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# RISE OF THE KETTLEBELL NATION



**Why Kettlebells Are Superior for Military Fitness**

*By SSgt Nathaneal Morrison, USAF Pararescue, RKC, Sr.*



**Anthony Diluglio, RKC: Taking Hardcore Training to the Mainstream**

*Interview by Rob Lawrence, RKC Sr.*

**Training Force and Redirection with Kettlebells**

*By Brett Jones, CSCS, RKC Sr.*

**The Benefits of Kettlebell Training for Athletes**

*By Mike Mahler, RKC Sr.*

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# ISOMETRICS: IRON FOSSIL OR SECRET WEAPON?

**S**cientists dabbled with isometrics, or muscle contractions against stationary objects, as far back as the 1920s. Then in 1953 German scientists Hettinger and Müller shook the muscle world with their study that concluded that you can add 5% to your strength a week by pushing or pulling against a stationary object once a day. Just once, only for six seconds, and at mere two thirds of a max effort!

Weightlifters and martial artists quickly jumped on the bandwagon. The former pushed and pulled empty bars against power rack pins; the latter tried to tear their black belts apart and pushed through walls with backfists.

Enter the Dragon.

But isos went out of fashion around the time of Bruce Lee's mysterious death, for reasons that had nothing to do with the effectiveness of this ingeniously simple method: the emergence of anabolic steroids—and the seep of flakiness and trendiness into the fitness world.

It is time to bring this secret weapon back.

## Why isometrics?

Prof. Verkhoshansky (1977) lists the six advantages of isometrics, slightly paraphrased below.

1. Accessibility of isometrics to everyone.

Although certain sport-specific applications of isometrics require specialized equipment such as power racks, generally you can manage with such mundane items as a wall, rope, stick, doorway, or chair.

2. The ability to train any muscle at very precise angles.

A great benefit when you are trying to overcome a sticking point in a lift.

3. Great efficiency.

In the words of Prof. Yuri Verkhoshansky himself, "...a ten minute session of isometric tensions in specially selected exercises will replace a tiring one hour of weight training."

4. Insignificant muscle and bodyweight gains when compared to dynamic exercises.

This may or may not be an advantage from your

point of view. The extent of muscle hypertrophy depends on the training protocol. Recent studies have registered respectable muscle growth from isometrics. For instance, Garfinkel & Cafarelli (1992) found a 14.6% increase in the cross-section of the knee extensors following eight weeks of isometric training. Increasing the duration of the contractions to a minute and longer, as explained below, is likely to yield even greater muscle gains—if you need them.

5. The ability to maintain high levels of speed-strength during important competitions due to the fact that isometrics expend a lot less time and energy than lifting weights.

6. Great for improving and fixing athletic technique.

Quoting Prof. Verkhoshansky, isometrics offer "A better opportunity to memorize the proper positions visually and kinesthetically than the dynamic mode. This makes the isometric method especially valuable for teaching and mistake correction."

I shall extrapolate on this subtle but extremely important point. Let us use the military press as an example. In order to put up the heaviest weight safely you need to 'wedge' yourself between the barbell and the ground, every muscle tight. It is not an easy skill to learn with a live weight but a piece of cake with isometrics. Stand inside a doorway, on a stool if necessary, put your hands up against the molding, and press. You will naturally tense up your legs and waist. Remember that feeling when you press a barbell.

The 'wedge' is just as effective for quick moves. I use it to improve my military and law enforcement clients' striking technique and power. On my *Martial Power: Hard Hitting Combat Secrets* from

the *Russian Special Ops* videos you can see an obvious improvement in a professional kickboxer's kicks and cage fighter's punches after just two days.

## What are the disadvantages of isometrics?

Suren Bogdasarov (1991), the coach of Russian weightlifting legend Yuri Vlasov, lists three drawbacks of isometrics. First, they are counter-indicated for people with high blood pressure and heart problems. Second, your muscles could lose their elasticity. The solution is simple: massage your muscles and shake them to relax between sets. Third, it is easy to lose your sense of exertion. Bogdasarov recommends varying the intensity of isometric contractions to address this problem, for instance an easy set followed by an all-out set.

Prof. Alexey Medvedev (1986) urges caution in applying isometric exercises to children and teenagers. He also warns that **strength development plateaus after six to eight weeks of isometric training.** This is not a problem as you are not supposed to train isometrically full time anyway. Go iso for a month or two, then go back to your regular strength training. Summer is the ideal time for an isometric only routine.

## How often?

Scientists disagree on a lot of things but not on the frequency of isometric training: **daily training is ideal** (Atha, 1981). It does not mean that you cannot train less frequently; you just will not gain as much. According to Hettinger (1961), training every other day delivers only 80% of the strength gains of daily training and training once a week yields only 40%.



## Super-Long Isometric Contractions

Steve Justa: *“they made my muscles dense and super efficient”*

Interestingly, scientists do not appear to have interest in studying very long isometric contractions for strength and muscle growth.

We have learned that two factors are important:

1) total time under tension;

2) continuous time under tension that is high enough to occlude the blood flow.

It seems logical to experiment with a contraction that is just intense enough to occlude the blood flow (about 50%) and holding it for as long as possible, isn't it?

If you look at the so-called Rohmert curve

(see Siff & Verkhoshansky, 1996), you will learn that men can hold a 50% intensity contraction for over a minute and women for almost three minutes. Ironically, people in the trenches such as strength coach Jay Schroeder and strongman author Steve Justa beat the scientists to the punch with their successful experiments with minutes-long isometric contractions.

### How much?

According to Verkhoshansky (1977), the duration of a contraction is more important than the contraction's intensity. McDonagh & Davis (1984) reviewed a number of studies of isometric strength training and concluded that the total time under tension, or the time of the combined contractions (e.g., 3 sets x 10 sec = 30 sec or 10 sets x 3 sec = 30 sec), is the loading variable of primary importance in isometric strength and muscle training.

Muscle tension impedes the blood flow and traps various growth factors. According to Smith et al. (1995), the muscle cells' longer exposure to these substances supposedly stimulates their growth. It appears that you should favor more contractions if you emphasize strength and longer contractions if you stress mass gains.

### How hard?

Surprisingly, all-out effort does not seem necessary for all-out gains. Hettinger (1961) and Medvedev (1986) recommended 40-50% of perceived max efforts. Incidentally, capillaries do not get completely shut until the intensity of the contraction reaches 50% max. Recall that this blood occlusion is important for bathing the muscle in its metabolites for growth.

Be clear that 50% intensity does not refer to trying half of your best throughout the set. It means you start out with 50% of your max strength and hold it. As you get tired, you will be working harder and harder to maintain that level of force. Just like lifting a 50% 1RM weight for reps.

### At what angles?

Strength gains were thought to be highly joint angle specific, that is limited to the position at which you train (Gardner, 1963). A new generation of scientists realized that while most gains indeed occur at the specific training angles, there is a transfer to untrained angles as well. In fact, most carryover of strength takes place in the range of plus-minus twenty degrees from the exercised angle (Knapik, Mawdsley & Ramos, 1983).

Traditionally, isometric exercises are done in three positions: near the bottom of the movement, in the middle, and near the top. In the case of the military press, you would press the bar off your

clavicles, at your eye level (the typical sticking point), and a couple of inches short of the lockout.

If you are short on time, just work the stretched position. In a Russian study by Zatsiorsky & Raitsin (1974) the subjects who isometrically trained the stretched position improved their full squat poundage 50% more than those who did their isos near the lockout. In other words, if you have time to work only one position, make it near the start of the movement.

Another reason to emphasize the stretched position is flexibility. Isometric contractions of shortened muscles have been known to reduce flexibility. Stretch isos, on the other hand, happen to be on top of the list of most effective stretching techniques (refer to my book *Relax into Stretch*).

If you have time to work two positions, work the stretched position and your sticking point.

### How should I breathe?

Do not hold your breath. Breathe shallow while keeping your abs hard. I have heard a great expression to describe this type of breathing from Uechi-ryu karate practitioners: “breathe behind the shield”.

Power breathing is an option if you practice very brief, 1-3 sec, contractions.

### How many exercises should I do?

You have choices. If your main focus is strength you will do fewer exercises with more sets. For instance, powerlifting coach Louie Simmons recommends an isometric bench press program consisting of three to four sets per position for the total of six positions. Needless to say, after twenty some sets you will be in no mood to do much else.

If you are after all-purpose strength a variety of exercises with fewer contractions per exercise are in order. Bogdasarov's (1991) routine, popular among Russian martial artists, consists of fourteen exercises, each done for two to three sets with one to two minutes of rest between sets.

The important thing is to quit before you get worn out. Verkhoshansky (1977) advises that you wrap up your isometric workout within ten minutes!

### Should I explode or go slow?

Slowly build up the tension to the specified level, take two to three seconds. Then release the tension just as gradually. This, by the way, is not the only way to iso, just the most common one. For the record, Siff & Verkhoshansky (1996) classify isometrics as ‘slow’ (what you are about to do), ‘voluntary explosive’, ‘reflexive explosive’, and ‘oscillatory’. This gives you a hint of the hidden wealth of athletic applications of isometrics.

### Can I use a live weight?

Yes. A technique popular in the strength world, ‘functional isometrics’, calls for pushing a loaded barbell against power rack pins. The obvious advantage is the ability to exactly gage your progress. The disadvantage is, you need a gym. You can use the resistance of your bodyweight in some static exercises that require no equipment, for instance, one-arm chinups.

### Can I combine isometrics with regular lifting?

You bet. There are many ways of doing it: mixing isos into ‘normal’ workouts, alternating them, etc. You may even combine static and dynamic work in one exercise. Following is a powerful RKC leg strength exercise that does just that. It is the kettlebell front squat/renege pistol iso combo.

Squat rock bottom with two light kettlebells in the rack. Shift your weight to one leg and carefully extend the other leg forward as if you are getting ready to do a mutant pistol. Stay tight! Tell yourself that you are ready to explode out of the hole like Steve Cotter. In a couple of seconds—before you lose tension!—bring your free leg underneath you and extend the other one. Finally retract to the front squat position and stand up. That was one rep.

Practice the above combo for singles, doubles, or triples in place of your usual leg workout for a few weeks. Do relaxation exercises such as shaking your limbs, leg swings, and loose jogging between your static sets. Do more relaxation exercises and stretch afterwards. I promise you great strength.

# THE BENEFITS OF KETTLEBELL TRAINING FOR ATHLETES

By Mike Mahler, RKC Sr.

**K**ettlebell training has taken the fitness world by storm. In just a few years, there are now thousands of people in the US that are benefiting from the brutal benefits of kettlebells. In addition, to everyday men and women, many athletes from a variety of sports now use kettlebells in their programs. Top K-1 fighter Bob Sapp recently stated that he uses kettlebell training to enhance cardio in a recent *Muscle & Fitness* interview. Welterweight UFC champion BJ Penn uses kettlebells to ramp up his muscular endurance for killer MMA battles.

The benefits of kettlebell training having even reached Hollywood as actor Ed O'Neill well known for his role as Al Bundy on the hit comedy sitcom "Married With Children" (Imagine Al doing KB snatches!) is a big fan of kettlebell training. Make no mistake about it kettlebell training is not another passing fad. The benefits of kettlebell training are undeniable which is precisely why many of the top strength coaches in the world such as Coach John Davies, Christian Thibaudeau, Steve Maxwell, and Wake Forest strength coach Ethan Reeve have incorporated kettlebells into their athletes training regimens. In this article I am going to go over several ways to incorporate kettlebells into your training regimen. Let's get started!

## Kettlebells For Killer Cardio

There is no better way to burn fat than with a few high rep sets of kettlebell swings, snatches, and clean and jerks. These killer ballistic exercises work your body as one unit and require a great deal of hard work. The harder you work, the more calories you burn. This is why sprinters are ripped to shreds and marathon runners have a skinny-fat look. As effective as sprinting is, ballistic kettlebell exercises such as high rep snatches (20 reps or more per set) make sprinting look like a walk in the park. High rep snatches work more muscle groups than sprinting and will build strength in the lower back, shoulders, and hip flexors.

Unlike many other forms of cardio, kettlebell training is "brutal fun" and a hard cardio kettlebell workout gives you a tremendous sense of accomplishment. Moreover, using kettlebells for cardio does not make you feel like an idiot the way that step aerobics, spinning, and other "body shaping" forms of cardio do. Just remember that if you feel dumb doing something that it is probably a dumb thing to do. Don't believe me, than forget about kettlebells and check out Richard Simmons' "Sweating To The Oldies."

One way to take the benefits of ballistic kettlebell exercises up a big notch is to combine them with aerobic activities such as jogging or moderate jump roping. This combination known as 'the Man Maker' was developed by Bill

Cullen, RKC, a Green Beret vet and an instructor for a federal agency. Here is an example of a Man Maker program to ramp up cardio and burn fat:

- 10 one-arm swings per arm
- One minute of jump rope
- 10 one-arm snatches per arm
- One minute of jump rope
- 10 two-arm swings
- One minute of jump rope
- 10 one-arm clean-and-jerks per arm
- One minute of jump rope
- 10 one-arm swings per arm

In the beginning take one-minute breaks after each set. A set in this program equals one minute of jump rope work followed immediately by a set of a ballistic kettlebell exercise. As your conditioning improves decrease the breaks. Have your athletes work up to ten rounds with a heavy kettlebell and their conditioning will go through the roof.

## Kettlebell Training For Active Recovery

Adequate recovery is crucial for athletes. However, programs in which you train to failure and then take a week off to hang out on the couch are not effective for athletes. The key with athletes is to improve performance and conditioning. Doing a few light workouts per week will speed up recovery by getting some blood into the worked muscles. An excellent way to use kettlebells for active recovery is to implement Jeff Martone's Hand-2-Hand Kettlebells drills into your athletes training regimens. Senior RKC Jeff Martone is an instructor for the National Nuclear Security Administration and the man who successfully implemented the first kettlebell PT program at a US federal agency's academy. Translation: Jeff knows a lot about conditioning!

Jeff's H2H video goes over several drills in which you pass the kettlebell from hand to hand in mid air. These exercises will increase hand eye coordination, grip strength, and the ability to absorb shock. An additional benefit of the juggling type kettlebell drills that Jeff does, is that they work the brain. Don't believe me? Try an H2H workout for forty-five minutes and watch how mentally tired you get afterwards. In addition to all of those benefits, the H2H exercises are flat out fun and you will not even feel like you

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are working out. Try doing two active recovery kettlebell workouts on your off days to speed up recovery. For more info on Jeff's video, go to page 23 of this catalog.

## Kettlebell Combination Workouts

Yes, you can have your pie and eat it to. There is no need to drop what currently works for your athletes and do kettlebell only programs (although there are some benefits of doing that which I will go over next). Coach John Davies incorporates killer core kettlebell drills such as the Turkish Get-up, The Windmill, The Push Press, and the Renegade Row into his athlete's training regimens. His excellent book on training for football entitled *Renegade Training For Football* reveals several kettlebell exercises that he uses with his football players.

Wake Forest Strength Coach Ethan Reeve likes to have his athletes warm up with the kettlebell clean and the kettlebell snatch before doing barbell cleans and snatches. It is much easier to teach the rapid hip fire movements with kettlebells and have them carry over to barbells. BJJ champion and strength coach Steve Maxwell likes to combine kettlebell training with bodyweight drills and Clubbells™. This combination has worked very well for Steve and his athletes. Finally, RKC Dylan Thomas likes to do some workouts in the gym and takes his kettlebells along for the ride. After knocking off a few sets of bench presses, chin-ups, and deadlifts, Dylan will bang out some kettlebell snatches and other drills. Dylan has had many of his clients do the same with success. The possibilities are endless for combining kettlebells into your athletes training regimen.

## Kettlebell Focus Workouts

With some careful planning and some creativity, you could design a killer training regimen that revolves almost entirely around kettlebell training. I have done this for my own workouts and many of my clients with excellent results. However, rather than convince you that this is a viable approach, I will meet you halfway. Try having your athletes do one month of Kettlebell only training for every three months of regular training.

The one month of kettlebell only training will be a nice change of pace and allow your athletes to focus on one thing really well. Your athletes will not lose strength in other exercises and will most likely come back stronger each time. You could have your athletes do kettlebell only workouts during the in season of their respective sports. During those periods, athletes generally train with lighter weights and do more maintenance workouts. That is a perfect time to implement some kettlebell focus workouts. Here is an example of a kettlebell only program that works very well for strength and conditioning:

Instead of taking Tuesday and Thursday off to hang out on the couch and waste time watching TV, have your athletes do some active recovery workouts. Again, check out Jeff Martone's H2H video for some great ideas. A twenty to thirty minute active recovery workout will get the job done.

The possibilities with kettlebells are endless. One criticism that I have heard from some people is that kettlebells only come in a few sizes. What happens when an athlete can do every kettlebell drill with the heaviest kettlebells? Good question. However, there are always ways to make kettlebell exercises more difficult. For example, when you can do standing military presses easily with a 70lb. kettlebell, try doing a Sots press (press from the bottom of the one kettlebell front squat) with a 70lb. bell or a bottom up press.

### Workout 1

#### Monday & Thursday: Upper Body Emphasis

- A-1 Alternating Kettlebell Military Press 5x5
- A-2 Kettlebell Renegade Row 5x5

Work these antagonistic exercises back to back. In other words, do one set of A-1, wait one-minute and then do a set of A-2. Wait a minute once again and do another set of A-1. Go back and forth between A-1 and A-2 until you have completed five sets of both exercises. Wait a minute and then do:

- Turkish Get-up 3x3, with one-minute breaks in between each set
- Guard Attack (alternating floor press) 3x8
- Hack Squat 3x5 with one minute breaks in between each set

### Workout 2

#### Wednesday & Saturday: Lower Body emphasis

- A-1 Double Kettlebell Front Squat 3x8
- A-2: Double Kettlebell Swing (Double Snatch is also an option for those that are proficient at the Double Swing) 3x10

Same instructions as Workout 1. Wait two minutes and then do:

- One-arm Windmill 3x5 with one minute breaks in between each set
- Double Kettlebell Stomp Jerk: 3x6 with one minute breaks in between each set

If you can snatch an 88lb. bell with ease, try snatching two 70lb bells at the same time. Believe me, it is much harder than snatching one heavier bell! When you can do front squats easily with 2 x 88lb. bells, try doing a one-legged front squat with two 53lb. bells. My friend and Senior RKC Steve Cotter can knock off a rep on one-legged squats with two 70lb. bells and has functional tree trunk legs as a reward.

If you still do not think that kettlebell training can benefit your athletes, feel free to not jump on board. Your competition will be very pleased when they crush you on the athletic battlefield!



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“This training was by far the most superior physical training I have ever had.”—Robert Bersi, Police Officer; Springdale, AR.

“This has been the best training I have ever received. The physical training I received was tougher than S.W.A.T. school or any other training seminar I have attended.”—Michael Johnson, Police Officer; Ellicott City, MD

“Outstanding! Nothing that I have ever attended downloaded as much info as this seminar. I learned more in one weekend about body alignment & body control than with a 4-year degree in exercise science. Nothing previously that I have attended even comes close to the depth & breadth of this workshop.”—Brad D. Nelson, Personal Trainer; Woodbury, MN.

“Excellent instructions! Most of my fitness training has been law enforcement related, and most of it has sucked! This is the kind of stuff cops should be learning.”—Jim Yankowsky, Police Officer; Tenafly, NJ

“Outstanding! The quality of both the training and instructors exceeded all of my expectations. This course far exceeded my study in preparation for the ACE CPT exam and is only challenged by some of my military training in terms of practical use. In terms of quality, this course is unmatched.”—Christopher R Greene, Systems Analyst; Summerville, SC.

“The quality of training was very good and in depth.”—Steve Pusker, Physician; Greenville, SC.

“Better conditioning in one weekend than six months in Police Academy.”—Jeff Colon, Deputy Sheriff; Carmel Valley, CA.

“Outstanding, this is by far the most challenging yet enjoyable experience of my life.”—Dan Kayser, RKC Instructor; Roswell, GA.

“More valuable, practical, applicable physical exercise knowledge was provided this weekend than in my degree and two personal trainer certifications combined. It will be of great value to my current and future clients.”—Garrett Smith, Naturopathic Medical Student/Personal Trainer; Tempe, AZ.

“It was the single best seminar I have ever attended in the fitness industry & I have attended many. Great instruction. There is no better way to learn than hands on.”—Rob Smith, Personal Trainer; Prior Lake, MN.

“I am certified ISSA and their quality of instruction through this certifying body could not compare with the RKC.”—John Wolf, Personal Trainer; Marina, CA.

“Incredible instructors and a brutal workout. I'm hardcore, and RKC pushed me way out of my comfort zone. The trainers will shock you with their talent. They are the best in the world.”—Randy Part, Tennis Coach; Santa Monica, CA

“This is the best course I have ever taken for physical conditioning.”—Omar Hakim, Graduate Student; Sioux Falls, SD

“It was one of the best trainings I have ever attended. NO, I would say it is the very best EVER. There is no other training or organization that has the total performance/fitness package in-house. Cardio, strength, flexibility – the RKC training does it all. It truly has to be experienced to be believed.”—Brian Erickson, Trainer/Exercise Equipment Retail; Loveland, CO.

“The RKC has been the best most thorough course I've ever taken. Everything was extremely functional, and far surpasses all the other physical training I've had. Very well organized with a wealth of information. Was worth every penny, as this type of info is just not found anywhere else.”—Christopher M. Giroso, Student /Fitness Trainer; Newark, DE.

“A life changing physical experience, not only did my flexibility increase, but also my endurance and strength. The instructors are among the elite in the world. Second to none!”—Mitch Jackson, Customs Inspector/LMT; Humble, TX.

“Hands down the best instruction ever for strength training. I learned an incredible amount of information about training for strength and power thru kettlebells. And more importantly I actually experienced it for myself and learned how to teach it.”—Kurt D. Kindred, Correction Officer/SRT Team Leader/Personal Trainer; Hillsboro, OH.

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# Unleashing a Powerful Force: Become a Leader in The World's Most Dynamic Exercise Method



Participants at *Pavel's 2003 Russian Kettlebell Certifications* included world champions, elite athletes, special forces, law enforcement, firemen, doctors, personal trainers, martial artists...and regular folk just looking to achieve irregularly spectacular levels of strength and conditioning. The Party is On. The Party is Growing. We invite you to ride the wave. Go to [www.hardstyle.com](http://www.hardstyle.com) today and sign on!

Participants at Pavel's June, 2003 RKC Workshop



Participants at Pavel's September, 2003 RKC Workshop



# ANTHONY DILUGLIO, RKC:

## TAKING HARDCORE TRAINING TO THE MAINSTREAM

*Interview by Rob Lawrence, RKC Sr.*

I first met Anthony Diluglio at the September 2003 RKC certification. He stuck in my mind because he was the only person to survive Steve Maxwell's brutal Sunday circuit. For 10 minutes Steve led the RKC hopefuls through a continuous battery of get-ups, snatches, cleans, presses, and windmills. Putting the kettlebell down was prohibited. By the sixth or seventh minute most participants were out; and when the 10:00 mark was reached, the only man still standing was Anthony Diluglio. Impressive, but most of the participants had performed Steve's circuit with 16kg, including Anthony, and at the time I was obsessed with the development of pure strength. I filed Anthony away in my head under "well-conditioned" and forgot about him.

I saw Anthony again at the 2003 Harvard Classic kettlebell sport meet and at the 2004 Punch! Open that he hosted in Providence, RI. But it wasn't until the April 2004 RKC certification that I started to realize how strong he was. An assistant instructor, Anthony wowed myself and other Senior RKC's by knocking off iron crosses with two 28kg kettlebells (and he has quite a wingspan at a height of six feet), and by bending sixty-penny nails with shocking proficiency after a couple of quick pointers from Brett Jones. Anthony had never practiced either of these feats before, but sure enough, there he was doing them like he'd been practicing all his life.

Anthony does not fit the typical profile of a "hardcore strength guy" that you might expect to see in the pages of MLO. He does not live in the heartland, he does not train in his garage, he is not a bricklayer, hay bailer, or boilermaker. On the contrary, he lives in a small northeastern city a couple of miles from Brown University, he trains in his own gym in a gentrified yuppie neighborhood, he speaks with a quick, sharp New England accent, and he is an entrepreneur who is never without his cell phone or a great new opportunity.

What's more, Anthony is the kind of guy who shares his success. At his Punch! gym facility in Providence he puts clients ranging from housewives to professional boxers through "The Circuit," an ever-changing set of kettlebell and bodyweight exercises performed in stations against the clock. Anthony claims that The Circuit leaves both him and his clients "ready for anything." Indeed, at the Punch! Open I saw one of his clients, a thin 46-year-old woman with no athletic experience, knock off 88 snatches (40+48) with 12kg, and another 40-year-old housewife put up 53 snatches (30+23) with 16kg. Given that neither of these women had seen a kettlebell until six months earlier, I decided to find out some more about Anthony and his training methods.

**RL:** What do you think is special about kettlebell training?

**AD:** I don't know. It's just one of those things that once you do, you can't forget about. I had the same experience with boxing. Body for Life, that you can do for a while, then forget about it. Kettlebells are different, they're like a real sport, they match the real mechanics of the body. Not like typical gym training.

The other thing is, kettlebells build real, transferable strength. There was a guy who survived the Rhode Island nightclub fire in early 2003 -terrible burns and lung

damage, in awful shape. The doctors told him he'd never be active again. I started training him and he was a trooper, nose to the grindstone all the time. Before the fire, his one-rep max in the bench had been 225. After six months of kettlebell training with me we tested him on the floor press, he got 285 for five reps. How? - I don't know. He hadn't done any bench work. All I can say is that kettlebells taught him to use the strength he already had. Not very scientific, but whatever.

Finally, there's me. I have serious damage to a disk in my back, the L5. Twelve years ago the disk was crushed and a piece of the vertebrae removed. According to the doctors I shouldn't be able to squat, deadlift, or really do anything. I don't train these lifts, but on any given day I can pull 405 or squat 325 deep with no problem. Why? I can't answer, but I know that kettlebell training has a lot to do with it. When something works, you don't ask too many questions.

**RL:** You've participated in sports for most of your life, correct?

**AD:** Correct. First I was a good horseman: I played polo and raced steeplechase. I also played baseball and lacrosse, raced motocross, did three years of rock climbing, and a couple of years of Thai boxing.

**RL:** Yet at one point you once were 100 pounds overweight. How did that happen? And how did you make a comeback?

**AD:** A mix of running a national business, being in an unhappy marriage, eating junk food, and quitting exercise boosted me from 185 to 285. When I had enough I got a divorce, got out of my business, moved to L.A., and started working with a trainer. I learned about training and nutrition and started to lose weight and before long I was back to my old 185.

**RL:** What sort of training did you do during that time?

**AD:** I was a hardcore Body for Life guy. Really into it, licensed directly by Bill Phillips, the whole deal. Eventually I ended up promoting BFL in Manhattan, Rhode Island, and, of all places, Sweden.

**RL:** What's your opinion of Body for Life today?

**AD:** Body for Life is good. It gives people structure and motivates them initially. But after their initial 12-week 'transformation' they reach their goals and their motivation fails. The next 12 weeks is a variation on the same thing, and they get bored with it.

While I was still living in Sweden and BFLing, I started seeing articles from Pavel [Tsatsouline] in Muscle Media. All of a sudden, here was this guy with a very different emphasis. More emphasis on strength, very different set and rep schemes from Body for Life, etc. I began following Pavel's articles carefully. Finally, Muscle Media published some of Pavel's kettlebell articles, so I decided to try kettlebells. They came just at the right time -when I was getting to quit the fitness industry for



good. I thought people in the U.S. were looking for a "magic pill" and didn't want to work. Kettlebell training was different. Pavel didn't promise anything but work, but it was work they found interesting and fun. So you could say, kettlebells kept me in the fitness industry right at the moment I was about to leave.

**RL:** Why did you call your gym Punch!?

**AD:** The name was inspired by Pavel's instruction at the RKC: "Punch up the kettlebell!"

**RL:** When visiting Punch! I noticed that you do not "dumb down" the exercises in any way. On the contrary, you have average people immediately perform complicated exercises like windmills, Turkish get-ups, and overhead squats. How did you manage to go mainstream without selling out?

**AD:** It just came naturally. I found that kettlebells immediately attracted a very serious type of client. These people didn't need me shouting at them or motivating all the time, they just needed good guidance and good feedback. So I got them doing hardcore exercises quickly. Just as important, I was able to train more than one at a time --first two at a time, then as many as eight.

**RL:** In your Punch! Gym in Providence you put people through a paced circuit, kind of like what's done in a boxing gym, except with kettlebells. How did you hit on "The Circuit"?

**AD:** To me it makes sense to build real strength and endurance at the same time. Initially I took a lot of ideas from Charles Staley's EDT [Escalating Density Training, learn more from myodynamics.com] which is about working for maximum volume against the clock. The Circuit is influenced by whatever kind of training I'm doing myself at any given moment. The next thing I want to add to it is nail bending, something I learned from Brett Jones at the April RKC certification.

**RL:** Nothing mainstream about nail-bending really.

**AD:** (Laughs.) No, not at all. Housewives bending nails.

**RL:** Did you paint the kettlebells different colors to soften the image?

**AD:** There's nothing "soft" about a painted kettlebell. As you know, the kettlebells used in Russian competitions are painted too -yellow, green, and red. US special operators paint their elite units' insignia on their kettlebells. Some Marine students of Pavel's have painted their KBs with a camouflage pattern. Painted kettlebells are cool and fun -yes, soft -no.

I've found that color bells just draw more people than the scary black cannonballs. Of course in reality,



a little paint makes a kettlebell slightly heavier, not lighter, so maybe they should have been \*more\* afraid (laughs). But they aren't, they just take to the kettlebells faster.

**RL:** What exercises do you have people perform in a typical Punch! Circuit?

**AD:** It varies - a lot. There maybe isn't even a "typical" Circuit. But there are some core principles. We might start with something like repetition kettlebell cleans for a warm-up, then a high-skill drill like an overhead squat, a repetition press, kicking the Thai pads, snatches, holding a plank position [very painful ab work - RL], punching the heavy bag, and then some swings to finish them off.

And I do mean "finish." All of this work is performed against the clock, using some interval like two minutes on, one minute off, or two minutes on, thirty seconds off. I don't care who you are, it's tough. I invented it, and it's tough for me. Following is a sample Punch! circuits. Substitute my poundages and reps with yours.

- H2H cleans: 40kgx10, 32kgx10, 24kgx10.
- Overhead squats: 40kgx10 each arm
- One-arm or see saw presses: 32kgx5
- Renegade row to pushup to jump to clean to squat. You know, the thing Mike Mahler does: 2/32kgx5
- Snatches: 1 line up a 40, a 32, and a 24kg kettlebells and snatch each one 5-10 times with each arm.

I may run through that one to three times depending on how much time I have. I like to keep my body guessing. I change my workouts constantly. To me that mimics life. Be ready for whatever comes your way.

**RL:** I am sure our readers would like a few more examples of your unorthodox training.

**AD:** Sometimes I do the following circuit with very little rest of 30 sec to 1 minute and repeat it 5 times:

- Deadlift: 350-400lbs x3-5
- Sots press or seated see saw press:

24-32 kg x 3-5

- Weighted pullups: 24 or 32 kg
- I finish with 40kg windmills. I love weighted pullups. The pullup bar I use at Punch! is suspended from a single chain. It is like Nate Morrison's 'Rocky bar'.

I have a very free style approach to training. Here is another example.

- Pushups: one arm fully extended on a kettlebell, the other arm sinking into the lat. 5 reps on the right, switch the extended arm and do 5 on the left. 5,4,3,2,1 reps alternating sides with no break in between reps.
- Renegade rows: 32kg alternating sides; 10,8,6,4,2. Rest 5 seconds between sets.
- Alternating overhead presses: start with 2/24kg KBs overhead. As one arm is pressing, the other stays up. 5, 4,3,2,1.
- Crush curl: I am doing these to build endurance in my wrist and arms. I also like these for grip strength. 24kg; 10, 8,6,4,2. A 5-second 'rest' holding the kettlebell to my chest with a constant crush!
- One-arm claw curl: I grip the round surface of the kettlebell with an open hand. I start with my palm facing down and turn it up on the top of the curl. I lift a 12kg kettlebell, a 16kg on a good day, for 3x5
- Triceps overhead crush extensions: 24kg; 5,4,3,2,1 or 3x5. I do this for shoulder flexibility.
- 'Hot potato' H2H drill: I toss a 16kg kettlebell from one hand to the other in front of me for 2-3 minutes. 10 seconds slow, 10 seconds fast. Great for body hardening.
- Speed snatches: 24kg or 32kg; as fast as possible, 10 on the left 10 on the right. Then 8,6,4,2.
- Hanging leg raises with body punches: I hang from a bar and do 5x5. After each set of HLRs I let someone punch me in the abs with boxing gloves while I am still hanging from the bar.

The above workout has no rest between exercises ...well, none to speak of. Just enough time to grab the kettlebell and hit it.

**RL:** What is the next step for Punch! Gym?

**AD:** The model has proved to be so effective, we are going to open other Punch! Gyms across the US, and man each one with an RKC-certified instructor. The details will soon be posted on [www.punchgym.com](http://www.punchgym.com). Punch! is a subversive operation: we bait the 'victims' with bright colors and fun and switch them to the hardest and most productive training imaginable. They wind up hardcore -even if they don't know it.

# Why Kettlebells are Superior for Military Fitness



*SSgt Nathanael Morrison, USAF Pararescue*

## What are Kettlebells?

### **DESCRIPTION:**

The Kettlebell is a round weight resembling a cannonball with a handle on it. Throughout the world the exact design differs somewhat. There are hollow Kettlebells that can be filled with lead shot, water, or sand. There are bells with various handle designs and thickness. Some specialty bells are very large and heavy while others are as small as 9lbs. In Russia, the traditional three sizes are 35, 53, and 70 pounds (16, 24, and 32kg).

### **HISTORY:**

Kettlebells can be traced back through history for hundreds of years. In fact, closely related to the KB are written and pictorial references from ancient Greece describing the benefits of exercising with rounded stones. Over the centuries these rounded stones were augmented and replaced by rounded pieces of iron. Eventually blacksmiths began to add handles to them and thus what we know today as a Kettlebell was born.

Over the last couple of centuries, Kettlebells were used by both blacksmiths and strongmen. Villages and communities would hold competitions of strength and endurance events, and as we well know, strongmen used KBs as their primary training tools. Such names as Arthur Saxon and Eugene Sandow practiced with brutal KB routines to stay in top form.

The Kettlebell is no stranger to America. They were once common in gyms across America including some of our most prominent academic institutions. But with the onset of bodybuilding, aerobics, jogging, and the other fitness fads of

the 1960s and 70s, the KB was forced into extinction by a society seeking instant gratification.

The reemergence of the KB today is owed to one man only, a Russian immigrant named Pavel Tsatsouline who brought with him a different kind of treasure in the form of knowledge and a couple of weights that look like cannon balls with handles.

## Why are KBs superior for military fitness?

### **LOGISTICS:**

Any modern military force requires a logistics train to back it up. This system supplies the soldiers with everything from food and water to gym facilities and radio batteries. For prolonged operations, soldiers must perform physical training (PT) to stay physically prepared for battle.

The Services and Moral Welfare and Recreation (MWR) departments spends huge amounts of money constructing facilities and purchasing the latest in exercise equipment to keep the troops in shape. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent every year on these facilities. Precious cargo space is wasted, and all of this expensive equipment just gets used, abused, and trashed year after year forcing the military to buy more to replace it.

But the fact is that these facilities are not available to the trigger pullers on the line. These gym facilities are only available to the rear echelon troops who support the men on the line doing the fighting. MWR doesn't go anywhere close to the fighting. Forward operating locations and units actively fighting do not have anything except what they

bring with them on their backs or in their vehicles. Now common sense tells us that there is no way that you are going to PT just before, during, or right after a battle. But during the train-ups, rehearsals, and staging, the men should be performing PT. It is during these times and in these places that the men do not have any facilities available to them.

The argument ensues that during these times that you are always able to do bodyweight exercises. This is faulty reasoning. The fact is that you are gearing up to do the real thing and the reality is that you end up carrying even more weight than you did during training. Bodyweight drills are fine if you are not strapping 100lbs. Of gear to your body. Moreover, bodyweight drills do a poor job of strengthening the posterior chain, which is absolutely essential for anyone carrying weight. Therefore, the requirement exists for soldiers to exercise with weights to maintain strength and stamina for the upcoming battle up until the point where they insert into the terminal area. There is no other available or effective system of weightlifting than Kettlebell lifting.

Below is a quick list of reasons KBs are the right choice from a logistics point of view.

1. Kettlebells are small and easy to ship. There are no benches, no bars, and no racks. Bring the whole gym, or a couple of Kettlebells. There are three sizes and in the military we really only need one size (24kg).
2. Kettlebells are easily stored and transported in military aircraft, watercraft, and vehicles from a C-5 to a nuclear submarine to a HMMV or ATV.
3. Kettlebells are easy to secure. Simply run a cargo strap through the handle.
4. Kettlebells do not require specific gym space. They can be used anywhere at any time. They take up very little space in the duty section.
5. Kettlebells are nearly indestructible. They have been dropped from 7 feet onto cement and only chipped the paint.
6. No accessories required!
7. No special care needs. Rain, snow, sleet, who cares! Kettlebells are all weather, all terrain.

## PHYSIOLOGICAL:

Physiologically there are many reasons why training with Kettlebells is the right answer for the military. These bullets are pretty self-explanatory.

1. Kettlebell lifting specifically *trains all of the physical traits* required of a soldier all at the same time where other systems fail. These traits are:



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[www.militaryfitness.org](http://www.militaryfitness.org)

- a. Strength
  - b. Endurance
    - i. Muscular
    - ii. Cardio-respiratory
  - c. Agility
  - d. Coordination
2. High-tension techniques, ballistic movement, and tight-loose movement skills have *direct carry over* to the soldier.
  3. Kettlebell lifting prevents injury by training around the injury cascade.
  4. No other system even comes close to matching the training loads and volume, thus Kettlebell lifting *builds greater strength and endurance (stamina)*.
  5. Kettlebell lifting *builds the "core" and posterior chain* better than any other system. Additionally, it conditions the muscles and connective tissue for the type of exertion soldiers routinely undertake.
  6. Strengthens the bones, ligaments, tendons, and muscles better than any one system.
  7. No other system strengthens the stabilizer/accessory muscles as well as Kettlebells. The displaced center of gravity creates a specificity found in most situations a soldier ends up in.

In the final analysis, Kettlebells are the only logical choice for the military. Their only limit is your imagination. You can bench on a bench, and you can squat in a squat rack. You can do leg curls on a leg curl machine. But with a Kettlebell, there is nothing you can't do better every time with no additional equipment.

# YOU CAN'T SWING A BARBELL BETWEEN YOUR LEGS!:

## TRAINING FORCE REDUCTION AND REDIRECTION WITH KETTLEBELLS

*Brett Jones, CSCS, RKC Sr.*

**A**n athlete must continuously produce, reduce, and redirect force. Traditional athletic conditioning protocols emphasize force production. This is an essential aspect of explosive performance but not the only one. The athlete is still unprepared to reduce/control the forces he has produced and the forces acting upon him during competition.

***"A sport does not treat one to a slow negative; the word is IMPACT!"***

The Olympic lifts are excellent for training force production. However, once the barbell is overhead or at the shoulders, the weight is dropped back to the platform. This results in the ability to explosively move a great amount of weight but does not train the athlete to control the same amount of weight during the impact of force reduction.

The powerlifts are great for training force production as well but they do incorporate a controlled eccentric movement. There is a hint of training to reduce force but it happens at a speed that will never be experienced in athletic competition. A sport does not treat one to a slow negative; the word is IMPACT!

Incorporating a variety of jumps can begin to teach the athlete to reduce and redirect force. However, these programs are often not applied correctly and do not teach the athlete to handle additional forces imposed upon them during competition. The jumping and bounding of plyometrics lacks the outside load of a competitor and the unpredictable nature of the athletic field.

So how do we train athletes to handle force reduction and redirection? -The ballistic movements of kettlebell training bridge the gaps between force production, force reduction, and force redirection.

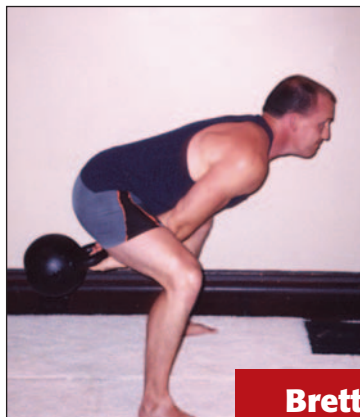
***"Kettlebell training teaches the athlete to explode, catch and redirect force. It is functional training for athletes."***

Due to the design and size of the kettlebell it can be swung back between the legs. Try swinging a barbell back between your legs! While you could do it with a dumbbell, its dimensions threaten the knees and do not allow safe performance of swings and such, except with really light, useless weights. So once the kettlebell is in motion and has been swung either out in front of or above the athlete, it is allowed to swing or fall and then be "caught" by the athlete. By allowing the weight to be swung back and having the athlete "catch" the kettlebell in the loaded position similar to a vertical leap, the athlete is not only trained to reduce force, but then is automatically loaded to redirect that force into another explosive hip snap.

Swings are only the beginning of the kettlebell experience. There are snatches, cleans, jerks. Then you start to enter the truly unique aspect of KB training – the KB's design allows for it to be passed from hand to hand. You can literally flip, spin, and "juggle" the kettlebell. Force reduction and redirection is trained in every plane. There is a freedom inherent to kettlebell training that loads the body from every conceivable angle and truly unlocks one's potential.

***"There is a freedom inherent to kettlebell training that loads the body from every***

***conceivable angle and truly unlocks one's potential!"***



**Brett Jones**

*Brett Jones, CSCS, RKC Sr. is the pioneer of "The All-Russian Kettlebell for the All-American Sports". Brett's specialty is seamlessly implementing kettlebells with other effective strength training modalities for your athletic team or program. Contact him through his website, [inmotionathletics.com](http://inmotionathletics.com).*