

JUNGLE GYM

Workouts on deployment

BY DON STEVENSON

In these times of high operational tempos and overseas deployments, ADF personnel could find themselves sent to far-flung corners of the world at a moments notice. This often means that even the most basic fitness equipment could be left behind and that you'll have to make do with what you can beg, steal, borrow, build or improvise.

The good news is that this doesn't mean your training needs to suffer. In fact, many of the best workouts for developing combat fitness use equipment that can't be found at the local gym, but which is abundant on operations.

For a start, you can always use your own bodyweight to perform a massive variety of exercises (refer to last issue), however, to build and maintain the strength and endurance needed for combat operations you are going to need some heavier gear.

Equipment

Forget fancy gym machines and isolation training! Combat fitness is about high-intensity, total-body workouts and handling awkward objects. Working with odd objects will challenge your core, grip and stabilisers and will improve your power and work capacity far beyond what you can achieve in the gym alone.

To get a killer workout on deployment, track down the following bits of equipment. Most units will have this stuff lying around in the Q store and all you'll have to do is talk to

your commander about cutting some of it free for PT a few times a week.

Rocks – get a few, from 20kg to 60kg. Rocks can be used for deadlifts, cleans, squats, presses, carries and much more.

A big tyre – a Unimog or other truck tyre will do at a pinch but, if you can find a combat engineer unit, try to get a tyre off some earthmoving equipment. About 150cm tall and 45cm wide is a good place to start. Tyres are practically a gym on their own, they can be flipped, jumped on, smashed with a sledge hammer and used as a bench for other exercises.

Sledge hammer – most units should have these for driving star pickets and tent pegs. If you can find a better cardio workout than smashing a tyre with a sledge I'd like to know about it!

Sandbag – Hessian sandbags can hold a fair bit of weight and can be used for carries, presses and even swings, but for a harder workout, scam an extra echelon bag and stuff two or three Hessian bags inside for a sandbag weighing 40-70kg. Use for deadlifts, cleans, lunges, carries and ab work.

Water jerries – the ubiquitous water jerry weighs roughly 20kg when full and has a handle on top, making it ideal for carrying during sprints.

Personal equipment – you might be able to do 20 chinups in PT gear, but how many can you do in webbing and armour? The addition of your webbing and armour to PT sessions can make simple things like bodyweight exercises and running into a very tough workout. Packs can also be used for many of the same drills as sandbags, just make sure they aren't full of valuable gear like radios!

Workouts

Once you've gathered a few bits of equipment together for your unit gym, you'll need to figure out a training plan.

There are literally hundreds of different workouts you can put together with the gear listed above. Just keep in mind that, for combat fitness, we want to work on full-body functional movements. This means the majority of things you do in training should involve picking up heavy stuff off the ground, pressing it over

your head, squatting with it, carrying it for time or distance and short, intense bouts of interval training.

Workout schemes such as five sets of five reps of heavy squat, deadlifts, presses and pulling movements all work well for developing strength and can incorporate novel exercises like tyre flips and sandbag work.

Try this sandbag circuit

5 rounds of:

- 5 shoulder + lunge each side
- 5 deadlift + bent-over row
- 5 clean and press
- 5 weighted pull-ups

For conditioning, try timed crossfit-style workouts such as...

as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes of 5 tyre flips, 10 jumps on to the tyre, 15 pushups with feet elevated on the tyre.

or

as many rounds as possible in 20 minutes of 5 sandbag get ups, 10 clean + squat, 200m carry.

Alternate strength days with interval days and, within a few weeks, you'll be prepared for anything.



Want more workouts like the ones described in this article?

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