

Mahler's

Aggressive Strength



The Aggressive Strength Primer For Kettlebell Training

By Mike Mahler

Disclaimer

The exercises and advice contained within this manual may be too difficult or dangerous for some people, and the reader(s) should consult a physician before engaging in them.

The author and publisher of this book are not responsible in any manner whatsoever for any injury which may occur through reading and following the instructions herein.

The Aggressive Strength Solution For Incredible Kettlebell Training

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The Five Pillars Of Kettlebell Training

Many trainees often forget that kettlebells are weights and the rules of effective weight training apply to [kettlebell training](#). Similar to traditional weight training, effective [kettlebell training](#) requires a balanced approach and an emphasis on the basic compound drill that provide the most bang for the buck. For most trainees, following a regimen with a strong emphasis on a few basic exercises is the way to go. However, putting all of your efforts into one or two exercises long-term is not the way to go. There are five areas that are worth focusing on for balanced development. Lets get going.

The Five Pillars:

- Press
- Pull
- Squat
- Lower body pull
- Core

Whatever form of weight training you engage in, you want the five above areas covered. Now lets cover each area with [kettlebells](#) as the focus:

Press:

KB Military Press or KB Floor Press. This includes all of the variations such as the Sots Press, Double Clean and Press, Alternating Floor press, See-saw Press.

Pull:

Renegade Row, Alternating Bent-over Row, Double Bent-over Row, One-arm Row, Pull-ups with a kettlebell

Squat:

Double Front Squat, Hack Squat, overhead squat, one-legged squat

Lower body pull:

Double Swing, Double Snatch, One-arm Swing, One-arm Snatch, Double Clean, One legged Deadlift

Core:

Windmill, Turkish Get-up, Bent Press, Side Press

Covering the above five areas ensures that you build a strong and balanced physique. Many people tend to focus on what they enjoy and neglect what they do not care for. For example, people that like to press tend to spend a great deal of time on Military Presses and not enough time on pulling motions such as rows. When I first started training with kettlebells, I made the mistake of doing too much pressing work and pretty much no pulling work. Sure enough imbalances starting popping up followed by shoulder pain. Once I balanced the training with pulling motions, my shoulders felt better and more stable and my strength went up dramatically. If you feel that covering five areas is too complicated for you, then do not bother getting off the couch. Better yet, do not go out the door or drive on the road. You are a danger to anyone you come across.

Lets cover a few balanced kettlebell programs for different levels:

Beginner:

Here is a good program for a trainee that only has one kettlebell:

Monday-Wednesday-Friday

- One-arm Clean and Military Press 2x5 l,r (two sets of five left and right)
- One-arm Bent-over Row 2x6 l,r
- One-arm Windmill 1x3 l,r
- One-arm Front Squat 2x6 l,r
- One-arm Swing 2x10 l,r

Take one to two minute breaks in between each exercise and work on technique.

Intermediate:

Monday-Wednesday-Friday

- Double Clean and Military Press 2x6
- Double Bent-over Row 2x6

- Turkish Get-up 2x3 l,r
- Double Front Squat 2x8
- Double Swing 2x6

Take 90 second breaks in between each set.

Advanced:

Monday-Wednesday-Friday

- Sot Press 2x5 l,r
- Alternating Renegade Row 2x5 l,r
- Double Windmill 2x5 l,r
- Double Front Squat 2x6 (2 second pause at the bottom)
- Double Snatch 2x6

Take 90 second breaks in between each set.

The possibility of combinations, volume, intensity, and workouts splits is endless. All of this really depends on what your skill level is, your conditioning level is, and what your goals are. Whatever you do, make sure you cover the basics. Imbalanced programs are fine for more advanced trainees. If you are someone that has a high level of pushing strength and a low level of pulling strength, you can place pressing on maintenance mode and focus on pulling. The same can be applied to any imbalance. Regardless, you are far less likely to create imbalances if you focus on a balanced approach to training.

If you have any questions about my program design services, [click here for more information](#).

How to Add Kettlebells to Your Training Program

As kettlebell training becomes more popular, trainees are getting confused about how to effectively add kettlebell training to their regimens. Some people might enjoy kettlebell-only or kettlebell-focused programs, while others won't want to quit their current program but instead enhance them by introducing kettlebell movements. Kettlebells are excellent weight training tools and also useful for work capacity and structural integrity. In this article, I'll cover using kettlebells as weight-training tools, along with other training tools for size and strength training--which is *the* way to go to for fat loss. In Part 2, the focus will be on how to add kettlebell training in timed sets for structural integrity, work capacity, and muscular endurance.

When using kettlebells for weight-training, for a comprehensive and balanced program, you must cover the following five categories:

1. Upper Body Press
2. Upper Body Pull
3. Lower Body Press
4. Lower Body Pull
5. Core

Upper Body Press Exercises

Barbell Military Press

Barbell Incline Press

Barbell Bench Press

Handstand Push-Up

Push-Up

Barbell Push-Press

Lifeline TNT Cable Military Press

Lifeline Power Push-up

Upper Body Kettlebell Press Exercises

Double KB Military Press

One-Arm KB Military Press

Alternating KB Military Press

KB Clean and Military Press

KB Push-Press

One-Arm KB Floor Press

Double KB Floor Press

Upper Body Pull Exercises

Pull-Up

Chin-Up

Barbell Bent-Over Row

Upper Body Kettlebell Pull Exercises

One-Arm KB Bent-Over Row

Alternating KB Bent-Over Row

Double KB Bent-over Row

Renegade Row

Alternating Renegade Row

Lower Body Press

Barbell Squat

Barbell Front Squat

Hack Squat

Elevated Trapbar Deadlift (stand on a solid box or barbell plate to increase the range of motion)

Box Squat

Hindu Squat

One-Legged Squat

Lifeline Portable Power Jumper Squat

Lower Body Kettlebell Press

One-Arm KB Front Squat

Double KB Front Squat

KB Suitcase Squat

KB Suitcase Lunge

Lower Body Pull

Barbell Deadlift

Trapbar Deadlift

Barbell Clean

Barbell Snatch

Lower Body Kettlebell Pull Exercises

One-Arm KB Swing

Double KB Swing

Double KB Clean

One-Arm KB Snatch

Double KB Snatch

Core Exercises

Ab Wheel Roll-Out (kneeling and standing)

Hanging Leg Raise

Slow and Controlled Sit-Up/Side Bend

Reverse Sit-Up

Core Kettlebell Exercises

KB Windmill

KB Turkish Get-Up

KB Side Bend

KB Guard Sit-Up

KB Pass Between the Feet

Once you've constructed your training program to cover these five areas, it's easy to see where kettlebell movements can fit in. Below are two examples of size and strength programs which effectively combine kettlebells with barbell work and body weight training. To cover all the bases, the programs additionally contain a conditioning element. These are not bulking programs wherein the goal is to add as much actual weight as possible, since such programs can end up adding more fat than muscle, which most trainees are trying to avoid! Rather, the objective of these programs is to gradually add solid muscle--gaining five pounds of solid muscle will have a more profound effect on your physique than adding fifteen pounds of mostly fat.

Sample Program "A"

Monday

A1) *Lifeline* TNT Cable Military Press 3x5

rest: 60-seconds

A2) Weighted Chin-Up 3x5

load: your 8 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do A1 and A2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of A1, rest for a minute, then do a set of A2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Kettlebell Windmill 2x5 each side

B1) Elevated Trapbar Deadlift 5x5

load: your 7-9 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

B2) Double KB Swing 5x5

*swing to chest level

load: your 8-10 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do B1 and B2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of B1, rest for a minute, then do a set of B2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Tuesday

Circuit Training

Double Kettlebell Clean and Push Press 1x10

One-arm Kettlebell Bent-over Row 1x10 each side

Kettlebell Turkish Get-Up 1x5 each side

Double Kettlebell Clean and Front Squat 1x6 (clean before each squat)

One-arm Kettlebell Swing 1x15 each side

Take 30-second breaks between each exercise and 60-second breaks at the end of each round. Do five rounds total.

Thursday

A1) Barbell Clean and Military Press 5x3

load: your 4-6 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

A-2) Weighted Pull-Up 5x3

load: your 5 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do A1 and A2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of A1, rest for a minute, then do a set of A2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Hanging Leg Raise 3x5 each side

load: your 7 rep max

B-1) Double KB Front Squat 5x5

load: your 7-9 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

B-2) Double KB Swing 5x5

*swing to chest level

load: 7-8 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do B1 and B2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of B1, rest for a minute, then do a set of B-2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Friday

Circuit Training

Double KB Clean and Jerk 1x10

***Lifeline Power Push-Up 2 Push-Up* 1x10**

Renegade Row 1x10 each side

Lifeline Power Wheel Roll-Out 1x5

Lifeline Portable Power Jumper Squat 1x10

One-Arm KB Snatch 1x12 each side

Take 30-second breaks in between each exercise and 60-second breaks at the end of each round. Do five rounds.

Sample Program "B"

Monday:

A1) Double KB Clean and Military Press 5x5

load: your 7-9 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

A2) Weighted Pull-Up 5x5

load: your 8 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do A1 and A2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of A1, rest for a minute, then do a set of A2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Lifeline Power Wheel AB Roll-Out 2x10 (from knees or standing, depending on your strength)

B1) Barbell Squat 5x5

load: your 7-9 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

B2) Double KB Swing 5x5

*swing to chest level

load: your 8-10 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do B1 and B2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of B1, rest for a minute, then do a set of B2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Tuesday

Circuit Training

KB One-Arm Clean and Push-Press 1x10

Alternating Renegade Row 1x10

Hindu Squat 1x25

One-Arm Kettlebell Snatch 1x10 each side

Slow and Controlled Sit-Up 1x10 (4 seconds up/4 seconds down)

Take 30-second breaks in between each exercise and 60-second breaks at the end of each round. Do 5 rounds total.

Thursday

A1) **Barbell Incline Press** 5x5

load: your 7-9 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

A2) **Weighted Chin-up** 5x5

load: your 8 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do A1 and A2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of A1, rest for a minute, then do a set of A2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

KB Turkish Get-Up 3x5 each side

load: a weight you can take to 7 reps

B1) **Elevated Trapbar Deadlift** 5x5

load: your 7-9 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

B2) Double KB Clean 5x5

load: your 7-8 rep max

rest: 60-seconds

Do B1 and B2 in alternating fashion, i.e., do a set of B1, rest for a minute, then do a set of B2. Continue until all sets have been completed.

Friday

Circuit Training

Explosive Push-Up 1x10 (launching off the floor as high as possible each rep)

Double KB Bent-Over Row 1x10

Double KB Suitcase Squat 1x12

One-Arm KB Swing 1x12 each side

Hanging Leg Raise 1x10

Take 30-second breaks in between each exercise and 60-second breaks at the end of each round. Do five rounds.

Off days, do light exercise, such as walking, swimming, joint mobility training, yoga, tai-chi and chi-kung. These types of exercise help with soreness and workout recovery. If you find that four days is too much training, move Tuesday's workout to Wednesday and Thursday's workout to Friday (cutting out the Friday circuit training workout) for three training days. If you're under excess stress or for whatever reason experiencing poor recovery, reduce training to two days only. For example, do Monday's workout, then do Tuesday's workout on Thursday, cutting out all other training. For active recovery on off days, do the suggested light exercises.

If you need some more help with program design, make sure you sign up for my [program design services](#).

High Frequency Kettlebell Training For Fat Loss

HFT is my favorite style of training for strength, muscle building, and fat loss. No need to add any cardio at all to the program. Focus on doing the strength training workouts well and you will be all set. Do not add more training to the mix. More cardio will not make the program work better and will screw up you're hormone levels.

Start with four workouts per week as indicated in the beginner program. After a month, go to the intermediate program and train five times per week. Finally, in month three go to the advanced program and train six times per week.

Whenever, you are stressed or need more days off, go back down to four days per week. You can even mix and match the training. One week, workout four times per week and another week workout five times etc.

Every time you work out and avoid over training you get a GH surge and an increase in Testosterone. Thus it is important to workout as frequently as possible to maximize fat loss and muscle building. If you feel like having sex after a workout, you are doing great. If you are wiped out and beat up, you are working too hard and need to scale back. Reduce the sets to 1-2 for a while if necessary. Make sure you sleep well every night and have a solid diet and supplement plan.

Beginner Option 1:

Monday and Thursday

- A-1: Double KB Clean and Press 3x6
- A-2: Double Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Double Suitcase Kickstand Lunge 3x8 l,r
- B-2: Double Swing 3x8

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises.

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Slow and controlled Sit-up 3x10 (4 seconds up and down)

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

Tuesday and Friday

- A-1: Double Hang Clean and Military Press 3x6
- A-2: Alternating KB Renegade Row 3x6 each side

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Suitcase KB Squat 3x10
- B-2: Double KB Clean 3x10

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Side Bend 3x8 l,r (left and right)
- C-2: Double Overhead Walk 3 rounds

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

Wednesday-Saturday-Sunday

1-2 mile walks

Intermediate (5 days per week)

Monday

- A-1: Double KB Clean and Press 3x6
- A-2: Double Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises.

- B-1: Double Suitcase Kickstand Lunge 3x8 l,r
- B-2: Double Swing 3x8

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Slow and controlled Sit-up 3x10 (4 seconds up and down)

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

Tuesday

- A-1: Double Hang Clean and Military Press 3x6
- A-2: Alternating KB Renegade Row 3x6 each side

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Suitcase KB Squat 3x10
- B-2: Double KB Clean 3x10

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Side Bend 3x8 l,r (left and right)
- C-2: Double Overhead Walk 3 rounds

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

Wednesday

- A-1: Hand To Hand Clean and Press 3x6 l,r
- A-2: One-arm Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6 l,r

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Double Rack Kickstand Lunge 3x6 l,r
- B-2: Double Swing 3x6

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Slow and controlled Sit-up 3x10 (4 seconds up and down)

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

Thursday

- A-1: Relaxed Military Press 3x6
- A-2: Alternating Bent-over Row 3x6 each side

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- Double Clean and Front Squat 3x8 (one-minute breaks in between each set)
- Finisher: Hindu Squat 50 reps

Friday

- A-1: Double KB Clean and Press 3x6
- A-2: Double Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Double Suitcase Kickstand Lunge 3x8 l,r
- B-2: Double Swing 3x8

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Double Overhead Walk 3 rounds

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

Advanced (6 days per week)

Monday

- A-1: Double KB Clean and Press 3x6
- A-2: Double Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Suitcase Squat 3x12
- B-2: Double Swing 3x12

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x15 on both exercises

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Double Overhead Walk 3 rounds

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

- Finisher: 50 Pushups

Tuesday

- A-1: Double Hang Clean and Military Press 3x6
- A-2: Alternating KB Renegade Row 3x6 each side

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Clean and Squat 3x6
- B-2: Double Swing 3x6

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Side Bend 3x8 l,r (left and right)
- C-2: Double Overhead Walk 3 rounds

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

- Finisher: Hindu Squat 50 Reps

Wednesday

- A-1: Hand To Hand Clean and Press 3x6 l,r
- A-2: One-arm Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6 l,r

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Double Rack Kickstand Lunge 3x6 l,r
- B-2: Double Swing 3x6

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Slow and controlled Sit-up 3x10 (4 seconds up and down)

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

- Finisher: Jumper Squat 50 reps

Thursday

- A-1: Relaxed Military Press 3x8
- A-2: Alternating Bent-over Row 3x8 each side

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- Double Clean and Front Squat 3x8 (one-minute breaks in between each set)
- Finisher: Hindu Squat 50 reps

Saturday

- A-1: Double KB Clean and Press 3x6
- A-2: Double Ballistic KB Bent-over Row 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of A-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of A-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- B-1: Double Suitcase Kickstand Lunge 3x8 l,r
- B-2: Double Swing 3x8

Do B-1 and B-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of B-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of B-2. Long-term goal is to work up to 3x12 on both exercises

- C-1: Power Wheel Roll Out 3x6
- C-2: Slow and controlled Sit-up 3x10 (4 seconds up and down)

Do C-1 and C-2 in antagonistic fashion. One set of C-1, then a one-minute break and then a set of C-2.

- Finisher: Jumper Squats 50 reps

How To Structure A Kettlebell Workout For Size and Strength

I get tons of emails from kettlebell trainees on how to structure kettlebell workouts for getting bigger and stronger. Many trainees make the mistake of doing too many exercises; apply improper use of volume; and use flawed training frequency. Training frustration is soon to follow with the inevitable lack of progress from not having a clear target. When designing a program, you must consider that you can only be good at so many things. Thus, one of the keys to designing an effective program for strength and size is to keep things simple and focus on doing a few things well. Moreover, you balanced development is critical as is proper exercise selection. Lets get into some key ingredients for maximizing a kettlebell program for size and strength.

The first thing you need to do is focus on are exercises that provide the most bang for you buck. I like to break down a full body workout into five categories. Pick one pressing exercise, one pulling exercise, one exercise for the quads, one for the hamstrings, and one core exercise. This ensures that the entire body is getting a workout and prevents trainees from focusing too much on one area. For example, men like to focus on the upper body and women like to focus on the lower body. To avoid imbalances and being mistaken for a California bodybuilder, focus on working the entire body and pick one exercise per category. Lets discuss each category:

Pressing

A pressing exercise will take care of the shoulders, triceps, and depending on what you pick the chest as well. Here are some kettlebell pressing exercises to choose from:

- The Double Clean and Military Press (clean before each press)
- Double Military Press
- Double Sots Press
- Alternating Military Press
- Floor Press

- Alternating Floor Press

Pulling

Pulling exercises are a necessity to ensure balanced development for the upper body. Moreover there is a synergy between pulling and pressing muscles. The better you get at pulling, the stronger your pressing will be and vice versa. Here are some excellent pulling exercises for you to choose from:

- Pull-ups with a kettlebell attached (use a dipping belt)
- Renegade Row
- Double Bent Over Row
- Alternating Bent-over Row
- One-arm Rows with two kettlebells (see Pavel's "More Russian Kettlebell Challenges DVD")

Quads

To avoid looking like a California bodybuilder you need to work on the legs. Even if you do not care about leg development, if you care about upper body development you need a strong foundation. I have had online clients that blast through pressing plateaus by increasing leg strength. Your body is only as strong as your weakest link. Build a strong foundation with the following exercises:

- Double Front Squat
- Double Lunge
- Suitcase Squat
- Double Front Box Squat

Hamstrings

The next critical area is the back of your legs. You need to balance the quad development from the squats with some hamstring exercises. In addition, if you are an athlete, you need strong hamstrings for explosive strength and speed. Choose from the following:

- Double Swing
- Double Clean
- Double Snatch
- Full Body Attack (on my new DVD, The Kettlebell Solution For Speed and Explosive Strength)
- Double One Legged Squat

Core

The last important area to cover is the midsection. The midsection is the hook that connects the lower body to the upper body and if your core is weak so is your entire body

and you will not be as strong as you could be with a well-developed powerful midsection. Choose from the following list:

- Double Windmill
- One-arm Windmill
- Turkish Get-up
- Turkish Get-up Sit-up

Now that we have all of the bases covered. Lets go over program design options. If your main goal is to get bigger and stronger then split your workouts into upper body and lower body and workout each area two times per week. Here is a sample program:

Monday: (Upper Body Focus)

- A-1: Double Clean and Press 5x5
- A-2: Double Bent Over Row 5x5

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 5x5 on both exercises. When you can do 5x5, add another set and do 6x5. Your long-term goal is to do 10x5

Tuesday (Lower Body Focus)

- A-1: Double Front Squat 5x5
- A-2: Double Swing 5x5

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 5x5 on both exercises. When you can do 5x5, add another set and do 6x5. Your long-term goal is to do 10x5

Take a one-minute break and then do:

- Turkish Get-up 2x5 l,r (left and right with one-minute breaks)

Thursday: (Upper Body Focus)

- A-1: Double Floor Press 5x5
- A-2: Pull-up with a kettlebell 5x5

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 5x5 on both exercises. When you can do 5x5, add another set and do 6x5. Your long-term goal is to do 10x5

Friday (Lower Body Focus)

- A-1: Double Front Lunge 5x5 each leg
- A-2: Double Snatch 5x5

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 5x5 on both exercises. When you can do 5x5, add another set and do 6x5. Your long-term goal is to do 10x5

Take a one-minute break and then do:

- Double Windmill 2x5 l,r (left and right with one-minute breaks)

Now if you are under some time constraints and only have time for two workouts per week then try doing two full body workouts per week. This is also a great program for people that require more rest days for adequate recovery. Here is a sample program:

Monday

- A-1: Double Floor Press 3x5
- A-2: Pull-up with a kettlebell 3x5

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 3x5 on both exercises. Your long-term goal is to work up to 6x5 per exercise.

Take a one-minute break and then move on to:

- B-1: Double Front Squat 3x6
- B-2: Double Swing 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 3x6 on both exercises. When you can do 3x6, add another set and do 4x6. Your long-term goal is to do 6x6 per exercise.

Take a one-minute break and then do:

- Double Windmill 2x5 l,r (left and right with one-minute breaks)

Thursday

- A-1: Double Clean and Military Press 3x5
- A-2: Renegade Row 3x5 l,r (left and right)

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 3x5 on both exercises. Your long-term goal is to work up to 6x5 per exercise.

Take a one-minute break and then move on to:

- B-1: Double Front Lunge 3x6
- B-2: Double Snatch 3x6

Do A-1 and A-2 back to back. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2, wait a minute and so forth. Continue in this fashion until you have completed 3x6 on both exercises. When you can do 3x6, add another set and do 4x6. Your long-term goal is to do 6x6 per exercise

Take a one-minute break and then do:

- Turkish Get-up 2x5 l,r (left and right with one-minute breaks)

To summarize, the keys to building an effective kettlebell program for size and strength is to focus on compound exercises and balanced development. Make sure to cover the five major categories for balanced development and organize a program in such a way that all of the bases are covered with the appropriate amount of training days, volume, and intensity.

The Kettlebell Solution For Speed And Explosive Strength

We all know that kettlebells are fantastic for building muscular endurance and core strength. Moreover, I showed clearly on my last DVD, "The Kettlebell Solution For Size And Strength", that kettlebells can be used effectively for getting bigger and stronger. My latest DVD is on how to use kettlebells to get faster and more explosive. Even if you are not an athlete, developing more speed and explosive power will enhance your goals. The more fast switch muscle fibers you can engage the stronger you will be and the more muscular endurance you will be able to tap into. Thus, my DVD will enhance any program that you are on. In this article, I am going to go over a program that is heavily inspired by Louie Simmons and the westside barbell club (Westside-Barbell.com) for increasing speed, strength, and size with kettlebells. Check it out:

Monday: Speed Day

- Double Clean and Speed Press 8x3 (pick a weight that you can press 8-10 times and press the bells as fast as possible while remaining tight. Do a clean before each press and take one-minute breaks in between each set.)
- Double Kettlebell Box Squats 8x3 (pick a weight that you can 8-10 times and take one-minute breaks in between each set. Squat down to a box just below parallel, sit on the box for a second and stand up as fast as possible)
- Double Kettlebell Swing 8x3 (pick a weight that you can do 8-10 times and focus on driving through as forcefully as possible. Keep the bells at no high than chest level. The focus should be on your hamstrings. One-minute breaks in between each set)

Doing the speed work first fires up your CNS and gets your fast twitch muscles engaged for the work to follow.

- Double Kettlebell Bent-over Row or Weighted Pull-up 3x6 (stay one rep away from failure and take two-minute breaks)
- Double Kettlebell One-legged Deadlift 2x6 l,r (left and right one-minute breaks)
- One-arm Windmill 2x5 l,r (left and right and one-minute breaks. Go heavy on these, but do not train to failure)

Wednesday: Medium Intensity Day

- A-1: Double Floor Press 2x6 reps
- A-2: Renegade Row 2x6 reps l,r

Do A-1 and A-2 in alternating fashion. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait a minute and then do a set of A-2. Keep going back and forth until you have completed all of the designated sets.

- B-1: Double Front Squat 2x6 reps
- B-2: Double Snatch 2x5 reps

Do B-1 and B-2 in alternating fashion. In other words, do a set of B-1, wait a minute and then do a set of B-2. Keep going back and forth until you have completed all of the designated sets.

Wrap up with

- Turkish Get-up 2x5 l,r (two sets of five left and right and one-minute breaks in between each set)

Friday: Maximum Effort Size and Strength Day

- A-1: Double Kettlebell Military Press 5x5 reps
- A-2: Weighted Pull-up or Double Kettlebell Bent Over Row 5x5

Do A-1 and A-2 in alternating fashion. In other words, do a set of A-1, wait ninety seconds and then do a set of A-2. Keep going back and forth until you have completed all of the designated sets. The last set should be very hard on each exercise. When you can do 5x5 with an exercise, add another set.

- B-1: Double Front Squat 5x5
- B-2: Double Swing 5x5

Do B-1 and B-2 in alternating fashion. In other words, do a set of B-1, wait ninety seconds and then do a set of B-2. Keep going back and forth until you have completed all of the designated sets. The last set should be very hard on each exercise. When you can do 5x5 with an exercise, add another set.

Wrap up with

- Double Windmill 2x5 l,r (two sets of five left and right and one-minute breaks in between each set)

Every three weeks change the exercises on the maximum effort day to avoid burnout, boredom, and lack of progress. For example do the Sot press instead of the Double Mil Press or Double Lunges instead of Double Front Squats.

The Kettlebell Solution For MMA Strength And Conditioning

The top MMA athletes are far and away the best-conditioned athletes in the world. Second place is so far behind that it is not even worth mentioning. These men and women work hard and need a great strength and conditioning program to enhance their efforts. While no strength and conditioning program can make up for tireless hours sparring and working hard on the mat, a properly executed program will help hard working MMA athletes increase explosive power, ramp up cardio and muscular endurance, and make the body more durable.

There are many effective training tools to choose from for a killer strength and conditioning training. However, the tool that we are going to focus on in this article is the kettlebell. Before we get into why the kettlebell is a great training tool for MMA athletes and how to use it, let's go over what the hell a kettlebell actually is!

A kettlebell looks like a cannon ball with a suitcase handle and is a relative of the dumbbell. Many of the old-time strongman in the US and overseas used kettlebells as part of their overall regimen for building incredible levels of strength and power. In Russia and more recently in the US, kettlebell training is actually a sport in which athletes focus on three kettlebell exercises: The Jerk, The Clean and Jerk, and The Snatch for time.

These are full body exercises that teach your body how to work as one unit. While novices can get away with muscling the kettlebell for these exercises, kettlebell athletes on the professional level have to be efficient and use as many muscle groups as possible to get the job done. The sport involves doing the designated exercises for ten minutes! If you put the bells down at any point it is over similar. Just lasting ten minutes alone with a light kettlebells takes a great deal of mental toughness and conditioning. Imagine using two 70lb kettlebells for the clean and jerk (an exercise in which you take the bells from the floor to the upper body and then overhead) for ten minutes and you get an idea of the incredible strength and conditioning that these athletes have and how such training will carry over very well to the needs of MMA athletes.

While simply working on the kettlebell competition lifts will go a long way for developing incredible levels of strength and conditioning for MMA athletes, it requires

professional instruction and a lot of dedication to get really good at (working up to ten minute sets). While I do think that this is worth your time, in this article we are going

To work on some other kettlebell exercises that have a very direct application to MMA. In addition we are going to go over a sample program on how to put the exercises into play for serious explosive power, strength, and conditioning. Lets get started.

The Exercises

The Double Kettlebell Clean and Push Press

If you ignore the rest of this article and only focus on this exercise you will go a long way to getting a lot out of kettlebell training. This is a full body exercise that teaches your body how to work as one unit. It is not as technical as the clean and jerk and is relatively easy to learn. If you have ever done a military press than you have probably done a push press. 99% of the clips I see for the military press on youtube.com are in fact push presses in which you use the legs to help drive the weight overhead.

The Double Clean and Push Press is a combination of two kettlebell exercises. The Double Clean and the Double Push Press. Lets cover the clean first.

Double Kettlebell Clean

Place two kettlebell between your feet aligned with your toes. Sit back as if you are trying to sit in a chair behind you and grab the kettlebells. Looking at the floor slightly in front, swing the kettlebells between your legs as if you are trying to pass a football behind you. Quickly reverse the direction and drive through with your hips, pop your pelvis up and drive the kettlebells to the rack position (Nope, the rack position is not referring to the ring girl's chest). The rack position is where the bells are resting against your upper body below chin level.

Performance Tips

- Focus on getting your hands around the kettlebells rather than letting the kettlebells flip over your hands and bang your wrists.
- Breathe into your stomach as you drive the kettlebells to the rack
- Stand up straight at the end of the move. Your legs should be locked out.
- Hold the bells in tight and close to the body at the top.
- Breathe out as you swing the bells between your legs

Now lets cover the push press portion of the lift

Double Kettlebell Push Press

Clean two kettlebells to your shoulders. Squat down a few inches and reverse the motion rapidly. Use the momentum from the legs to drive the kettlebells overhead. Once the kettlebells are locked out, lower the kettlebells to your shoulders and the back to the starting position. Stay loose upon cleaning the kettlebells and when you squat down a few inches to power up the leg drive.

Performance Tips

- Push the kettlebells off of your upper body.
- Do not squat down too far.
- Breathe in as you lower the weights and breathe out forcefully as you push press the kettlebells overhead.
- Look straight ahead or slightly up when driving the bells off of the rack position.

One-Arm Kettlebell Swing

The kettlebell swing is a great exercise for developing explosive hamstrings and when done in high reps incredible cardio and muscular endurance. Best of all it is pretty easy to learn and apply safely. It has many of the benefits of the kettlebell snatch without the technical demands of the snatch. No doubt the snatch is worth your time to learn, but the swing is the best exercise to put into play immediately while you work on snatches for down the road.

Performance

Place one kettlebell between your feet. Push your butt back and bend your knees slightly to get into the starting position. Make sure that your back is flat and look down or at the floor slightly ahead. Swing the kettlebell between your legs forcefully as if you are passing a football to someone behind you. Quickly reverse the direction and drive through with your hips explosively taking the kettlebell straight out. Let the kettlebell swing back between your legs and repeat. Switch arms with each set. Remember that the swing is primarily a hamstring exercise and that is where all of the power is generated from. It is not a front raise so do not use a crush grip on the kettlebell and keep the arm loose.

Double Swing

The Double Swing is one of the most powerful ballistic drills that you can use with kettlebells. There is no way to muscle up two heavy kettlebells. You have to have powerful hamstrings to make double swings happen. On the Double Swing you are going to focus on driving through with the hips as fast and as powerful as possible. Do not

worry how high the bells get. In fact, they should not get higher than chest level. Keep the tension and focus on the hamstrings. A large percentage of the lower body explosive power comes from the hamstrings. Keep that in mind when doing Double Swings. If your lower back gets sore then you are not doing the exercise correctly.

Performance Tips

Place two kettlebells between your feet. While you will most likely have to take a wider stance than you would when doing a regular one-arm swing, do not stand too wide. The wider you stand the less hip drive you will have. Only stand as wide as you need to in order to comfortably place two kettlebells between your feet. Push back with your butt and bend your knees to get into the starting position. Make sure that your back is flat and look down or slightly in front. Swing the kettlebells between your legs forcefully. Quickly reverse the direction and drive through with your hips taking the kettlebells forward. Let the kettlebells swing back between your legs and repeat.

Double Kettlebell Squat Shrug

This is a great exercise for developing full body explosive power. You start the power with the lower body and transfer it into the upper body in each repetition. The best part about this exercise is that it is not technically demanding and fairly easy to learn. It does not require the technique of the clean or snatch, yet has many of the benefits. It is also a tremendous trap developer and strengthener.

Performance.

Place a kettlebell on the outside of each foot. Squat down and pick them up as if they are two suitcases. Keep your eyes forward and arch your back in the starting position. Stand up quickly and drive through with the hips and get airborne on each rep. As you get off the floor, push your chest out and pull your shoulders up and try to pinch your shoulder blades together. Let your shoulders go back in the socket as you land back on the ground.

Full Body Attack

This is an incredible exercise that will teach you how to use your body as one unit and build explosive power from the ground up. It is particularly beneficial for combat athletes. Often in a fight you have to get from the floor to your feet explosively against the resistance of an opponent. That is exactly what you are doing with the "Full Body Attack."

Performance

Place two kettlebells shoulder width apart on the ground. Get into the top position of the pushup with both hands on the kettlebells. Jump forward explosively while holding onto the kettlebells. Now you are in the starting position of the clean. Clean both kettlebells and drive through with the hip flexors rapidly.

Your elbows should be tucked in and in line with your stomach at the top of the movement. Bend your knees slightly, reverse the motion quickly and drive the kettlebells overhead. Now reverse the motion and do another rep. For the purpose of building speed and explosive strength, keep the rep range to no more than three. Focus on moving as quickly and as explosively as possible while maintaining solid form.

Full Body Defense

In addition to learning how to go from the ground to your feet explosively, a combat athlete needs to be able to go from the feet to the ground rapidly as well to avoid takedowns. That is precisely what the "Full Body Defense" will assist you with.

Performance

Start the exercise by cleaning two kettlebells to your shoulders. Push your pelvis up at the top of the clean so that you can press your elbows against your stomach and keep the kettlebells tucked in. Take the kettlebells to the floor so that you are in the starting position of a double clean.

Now jump back while still holding onto the kettlebells and arch your back. When executed properly, you will look like you are doing a yoga stretch or end position of a Hindu Pushup. Immediately jump back into the clean position, clean the kettlebells, and then proceed with another rep.

Alternating Kettlebell Renegade Row

This is an outstanding drill that I picked up from my friend Coach John Davies, author of "Mastery On The Gridiron." In addition to being an excellent exercise for your upper back and lats, the Renegade Row is a killer core exercise and a great chest exercise. Yes, even the chest is worked with the Renegade row. How is this possible? The chest is activated tremendously to stabilize the body for rowing with the Renegade Row. Don't be surprised if you notice that your pecs are sorer than your lats the next day after doing Renegade Rows. Because you are off balance with the Renegade Row, the abdominal muscles are also worked tremendously to maintain balance. There are not too many upper body muscles that the Renegade Row does not work.

Performance

Get into the top position of the pushup holding on to two kettlebells that are less than shoulder width apart. Take a shoulder width stance and push one kettlebell into the floor forcefully while you pull the other kettlebell in the working arm. Hold the kettlebell in the working arm in the top position for a second and then lower the kettlebell under control back to the floor. Switch arms after each repetition.

Performance Tips

- Push the kettlebell of the non-working arm into the floor with as much force as possible.
- Breathe in as you pull one kettlebell and out as you lower the kettlebell.
- Flex your butt and stomach for added stability
- Flex the lat of the working arm before pulling each kettlebell off of the floor.

Take a wider stance to make the exercise easier and a closer stance to make the exercise harder.

The Kettlebell Guard Attack

This is an exercise that suits perfectly the needs of MMA fighters and grapplers. Sports in which you often end up on your back called the guard and have to fight off an opponent in the mount position. Learning how to be strong and powerful out of the guard position is a valuable skill. The Guard Attack will help build explosive strength from the guard position. It is also great for building strong and a powerful chest, strong triceps, strong shoulders, and impressive core strength.

Performance

Lie on the floor and position two kettlebells on the floor next to your shoulders. Use two arms to get the bell on the weaker side into place on your chest. While holding on to the bell on your chest, pull the other bell towards your other pec and get it into the starting position on your chest. Let's use the right arm to illustrate the performance of the Guard Attack. Press with your right hand and use your right foot to shift your weight to the left. As you lower the bell, press with the left hand and use your left foot to shift your weight to the right. Use maximum speed when doing this drill. You want to be fast and explosive in the guard position.

Sample Kettlebell Training Program For MMA

Monday And Thursday (Circuit Training for strength endurance)

Double Kettlebell Clean and Push Press 10 reps

Double Kettlebell Squat Shrug 10 reps

Guard Attack 10 reps each side

Alternating Renegade Row 10 reps each side

Full Body Attack or Full Body Defense 10 reps

Double Swing 10 reps

Take 30-second breaks between each exercise and 60-second breaks at the end of each round. Do five rounds per workout I recommend that beginners do five reps per exercise and take one-minute breaks between each exercise and round. Add a rep to each exercise each week until you are up to 10 reps per exercise. Work on getting the breaks down to zero in between each exercise and in between each round. Do this by shaving ten seconds off each break per week until there are no breaks at all. If you get to this point with a relatively heavy set of kettlebells you will be a machine to say the least.

Tuesday and Friday (High Octane Cardio for muscular endurance and cardio)

Ten rounds of

Squat Thrust 30 reps

One-arm Kettlebell Swing 15 reps each side

A round is one set of squat thrusts and one-arm kettlebell swings down back to back. In case you do not know what a squat thrust is it is a bodyweight exercise in which you squat down, get into the top position of a pushup, and then get back to the standing position.

Beginners can take on-minute breaks in between each round. Shave ten seconds off each successive workout until you can do ten rounds with no breaks. Once you are there you will never have to blame lack of cardio for losing a fight.

Wrap-up

There you have it an array of killer kettlebell exercises to get you in shape and a sample program to get into action right away. Depending on what else you have going on with regards to training, life, and individual restoration you will most likely have to modify the program to fit your situation. If four workouts is too much, start with two workouts per week or reduce the rounds and go from there.

For more information on kettlebell competitions and how the Russians experts use kettlebells, check out the following sites:

www.ikff.net

www.americkettlebellclub.com

Beyond Kettlebells
An Interview with Mike Mahler
by the Editors at www.t-nation.com

UFC fighter Frank Shamrock says that Mike Mahler's training tactics are unique, innovative, and one of a kind. And that seems to be on the mark, as Mike is proving to be much more than just another "kettlebell guy."

Coach Mahler has published about a dozen articles here at *Testosterone*, but we've never sat him down and picked his brain... until now.

Testosterone Nation: Sum up your overall training beliefs for us, Mike. What's at the core of your philosophy?

Mike Mahler: When it comes to a comprehensive training program for strength, health, and well-being, there are five important areas that need to be addressed: strength, cardio, joint mobility/flexibility/balance, nutrition, and restoration.

I don't like to waste time, and don't want my clients and readers to waste time, so my strength training approach focuses on compound exercises that provide the most bang for your buck. There are five areas I like to cover: presses, pulls, hamstrings, quads, and core.



If you hit those five areas with compound exercises such as the standing military press for pressing, weighted pull-ups for pulling, Romanian deadlifts for the hamstrings, barbell squats for the quads, and hanging leg raises for the core, you have a great training program that'll cover at least 80% of your needs.

T-Nation: What about the other 20%?

Mahler: The other 20% may consist of specialty work to address injuries, such as rotator cuff work. Or if you're a bodybuilder perhaps a lagging body part like calves.

Whether your goal is size and strength or fat loss, the above five areas should be your focal point. The differences would be in execution based on your goals. For example, if your goal is fat loss, you can do circuit-style weight training several times per week. If your goal is size and strength, you can do high volume work via a split routine.

Finally, you don't have to do the same five exercises indefinitely. Keep the five pillars covered, but feel free to rotate exercises to keep training fun and to avoid overuse injuries.



What training implements you use are up to you. You can cover the five pillars with barbells, dumbbells, kettlebells, sandbags, or even TC's Real Doll. You can also mix and match implements.

T-Nation: What's your take on cardio?

Mahler: I like high intensity cardio for efficient fat loss and heart health. An example would be doing twenty 100 yard sprints. Run as fast as you can for 100 yards, jog back to the starting point, and repeat. This doesn't take long, is much more fun than running on a treadmill, and it's great for ramping up fat loss.

Another area I focus on is joint mobility. This is important before and after each workout and is incredible for anti-aging. Five to ten minutes of joint mobility work each day is enough to cover the bases.

We should also spend some time on restoration. Many people know how to train hard but don't balance the equation properly with restoration. Get a good massage every other week or at least once a month. Meditate for 20 minutes after each workout and get quality sleep every night to optimize hormone production.

T-Nation: Okay, a lot of what you do might be categorized as "functional training." That term has been abused though, and seems to have lost its meaning. How do you define it?

Mahler: One element of functional strength is strength that carries over to real-world activities such as carrying your groceries to the car, putting your carry-on bag in the overhead compartment, being able to carry your child effortlessly, etc. Those of us that actually have even a small amount of strength and conditioning take such tasks for granted, but I've seen a lot of people that have a hard time with daily activities that should be effortless.

Another element of functional strength is having strength and conditioning for the activities or sports that you love to do such as hiking, surfing, grappling, and mountain climbing. Not only strength that carries over directly, but *balanced* strength so that you avoid injuries.



Finally, the most important part of functional strength, the part that's completely overlooked by most people, is this: It makes you a stronger and tougher person overall, not just strong in the context of working out.

I've seen many people that are training bad-asses, but are complete pushovers in their personal and professional life. They avoid risks like the plague, don't have the courage to pursue the lives they really want, and couldn't make a tough decision if their lives depended on it.

They always go with the flow, never trust their instincts, and constantly look to others to make decisions for them. They've completely compartmentalized their strength and conditioning and don't carry it over to any other aspect of their lives.

While they have strength and toughness in the context of physical training, that strength doesn't carry over to where it really matters. It's wasted. If you're strong and in shape when it

comes to working out, but a wuss everywhere else, then you're not a strong person overall and you've missed out on the most important benefit of training.

Hard training teaches us how to push through when things aren't easy and finish what we start. Transforming your body and building a high level of strength takes a lot of discipline and hard work. Physical accomplishments, whether it's losing 30 pounds of fat, adding 50 pounds to your bench press, or running a marathon, teach you a lot about yourself and help break mental barriers that hold you back in life.

It's a complete shame if we only have that strength and mental toughness in the context of working out.

T-Nation: Mental toughness goes along with something we've written about here at *Testosterone* before: self-talk. What is that exactly?

Mahler: Well, one of the great potential benefits of hard training is it teaches us how to use our minds to push forward. If you give up mentally, it's over. You could have the best training technique in the world, but if you're not mentally tough, you'll give up when things get arduous.



We're all constantly having internal dialogues without ourselves. If you're telling yourself that you're weak and that it's time to give up, that's exactly what you'll do. On the other hand, if you tell yourself to keep pushing forward, that'll drastically increase your odds for success in your workouts and in life in general. The dialogues that we have with ourselves are "self-talk."

I learned about self-talk from Richard Machowicz, author of *Unleashing The Warrior Within*.



When Richard went through Navy Seal training, he saw a lot of physically impressive people give up because they weren't mentally tough, an example being when his group was ordered to run several miles. Just when everyone thought it was over, the instructor ordered several more miles. Half the class collapsed on the spot.

Were they defeated physically at that point? No, they probably could've kept going if they were mentally prepared for it. They were defeated *mentally*. Richard pushed through not just with great physical conditioning but by giving himself the right messages via self-talk. No matter what was happening to him, he knew that he was going to pass. He burned his bridges with failure and there was nowhere left to go but the other way, to success.

I look at strength and conditioning training as much more than just being impressive physically. We all want to look good, be in shape, and be strong, but what's the use if it doesn't carry over to other areas of life such as business, integrity, and our personal lives?

When you push through hard workouts and learn the discipline of training consistently in order to reach a goal, you have very powerful self-knowledge and skill sets which can help you push through in other important areas of life. However, if you compartmentalize who you are as a trainee from who you are in the rest of your life, the benefits won't carry over. That's a travesty!

Ironically, I see many people train the way they should be living their lives and many people live their lives the way they should be training!

T-Nation: So give us an example of mental toughness training.

Mahler: Ori Hofmekler has a system called *Controlled Fatigue Training* where you purposely put yourself in a fatigued state before strength training. For example, go do ten 100 yard sprints, then go do your strength-training workout. That fresh strength you normally have is gone and now you have to push through mentally.

In the beginning you'll be weaker and many will say screw it and give up. Others will push forward, and once you adapt your strength comes back and goes up.

It's one thing to be strong when everything is perfect. You slept eight hours the night before, you timed your pre-workout meal perfectly, and you're in a great mood. However, what can you do when things are far from ideal? Most likely you'll have to apply your strength at times when things aren't perfect. If you haven't trained yourself to be able to do so, then you're in trouble.

T-Nation: Interesting. Now, you're known mostly for kettlebell training. Kettlebell training has gone from obscure to mainstream, some would say to fad level. Where does it stand now in the big picture?

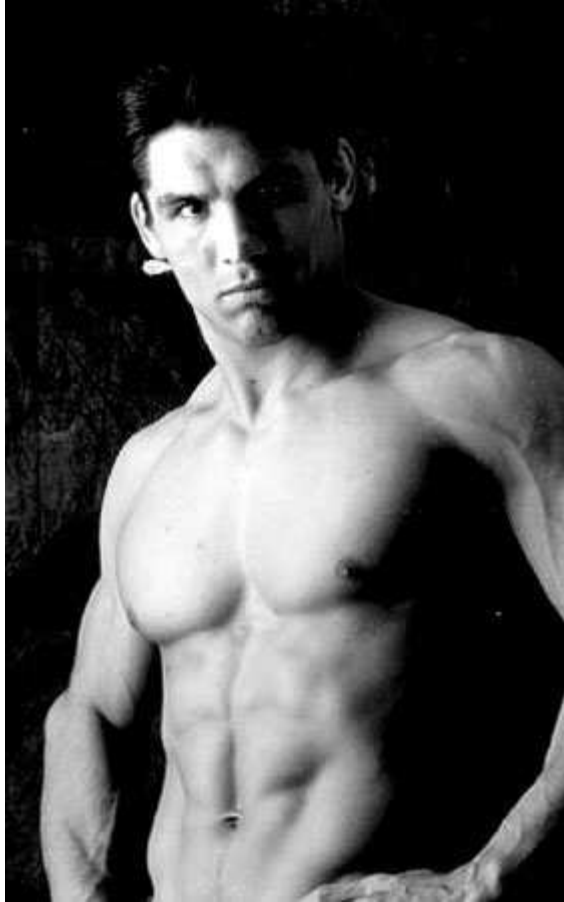
Mahler: I define a fad as something that's here today and gone tomorrow. Kettlebell training is definitely here to stay.



I think a lot of people got turned off by kettlebell training by some of the over-the-top marketing that was associated with it. Several years ago, Dragondoor was the only company that was selling high quality kettlebells. They were also the only information provider for kettlebell training. When only one company is doing any one thing, no matter how good or bad it is, it'll be regarded as a fad.

But now there are a lot of companies such as Lifeline USA, Ader, and the American Kettlebell Club that are selling high quality kettlebells and offering kettlebell training information. As a result, the prices for kettlebells have come down a great deal and there are several options for customers to choose from for kettlebells, training info, and certifications.

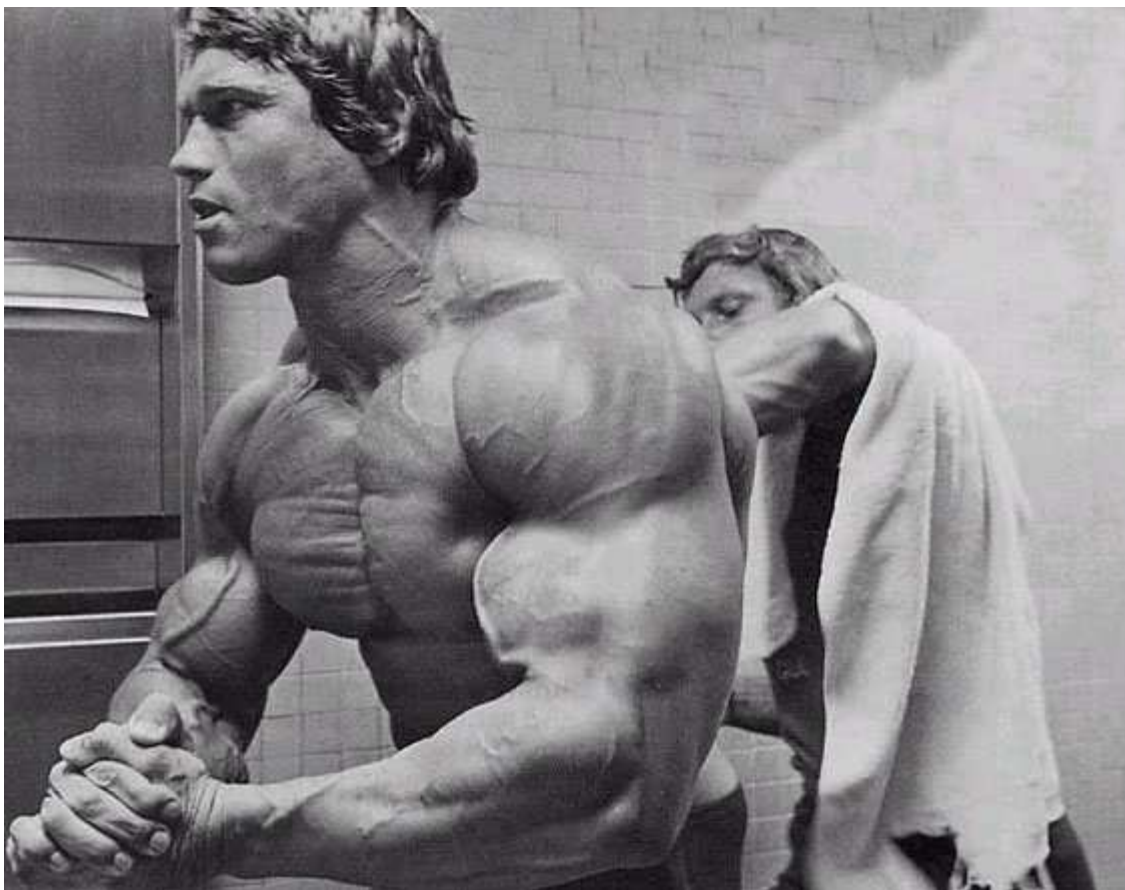
I see kettlebells everywhere, and a lot of serious athletes and coaches use kettlebells, including Frank Shamrock, Mark Philippi, and Randy Couture. However, they don't use kettlebells as a stand-alone tool, but as a great addition to their training systems.



No single training tool can offer everything, and people who think that kettlebells are the be-all, end-all of strength training are just delusional. Kettlebells are simply a great training tool to round out a solid training system.

T-Nation: Nice to hear a "kettlebell guy" actually say that! Now, you say that every hypertrophy program should have a focus on strength. But many people see size and strength as two different goals. What's the real story?

Mahler: Even today the most successful bodybuilders are very strong. Some examples that come to mind are Ronnie Coleman, Dorrian Yates, and Kevin Levrone. Back in the day wasn't much different. Arnold, Franco Columbu, John Grimek, and Reg Park were all big and very strong. Even if you could get really big without getting strong, why the hell would you want to? Why not have it all?



A lot of people that want to get bigger would do very well on a powerlifting style of training. Try keeping your size down and getting your bench press up to 350, deadlift up to 500 and squat up to 450. Even if you're not trying to put on size, you will. Sure, we've all seen people who aren't too big that can bench press 350, but these people usually can't squat 225 to save their lives.

Eat a lot of good food, make sure that 30% or more of your diet comes from good fats to optimize hormone production, sleep well every night to ramp up GH, focus on getting strong on compound exercises, and you'll get bigger.

T-Nation: What's your take on training to failure? Is it different for performance vs. bodybuilding goals?

Mahler: It really depends on how you define training to failure. For some it means literally working against the weight until you fail and then doing forced reps or some other set-extender to really shock the muscle.



I look at training to failure as training to your limit. For example, you do ten reps on the bench press and the tenth rep is really hard and takes everything you have to complete. You know you won't get an eleventh rep, so you stop there, rest up, and grow stronger for another day.

Using this definition of training to failure, I think it has a lot of merit when used appropriately. If you never push yourself to the limit you'll never know what you're capable of. So yes, it's important.

However, it does not and should not be done at every workout. A periodization approach should be applied. Spend some time each year working on high volume training where you don't train to failure. Spend some time working on moderate volume such as the 5 x 5 program where the fifth set is sometimes pushed to failure, but not necessarily at every workout.

Then spend some time on a high-intensity protocol where the volume is pretty low (two to three sets) and push it hard on each set. Such training is good for four to six weeks and then it'll be time to shift gears.

Training to failure shouldn't be avoided like the plague as some recommend, nor is it something that has to be applied at every workout. It has its use, and when used properly it can be very beneficial for hypertrophy goals and strength gains.

I really like Louie Simmons's approach of working on force production one day with fairly light weights and working on maximum effort later in the week. It's hard to argue with the results he and his team have produced, and many bodybuilders work with him as well to blast through plateaus.



T-Nation: Let's talk overtraining. Some coaches claim that it practically doesn't exist. Other well-respected coaches make us think that we're *all* overtrained! What's the deal here?

Mahler: Here's what I've found: People who love to train are more likely to go into a state of overtraining than those who hate to train or those that are indifferent.

Why? People who love to train are often addicted to the stimulus of training. They look forward to each workout and love everything about training. The last thing they want to do is train four times per week at 45 minutes or less per session. They've made the stimulus of training the goal, and any other training goal is secondary at best.

Once you're addicted to the stimulus of training, going into an overtrained state is inevitable. Moreover, they're not just addicted to working out but to the feeling of being wiped out after every workout. They think they should barely be able to walk from the gym to their car after each workout! They also want to be super sore after every workout and will complain if they're not. Not only do such people go into overtrained states easily, they're probably *there* most of the time!



I can see why many coaches don't believe that overtraining exists. Most people have never trained hard enough to be overtrained! The average person watches four hours of TV every night and considers walking a form of exercise. (Of course, this means walking from the living room to the kitchen.)

When it comes to work, many people like to focus on doing as little as possible to stay employed. These people, who represent a good chunk of the population, aren't in danger of being overtrained any time soon.

On the flip side, the training stimulus addicts often have a hard time reducing training. They have a fear that they'll lose it all if they don't train long and often. Moreover, these people push it hard, yet are often sleep-deprived, are terrible at stress management, and have nagging injuries and mediocre diets.

They know how to push themselves, but they haven't balanced the equation with restoration. Once we get their training more precise so that it fits them as individuals, really cool things start happening. In addition to getting stronger, leaner, or bigger if that's the goal, they feel much better. And ultimately that's the goal that all of us have in common.

Yes, overtraining does exist and many people who love to train are often overtrained. That said, many people take it too far and have an irrational fear of overtraining. If they don't feel perfect and energetic every day, they assume they're overtrained, which is rarely the case. I've had days where I feel like crap and have incredible workouts, and other days where I can't wait to jump into my workout only to have a terrible session. Our physiologies are just not that simple.

One way to avoid overtraining is to do a light week of training for every three weeks of hard training. This is harder than it sounds for stimulus addicts as they want to train hard all of the time. However, it's a simple and productive way to avoid overtraining.

T-Nation: Good stuff, Mike. Looking forward to future articles from you!

More On Mahler



Mike Mahler is a kettlebell instructor and strength coach based in Las Vegas, NV. In addition to his in-demand workshops, Mike has authored three best-selling kettlebell training DVDs, two best-selling kettlebell training e-books, and has published over eighty articles. Find out more about Mike at his [website](#). His past T-Nation articles can be found [HERE](#).

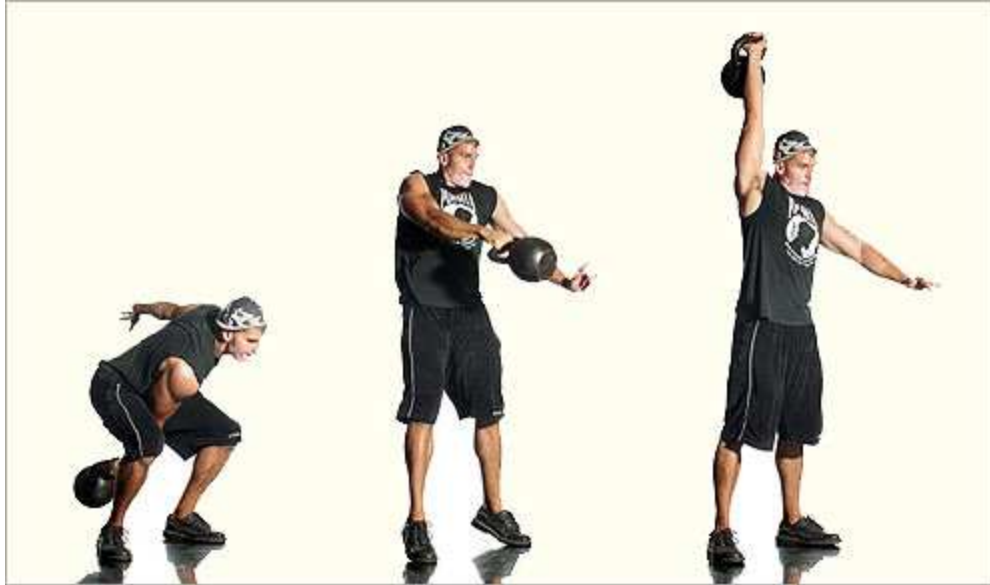
Kettlebell Exercises Directory

Photographs of Mike Mahler courtesy of Michael Neuveux.



One-Arm Kettlebell Swing

Place one kettlebell between your feet. Push back with your butt and bend your knees to get into the starting position. Make sure that your back is flat and look straight ahead. Swing the kettlebell between your legs forcefully as if you are passing a football to someone behind you. Quickly reverse the direction and drive through with your hips explosively taking the kettlebell straight out. Let the kettlebell swing back between your legs and repeat. Switch arms with each set. Remember that the swing is primarily a hamstring exercise and that is where all of the power is generated from. It is not a front raise. [Click here for more info on swings.](#)



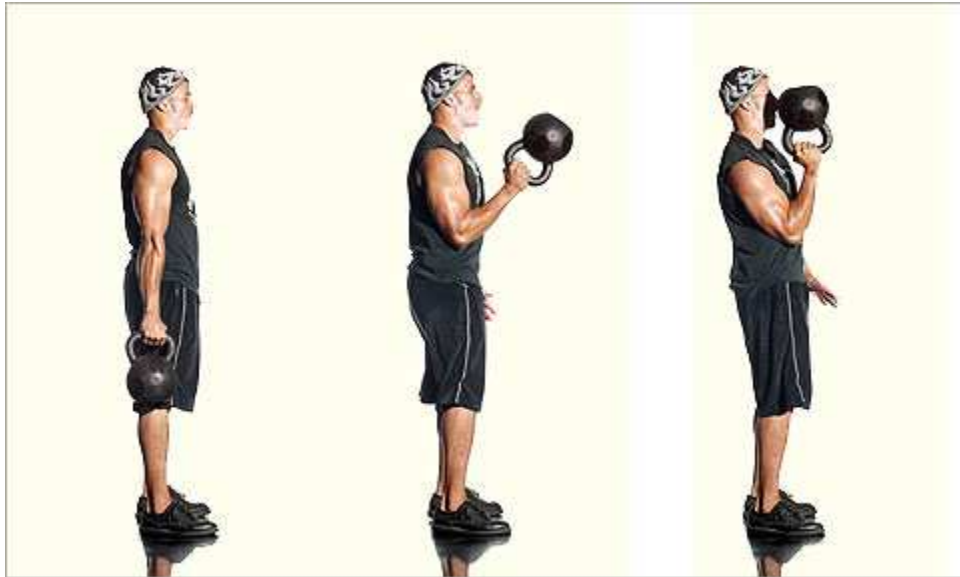
One-Arm Kettlebell Snatch

Place a kettlebell between your feet. Bend your knees and push your butt back to get in the proper starting position. Look straight ahead and swing the kettlebell back between your legs as if you are passing a football to someone behind you. Immediately reverse the direction and drive through explosively with your hips. Pull the kettlebell towards your body as if you are starting a lawn mower. The trajectory of the kettlebell will resemble a J Curve rather than an arc. As the kettlebell rises to your shoulder open your hand and get your hand around the bell rather than letting the bell flip over and bang up your wrist. Punch through straight overhead to complete the snatch. [Click here for more info on snatches.](#)



One-Arm Kettlebell Clean

Place a kettlebell between your feet. As you bend down to grab the kettlebell, push your butt back and keep your eyes looking forward. Swing the kettlebell between your legs as if you are passing a football behind you. Quickly reverse the direction and drive through forcefully with the hips. Bring the kettlebell straight up using body momentum (don't even think about trying to curl it). Open your hand and get your hand around the handle rather than letting the bell flip over and bang up your wrist. [Click here for more info on cleans.](#)



One-Arm Kettlebell Bottom Up Clean (Hang Position)

Hold a kettlebell like a suitcase. Swing it back and then forward and crush grip the handle to hold it in place in the rack position. Keep a loose grip until you reach the rack position and then crush grip the handle and flex your entire body to hold the bell in place. [Click here for more info on bottom up cleans.](#)



Kettlebell Sots Press

Clean a kettlebell and go into a full squat. Stay in the bottom position of the front squat and press the kettlebell overhead until it is locked out completely. Lower the kettlebell back to the starting position and repeat. Stay in the bottom position of the squat for the entire duration of the set. Make sure you push your glutes into your calves and contract your midsection for increases stability and power. If you cannot do a full squat, then you cannot do the Sots Press. [Click here for more info on the Sots Press.](#)



Kettlebell Windmill

Clean and press or snatch a kettlebell overhead with one arm. Keeping the kettlebell that is overhead locked out at all times, push your butt out in the direction of the locked out kettlebell. Turn your feet out at a forty-five degree angle from the arm with the locked

out kettlebell. Lower yourself until your non-working hand touches the floor or front foot. Pause for a second and reverse the motion back to the starting position. [Click here for more info on the windmill.](#)



Kettlebell Side Press

Clean a kettlebell with one arm. Push your hip out in the direction of the cleaned kettlebell. Turn your feet out at a forty-five degree angle from the arm with the kettlebell. While you are sitting back and lowering yourself, actively press the kettlebell at the same time. Continue to bend to the side until the kettlebell is locked out. [Click here for more info on the side press.](#)



Kettlebell Bent Press

Clean a kettlebell with one arm. Push your hip out in the direction of the cleaned kettlebell. Turn your feet out at a forty-five degree angle from the arm with the kettlebell. While you are sitting back and lowering yourself, contract your lat as hard as possible and move your body away from the kettlebell. Continue to bend to the side until the kettlebell is locked out. The difference between the Bent Press and the Side Press is that there is no press with the Bent Press. You simply hold the bell in position and extend your forearm as you shift your weight away from the kettlebell. [Click here for more info on the bent press.](#)



Kettlebell Turkish Get-Up (TGU)

Lie on your back and use two hands to position a kettlebell to the lockout position of one arm. Lets use the right side as an example to discuss proper performance. Keep the bell locked out at all times. Bring your right leg in and use your right leg to pivot to the left. Roll onto your left triceps and keep rolling until your hand touches the floor. Use your left hand and right leg to drive forward. As you are driving forward, bring your left leg in and take your right leg forward. Now keep driving forward until you are in the bottom position of a lunge. Take a second to gather yourself and then stand up. To complete the rep, reverse the movement to get back to the starting position. Do a lunge back to the bottom, then place your left hand behind your back until you feel the ground. Bring your legs forward and use your left arm to guide you back to the starting position. Take a second to gather yourself and then proceed to another repetition. [Click here for more info on the TGU.](#)



Double Kettlebell Military Press

Clean two kettlebells to your shoulders. Breathe in as you clean the bells to the rack position. Hold the kettlebells in tight against your core as if you are a boxer bracing for a punch. Try to touch your elbows to your midsection so that you have a strong foundation to press off of. The shortest distance between two locations is a straight line. Remember that when you do the overhead press. Imagine that the bells are connected and that you are pressing a barbell. Press the bells up and out only as much as necessary to complete the exercise. As the kettlebells pass your head, lean into the bells slightly so that they are locked out behind your head. Take a bench press tip from legendary powerlifting coach Louie Simmons and lower the kettlebells with your lats. Your lats are much stronger muscles than your shoulders and will assist in stabilizing the shoulders for maximum strength. Lowering two kettlebells is your chance to get your lats loaded up for the next press. [Click here for more info on presses.](#)



Double Kettlebell Push Press

Clean two kettlebells to your shoulders. Squat down a few inches and reverse the motion rapidly. Use the momentum from the legs to drive the kettlebells overhead. Once the kettlebells are locked out, lower the kettlebells to your shoulders and repeat. Stay very tight upon cleaning the kettlebells and when you squat down a few inches to power up the leg drive. However, when you reverse the direction get loose in order to move quickly and then get tight again once the bells are locked out overhead. [Click here for more info on push presses.](#)



Double Kettlebell Bent Over Row

Place two kettlebells between your feet. Bend your knees slightly and then push your butt out as much as possible as you bend over to get in the starting position. Imagine that you are trying to sit in a chair behind you. Arc your back and hold your chest high as you sit back to get into the optimal pulling position (Imagine that you are a Venice Beach bodybuilder if you are having difficulty with this). Grab both kettlebells and pull them to your stomach. Lower the bells back to the floor under control and repeat. [Click here for more info on rows.](#)



Kettlebell Renegade Row

Get into the top position of the pushup holding on to two kettlebells that are less than shoulder width apart. Take a shoulder width stance and push one kettlebell into the floor forcefully while you pull the other kettlebell in the working arm. Hold the kettlebell in the working arm in the top position for a second and then lower the kettlebell under control back to the floor. Switch arms after each repetition. [Click here for more info on rows.](#)



Kettlebell Pistol (One-legged Squat)

Hold a kettlebell close to your chest like a steering wheel. Hold the non-working leg up and squat all the way down with the working leg. Pause at the bottom for a second and then stand up. Pull yourself down slowly with your hamstrings and contract your abs, glutes, and quads for maximum tension and stability. [Click here for more info on Pistols.](#)

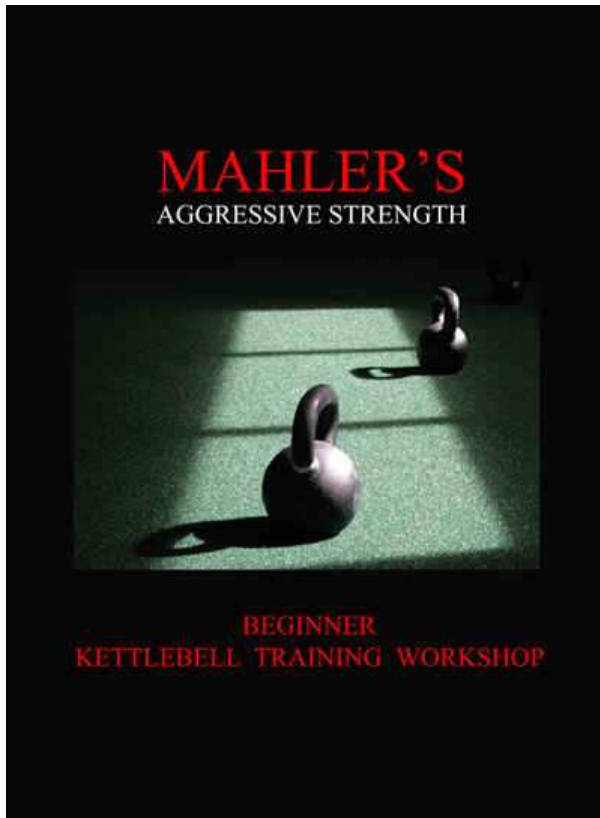


Double Kettlebell Front Squat

Clean two kettlebells to your shoulders and take a stance that you find comfortable for your body type. As you squat down, push your butt out. Looking straight ahead at all times, squat as low as you can and pause at the bottom. Rise back up and repeat. Pull

yourself down with your hamstring and breathe in as your lower yourself down to the bottom. Hold your breathe and stand up. [Click here for more info on squats.](#)

Kettlebell Resources



Level 1 Beginner Kettlebell Workshop DVD



The Kettlebell Solution for Fat Loss and Mental Toughness

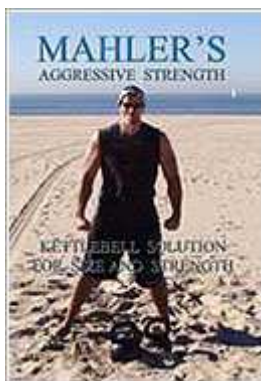
"The DVD is the best yet buddy! I'm finally interested in the fat loss side of things! GREAT detailed instruction with sound info on the finer aspects. You've cut through the crap that's out there & blown the lid off all the mystical BS that usually surrounds this subject AND not a stepper of 'spin' cycle in sight!! FANTASTIC!!"

- Dan Wait

The Key to winning the battle against fat and keeping it off is to build as much muscle as possible. Yes ladies this means you as well! Learn why with *The Kettlebell Solution For Fat Loss And Mental Toughness*.

The most effective way to combat fat is to build as much muscle as possible. The more muscle you have the more of a fat burning machine you become. I am happy to report that boring cardio programs that insult your intelligence and make you feel like an idiot are not only unnecessary but counter productive. The real solution to losing fat is not spending hours on low intensity aerobics burning calories. No, the most efficient path to success is the application of the following:

- Muscle building exercises to combat fat forcefully! (This DVD has 18 of them!)
- High Workout Frequency Full Body Workouts to obliterate fat
- Proper Diet as fat loss is 70% diet (No low fat diets allowed!)
- Restoration as you need rest to lose fat (Yes you need sleep and recovery methods)
- Optimizing Sex Hormones (Poor sex hormone levels equals: poor mood and poor body composition period. Men if your T levels are low forget about getting lean and ripped same goes for you ladies!)

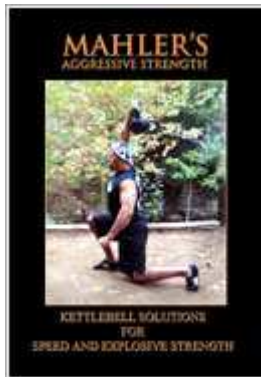


Kettlebell Solution for Size and Strength

If you enjoy lifting light kettlebells and have no desire to be strong with a powerful physique, then this DVD is not for you. However, if you are ready for a new challenge

with kettlebells and desire to maximize the benefits of kettlebell training, get this DVD today.

The Kettlebell Solution For Size And Strength will show how to get much stronger with kettlebells and build a muscular physique as well. This detailed DVD is for all levels and covers the basics enough for beginners and offers new challenges for experienced kettlebell lifters.



Kettlebell Solutions for Speed and Explosive Strength

Super comprehensive kettlebell training DVD that goes over how to build speed and explosive power in four different categories: Full body explosive power, Upper body explosive power, Lower body explosive power, and Rotational explosive power. Translation? You will be one explosive hombre after you practice the exercises on this DVD and follow the programs in the Free Kettlebell Training DVD E-book. I did not leave anything out on this DVD. Even if you do not care about getting faster and more explosive, you will love the wide variety of exercises that this kettlebell training DVD contains.





The Boys Are Back in Town Kettlebell Workshop DVD

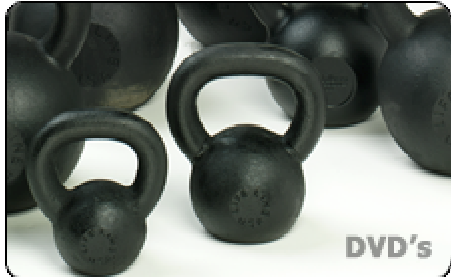
Ready to develop impressive gains in strength, mobility, internal energy, work capacity, and vitality? Our comprehensive fluff free three disc Kettlebell workshop DVD is exactly what you need to make 2009 your best training year!

- **Steve Cotter:** Russian Professional Kettlebell System and Chi-Kung
- **Mike Mahler:** Power Kettlebell Training and Optimizing Hormones
- **Steve Maxwell:** Joint Mobility and Kettlebell Core Training
- **Nate Morrison:** Performance Breathing for Kettlebells and Beyond

DVD Length: 7 hours and 30 minutes and as a bonus you will get a download link for the bonus report “The Aggressive Strength Solution For Optimizing Hormones And Well Being” when you place your order.



Recommended Kettlebells



Lifeline USA Kettlebells

The marketplace is finally ready for a high quality kettlebell at a great price. I have no doubt that you will love these kettlebells and you cannot beat the price!

"My name is Jon Bruney. I am the one who pulls Semi Trucks with John Brookfield. I just wanted tell you that I enjoyed your DVDs. Great job at packing in a lot info. I have lifted heavy kettlebells frequently as a part of my training programs. {The 145 Lb. max k-bell}. I wanted to work on some double drills, so I ordered your DVDs and two 97 lb. lifeline k-bells. You were right about the lifeline bells. They are best I have lifted, and I own a lot K-bells. The double drills are a blast and are really good assistance exercises for my log pressing."--**Jon Bruney**

Lifeline Kettlebell FAQ

Q: I have one Dragondoor bell, can I use a Lifeline USA bell with the DD one for double work?

A: *Yes it should not be a problem at all. While the LL bells have slightly thicker handles, the bell is pretty much the same size and will not be an issue.*

Q: Can the smaller ladies bells be used for Renegade Row?

A: *While the smaller bells look like real kettlebells (no plastic thin handles) I do not recommend anything below 35lbs for Renegade Row. It becomes too much of a stability issue with very light bells.*

Q: Do the handles have the slick smooth epoxy coating that DD bells have?

A: *Nope, I made a point of having LL avoid the slick handles. They are smooth enough that they will not tear up your hands and rough enough that they will not fly out of your hands on high repetition work.*

Q: How big is the 97lb bell?

A: *Around the same size as DD's 88lb bell. I love the 97s for double work!*

Q: How is the quality?

A: *I am very happy with the quality. The bells went through strict quality control measures and passed with flying colors. I could put my reputation behind any bell on the market and chose to do so with the LL bells. I have been training with them for two years and love them. I know you will as well.*



