

How to stretch your lats

Stretching the latitimus dorsi or lats have long been a mainstay of stretching and mobility programs. However, i believe we are sometimes missing the point as to what we are trying to achieve when we stretch or mobilise such a muscle.

First of all it is important to discuss what the lats do:

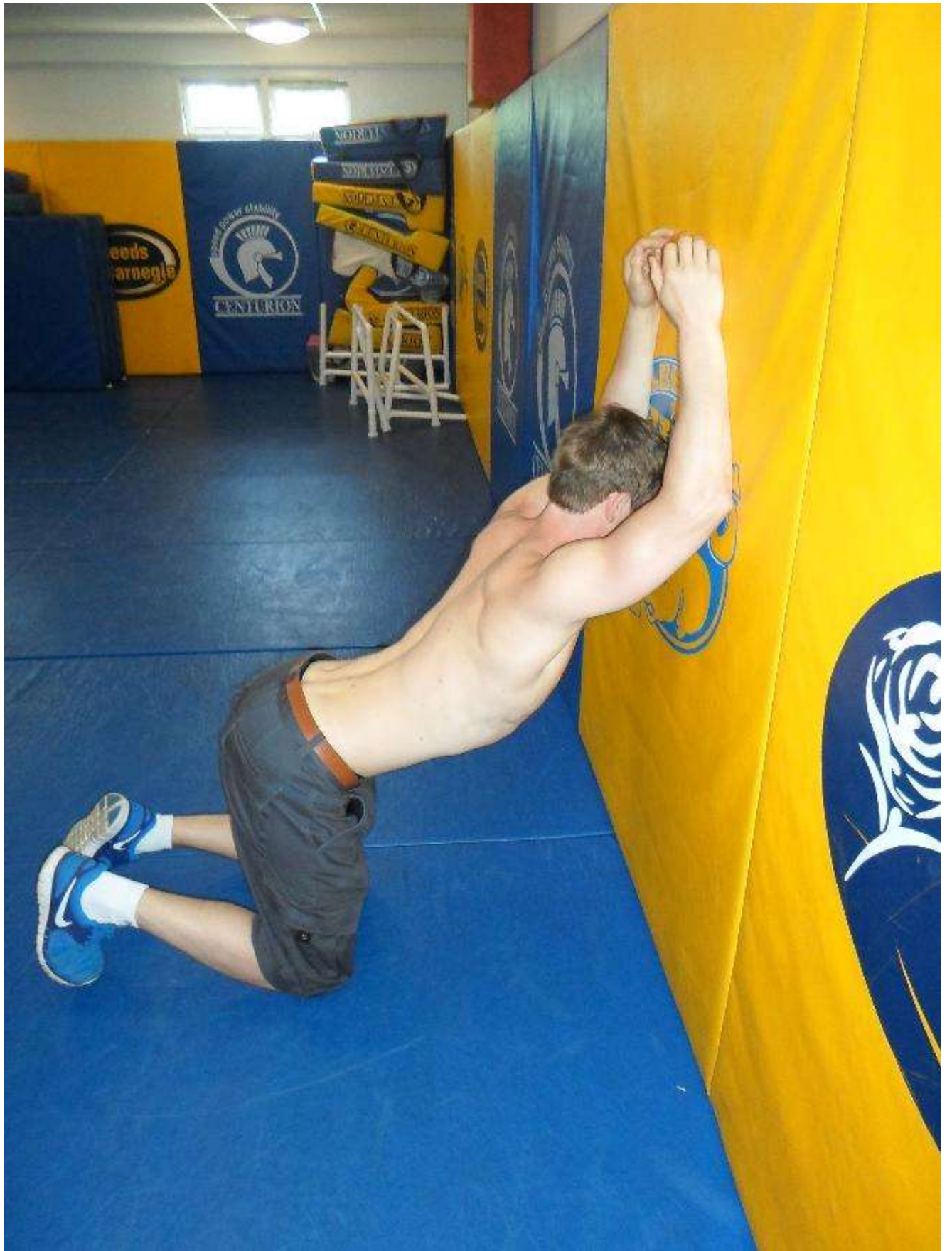
- Shoulder extension, internal rotation, adduction and horizontal abduction
- Downward rotation of scapula i.e. during a pull up
- Synergist role at lumbar spine with movements of extension and lateral flexion

Due to there attachments site and through connection through the thoracolumbar fascia the impact the lats can play of lumbo-pelvic position can be massive. And that is where i want to focus todays post.

The picture below shows a commonly performed wall lat stretch.

1. Place the forearms on the wall
2. Walk the knees away from the wall
3. Drop the chest towards the floor to increase the stretch through the lats

Wall lat stretch (extended position)



The problem with this stretch is that many athletes will default into lumbar extension. As mentioned previously the lats have a role at the lumbar spine due to their distal attachment sites. The lats if shortened will pull the pelvis into an extended position which for many athletes is not a good position as they already live in extension.

To get around this using the wall stretch, cue ribs down and encourage hips to heels. This keeps the lumbar spine in neutral or even a slight degree of flexion which will aid lat stretching. In addition, it will aid pelvic positioning which may have resulted partly from reduction in lat muscle length.

Wall lat stretch (neutral position)

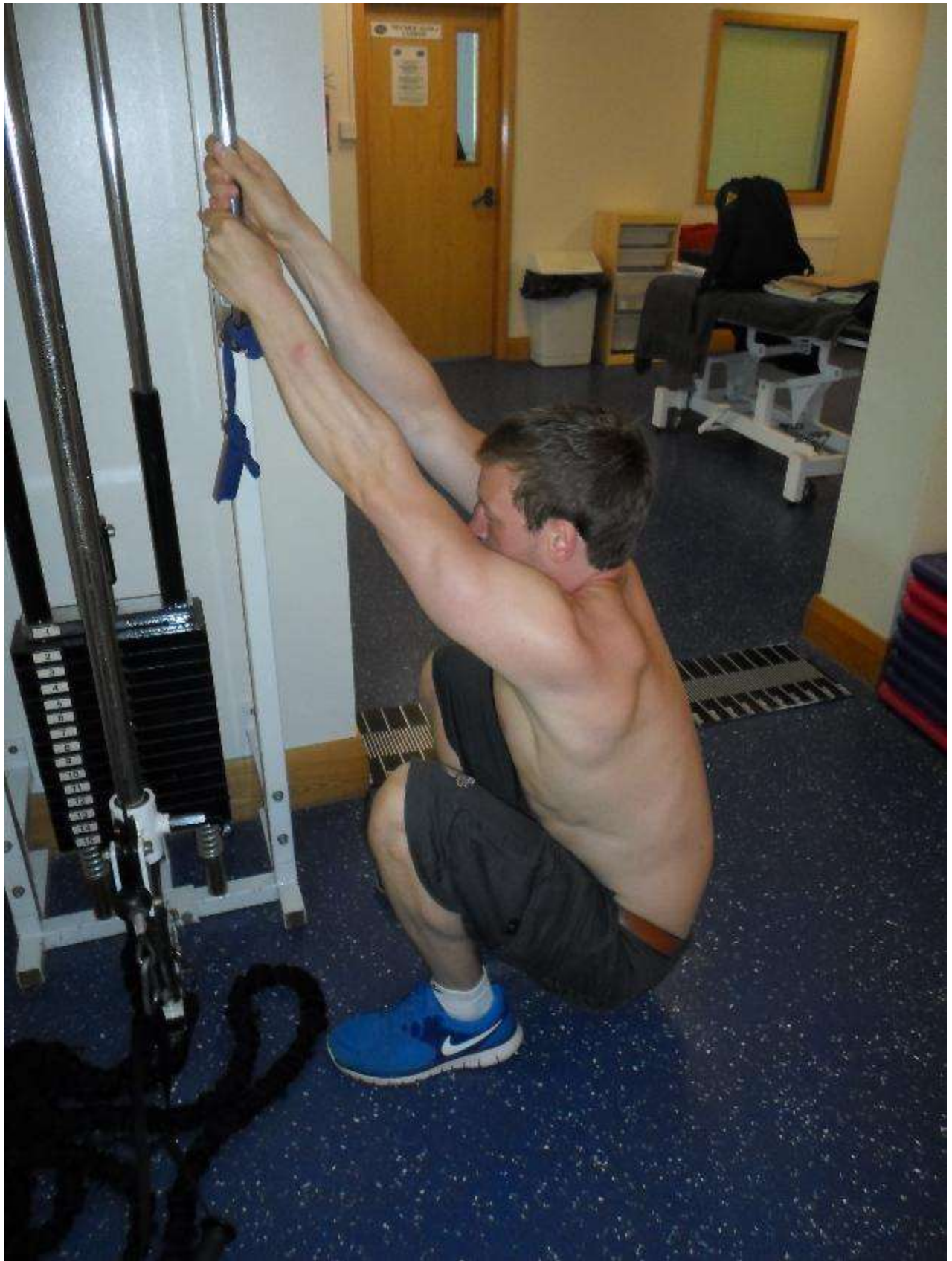


In addition the following two pictures show further lat stretching drills that may be useful, particularly for those that default into lumbar extension even after cueing. The second: Pole stretch is a current favourite of mine and can also be doubled up as a core drill by using diaphragmatic breathing patterns whilst in the bottom 'stretched' position.

Floor lat stretch



Pole stretch



Have a blast and let me know what you think.

Thanks for reading,

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