

## The NBA Pre-Game Work-Out

Rev up your engine and get a jump-start on the day with a pre-game workout designed for NBA athletes. Most of us believe we need to set aside massive amounts of time in order to maintain a good conditioning routine. Not necessarily, so says Tom Vachét, a Southern California Health and Performance Consultant and Master Trainer.

Here is a short routine, eight exercises long, created by Tom a few years ago, and based upon his hypothesis that a smart workout would warm and lubricate the muscles and joints, as well as stimulating the senses in a way that aids in preparation for competition.

Tom's routine, completed by the athlete one hour before tip-off, takes only 15-20 minutes with no rest between exercises, and requires no equipment and minimal space. It begins with a static pose, the infamous "**Plank**", a total body exercise proven to create core strength, and as essential to the functional expression of power as it is to maintaining a flat belly.

"Most athletes that come to me are familiar with the plank, but have only held the position for a minute at a time. My clients come to appreciate core endurance is more useful to an athlete than core strength, and with work, can achieve at least four to five minutes of the plank in good form. I have had a few, awesome athletes, including women, who have gone as long as twelve minutes."

Additionally, anyone who thinks that cardio workouts only occur on treadmills, need only wear their heart rate monitor while doing a plank for an extended period, and watch the rate rise as the sweat starts to flow. "

The plank begins with you on your stomach, in a modified push-up position. You rest on your elbows, with your feet together and toes to the floor. Push up, and you are now suspended from elbows to toes. Pull your bellybutton to your spine, activate your glutes, maintain a flat back, and keep your head in alignment with your spine.

For the purposes of this workout, Tom is satisfied with three, long, meditative minutes, maintaining a flat back. With the plank, as with all these exercises, avoid breath holding. Instead, belly breathe, inhaling through the nose, and exhaling through the mouth.

Following the plank, we have the "**Side Plank**", which places an emphasis on rotational strength, stability and endurance, and serves as an exclamation point to the plank. Lie on your side, with your elbow supporting your upper body, and feet stacked on top of one-another.

When you are ready, elevate your body so you are now suspended in a straight line between feet and elbow. Extend your upper arm to the sky in a "salutation" position, with palm facing outward. We hold the side plank for one and a half minutes on each side.

Next, we fire-up the glutes, deep stabilizers in the low back, adductors and hamstrings with a "**Static Hip Extension**". Lie flat on your back. Bend the knees and place the feet together, flat to the floor and close to your buttocks. Raise your hands, palms together,

straight up to the sky. Now, push through the soles of your feet, and extend your hips up, keeping your knees together, with shoulders on the floor. Hold for two minutes.

At the end of the two minutes, come back to the floor and begin “**Single Leg Extensions**”. Take one leg, extend it like an arrow, pointing the toes, and raise it to the level of the opposite knee at about a 45-degree angle. Now, again extend the hips as before, slowly and with control, as high as you can, then gently return to the starting position. Repeat this movement twelve times on each side.

When finished, roll to your stomach. Place your hands into a pushup position, toes to the floor. Push up, with good body alignment, and head up. Then raise one foot six inches off the floor, creating just enough instability to keep the core engaged, keeping the leg straight and perform twelve “**Single Leg Pushups**”. Repeat on the opposite side.

Now that your pectorals and deltoids are firing, bring your hands together under your chest, elbows out, palms down, with the thumbs and forefingers together forming a diamond or triangle. With both feet on the floor, complete twelve “**Diamond Pushups**” for a nice triceps finish.

At this point, you are likely feeling the effects of this little warm-up. So, let’s try a little balancing act, called a “**Single Leg Touch-Down**”, that will fire up the middle glutes and challenge your stability and flexibility.

To begin, stand with both feet together. Select one foot to stand on, and raise the other two inches off the floor. Whether or not you knew it before now, each of us is asymmetrical, with a weak and a strong side. Subconsciously, you will always demonstrate a preference to stand on your strong and stable leg. Since this exercise is intended to create symmetry, now switch to your weak side leg.

With one foot raised two inches off the floor, but maintained directly adjacent to the standing foot, bend at the knees, and with your torso upright, drop down toward the floor. As you come down, begin to rotate your body in the direction of the standing leg, take your opposite side hand and reach diagonally down and across your body to touch floor on the outside of the standing foot, just at the base of the little toe.

Remember the opposite foot must stay directly beside and in alignment with the standing foot throughout. Come back to standing, maintaining your balance, and without touching the other foot to the floor, repeat this exercise twelve times.

There is no mistaking what muscle were targeting, and after the inferno in your middle glute, and/or calf and arch, has subsided, you have the opportunity to repeat the exercise, but now standing on your strong leg.

“In my opinion, most injuries to the knee and ankle are the result of a combination of middle glute instability, and bilateral asymmetry of strength”, says Tom. “This single exercise will improve everything from your vertical leap to lateral explosiveness, while reducing your risk for injury”.

Finally, we finish with an exercise that will incorporate your quads, and create rotational strength and hip flexor flexibility. The “**Alternating Lunge, Turn & Reach**” can be broken down into several discreet movements.

First, stand tall, with arms at your sides, elbows bent and hands with palms forward. Now, pick up one leg, and bring the knee up high, maintaining your balance. Begin to reach the foot of the leg forward, and drop down into a lunge position. The leading knee should be directly over the foot, and the trailing knee, just above the floor.

Holding in this down position, extend your arms straight out in front of you, palms still facing together. Now, raise your arms directly over your head, while rotating in the direction of the leading leg. Stretch around as far as is comfortable while still maintaining your balance, and now look back behind you over your shoulder. You should feel a nice stretch through the hip flexor, and serratus anterior on the trailing leg side of your body.

Recover to the starting position by rotating back to neutral, then pushing off the leading foot. Repeat the exercise leading with the opposite foot and leg, continuing to alternate for a total of twelve.

Congratulations, you have just completed a total body workout that should leave you with a sense of physical accomplishment, but refreshed and ready for what is next in your day.

Tom reminds his clients that it's important to remember that each of these exercises should be performed slowly, with control, and under good form. If you feel they are too challenging, break them up, and do half in the morning and half in the afternoon.

“If you'd like an additional challenge, then I suggest you perform the routine with your eyes closed and with no shoes. The floor exercises will be simple. The last two standing exercises will be difficult, but as demonstrated by many of my athlete clients, they are doable. An extraordinary benefit comes from removing the sense of sight, heightening the other senses, in particular the sense of proprioception, better appreciated in bare feet, and which is so important to athletic performance.”

Last but not least, change the order of exercises every time you do them. Avoiding patterns maintains your body in a heightened state of neurological confusion, eliminates training plateaus, and accelerates your rate of performance improvement.

Enjoy!