

Bodyshop



A better behind

Behind every great physique, there's a strong set of glutes. Here's how to build head-turning buttocks.

BY SCOTT COLE

W

hen I was a junior in high school, a group of senior girls started walking around in T-shirts that bore the letters Y.G.A.G.A. These girls would huddle together, point at guys and giggle. One day I actually found myself talking with the leader of the group, a cheerleader named Diana Owen, and asked her what Y.G.A.G.A. meant.

"Don't worry," she told me. "You're in the top 10."

I panicked, and she felt my fear. She grabbed me by the shoulder, spun me around, looked down at my butt and amended her statement. "No, top five." Then she let me in on the secret: Y.G.A.G.A. stood for "You've Got A Great Ass."

Since then, as you can imagine, I've enjoyed a high level of butt-esteem. I also enjoyed a date with Diana to the Westbury High Christmas formal (appropriately named the Blue Ball).

But you probably didn't start reading this article to learn about that. You want to know how to achieve pride in your own assets. First, think about who has great glutes. Sprinters, to pick one example from the sports world, have strong, muscular glutes, built up from years of taking lengthy, powerful strides. Think of the others: dancers, shortstops, kickboxers, soccer players—all guys who have to take long strides, usually after pushing off powerfully from a standing or crouching start.

Now hold that thought. Before we get into the specific exercises you can do to duplicate the power-generating moves of these athletes, let's look at exactly what we're talking about here.

There are three gluteal muscles: gluteus maximus, medius and minimus. The maximus, as its name suggests, is the largest. It shapes the bulk of your buttocks. The maximus is responsible for extending your leg directly behind you.

The medius and minimus work together to lift your leg to the side. The medius is the visible one and provides the roundness on the side of your buttocks; the minimus, which lies beneath it, isn't visible.

Three exercises will work the entire muscle group: the *extended lunge*, *side leg lift* and *short-range glute squeeze*.

Try the *extended lunge* without weights



Side leg lift

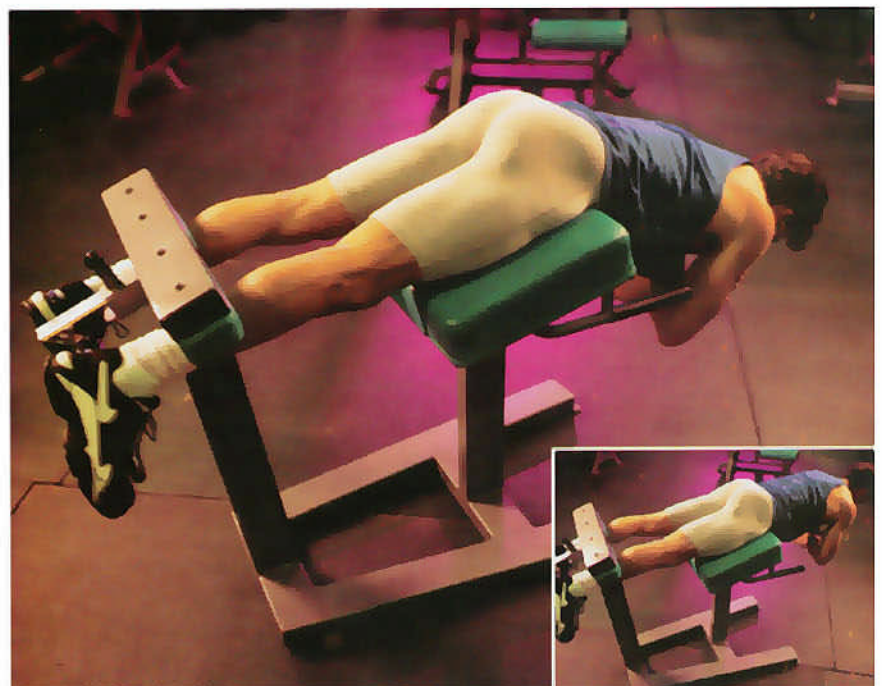
Emphasis: gluteus medius and minimus

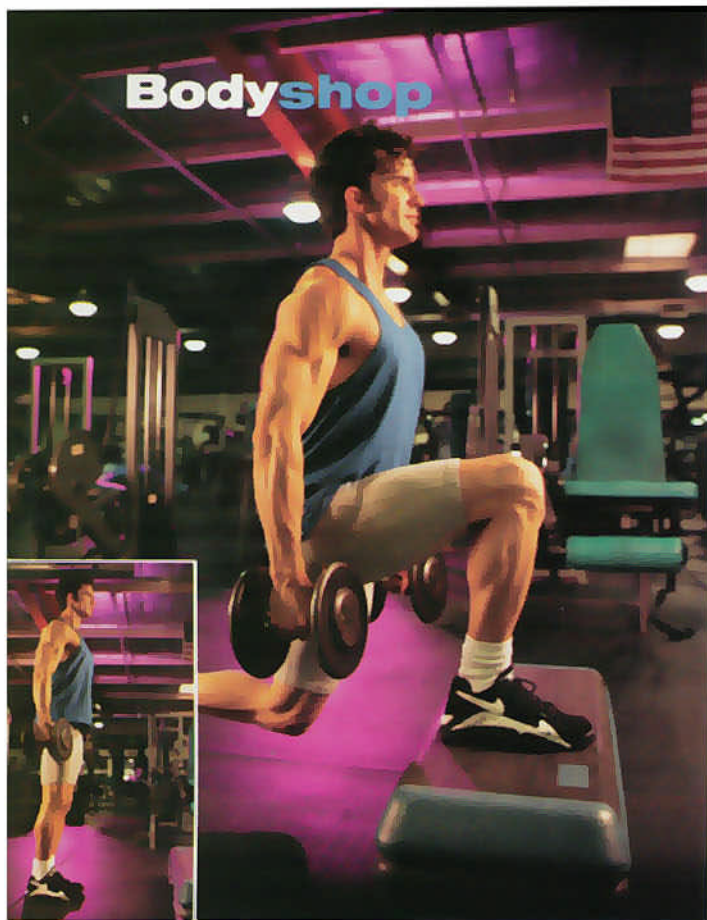
Stand alongside an incline bench set at 45 degrees, hands on the bench, legs shoulder-width apart. Shift your weight to your right leg and lift your left leg sideways as high as you can. The side of your foot should stay parallel to the floor. Hold for a beat, then slowly return to the starting position. Complete the set with that leg, then do an equal number of reps with the other.

Short-range glute squeeze

Emphasis: all gluteal muscles

Lie face-down on the back-raise apparatus, lower legs secured under the pads. Cross your arms in front of you and bend forward at the waist until your upper body is at a 45-degree angle. Now lift your torso until it's parallel to the floor. Squeeze your glute muscles, then slowly return to the starting position.





at first to get a good feel for it. The longer your stride, the harder you'll hit your maximus. Make sure you stretch your quads and hip flexors thoroughly before performing this exercise. Only when your body is used to the exercise should you add resistance in the form of a light barbell held behind your neck or dumbbells held at your sides.

To perform the *side leg lift*, you have to anchor the rest of your body. This makes the medius and minimus do the work and keeps all your other muscles out of the action. Your leg will provide plenty of resistance at first; later, you may want to add a light ankle weight.

The *short-range glute squeeze* uses all the glute muscles, but you'll have to try it a few times before you feel the exercise in your glutes and only in your glutes. If you go too low at the beginning of the movement, you'll feel your hamstrings getting involved, and if you rise up too high at the end, you'll work your lower back.

Perform all three exercises during your regular leg workout. Focus on improving your flexibility and range of motion before adding or increasing resistance. Before too long, you may find yourself enjoying a much higher level of butt-esteem. □

Scott Cole is the star of the videotapes *Abs of Steel 2 for Men* and *Power Stretch* and of the motivational audiotape, *Body Meditations* (800-843-6499).

Extended lunge

Emphasis: gluteus maximus

Set up a box, bench or step platform that's eight to 12 inches high. Step back about three to four feet. With your feet together and arms at your sides, step forward with your right leg, placing your foot on top of the step. Lower your body as far as you can; your left knee should almost touch the floor, while your right shin should stay perpendicular to the floor. Push back up and return to the starting position. Repeat the movement with your left leg. That's one rep. Alternate legs until you finish the set.

WORKOUT SCHEDULE

Exercise	Sets	Reps
Extended lunge	4	14-12-10-10
Side leg lift	3	10
Short-range glute squeeze	3	10

Advanced Training

Although no studies have been done on the topic, it's probably safe to say that when most guys train their chests, they do it first in their workouts, when their muscles tend to be cold. One good way to warm up your pectorals is with a light set (or two) of the first chest movement in your workout—barbell bench presses, say. But the *bench push-up* is also a terrific way to warm up your pecs.

Line up two benches about shoulder-width apart, with a third bench set up behind them for your feet. Start in the standard push-up position, then slowly lower yourself as far as you can. Feel the deep stretch in your chest, then push yourself back up to the starting position. For variety, try doing extremely slow reps, counting to five on the way down and five again on the way up.

