

5.1 – Toe Positions

When training the foot in these isometric positions it is very important that you are monitoring toe position. The goal here is for the athlete to be able to both identify the big toe arch as well as maintain the position while under load. This big toe arch is essential in transmitting energy into the ground. It can be viewed as the very first coil in a spring. This is our first point of contact with the ground. If the big toe flattens as ground contact occurs there is a sequential effect on the chain and the athlete is likely to experience a dramatic decrease in propulsive forces. This decrease is also coupled with the injury risks discussed earlier in the book.

There are several ways to train this position while performing the spring ankle isometric exercises. We have found that using a small dowel on a foot pad is both efficient as well as being cost effective. What we have done is cut small dowels in half and placed them on the crest of the foot pad. When the athlete using the foot pad, they are to squeeze this dowel. Many times, you spend time teaching the athlete short foot and short toe positions but when it comes to performing a movement, they quickly lose this position. This is especially true when the athlete attempts to go into a plantar flexed position.

Keeping that arch intact on flat ground is not nearly as challenging as asking the athlete to maintain the position while the heel is raising. Many times, the athlete's big toe will instantly collapse and extend into a flat position. This makes it crucial that we train the big toe arch. Using a dowel provides the athlete with an external mechanism to apply force to and help focus on proper activation of the big toe arch.

The media included in this section provides a close-up view of the foot with an elongated big toe position as well as utilizing the foot pad with dowel that is described above.