

Top Squat

Review by Brian D. Johnston

With the exception of the deadlift, there is no other exercise more productive than the squat, particularly for lower body development and strength. Certainly I am not saying anything new, but for one reason or another people avoid squats because they are very demanding (hence, why they are so productive), and because they increase the risk for injury (because they are so demanding).

Some obvious potential injuries with the squat include lower back strain (most obvious) and rotator cuff strain (which is less obvious but very much a reality as one increases the load over several years). These aspects are vital to realize for any serious trainee, and even more so with athletes whose shoulders must stay intact in order to perform optimally, including those involved in football, baseball, and hockey.



Until now, trainees who wanted to avoid the squat for the reasons mentioned were limited to dumbbells squats (far less effective) or squatting with a specially designed machine with unique designed yolks to rest across the shoulders and to necessitate less emphasis on arm and shoulder stabilization. Although some gyms cater to such equipment, not everyone likes to use them (some actually place great strain on the knees, thus displacing the injury potential to another body part), and few home trainees can afford to purchase or house such equipment.

This has changed, thanks to the **Top Squat**. I was mesmerized by the photo I saw of this device on Dave Draper's site, former Mr. America, Mr. Universe, and Mr. World, who has experienced his fair share of battle injuries, including problems with his shoulder joints from intense upper body work and heavy squats.

To paraphrase from Mr. Draper, he conceived of this apparatus in his late 50s when he overloaded his upper back and shoulder cage while pursuing some aggressive squat and deadlift training. Humbled and healing, he realized that he could no longer squat as his shoulder rotation was limited by the painful and damaging injuries he sustained. Positioning his hands to control the bar or extending his arms the width of the bar for support was impossible.

That he could not squat because his shoulders were limited in range seemed unacceptable. If only he could balance the bar from a comfortable and powerful placement of the hands and arms IN FRONT of himself, like two handles protruding from the front of the bar itself (in fact, this is how many expensive squat machines work).

The **Top Squat** was designed for all levels of fitness advancement, from beginners to powerlifters, yet is as simple to use as squatting itself. Here is how it works, as demonstrated on the Laserfit Pendulum Power multi-smith machine.

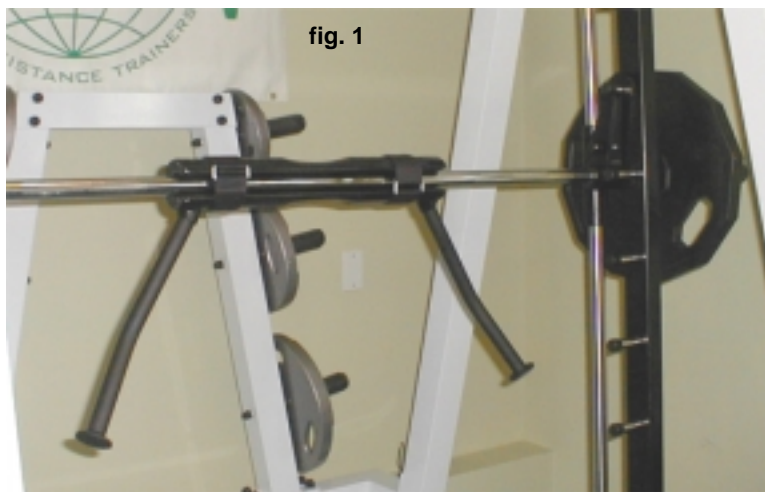


fig. 1

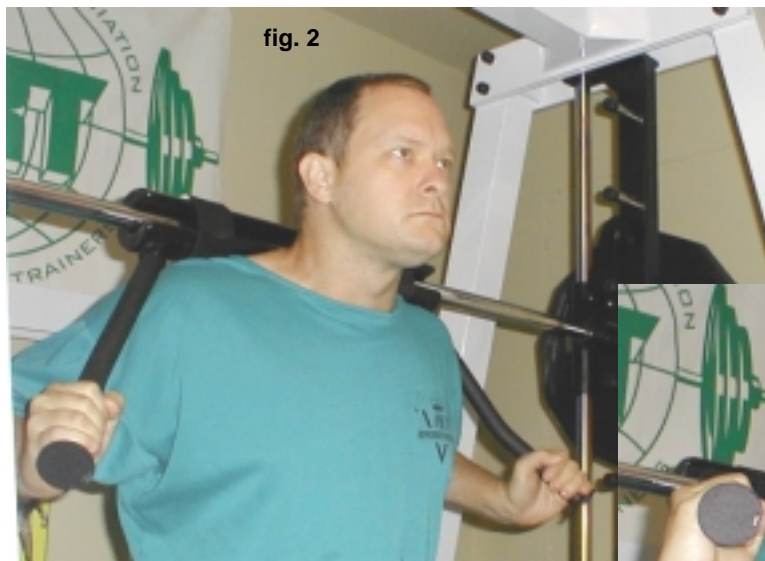


fig. 2



fig. 3

Attach the **Top Squat** by placing it center on the bar (see fig. 1). You can use the Velcro safety straps provided, although they are unnecessary since the **Top Squat** remains in place by pressure (the straps were provided for psychological security's sake). When using a Smith-type machine, as I am showing in the photo sequence, you will notice that as you move the handles upward (from fig. 1), the Smith's safety hooks rotate back (fig. 2), and when you finish the movement, simply rotate the handles back down and the hooks catch (fig. 3 again). Very convenient!



Perfectly balanced and super-comfortable, even in the bottom position.

With a typical Olympic bar setup, as in a power rack, you place the handles in a 45-degree downward position, then as you straighten up you rotate the handles upward to allow slight rotation and positioning of the **Top Squat** for ultimate squatting efficiency, feel, and performance.

Further, as Mr. Draper noticed, the erectness of the back can be determined by the raising or lowering of the handles, an added attraction he had not foreseen in the inception of the **Top Squat**, but have come to appreciate same here!

Most important, the action of the squat remains true, and does not alter unless you decide to change your mechanics by altering the position of the **Top Squat** (to provide a different feel, or a more upright or bent position [for powerlifting purposes] as the case may be).

My major concern was balancing a bar on the upper back while using this device. I was amazed as to how stable the bar remains and how little effort is required by the arms and shoulders to keep the bar in position; because of the lever advantage of the **Top Squat**'s adjustment/balance arms.

This is one of weight training's best kept secrets, and the value of squatting cannot be underestimated. The **Top Squat** is recommended highly for any trainee who likes to or needs to squat, from home trainees to professional athletic establishments.

Whether for pure comfort or before your rotator cuffs become worn and it is too late to do anything about it, invest in the **Top Squat** by visiting:

<http://www.DaveDraper.com>