

## Four weeks to a better bike and run split by Diego Schmunis - CPT

*New Year's resolutions: faster bike and run splits. Time to hit the gym and supercharge your legs with this lower body routine.*

With days getting longer and Wildflower approaching faster than Steve Larsen in your rear view mirror (you have one on your bike, don't you?), the signs are undeniable that another triathlon season is just around the corner. This time of the year finds you working on losing those few extra pounds that you gained while visiting your in-laws for the holidays, and focusing on improving your PR for the next racing season. Two areas where all triathletes feel they can improve are faster bike and run splits. In your attempt to accomplish this, you go out every day and hammer your legs to exhaustion in hopes of increasing power and speed. However, just like an engine in a racecar, the amount of power and speed your legs produce is somewhat limited by their size. So, you want faster times? Then you just might need bigger engines. So get ready, pack your gym bag, and head out to the body shop to implement a simple, results-oriented lower body-training program. It will have your legs revved up, and as a result, cut considerable amounts of time off your bike and run splits.

The workout is simple: It should be done twice a week during your *base* period, with at least three days between sessions and at least one full recovery day before a hard ride/run. The reason for doing the routine before a hard bike or run day is so the legs have to work a little harder, bringing about a higher degree of overcompensation after each training session. If you'd rather have stronger legs for your hard bike/run days, then give your legs a day off after those training sessions, then hit the gym.

As with any other time when you go into the gym to do weight training, start with a short session (10-15 minutes) on your favorite cardio station and perform some light lower body stretches.

### The routine:

Exercise	Sets and repetitions
<b>Leg press (with toe press)</b>	3 sets x 20 reps
	3 sets x 10-12 reps
<b>Prone leg curl</b>	3 sets x 20 reps
	3 sets x 10-12 reps
<b>Leg extension</b>	3 sets x 25-30 reps

### How to do it:

There are two ways to do the routine: you can complete all the sets of each exercise before moving onto the next one, or to shorten and intensify the routine perform SUPERSETS (two exercises done back-to-back with no rest) of leg press/leg curl.

For the first 3 sets (3x20) of the leg press and the leg curl use a weight that leaves you feeling as though you could have completed 3-5 more repetitions. For sets 4-6 use a weight that you could have lifted 2-3 more times but not 5. Do these repetitions at an easy tempo. A count of 1-2 for the eccentric and concentric phases should do. Make sure that you get your breathing in sync with each phase of the exercise. That is, inhale as you lower the weight and exhale as you lift it.

For the leg extension, select a weight that will allow you to perform 25-30 repetitions. The tempo should be a quicker repetition (1-1) and it should produce a very intense burning sensation deep inside the muscle.

**Rest periods:**

If you are doing one exercise at a time, keep your rests to 30-45 seconds. If you are doing supersets, give your legs a 60-90 seconds recovery. For the leg extension keep rests to 30-45 seconds.

**Increasing the load:**

As the weeks go by and the sets start getting easier, add more weight as needed. There are two ways to do this: 1) Add 8-10% more, or B) Add enough weight so you are left feeling that you could have done 3-5 more repetitions for the first three sets and 2-3 more reps for sets 4-6.

**Moving on:**

As you move into your *build* period, you are probably going to want to cut back on how much lifting you do on your legs so that you can hit them harder on your bike/run days. You can cut back the routine to once a week, or change your number of repetitions and weight. For example: from 3-4 sets at 10-12 repetitions to 6 sets at 20 reps with 65-85% of your original weight.

If you follow the plan outlined above, you should start noticing results in about 3-4 weeks, and you should start improving your bike/run times and finishing training sessions with your legs feeling less fatigued.

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