

HYROX SLED PUSH + SLED PULL ALTERNATIVES

Normal Gym Environment | Advanced Client Guide

Use this guide when your plan includes sled push or sled pull work, but your gym does not have a sled, turf, or a HYROX-style setup.

Prepared by Warrior Performance Lab

For educational and informational purposes only. Not medical advice.

CLIENT GUIDE

Quick Start: What You Are Training

No gym substitute perfectly copies the sled. That is fine. Your job is to train the same qualities that make the sled difficult: heavy leg drive, trunk stiffness, grip and posture, breathing control, and the ability to run immediately after force work.

Main rule

Do not chase a perfect sled number in a normal gym. Use RPE, time under tension, clean mechanics, and run quality as your standards.

Sled demand	What it feels like in HYROX	Normal-gym training target
Heavy leg drive	Quads and glutes burn while breathing spikes.	Deadmill push, leg press, incline march, belt squat march.
Trunk stiffness	You have to push or pull without collapsing through the low back.	Braced carries, marching, cable pulls, heavy rows.
Grip and posture	Hands, lats, upper back, and breathing fatigue together.	Low cable rope pull, farmer carry, farmer hold, rows.
Transition skill	The station ends and the run starts right away.	Push or pull substitute -> immediate 300-600 m run.

How to choose your substitute

1. If the gym allows treadmill pushes, pair a deadmill/manual treadmill push with a low cable rope pull.
2. If treadmill pushes are not allowed, use heavy leg press or incline marching for the push demand.
3. If the cable setup is good, use low cable rope pulls as your first sled-pull replacement.
4. If cables are limited, use band-resisted rope pulls, plate/towel drags, or a heavy row/RDL/farmer-hold tri-set.
5. If your knee, wrist, or neck is irritated, choose the joint-friendliest option and keep the effort submaximal.

Traffic-light adjustment

Status	What it means	What you do
Green	Pain 0-2/10, sleep decent, movement clean.	Run the full session as written.
Yellow	Pain 3-4/10, poor sleep, heavy legs, or technique slipping.	Reduce load, cut one round, or use a lower-impact substitute.
Red	Pain 5+/10, sharp pain, swelling, limp, grip loss, or neck symptoms.	Stop the hard work. Use Zone 2 cardio, mobility, and prehab only.

NORMAL GYM SUBSTITUTES

Sled Push Alternatives

The push substitute should create strong lower-body pressure without turning into sloppy sprinting. Your standard is simple: low body angle or strong braced posture, powerful steps, controlled breathing, and the ability to run immediately after.

1. Deadmill / Manual Treadmill Push

Best option when the gym allows it. Use a powered-off treadmill or curved/manual treadmill. Hold the front handles, lean forward, and drive the belt with short, powerful steps.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Strength focus	6-8 x 20-30 sec hard push	Rest 90-150 sec | RPE 7-8
HYROX conditioning	4-6 x 30-45 sec push	Rest 60-120 sec | RPE 7-8
Compromised running	20-30 sec push -> immediate 300-600 m run	Rest 90-180 sec | RPE 7-8

Cues: Stay low, ribs down, short steps, push the floor away, and breathe every 2-3 steps. Only use this if the gym allows it.

2. Heavy Leg Press + Immediate Run

Best pure strength substitute when there is no safe treadmill-push option. It does not copy the body angle perfectly, but it gives you the quad and glute pressure you need before running.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Strength	5 x 12-15 heavy reps	Rest 90-150 sec | RPE 8
Density	4-6 x 18-25 reps	Rest 75-120 sec | RPE 7-8
Run-off combo	15-20 reps -> immediate 300-500 m run	Rest 2-3 min | controlled pace

Cues: Drive through the full foot, knees track over toes, do not bounce, and do not hard-lock the knees at the top.

3. Heavy Incline Treadmill March

Useful when you want sled-push style leg pressure without as much joint impact. This is also a strong choice on a yellow knee day.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Incline march	5-8 x 45-75 sec at 12-15% incline	Rest 45-90 sec | RPE 6.5-8
Advanced version	Add weighted vest or light dumbbells only if posture stays clean	Keep breathing controlled
Run-off combo	60 sec incline march -> 300 m run	Rest 90-150 sec

Cues: Lean from the ankles, keep the hips tall, use strong arms, and avoid hanging on the rails unless needed for safety.

4. Belt Squat March or Heavy Goblet March

Good for a joint-friendlier sled-push substitute, especially when you want leg drive without pounding.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Belt squat march	5 x 45-60 sec	Rest 60-90 sec | RPE 7-8
Heavy goblet march	5 x 40-60 steps	Rest 60-90 sec | RPE 7
Combo	March -> farmer carry 50 m -> easy run 300 m	Rest 2 min

Cues: Small powerful steps, ribs down, knees tracking clean, and no side-to-side rocking.

5. Plate Push / Towel Push

Use only if the floor allows it. Place plates or a heavy dumbbell stack on a towel or slider and push it across turf, carpet, or a smooth floor.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Short power	6-8 x 10-20 m	Rest 60-120 sec | RPE 7-8
HYROX density	4-6 x 20-30 m	Rest 90-150 sec | RPE 7-8
Run-off combo	20 m plate push -> 300-500 m run	Rest 2-3 min

Cues: Low body angle, short steps, steady pressure. If it becomes a slip-and-slide circus, pick a different option.

NORMAL GYM SUBSTITUTES

Sled Pull Alternatives

The pull substitute should train lats, legs, grip, trunk position, and breathing without turning into an upper-trap shrug. Your standard is shoulders down, neutral neck, long pulls, and steady footwork.

1. Low Cable Rope Pull

Best normal-gym sled-pull substitute. Attach a rope to a low cable. If possible, use a long rope and pull hand-over-hand while stepping back.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Strength	6-8 x 20-30 sec heavy pulls	Rest 60-120 sec | RPE 7-8
Density	8-10 x 20 sec on / 40 sec off	Keep every rep identical
Run-off combo	30 sec cable rope pull -> immediate 300-600 m run	Rest 90-180 sec

Cues: Shoulders down, chin tucked, ribs down, long pull, step back with the legs. Do not shrug and do not yank with the neck.

2. Seated Cable Row + Backward Walk Combo

Use this when the cable setup does not allow a proper hand-over-hand pull. The row trains the lats and upper back. The backward walk gives you the quad burn and leg drive.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Combo rounds	Heavy seated cable row x 10-15 reps -> backward walk 45-60 sec	4-6 rounds | Rest 75-120 sec
Advanced version	Use heavier row, longer backward walk, or shorter rest	Only if posture is clean
Run-off combo	Row + backward walk -> immediate 300 m run	Rest 2 min

Cues: Row with the lats, not the traps. Backward walk with small controlled steps and a tall chest.

3. Rope Pull With Plates on a Towel

Good when the gym allows dragging on the floor. Put plates or heavy dumbbells on a towel or slider, attach a rope or band, and pull the load toward you.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Strength	5-6 x 15-25 m equivalent	Rest 60-90 sec | RPE 7-8
Density	8 x 20-30 sec	Rest 45-75 sec

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Combo	Rope pull -> farmer carry 50 m -> run 300 m	Rest 2-3 min

Cues: Long pulls, shoulders away from ears, exhale at the finish of each pull, and reset posture quickly if the traps take over.

4. Heavy Band-Resisted Rope Pull

Useful when the gym has no good cable setup. Anchor a thick band low to a rack and attach a rope or towel through the band.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Pull strength	6-8 x 20-30 sec	Rest 60-90 sec | RPE 7-8
Posture endurance	4-5 x 45 sec	Rest 75-120 sec | RPE 6.5-7.5
Run-off combo	30 sec band rope pull -> 300 m run	Rest 90-150 sec

Cues: Keep the rib cage stacked, pull with lats and legs, and stop the set if the neck starts doing the work.

5. Heavy Row + RDL + Farmer Hold Tri-Set

Lowest-specificity option, but still valuable when equipment is limited. It builds posterior chain, lats, grip, and trunk stiffness.

Goal	Prescription	Rest / Intensity
Tri-set	RDL x 6-8 -> chest-supported row x 8-10 -> farmer hold 30-45 sec	4-5 rounds | Rest 90-150 sec
Strength bias	Heavier load, longer rest, cleaner reps	RPE 7-8
Conditioning bias	Moderate load, shorter rest, immediate easy run 300 m	RPE 7

Cues: Brace first, use controlled reps, and finish the farmer hold tall - no rounded shoulders.

USE THIS WHEN YOUR PLAN SAYS SLED

Best Substitution Map

Use these swaps when your plan includes sled work but the gym does not have a usable sled setup. Time under tension usually works better than guessing load.

If the plan says...	Best normal-gym replacement	Standard
Sled push 4 x 12.5 m	Deadmill push 4 x 20-30 sec OR leg press 4 x 15-20 reps	RPE 7-8, clean body position
Sled push 4 x 25 m	Deadmill push 4 x 40-45 sec OR leg press 4 x 20-25 reps	Run quality after matters most
Sled pull 4 x 12.5 m	Low cable rope pull 4 x 20-30 sec	Shoulders down, no trap shrug
Sled pull 4 x 25 m	Low cable rope pull 4 x 40-45 sec	Steady breathing and long pulls
Heavy sled touch	Heavy leg press + low cable rope pull combo	Do not max; stop before ugly reps
Technique sled day	Lighter cable pull + incline march + mobility	Perfect mechanics only
HYROX compromised day	Push substitute -> pull substitute -> immediate run	Transition within 10-15 sec

Transition standard

The substitute is not complete until you can start running quickly after it. Station ends -> quick breath -> run. Do not turn the transition into a hidden rest break.

PROGRAMMING OPTIONS

Advanced No-Sled Sessions

Use these sessions when you need a full sled-focused training day in a normal gym. Keep the work hard, but repeatable. A great session is one where the last round still looks like training, not survival.

Session 1 - Full Sled Substitute Session

Order	Work	Target
Warm-up	8-10 min easy bike, row, jog, or SkiErg + ankles, calves, hips, T-spine	Arrive warm, not tired
1	600-800 m run @ RPE 7	Controlled pace
2	Deadmill push 25-35 sec OR leg press 18-20 reps	Heavy but clean
3	300 m run immediately	No walking start
4	Low cable rope pull 25-35 sec	Long pulls, shoulders down
5	Farmer carry 50-60 m	Tall posture
Rest	2:00-3:00	Repeat 4-5 rounds

Session 2 - Short Push + Pull Finisher

Round	Work	Rest
1-6	Deadmill push 20 sec OR leg press 15 reps	30 sec
1-6	Low cable rope pull 20 sec	60 sec after pull

Use this after strength training. Intensity should sit around RPE 7-8. The goal is crisp, powerful, repeatable work.

Session 3 - Pace-Lock Compromised Running Block

Minute	Work
Min 1	Push substitute: deadmill push 20-30 sec, leg press 15-20 reps, or incline march 45 sec
Min 2	Pull substitute: low cable rope pull 20-30 sec or seated row + backward walk
Min 3-4	Run at fixed HYROX pace, 10K pace, or controlled threshold pace
Min 5	Rest, breathe, and record HR/RPE/notes

Complete 8-10 rounds. The run pace stays fixed while station fatigue builds. If you cannot hold the run pace and mechanics, do not add load yet.

Session 4 - Strength-Biased Sled Alternative Day

Block	Work	Intensity
A	Leg press 5 x 12-15	RPE 8
B	Low cable rope pull 6 x 25-30 sec	RPE 7-8
C	Farmer carry 5 x 50 m	Heavy, tall posture
D	3-4 x 400 m run	Controlled hard, no sprinting

Session 5 - Knee-Friendly Sled Alternative Day

Block	Work	Target
A	Incline treadmill march 6 x 60 sec	RPE 6.5-7.5
B	Seated cable row 4 x 12 + backward walk 45 sec	Posture and control
C	Bike or SkiErg 6 x 2 min steady / 1 min easy	Aerobic pressure without pounding
D	Mobility: calves, quads, hip flexors, lats	10-15 min

PASS/FAIL CHECKLIST

Technique Standards

A substitute only counts if the mechanics match the goal. If the work gets ugly, reduce load, shorten the interval, or switch to a better option.

Push standards

Standard	Pass	Fix if failing
Body angle / posture	Strong forward lean on push, or tall braced posture on machine versions.	Reduce load or shorten duration.
Steps	Short, powerful, consistent steps.	Slow down and avoid frantic sprinting.
Trunk	Ribs down, no low-back collapse.	Brace, breathe lower, and reset.
Breathing	Controlled under pressure.	Drop intensity until breathing is not panicked.
Run after	You start running within 10-15 sec.	Lower station demand until transition improves.

Pull standards

Standard	Pass	Fix if failing
Neck	Neutral neck, no looking up.	Chin slightly tucked; eyes down and forward.
Shoulders	Down and away from ears.	Lower load and reset scapula before each pull.
Pull	Long, smooth, not jerky.	Use legs and lats instead of arms only.
Traps	No shrugging takeover.	Stop the set if neck tension builds.
Run after	You leave the station without standing around.	Shorten the pull interval or reduce load.

Pull cue stack

- "Shoulders in your back pockets."
- Chin slightly tucked; keep the neck quiet.
- Ribs down before you pull.
- Long pull, step back, exhale.
- Quick shoulder shake only if needed - 2-3 seconds max.

ADVANCE WITHOUT GUESSING

Progression Rules

Progress one variable at a time. The order should usually be mechanics first, then duration, then density, then load, then faster run pace.

Variable	How to progress	Do not progress if...
Mechanics	Cleaner posture, better steps, smoother breathing.	Neck, traps, knee, wrist, or back take over.
Duration	Add 5-10 sec per work interval.	Run quality drops after the station.

Variable	How to progress	Do not progress if...
Density	Keep work the same and reduce rest by 10-20 sec.	You start using the rest as a full rescue.
Load	Add small weight only when the same work feels controlled.	Reps become jerky or slow-grindy.
Run pace	Increase pace only after stations stay clean.	First 30 sec of the run becomes a shuffle.

Simple 4-week build

Week	Focus	Example
Week 1	Learn the substitute and lock in mechanics.	6 rounds, RPE 7, full rest.
Week 2	Add density.	8 rounds or same rounds with slightly shorter rest.
Week 3	Add compromised running.	Push/pull substitute -> immediate run.
Week 4	Deload or benchmark.	Reduce volume 25-35% or repeat a fixed test.

Benchmark idea

Pick one fixed setup and repeat it every 4-6 weeks: 30 sec push substitute + 30 sec pull substitute + 400 m run. Track run time, RPE, HR, and technique notes.

STAY TRAINABLE

Pain, Recovery, and Gym Safety Rules

The goal is to build sled-specific qualities and stay healthy enough to keep training. Hard work is useful. Ugly work that changes your movement is not.

Signal	Adjustment
Wrist feels irritated on treadmill push	Use leg press, incline march, or belt squat march.
Knee feels irritated on deadmill push	Use leg press, belt squat march, bike, or incline march at lower intensity.
Neck or traps tighten during pulling	Drop load, slow the pull, reset shoulders down, and reduce pulling volume.
Low back takes over	Shorten the interval, lower load, and prioritize bracing.
Pain reaches 4/10 or changes your movement	Modify immediately. Do not push through altered mechanics.
Sharp pain, swelling, numbness, dizziness, radiating symptoms	Stop hard training and get appropriate medical guidance.

Gym etiquette and equipment safety

- Only push a treadmill manually if the gym allows it. Some commercial gyms do not permit this.
- Only drag plates, towels, or sliders on floors where it is allowed and safe.
- Do not block walkways, cable stacks, or high-traffic areas during run-off combos.
- If a setup annoys the gym, simplify it. Training should be hard, not a public works project.

RECORD WHAT MATTERS

Tracking Sheet

The best coaching insight is not just what load you used. It is whether you could move well, transition quickly, and run clean after the substitute.

Date	Substitute	Load / setting	Work performed	Run after	RPE / HR	Notes next day

What to report back

Send your coach the substitute used, load/setting, work duration or reps, run pace after, RPE, HR if available, and any knee/wrist/neck response the next morning.

© Warrior Performance Lab. For use with current Warrior Performance Lab clients. Not medical advice.