



Keys to Nolan Ryan's Longevity

Key #4: Thoracic Spine Mobility



A

B

C

D

Step 1. Foam Roller/ Tissue Prep

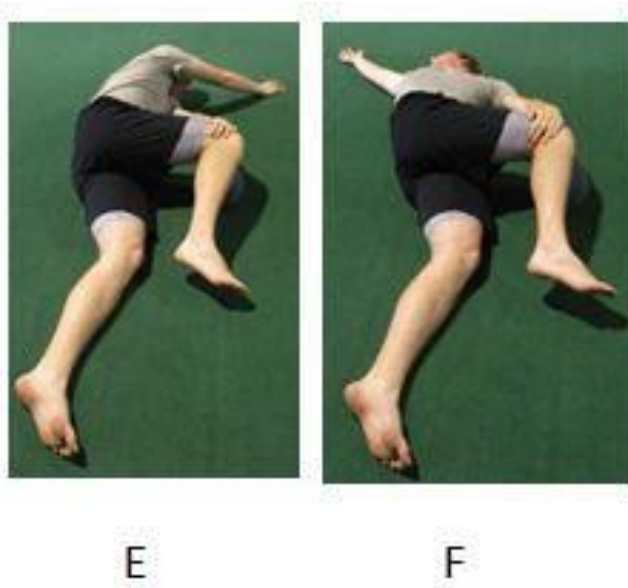
A. First we roll. We roll on the foam roller from low back to top of shoulders 10 X's or for 30 seconds

B. Second we roll between the shoulder blades and over both scapula from shoulder to shoulder 10X's or for 30 seconds

C. Third we roll a 'harder' medicine ball (4-10 lb) up and down the entire length of the spinal column (30 seconds) then make a figure eight around both scapula for 30 seconds.

D. Fourth we sit on the softball right on our spine for 10 seconds then do a crunch right on the ball. (This is definitely not an athlete favorite) up and down the spine...stopping at each vertebra on the way up and on the way down.

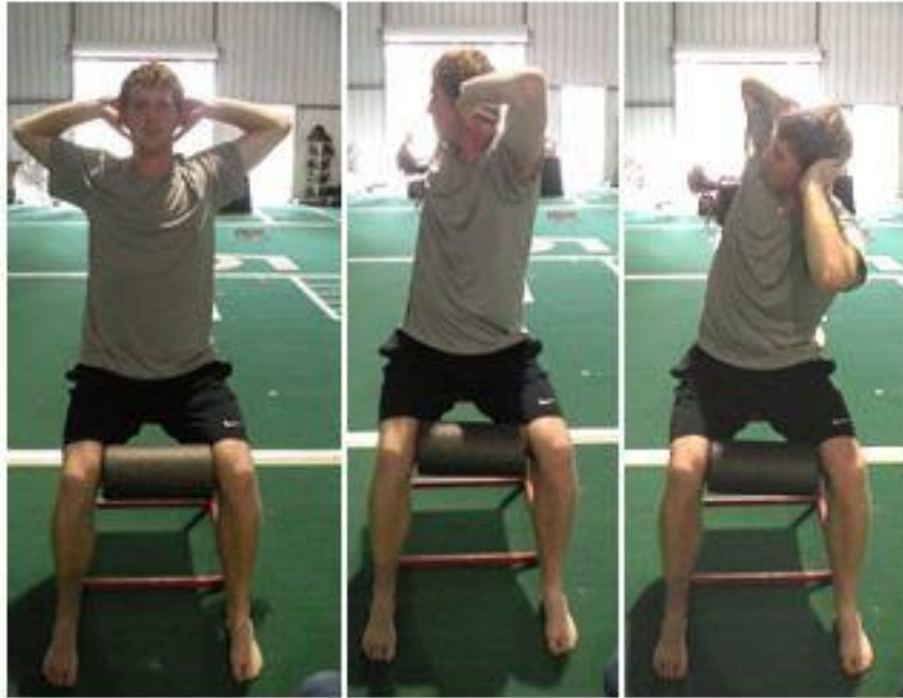
Next are two simple thoracic spine stretches Step #2.



E. Laying on side, Bottom leg extended, Top knee is at 90 degrees sitting on a med ball and bottom hand resting on knee.

F. With his head leading the way, the athlete then opens up and rotates on the diagonal, really reaching out and attempting to get the shoulder flat on the turf while keeping his knee on the ball. We perform 10 reps...both legs/both ways

Step # 3



G

H

I

G. Sitting on a chair, with a foam roller or med ball squeezed between our knees to lock in our lumbar spine and fire the core, we sit up straight, keep our toes pointing forward and interlock our fingers together behind our head...making sure the elbows are behind our ears.

H. We then rotate as far as we can comfortably...then stop.

I. Then we flex at the trunk...come back up and rotate further. Rotate as far as we can comfortably-stop...come back up, then we flex again. We repeat the process three times per side. We repeat the entire process twice.

These two t-spine stretches are very easy and casual. There is nothing forced or painful about them. We are simply encouraging the t-spine to open up and develop a new pattern. Flexibility/ mobility is generally lost by fractions of inches over long periods of time. We gain it back the exact same way.... gradually over time. We continually encourage and enforce a new pattern of openness and malleability.

We use these 3 steps before we head into our pronation series.

Another reason Nolan Ryan had such a healthy and durable arm was that he had very good T-spine mobility allowing him to decelerate over a much longer arc....sparing the very vulnerable soft tissue of his elbow & shoulder from exponential stress. The following pictures clearly show the difference between the decelerations of Nolan and other throwers with more limited thoracic mobility.

At the Ranch we believe a limitation in T-spine mobility can be directly attributed to many rotator cuff /labrum issues. It is a BIG issue for us.



For more information on the Texas Baseball Ranch® and the various training programs offered, visit www.TexasBaseballRanch.com, call (936) 588-6762 or email: info@TexasBaseballRanch.com