progressively increase the range while decreasing the use of your arms so that, by the tenth rep or so, you're doing the same range that you'll be using in your work sets — by this time, your arms will be doing very

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As the loading or resistance is going to be greater in this workout than in the earlier ones, as well as the focus on squatting more sets, I recommend that you take a look at the sidebar describing additional squat warm-up techniques. Their intent is to reduce the friction at the patella-femoral (knee) joint, in particular.

Use a progressive warm-up set of ten (using approximately 40% of what you'll use for your first work set), a set of eight (approximately 60% of the first work set), and a set of five (approximately 80%). Now, select a work-set load that creates a high degree of fatigue yet allows excellent technique for five reps while using a 201 speed of movement. Take three to four minutes rest. Because the rest period is longer, the use of a towel on the shoulder is more critical to maintain body temperature (in addition to serving as an arousal technique when removed prior to the next set).

The next work set is a set of one rep at a load that's about a 2-3RM (i.e. you could do two to three reps of this weight, if you tried). Use the same tempo and take the same amount of rest.

Now, on your next set, return to a load that's slightly heavier than the first work set of five. For example, if you're using less than 100 kg (220 pounds), add about 2.5-5 kg (5-10 pounds); if you're using 100-200 kg (220-440 pounds), add about 5-10 kg (10-25 pounds); and if you're using over 200 kg, add 10-20 kg (25-50 pounds).

The fourth work set will then be a repeat of the one-rep set, using a weight slightly heavier than the first single-rep set. You can use the same guidelines to determine the jumps from the first set to the second set of both the set of fives and the set of ones.

Walk around between sets for, say, 30 seconds or so to assist recovery of the working muscles, and then sit down until it's time to go again.

Do you typically use a belt? If you do, this should have been the first time in the 12-week program that you used it. I don't recommend belts very often, but I'll let you make your own mind up. If you choose a belt for this stage, though, use a *thin* one (for example, a weightlifting belt). Save the thick (powerlifting) belt for the last stage if, indeed, you use it at all during the 12-week program.

Knee wraps? Again, I'll let you decide, but I don't see a big need for them here unless you're a competitive lifter. If you are a competitive lifter, use a lighter tension or an older set of knee wraps, leaving the greater tension/newer set for the next stage.

When you do this part of the program again, the workload on all work sets needs to be raised. For example, you may find the weight that you used for your second work set *this* week becoming the weight that you use for your first workout *next* week. Make similar incremental increases during the third week of this stage.

little during the lift.

Knee sleeves: Try putting on neoprene knee sleeves (or something similar) prior to the bike (or similar) warm-up, and keep them on for the duration of the workout. They will maintain knee temperature, which is critical during workouts where you'll be taking longer rest periods. There's a positive relationship between knee temperature and joint lubrication, and this may result in reduced wear on the joint, something that you'll appreciate later in life!

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Quarter squats

These are limited-range squats that allow you to expose your muscles to supra-maximal loading — which will, no doubt, please Little and Sisco!

Use a load that's somewhere in the vicinity of 20-30% greater than what you'd use for a conventional, full-range set of the same number of reps. Do one set of five reps. For those who are interested in increasing explosive power, focus on accelerating (or, at least, trying to do so) during the concentric phase so that you end up on your toes.

If you're in doubt as to how far to go down, be conservative in the first rep and progress in depth in subsequent reps. If you go beyond your sticking point, you may not come back up, so be careful here. I recommend using a spotter and/or safety rack.

Explosive squats or high-rep squats

We've come to a fork in the road. What do I mean by that? Well, those who are primarily interested in developing explosive power should do *explosive squats*, while those wanting primarily to increase muscle size should do *high-rep squats*.

Explosive squats: Reduce the load to about the weight you used in your first set of five reps in the first exercise. Aim to perform these reps with maximal acceleration in the concentric phase. This is more about *trying* to lift fast than actually looking like you're lifting fast, but it should appear even to the casual bystander that you're gaining speed in the final stages of each concentric phase, ideally allowing you to finish on your toes. Look for four to eight reps, but stop if or when you lose the speed or the technique breaks down. Do one set.



High-rep squats: These present an incredible window of opportunity to perform a greater amount of work than usual due to the fact that I've sequenced this set after the maximal loading set.

You're looking for a weight that will allow 10-20 reps at a 301 speed and, as a guide, you'll probably want to use a weight somewhere between your last and second to last warm-up set. Whatever you use, you'll be able to do more reps at this stage of the workout than if you had attempted the same weight as your first work set (due to increased neural firing and reduced inhibition).

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Again, cease the rep if the technique breaks down. You also have the alternative of performing this set continuously or using intermittent, short pauses to catch your breath. For those who wish to totally deplete their fiber pool, this is an excellent compliment to the earlier sets, giving you "the best of both worlds."

Jump squats or dynamic lunges

Another fork in the road — *jump squats* for those who are primarily interested in explosive power; and *dynamic lunges* for those who are more concerned about hypertrophy.

Jump squats: Reduce the load to about the weight of the first work set. Use a partial and "as quick as possible" eccentric (lowering) phase. Shift to the concentric phase with as little delay as possible. Jump for maximal height and land with knees bent, absorbing the shock. Pause, reset mentally, and repeat. Remember that this is for speed and height. Look for 6-10 reps but, again, if speed or jump height decreases, terminate the set. Do just one set.



Dynamic lunges: Use a load somewhere between the first and second work set. With the bar on the shoulders and your feet side by side, step out with the weaker leg first, landing with a foot position that keeps the knee of the leg centered between the heel and toe at all times during the beginning and end of each rep. Go down using a moderate speed and drive back up with maximal speed. Do one set.

Here's a little trick for those with significant right-to-left leg imbalances. Do two reps on the weak side for every rep that you do on the strong side. Perform a total of 20 reps. If both legs are equal, you'll end up doing 10 reps for each leg. But if an imbalance exists, you may end up with 14 reps on the weak side and 7 reps on the strong).



In-depth jumps or single-leg squats

The final fork in the road. For power, do *in-depth jumps*. For hypertrophy, do *single-leg squats*.

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In-depth jumps: Stand on a box about half the height of a standard prone bench. Place a regular flat bench about a meter or yard in front of the box. Step off the low box, land on the ground with both feet, and then jump to the higher box/bench with as short a ground contact time and as limited a knee bend as possible. Look for ten reps, one to two sets.



Single-leg squats: I outlined the technique for this in the previous "quad dominant" workout, but I'll include it here also as a refresher. Stand on one leg beside the squat rack or some other supporting structure. Place the other leg out so that the heel of that leg stays just off the ground at all times. Bend the supporting knee and go down as far as you can while keeping your foot flat on the ground.

This is an excellent exercise for those with leg imbalances. If the imbalance is great, you may choose not to do any on the stronger/larger side. For variety, or if your bodyweight is too much for your leg strength for whatever reason, you can always do one-legged leg presses or hack squats. If you're using bodyweight, do as many reps as possible at about a 311 tempo. If you're using a leg press or similar, look for 10-20 reps at the same speed.

Here's a synopsis of the exercises outlined in this program:

Medium-bar, medium-stance, medium-grip squats

Warm-up sets — 1x10 at 40%, 1x8 at 60%, 1x5 at 80%

Work sets — 1x5, 1x1, 1x5, 1x1

Speed — 301 or 201

Quarter squats

Work sets — 1x5

Speed — 201 or 20 (explosive movement)

Explosive squats

Work sets — 1x4-8

Speed — 20 (explosive movement)

(or)

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High-rep squats

Work sets — 1x10-20

Speed — 301

Jump squats

Work sets — 1x6-10

Speed — 10 (explosive movement)

(or)

Dynamic lunges

Warm-up sets — 1x5/leg at 50%

Work sets — 1x10/leg

Speed — 10 (explosive movement)

In-depth jumps

Work sets — 1x10

Speed — 10 (explosive movement)

(or)

Single-leg squats

Work sets — 1x(as many reps as possible)

Speed — 301

Note: The loads for the warm-up sets are expressed as a percentage of the first work-set load.

Okay, now that you've finished, go home, lie down in a bathtub of ice, and patiently await Part II of the third phase to be posted next week!

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