

## Racewalk Training Tip From Ian Whately

Ian Whately offers three things to help develop the full range of ankle motion and strength for RW.

The ability to push off the toes until the foot is almost vertical is a very difficult thing to achieve. The problem is that you cannot get stronger for this full push off unless you work the calf muscles through a full range of motion -- however, you cannot work through the full range of motion and push off the tip of the toes until you are strong enough!!

This is a catch - 22 or circular argument trap. I suggest three things to help develop the full range of ankle motion and strength for RW:

1. Focus on pushing all the way off the trail foot during all training, whatever the speed. The sensation is like "trying to kick sand up behind you". I sometimes repeat a phrase in my head to remind me of this part of walking form when training, "All the push is behind me." That is to say, I want no front knee lift, just a long back push after landing the leg almost vertical under my centre of gravity.

2. Work the calf muscles through a full range against resistance. Keeping the supporting leg straight, stand on one foot with the toes resting on a step or curb. Push right up as far as you can with a rapid calf contraction.

Drop back to your start position (control the drop, don't go down at full speed since it could strain or at least make the calf muscles sore) repeat a bunch. You can add weights to the shoulders or held in the hands to add more resistance.

A variation on this that is closer to true walking form:

Stand about three feet in front of and facing a door frame (open the door for this or you'll get a flat nose!) place each hand on the respective door post at about belly button level. One leg is extended backwards with the

foot flat on the ground, the front leg is bent at the knee and the foot rests lightly on the ground to stabilise you. Upper body is vertical. Push forward with the straight rear leg by using the calf muscles. Allow your body to move forward but not upwards by using your arm muscles to resist this push off. The upper body is kept vertical and the rear leg stays straight through the whole pushing motion. Relax the calf and let your heel go back to the ground. Repeat a bunch.