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**White Men Can Jump!**

by Ian King | Fri, Apr 27, 2001

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8 Weeks to a Killer Vertical  
by Ian King**

One of the most common questions we receive here at *Testosterone* is, "How do I improve my vertical jump?" Go ask the average coach and he'll tell you to buy one of those goofy jumping-shoe devices. We decided to do one better and ask Ian King, a coach who's helped some of the world's top athletes improve this very skill. So if you have the "ups" of a fat grandma, then this is the program for you. In fact, this is a great lower body program for anyone wanting to improve strength, size and stability.

So you want to improve your vertical jump, huh? Okay, let's do it! The following program is a four-stage plan that'll give you improvements in your vertical jump you'd only previously dreamed of! Each stage should be used for somewhere between two to six weeks, depending upon how fast you adapt. Basically, if you stop making gains, move on to the next stage.

You may consider taking at least a half recovery week after each stage and you may also want to apply my progressive intensity method if you choose to use each stage for more than two weeks. That means you should leave a few reps "in the hole" the first couple of weeks of each stage. During the last week of each stage, you can give it all you've got and train to failure, or at least very close to it.

**Pre-program Testing**

If we're going to be objective with our analysis of results, then we need to start with a pre-program assessment of your vertical. If you have access to high-tech jump assessment pads or the old Vertec device, then go ahead and use them. Just make sure to use the same device for post-testing.

For those who don't have access to these testing devices, here's what you need to do. Get some chalk, a long tape measure, and a flat firm surface at the base of a high, smooth wall. Now stand side-on to the wall with your dominant hand up the wall, palm in contact with the

surface. Don't over or under-reach. Mark the top of the fingers, then measure from the ground to this mark. This is your base.

Now chalk up the fingertips of the dominant hand and stand side-on to the wall again. If you're right handed, your right shoulder will be closer to the wall and vice-versa. From a two foot, parallel stance, stationary start, jump up and mark the wall with the chalk on your fingers. Take a minute or so to rest and repeat. Do this until you no longer get any higher, then measure the distance from the base (the first fingertip mark) to the highest mark you made while jumping. This is your score.

### **Goal Setting**

Now that you've written the score down, I want you to also write down a goal score. If you have no clue on this, I'm going to say to aim for a 10% improvement. Write this goal score down and place it in a prominent place, ideally where you'll see it in your daily routine.

### **Training Program Overview**

For strength training, you'll do three to four sessions a week, at least half of which will be devoted to lower body training. Exercises will be a mixture of small muscle or isolated exercises, and slow or controlled speed compound movements. We'll also use some low level jumping drills at the end of the two lower body workouts each week.

For on-court training, I want you participating in specific sport skills training, but keep the volume and intensity low, like training twice a week for thirty minutes. As for what I call "off-court, field energy system training" (like doing extra cardio), I'd suggest either skipping it completely or doing only one session per week. If you're doing this to drop fat, then look to your diet instead and eat smarter!

### **Stage 1**

#### **Stability, General Strength and Hypertrophy Dominant**

Back Squat — Medium stance/high bar

Position: Bar high on back, grip close to shoulders, elbows down, shoulder width stance

Warm-up: 1 x 10, 1 x 8

Work sets: 2 x 6

Speed: 321\*

Rest: 2 to 3 minutes

Back Squat — Narrow stance/high bar

Position: Bar high on back, grip close to shoulders, elbows down, feet six inches apart

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x 10-12

Tempo: 311  
Rest: 2 minutes

### Squat — Single leg

Position: Stand on one leg with the other leg out in front of you so your heel is off the ground. Hold on to something with one hand but don't use it to pull yourself up. Use a range that allows you to get between 10 and 15 reps.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x AMRP (as many reps as possible)

Tempo: 311

Rest: 1 to 2 minutes



### One-Leg Bench Squat

Position: Stand on one leg with the other leg up on a bench behind you. Assume a stance that allows the lead leg to stay in the same plane as the toe and heel of that same foot (in other words, don't have your knee travelling in an angle that's inconsistent with the way your foot is positioned). Aim to take the back knee to almost touching the ground. Perform the movement either holding dumbbells or with your hands on your head. If you can get 15 reps without weight, then add dumbbells. If you can get 15 with dumbbells, then increase the weight.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x AMRP

Tempo: 311

Rest: 1 to 2 minutes



**Squat — Single leg standing on low block**

Position: Stand on one leg on a low block with the other leg off the side of the block. Bend the support leg until the other foot brushes but doesn't rest on the ground, then stand back up. Add dumbbells when you can get 20 reps per leg. If you can get 20 reps with dumbbells then increase the weight.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x AMRP

Tempo: 311

Rest: 1 to 2 minutes





**Calf Press — Standing, single leg**

Position: Stand on one leg with the ball of the foot on the edge of a block. Hold on to a vertical frame with one hand for balance. With the free hand hold on to a dumbbell if needed. If you can get 20 reps per leg, then you'll need to add dumbbells. If you can get 20 reps with dumbbells, then, you guessed it, use heavier dumbbells!

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x AMRP

Tempo: 311

Rest: 1 to 2 minutes

**On-off Box Jumps — Single leg**

Position: Stand on one leg, facing a low bench or box (ideally, use a Reebok step as it's very adjustable). Jump up on top of the box and land on the same leg, pausing to confirm balance for two seconds. Then jump off and land on the same leg, again pausing for two seconds to confirm balance. If you do two reps in a row with good balance in both the on-box and on-ground landings, raise the box by the smallest progression.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x 10 per leg per on-box and on-ground landings

Rest: 1 to 2 minutes



**Stage 2  
Hypertrophy and Maximal Strength Dominant**

Back Squat — Medium stance/medium bar

Position: Bar medium on back (not too high or too low), grip close to shoulders, elbows down, shoulder width stance

Warm-up: 1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 5

Work sets: 1x 5, 1 x 1, 1 x 5, 1 x 1, 1 x 10-15

Speed: 301

Rest: 3 minutes

Dynamic Lunge

Position: Bar on back, one foot out in front of the other, back foot angled in, weight on toes. "Dynamic" means that you'll push off the working leg each rep and bring it back up beside the other leg.

Warm-up: 1 x 6 per leg

Work sets: 1 x 10 per leg

Tempo: 311

Rest: 2 minutes



Calf Press — Standing, two legs

Position: Use both legs this time in a standing calf press machine

Warm-up: 1 x 12

Work sets : 1 x 10-12

Tempo : 311

Rest: 1-2 minutes

In-depth Jumps — Both legs

Position: You'll need two boxes for this one. Stand on both legs on a low box. Step off with one leg, land with two, and jump up onto another, higher box. Spend as little time on the ground as possible (if you're too slow off the ground, the box is too high). Step back to the lower box to start each rep.

Warm-up: 1 x 10 per leg on very low boxes

Work sets: 1-2 x 10 per leg per on higher boxes

Rest: 1-2 minutes



### **Stage 3**

#### **Maximal Strength/Explosive Power Dominant**

Back Squat — Medium stance/medium bar

Position: Bar medium (not low on the back, not high, but medium on the back, grip away from shoulders, elbows back, shoulder width stance)

Warm-up: 1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 5

Work sets: 1 x 4, 1 x 3, 1 x 2

Speed: 201

Rest: 3 to 4 minutes

Quarter Squat

Position: As above but with 10 to 30% more loading. Only lower yourself about one-fourth of the way down.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x 3

Tempo: 201

Rest: 3 to 4 minutes

Explosive Squats

Position: As per the first squat, but attempt to come up as fast as possible. Use less weight to allow for greater explosiveness.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x 6

Tempo: 20X (Lower the weight to a two second count, no pause, explode up)

Rest: 3 minutes

### Jump Squats

Position: As per the first squat, but with minimal loading. Bend the knees as little as you can before jumping in the air as high as you can. Land on bent knees to absorb the shock.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x 8

Tempo: 10X

Rest: 2 to 3 minutes



### Depth Jumps — Both legs

Position: Again, you'll need two boxes. Stand on both legs on a box. Step off with one leg, land with two and jump up onto a box of the same height. Spend as little time on the ground as possible. Turn on that box and repeat.

Warm-up: 1 x 8 on low boxes

Work sets: 1-2 x 8 on higher boxes

Rest: 1 to 2 minutes



#### **Stage 4** **Explosive Power/Speed Strength Dominant**

Back Squat — Medium stance/medium bar

Position: Bar medium on back, grip away from shoulders, elbows back, shoulder width stance

Warm-up: 1 x 10, 1 x 8, 1 x 5

Work sets: 1 x 3

Speed: 201

Rest: 4 minutes

Depth jumps — Both legs with external load

Position: Stand on both legs on a box. Step off with one leg, land with two and jump up onto a box of the same height. As always, spend as little time on the ground as possible. Turn on that box and repeat. Ideally have a weighted vest on or at least hold a medicine ball or weight plates in your hands. Just remember that negating arm action by holding weight will lower your apparent jumping height ability, which means you need to review your box heights.

Warm-up: 1 x 6 on low boxes

Work sets: 1 x 6 on higher boxes

Rest: 2 to 3 minutes

Depth jumps — Both legs with bodyweight only

Position: As per above but no external load. Ideally raise the height of the boxes for this set.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 1 x 6 on higher boxes

Rest: 2 minutes

Specific jump — As per sport requirement

Position: Select one jumping style (one leg take off, three step entry, two leg take-off etc.) and do that specific jump.

Warm-up: nil

Work sets: 2 x bodyweight at 6 reps

Rest: 2 minutes

Your goal is to do two sets with the aim of going slightly heavier in each set without losing any explosiveness in the lifts.

### **Note of Caution**

As the volume increases in the jumping drills, it's important to avoid any of the potential problems. Minor concerns such as shin soreness can be avoided by selecting a "firm yet forgiving" surface. More serious problems such as muscle tears can be avoided by not exceeding your speed-strength potential. In other words, if you're unable to show extreme quickness off the ground, the box height is too high. Do not underestimate the importance of this guideline.

### **Be Like Mike**

There you have it, a complete program to help you fly like Michael Jordan! Okay, maybe not, but if you follow this program correctly, you'll certainly see some fantastic gains in jumping ability. Good luck!

### **Ian King Training Info**

Ian's *Get Buffed!* book and video, *Killer Leg Exercises for Strength and Mass*, are available by calling 800-525-1940 or by visit visiting **[BiotestEdge.com](http://BiotestEdge.com)**.

\* Tempo refers to how fast you do the movement. The first number refers to how many seconds you should take to do the lowering part of the exercise. The second number refers to how long of a pause you should take before raising the weight. The third number refers to how many seconds it should take to raise the weight. An "X" means that you should do the movement explosively.