



Formula for physical fitness

BY GREG AMUNDSON

During the recent NTOA Conference in Orlando, I was asked the following question by a group of operators who had just completed my course on functional fitness: “Greg, if you only had 15 minutes a day for fitness, what would you do?” I paused for a moment to reflect on my answer — after all, 15 minutes was not a lot

of time and for me, training is a matter of life and death. Then, I explained the following principle of integrated, holistic training.

I would divide my daily-allotted training time into thirds in the following manner:

- Five minutes would be dedicated to constantly varied, high intensity,

functional movement. *I would physically train my body the right way.*

- Five minutes would be dedicated to preparing my nutrition and hydration plan for the day. *I would support my body, health and fitness by eating and drinking the right way.*

I would drink one gallon of water throughout the day. I would eat a

Members of the Scottsdale PD SWAT team participate in a "beta test" of the forthcoming NTOA SWAT physical fitness qualification. These operators are integrating functional movement, variance and a great deal of intensity. (opposite page)

balance of protein, carbohydrates and fat, with an emphasis on lean protein choices and fruits and vegetables as my primary source of carbohydrates.

- Five minutes would be dedicated to prayer, silence, meditation and stillness of my mind and body.

I would strengthen my spirit.

Over the course of the next several articles in *The Tactical Edge*, I will address techniques and methodologies for proper physical training, nutrition and practices to strengthen your mind, body and spirit. Together we will investigate the implications of a balanced approach to holistic fitness training.

TRAIN THE RIGHT WAY

Keep in mind that I equally divided my 15 minutes of training time throughout the day. Physical training, nutrition and spiritual development are equally important in a holistic fitness program and the achievement of health and wellness. However, we will get right to the blood, sweat and tears of the matter: *physical training.*

Years ago I was with CrossFit founder Greg Glassman during a lecture at the Los Angeles Police Department Police Academy when he was asked the following question: "Coach Glassman, what is CrossFit?" Glassman replied, "It's a straightforward formula perfect for law enforcement. We do constantly varied, functional movement, at high intensity."

After nearly 20 years in law enforcement and 20 years of adhering to the formula of functionality, variance and intensity, I have indeed concluded this is the ideal program for the professional warrior athlete — the law enforcement officer and special team operator. Let's look a bit closer at Glassman's definition of what this three-tiered approach to training is to understand why it's the ideal fitness program for law enforcement.

FUNCTIONAL MOVEMENT

We begin with the actual techniques and principles that make up the foundational functional fitness program. The reason for starting with functional move-

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ment is that all fitness programs claim to be doing some degree of “functional movement.” Therefore, it becomes necessary to define our terminology. Functional movement focuses on compound, multi-joint movements that move a large load a long distance, and very quickly. These same movements are recognized by their natural occurrence and their universal motor-recruitment pattern. These movements were not “invented” by any particular fitness program; rather, these are the movements humans would be doing if the traditional gym were never invented.

Picking up an object from the floor is a deadlift. Bringing the same object to the shoulder is a clean, and putting the same object overhead is a press. Whether the object is a patrol K9, a box of ammunition on the range or a weighted barbell in the gym, the mechanics and “functionality”

of the movements are the same: They accomplish a task.

Of significant importance for operators is the fact that functional movements, by their very nature, solicit a wave of lateral contraction from core to extremity, and develop powerful and controlled hip extension. Developing an awareness of these two principles of movement enhances an operator’s ability to perform a multitude of patrol-related duties, from sprinting to jumping to tackling to striking.

HIGH INTENSITY

Training with intensity has been likened to heart rate, sweating, V02 max, grunting, and even vomiting. However, these only loosely correlate to what intensity actually is. Exercise psychologists have determined that intensity is power, and that training at a high level of power output is relative to training at a high level of intensity.

Intensity as power can be measured, and anything measured can be repeated and improved upon. The beauty of the functional movements that comprise a solid functional fitness program is their unique ability to move a large load (force) a long distance, and very quickly (time). Simply put, functional movements allow officers to train at a high level of intensity.

$$\text{Force} \times \text{Distance} / \text{Time} = \text{Power}$$

Take for example a basic air squat, which is arguably one of the essential functional movements for operators. As an example and illustration, if we take an operator’s bodyweight of 200

lbs. and measure his center of mass, just below his navel, and perform one air squat, the operator will travel a distance of two feet to the bottom of the squat, and two feet back to the start position, for a total of four feet of travel per repetition.

Now, if we only counted the body’s force against gravity from the bottom of the squat to the top, the operator would perform two feet of travel per repetition. However, a trained operator can perform 60 squats in one minute, which when plugged into the equation, equals 24,000 foot-lbs/minute, roughly 2/3 of a horsepower. And this is just using his bodyweight. Imagine the increase in power if I added a barbell, dumbbell or medicine ball to the equation.

THE SIGNIFICANT POWER OUTPUT, AND THEREFORE INTENSITY, OF A FUNCTIONAL FITNESS PROGRAM IS THE REASON WHY QUALITY OF TIME FOR TRAINING, AND NOT QUANTITY, IS SO IMPORTANT.

The significant power output, and therefore intensity, of a functional fit-

EXERCISE PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE DETERMINED THAT INTENSITY IS POWER, AND THAT TRAINING AT A HIGH LEVEL OF POWER OUTPUT IS RELATIVE TO TRAINING AT A HIGH LEVEL OF INTENSITY.



ness program is the reason why quality of time for training, and not quantity, is so important. In three to five minutes, a combination of basic movements such as a thruster and pull-up can completely exhaust an operator, leaving them feeling like they've just endured the fight of their life.

CONSTANTLY VARIED

What is routine about the profession of law enforcement? Absolutely nothing. In fact, the mindset of "routine" has been attributed to officer injury and even death.

When was the last time you approached a vehicle stop with the mindset, "This is just a routine car stop." Hopefully never!

Therefore, when we come to the variance of a functional fitness program, it makes perfect sense that professional warrior athletes would embrace variance in their training. Our intention in training is to develop capacity across a wide range of skills, drills, time domains and fitness modalities. Our goal is to be good at everything. When we hit the street the operator's mindset from the variance of their training program is — and repeat after me: "Whatever I face on the street today I'm ready, because I've exceeded the demands of the street in the gym."

CONCLUSION

What operators, officers or agencies call their fitness programs is irrelevant. What matters is adherence to the formula of constantly varied, functional movement, performed at high intensity.

Until next time my friends, train like your life depends on it — because it does.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg Amundson has served in law enforcement for more than 19 years in numerous capacities including DEA special agent, SWAT operator, field training officer, defensive tactics instructor and sniper. He also served as a U.S. Army military police captain and TAC officer where he instructed leadership and Army combatives at the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School. He is a Black Belt in Krav Maga and honor graduate of the Los Angeles PD Handgun Instructor School (HITS). He currently serves as a reserve deputy and chaplain for the Santa Cruz (CA) Harbor Patrol. Amundson is the author of three #1 bestselling books, and is a graduate student at Western Seminary pursuing a master's of divinity with an emphasis in chaplaincy.

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