

TRAIN · PILLAR SERIES

IT'S ALL IN THE HIPS

The difference between a good skater and a great skater often comes down to one thing: the ability to generate force through the hips. If your hips aren't strong, you're leaving speed, power, and performance on the table.

Two muscle groups stand out as the key drivers: the glutes and the adductors (groin). When they're strong and working together, athletes produce more power, skate more efficiently, control their edges better, and get hurt less.

01 THE GLUTES DRIVE THE STRIDE

The glutes are the largest muscles in the body. They drive the leg backward (hip extension), rotate it outward (external rotation), and push it away from the body (abduction) – the exact movements of every skating stride. Research shows glute strength is closely related to skating acceleration and change-of-direction ability. Simply put: strong glutes = faster hockey players. Great starting exercises: the super glute and side plank abductions.

02 PROGRESS OR PLATEAU

Doing glute exercises isn't enough – you need progressive overload, gradually increasing the challenge so the muscles keep adapting. Two simple ways to progress:

INCREASE RESISTANCE
Stronger band, more band tension, external load, or step further from the anchor point

INCREASE THE CHALLENGE
Harder variation, pauses at peak contraction, bigger range of motion, slower lowering phase

The goal isn't just to feel your glutes working. The goal is to make them stronger over time.

03 DON'T FORGET THE GROIN

While the glutes create power, the adductors control the stride. As the leg extends during each push-off, the adductors lengthen under load before rapidly contracting to bring the leg back under the body. Absorbing and producing force through big ranges leaves them vulnerable to strains if they lack strength – so train them through a variety of positions, including shortened positions. Strong groins are resilient groins. If you've had a groin strain before, extra adductor work helps restore balance – and see a professional for any potential injury.

04 BALANCE THE HIP: 1 TO 1

Ideally, groin (adduction) strength and glute (abduction) strength are balanced at a 1:1 ratio. At Testify Performance we measure both with a ForceFrame to profile each athlete and identify imbalances. No access to testing? Simple rule of thumb: one set of groin-strengthening work for every set of glute-strengthening work. Take care of your hips now – so you're not skating around with the mobility of a 75-year-old getting out of a recliner by the time you're 25.

05 STRONG HIPS. MOBILE HIPS.

All the hip strength in the world won't help if you can't get into the positions hockey demands. Limited hip mobility shortens stride length, reduces force production, and makes strong skating positions harder to hold. A bigger range of motion gives you more runway to create force – and more force into the ice means more speed on it. More on hip mobility and stride mechanics in an upcoming Mobility & Movement newsletter.

TESTIFY TAKEAWAY

STRONG GLUTES. STRONG GROINS. FASTER, MORE DURABLE HOCKEY PLAYERS.

Train the glutes and adductors with progressive overload, keep them balanced, and keep the hips mobile. The better you take care of your hips now, the more speed, power, and durability you'll have on the ice.