

BE THE 7s PROP

YOU WANT TO PLAY 7s? MAYBE PROP IS FOR YOU.

BY AARON MANHEIMER (EDITED BY ALEX GOFF)

The word Prop brings to mind cinder-block bodies and straight-ahead power, but in 7s the prop is an everyman (or woman).

A 7s prop has to be strong enough to win scrums and lift in the lineouts, and speedy enough to cover the field, and finish a breakaway. Props in 7s have to be able to win a ruck all by themselves, and need good passing skills. Think about this: If an entire 7s team passes the ball from sideline to sideline, each pass must cover over 10 meters. So everyone has to have those skills.

Top-level 7s props usually play flanker or center in XVVs, but they need extra work to get into prop shape for 7s.

Chicago Lions 7s coach Aaron Manheimer—who is also a professional trainer and strength coach—and USA 7s prop Mark Bokhoven give us a look at the kind of work a prop needs to prepare.

(Always check with your doctor before pursuing any workout. This workout outline is designed to give you a starting point. Consult an expert for more detail.)

Core Strength. Develop stabilization in all planes of motion; engage core and strengthen with isometric exercises. Build strength through full body exercises with rotational strength 1/3 of regimen. In plyometrics, learn proper landing mechanics before moving from drop squats to box jumps & squat jumps.

Turn strength into power. Work towards fast, explosive movements. Then on to single-leg and then single-leg while balancing on an Airex pad, Dyna Disc, etc.

Says Bokhoven: *I'll do a whole-body lift 3 times a week, and other times I'll do circuit training, using tire flips and sand bags. I involve a lot of running so I'm building muscle mass and my core, but staying mobile.*

Nutrition. Post workout or training recovery should consist of a drink or meal with carbohydrate to protein ratio of 3:1 or chocolate milk. During training make sure to stay hydrated with water.

Says Bokhoven: *I'm not into supplements, but I work on a healthy diet—lots of fruit and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat protein. No fast food or fried food. My go-to food is oatmeal. In camp or at a tournament if I start the day with oatmeal I have a good base of nutrition for the whole day.*

Be smart. The web provides ample examples of dynamic warm up, basic strength exercises, learning how to engage the transverse abdominal muscle, plank series, basic medicine ball drills, and proper landing technique for plyometrics.

Actively helping your body recover is a key component in reducing injury risk. Use techniques such as self myofascial release (foam rolling), active isolated stretching (AIS), ice baths, and a massage therapist.

Ball-handling skills. Passing from hip and one-handed. More complex passing drills involving more players (passing, loop, switch, spear, T-Drill Passing)

See drills at public.me.com/usarugby.
Says Bokhoven: *"I do passing drills a couple of times a week. We break the pass down to its most basic form. I work on catching while on a dyna-disk, so I am concentrating on the ball and my balance."*

Fitness and agility. Build cardio base with interval training with a work/rest ratio of 1:4 to 1:3. As base improves cut recovery time between sprints. 1:2 and 1:1 for more intermediate level training and 2:1 to 3:1 for more advanced. For agility, use a ladder to speed-up feet and increase coordination. Incorporate agility drills into your fitness training (Example: M Drill for 30 seconds with 30 seconds rest X 6 for intermediate players).

Says Bokhoven: *With running, I involve a lot of quick turns, quick stops, and cuts left or right. Coming back from a broken foot, that was the toughest part.*

