

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

The Turkish Get-Up, Part 3

Overhead Squat Variation

Jeff Martone

“A wise man is strong; yes, a man of knowledge increases strength.”

– Proverbs 24:5

The TGU overhead squat is the final progression in this series on kettlebell get-ups. It is an outstanding exercise that requires and develops balance, strength, stability, and flexibility in the ankles, knees, hips, upper back, and shoulder girdle. This exercise is an advanced progression that may initially prove too challenging for some people. It is commonly very challenging for those who fit the profile of “mature” male athletes with “high mileage,” or others with a lifetime of acute and chronic pre-existing injuries

resulting in various range-of-motion limitations. If you fall into this category, do not despair. Focus your efforts on what you can do (i.e., maximizing your performance of the tactical TGU and gradually working your overhead squat at light weight). Over the years I’ve been doing and teaching this move, I’ve noticed that women often seem to transition to this exercise more naturally than men.

TGU overhead squat

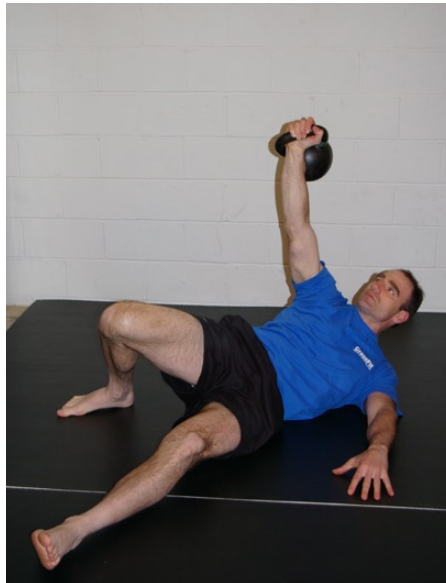
1. Begin exactly as you would to perform the tactical TGU (as described in [CrossFit Journal #57](#)), from lying on your back—with the kettlebell extended straight above you in your right and your right foot posted on the ground—up to the sitting position. The heel of your posted foot needs to be as close to your buttocks as possible.
2. Transition to the squat position by pressing the shoulder of your posted hand (your left) down and away from your ear. Lift your left hip off the ground and firmly plant your foot—not your knee—on the floor. Your feet should be in a good squat stance, about hip width apart, with toes pointed slightly outward. Keep your eyes on the kettlebell while making this transition.



1 of 3

The Turkish Get-up: Part 3 (continued...)

3. Establish your balance by bringing the elbow of your left hand between your knees, with triceps pressing firmly against your inner thigh.
4. Before you stand up, make sure your weight is on your whole foot, not just the ball or toes. Pressurize your abs by inhaling through your nose and creating pressure in your lower abdomen.
5. Contract your glutes and then stand up. Be sure to press equally off both feet while moving from the squat to standing.



The Turkish Get-up: Part 3 (continued...)

Options from the standing position

Once you have made it to standing you have three options for returning to the starting position. These options are also safety measures that help adjust the technical difficulty of the exercise to the athlete. From least to most challenging, they are:

1. Slowly lower the kettlebell to your shoulder then to the floor.
2. While keeping your arm straight and the kettlebell overhead, descend to one knee and then return to the starting position as you would in the tactical TGU.
3. While keeping your arm straight and the kettlebell overhead, squat and carefully reverse the movements of the TGU overhead squat until you are back in the starting position.

Tips:

- Practice the movements without a kettlebell for the first few reps. Then progress to a light kettlebell—i.e., one that is one or two sizes smaller than you would normally use for TGUs.
- Move slowly and precisely.
- Maintain constant tension in your torso, shoulder, and arm throughout the movement, and actively press the kettlebell up toward the ceiling on a straight, fully-extended arm and shoulder. Nothing is loose or casual in this exercise.
- Stay as fresh as possible, never training to muscle failure.
- No pain is gain. If something doesn't feel right, stop and re-evaluate. You may be doing something wrong. Or you may be trying to lift heavier than your strength and flexibility will allow. Or, you may be doing everything right but fit the profile of those who have difficulty with this exercise and it may not be the best one for you at this point in time.

The bottom line: Train smart. Choose a TGU variation that works for your body and that makes it stronger. That's the goal, after all.



Jeff Martone, owner of [Tactical Athlete Training Systems](#), was one of the first certified senior kettlebell instructors in the United States. He is best known as the creator of “hand-2-hand” kettlebell juggling, SHOT training, and the T.A.P.S. pull-up system. He is also the author of six training DVDs. He was the first to implement kettlebell training in a federal law enforcement agency and now offers instructor-level certifications. He has over 15 years of experience as a full-time defensive tactics, firearms, and special-response-team instructor.