

The Precision Nutrition
Bonus Training Program

Strength Conditioning for Fighters

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Precision Nutrition Bonus Strength Conditioning For Fighters by Chad Waterbury

Introduction

Thanks to the marketing mastery of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) and Pride, many people have been drawn Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). Not only do people enjoy watching two highly skilled fighters go at it, but the events also create much interest in how to develop the kind of strength and conditioning that's needed to excel in combative sports. After all, it would be pretty cool to train for MMA competition, regardless of whether or not you ever step into the ring or octagon, right?

So I'm here to give you a program that will not only build up your strength, but it'll also build up your endurance, explosiveness, and mobility. That's because fighting demands that you develop many fitness qualities. Sports such as powerlifting and soccer, for instance, primarily revolve around two strength qualities: absolute strength and endurance strength, respectively.

As a fighter, however, you need to develop both absolute strength and endurance strength. Not only that, but you also need to build your explosive strength and mobility. Yep, if you want to excel in fighting, you've gotta be the total package. In other words, a strength training program that's designed for fighters must coalesce absolute strength, endurance strength, explosive strength, and mobility drills into each workout. I like to call this coalescence of qualities, *Strength Conditioning*.

And that's precisely why I love training fighters: it takes a lot of experience and training knowledge to develop all of those qualities at the same time.

My Resume

There are indeed many reputable performance enhancement coaches on this third rock from the sun. So what qualifies me to outline the latest, most effective methods to develop the qualities that are specific to fighting? I can sum the answer up in one phrase: I surround myself with the best fight coaches in the world.

One of the big advantages of living in a city like Los Angeles is that I have access to some of the top fighting facilities. Jiu-jitsu studios and MMA gyms are popping up all over Los Angeles. And I certainly take advantage of that

fact. For five days each week I meet and train with different fight coaches in order to develop a deep bag of tricks. I train for MMA-style fighting to not only develop my own combat skills, but also to build a deeper understanding of what qualities that fighters must possess. Not many performance coaches out there can make such a statement.

Since I train for fighting, and since I'm a performance coach, I've developed novel and effective methods for my clients who make their living in combative sports.

So it's the hands-on training that I get from the top fight coaches that I work with that's allowed me to develop a thorough understanding of what fighters need for maximum performance. Pair that with the fact that I've been involved in some type of combative sport since I was 15 and you'll soon understand why fighters hire me to design their programs. Indeed, I have a deep, personal understanding of the sport and I know what it takes to get results.

Strength Definitions for Fighters

Before I go any further, let me explain what I mean by "strength." You see, most people only associate the term with lifting maximal loads such as a 1-3 repetition maximum (RM) for, say, the deadlift. In reality, the term strength is about as specific as saying you drive an automobile. (Do you drive a Bentley or a Volkswagen Bug?)

The same is true with fighters. For someone to say a fighter is strong means nothing to me. What makes him strong? Is it his absolute strength, endurance strength, explosive strength, or a combination of those? What about his mobility-to-strength ratio? Is he explosive while shooting forward, but weak while tangled up on the ground? These are but a few issues that must be understood and addressed in any program.

It's imperative for fighters to develop three essential strength qualities: endurance strength, explosive strength, and absolute strength. Here's a quick definition of each quality.

Endurance Strength – the ability to maintain muscular contractions for long periods of time (minutes).

Explosive Strength – the ability to develop maximum force in a short time period (fractions of a second).

Absolute Strength – the ability to develop maximum force without regard for time or bodyweight.

Now if you carefully read the three aforementioned definitions, and think about fighting, you'll realize that building just one of those qualities is simply not enough. Sure, endurance strength is a must for fighters, but if you don't have enough absolute strength to throw a fighter or resist a takedown, you're in trouble. Explosive strength is also essential because you need to be able to develop maximum force in very short time periods (think about the miniscule amount of time that's available before you strike or kick); but if you can't maintain that explosive strength for long enough to defeat your opponent, well, that's not good. Finally, absolute strength will help you control and throw a fighter, but if your muscles can't maintain the effort because of low endurance, the fight will probably prove to be a hard lesson learned.

So an effective training program for fighters will build all of those strength qualities. In addition, the movements that develop those qualities must also challenge and enhance mobility. Without sufficient mobility, a fighter is doomed to mediocrity.

How Fighters Should Train For Strength

The goal of any program that's intended to yield big results as quickly as possible must revolve around managing fatigue. This is especially true with fighters since they must devote hours each day to practicing their technique. After all, even if you develop each fight-specific strength quality to an elite level, you'll still get your ass handed to you if you don't have excellent technique.

I've discovered that two sessions each week for absolute/explosive strength is ideal. In addition to those two sessions are three endurance-focused sessions that take place either later in the day, or on a different day. Here are two different schedules that work well for my clients:

Schedule 1

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
AM: Ab./Ex. Strength	AM: Technique	AM: Technique	AM: Ab./Ex. Strength	AM: Technique	AM: Technique	AM: Off
PM: End. Strength	PM: Technique	PM: Off	PM: End. Strength	PM: Technique	PM: End. Strength	PM: Off

Or:

Schedule 2

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
AM: Ab./Ex. Strength	AM: Technique	AM: Technique	AM: Ab./Ex. Strength	AM: Technique	AM: Technique	AM: End. Strength
PM: Technique	PM: End. Strength	PM: Off	PM: Technique	PM: End. Strength	PM: Off	PM: Off

Whether you follow Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 has no bearing on how the workouts are performed. The following program will outline the Absolute/Explosive Strength and Endurance Strength workouts for each phase. Your job is to put them into a weekly plan. And if you need to restructure the above plan, that's fine. But try to devise a plan that's as close to one of the schedules as possible.

Here's the 12-week, *Strength Conditioning for Fighters* program!

Strength Conditioning For Fighters Phase 1: Weeks 1-4

Absolute/Explosive Strength Training (performed twice each week)

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Load	Rest
A1 Box jump**	6	3	Bodyweight	30s
A2 Clap push-up	6	3	Bodyweight	30s
B1 4" platform snatch-grip deadlift	3	3	5RM	60s
B2 Single arm standing cable press w/twist*	3	5	7RM	60s
C1 Reverse crunch on slant board	3	10	12RM	30s
C2 Single leg squat (aka pistol)*	3	5	7RM	30s
D1 Single arm standing cable row w/twist*	3	5	7RM	30s
D2 Single arm db external rotation*	3	8	10RM	30s

* Don't rest between any single limb movements, start with weakest side.

** Use the highest box you can. Jump up and land with your feet together; jump down and land with your feet wide while dropping down into a full squat.

Endurance Strength Training (performed three times each week)

Exercise	Sets	Duration/Reps	Load	Rest
Farmer's Walk*	3	60s	AHAP	45s
Sandbag Run**	6	30s	AHAP	60s
Squat thrust (aka burpee)	3	45s	Bodyweight	60s
Overhead medicine ball throw	3	20 reps	AHAP	60s
4 limb run***	3	45s	Bodyweight	60s

AHAP = as heavy as possible

* Walk in a figure 8 pattern.

** Bear-hug a heavy sandbag or similar tool and run with it as fast as you can.

*** Bent forward and place your hands on the ground. Run with all four limbs as fast as you can.

Strength Conditioning For Fighters Phase 2: Weeks 5-8

Absolute/Explosive Strength Training (performed twice each week)

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Load	Rest
A1 Jumping split squat*	5	4	Bodyweight	30s
A2 Two hand medicine ball throw**	5	5	AHAP	30s
B1 Overhead squat	4	4	6RM	60s
B2 Single arm db bench press***	4	4	6RM	60s
C1 Ab wheel	3	12	14RM	30s
C2 DB Romanian deadlift	3	6	8RM	30s
D1 Chin-up	4	4	6RM	30s
D2 Single arm cable external rotation	4	6	8RM	30s

* From a split squat position, jump up and switch your legs in the air so you land with the opposite foot forward.

** From a standing position, hold a medicine ball at your chest. Explosively push and release the ball forward.

*** Alternate arms with each rep.

Endurance Strength Training (performed three times each week)

Exercise	Sets	Duration/Reps	Load	Rest
DB squat thrust*	3	15 reps	18RM	45s
Sandbag Backward Run**	4	45s	AHAP	70s
Star jump***	4	10 reps	Bodyweight	60s
Medicine ball throw down w/twist****	3	15 reps	AHAP	60s
Sprints	3	30s	Bodyweight	60s

AHAP = as heavy as possible

* Hold a db in each hand while performing a squat thrust, but omit the jump portion.

** Bear-hug a heavy sandbag or similar tool and run backward with it as fast as you can.

*** From a standing position, jump up as high as you can and push your legs out to the side. Touch your toes with your fingertips while you're in the air.

**** Hold a medicine overhead with both hands. Throw the ball down to your right side while twisting to the right. Do the same for the left.

Strength Conditioning For Fighters Phase 3: Weeks 9-12

Absolute/Explosive Strength Training (performed twice each week)

Exercise	Sets	Reps	Load	Rest
A1 Reverse box jump*	4	6	Bodyweight	30s
A2 Two hand medicine ball throwdown**	4	6	AHAP	30s
B1 Front squat	4	6	8RM	60s
B2 Dip	4	6	8RM	60s
C1 Narrow grip pull-up	4	8	10RM	30s
C2 Single leg db deadlift	4	8	10RM	30s
D1 Standing db shoulder press***	3	8	10RM	30s
D2 Standing EZ bar reverse curl	3	8	10RM	30s

AHAP = as heavy as possible

* Stand with your back to a short box. Squat down and jump up and back so you'll land on the box.

** From a standing position, hold a medicine ball overhead. Step forward with one leg, then explosively slam the ball to the ground while contracting your abs as hard as possible. Repeat with the other leg forward for 6 reps on each side.

*** Alternate arms with each rep.

Endurance Strength Training (performed three times each week)

Exercise	Sets	Duration/Reps	Load	Rest
Side lunge*	3	15 reps	18RM	60s
Scapular push-up	3	20 reps	Bodyweight	60s
Star jump	3	12 reps	Bodyweight	60s
Medicine ball squat throw**	3	15 reps	AHAP	60s
Rope skipping	3	90s	Bodyweight	30s

AHAP = as heavy as possible

* Hold a db or medicine ball at your chest; step out to the side as far as possible; alternate legs with each rep for a total of 30 reps.

** Squat down while holding a medicine ball at your chest. Jump up and forward while you simultaneously push the ball forward. Run to the ball and repeat.

About Chad Waterbury



Chad Waterbury is one of the world's leading experts on developing muscle for the goal of enhancing human performance. His novel training methods are used by athletes, bodybuilders, and fitness enthusiasts of all ages and from all walks of life.

Chad has an M.S. in physiology from the University of Arizona, and he specializes in the neurophysiology of movement and performance.

Chad also trains, consults, and lectures around the country, contributing to numerous newsstand and online publications.

Chad can be contacted at www.chadwaterbury.com. Further, you can pick up a copy of his book, Muscle Revolution, at www.t-nation.com.