



CONTINUOUS PLANK SERIES

Introduction and Level 1

During the early years operating the Pursuit Athletic Performance gait analysis lab (along with Dr. Kurt Strecker) ...I discovered a problem – a problem that needed a solution.

The problem? Well, it was related to the *training we'd prescribed for them* – something that the runners and other athletes who were coming into our lab learned was part of what they needed to do to improve.

So, what was it?

Everyone who came in was given the **Side Plank** exercise as part of their Level 1 training. As you certainly know by now, it's an essential exercise for developing side-to-side frontal plane stability and strength. The problem was that nearly everyone who was working on it, at some point, **plateaued**. To put it another way, they would work hard and improve, but at some point, in the first weeks and months of their training, the rate of improvement slowed dramatically. After all, the duration to hold this position that we targeted for everyone was 2 ½ minutes with excellent form – an extremely challenging task!

Folks who are smaller in size, especially shorter, had an easier time with it. Those who are taller found it harder. That's understandable as the larger sized folks would naturally be placing MORE load on their core than would someone lighter.

That being said, as I watched and listened to their frustration, the simple problem as I saw it was this:

How could I help people blast through their plateau, so that they could keep marching up the side-plank ladder toward the ultimate success they were seeking?

It wasn't just about the number, 2 ½. It was also about them feeling good that they were on the right path, and that they were building the strength and confidence they needed to keep improving.

The solution!

As the coach, I took it as a personal challenge to come up with a solution and help folks blast that plateau, wherever it might be.

The solution I came up with was THIS **Continuous Plank Series**. If I say so myself, it's been one of my biggest and most important creations.

What's the thought process behind this series?

I knew I needed to devise a way to mix things up. To vary the stress in a way that would ultimately lead to improvements.

Think of it this way: let's say you've been working hard and have finally reached a 90-second side plank. You might have begun like most people, focusing first only on the right form, at which point you may have realized you could hold it for only a few seconds, maybe 10 or 15 or so.

And while getting to 90-seconds is fantastic progress, you're realizing our goal of 2 ½ minutes on each side seems a galaxy away.

How can you change things up and make some gains, blasting that plateau?

This is what I came up with: Alternating a full front plank with a side plank on EACH side, so that the sides get a bit of a rest but the entire body DOESN'T rest! In other words, we stress the body holistically while training that side-to-side plane of motion. We're essentially tricking the body a little bit while building endurance in that side plank position. Pretty cool, right?

Let's see how this might work:

Take ~ 75% of your BEST maximum effort and use that duration as your baseline starting point for a descending progression. I'll outline that progression soon – so keep reading.

As you descend in duration, subtract approximately 10 to 15-seconds from each rep as you move downward in duration. In other words, you'll do progressively less work on each side as you fatigue, yet you will still be working.

For example, using our example of a best MAX effort of 90-seconds from above, you would subtract ~20-25% from 90-seconds (which is about 20-seconds), leaving you with 70-seconds. Use this 70-second duration as your starting point and proceed, descending in duration as you alternate side plank and prone plank in this manner:

1. Side plank, right side: 70-seconds
 2. Prone plank: 60-seconds
 3. Side plank, left side: 70-seconds
 4. Prone plank: 60-seconds
 5. Side plank, right side: 50-seconds
 6. Prone plank: 45-seconds
 7. Side plank, left side: 50-seconds
-and so on.

But not everyone is at 90 seconds...

I really thought I was onto something as I ran the math in my head. In my mind, this might JUST BE one way that folks who were stuck, could blast that plateau and move ahead.

Of course, this “continuous” series needed to be progressive and scalable, like any other movement or exercise. Not everyone was starting from the same place obviously.

Problem solved.

How? Well, simple. This is just math. The above percentages would work for whatever the starting point was. The point is simply taking 20 to 25% from whatever the maximum number might be and starting the descending series from that reduced number.

Hence, what I have here for you: EIGHT progressive series going from a FOUR-minutes-long series, up to a THIRTEEN-minutes, 20-seconds long series. Wow!

Enter the “App” that changed the game!

As time went on, this proved to be a fantastic way for folks to not only improve and blast their plateaus – it also became a cool game to play – a way to challenge endurance in a different kind of way that athletes really got into! Everyone loves a challenge after all, right? Hell yeah!

Then a team member and friend got an idea – what if we could create an app of sorts that would help people count down, so that they could focus on the effort rather than on counting?

Boom! A great idea!

This, my friend, is what I have for you in these series. I’ve embedded the app right into the video so you can follow along with each series. You won’t have to count – you’ll just have to watch and listen for the **DING** that tells you it’s time to change positions.

So, what about Level 1?

IF YOU are working in Level 1 right now, your focus should be strictly on the Side Plank exercise. We’ll get into this **Continuous Series** once you get to Level 2.

If you’re thinking, “I’d like to start in on this series right now because it looks cool (fun, challenging, etc., pick your word)...DON’T.

Not yet.

See what you can do to first get as close to 2.5 minutes on the Side Plank. Make THAT your goal. And of course, focus in on the rest of Level 1 training.

Level 2 will be there when you're ready. At which point you can begin to incorporate the Continuous Series.

Train smart!