

TACTICAL BARBELL

DEFINITIVE STRENGTH TRAINING
FOR THE OPERATIONAL ATHLETE



3RD
EDITION

TACTICAL BARBELL

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3rd EDITION

Consult a physician prior to beginning this program or any
new fitness regimen

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ORIGINS



Author

Congratulations on saving years of wasted time and effort in achieving your strength goals. To borrow an overused cliché, this is truly the program I wish I had when I started on the path to tactical fitness.

This book is for the man or woman that wants raw useable

strength and durability WITHOUT sacrificing athletic ability. This is for you if you want a program with **measurable** results that doesn't require you to spend hours under the barbell to the detriment of your other physical attributes. I wrote this to provide military, SWAT, and first responder types with a definitive strength program to incorporate into training. Due to time demands and the variety of skills required, an operator can't train like a powerlifter, and can't be sore for a week recovering from leg day. At the same time, maximal-strength is a **major** requirement that can't be ignored. Tactical athletes have to become experts at everything, which can be a juggling act. This book will deal with giving you the piece that is strength, in a way that doesn't force you to specialize or neglect your other skills.

This book is primarily aimed at those in the operational arena, but it's also for the general training enthusiast, weekend warrior, or fitness fanatic that wants a hard, muscular physique that delivers real world strength. Athletes or those preparing for an event will find a customizable approach that can be used annually or seasonally in block-fashion.

A SWAT operator may have to breach a fortified drug house, run behind a police dog, and wrestle with bad guys, all while wearing heavy body armor and carrying cumbersome gear. Infantry soldiers have to patrol dozens of miles in unforgiving terrain carrying up to 100lbs of kit or more, and then conduct gruelling house to house combat. While sleep deprived and fatigued. We all know how physical a

firefighter's job can be, posing for calendars and preparing the barbeque (I kid).

This is NOT a cookie cutter program. There are simple, definitive pieces that you can move around and incorporate within your lifestyle and current training. Many tactical types train a martial art or sport on the side. More to juggle. The right strength program can boost your results. The wrong type can take away from your performance and eat up your time.

I've included several templates to choose from, that take into account the amount of time you can allot to strength development, in relation to your additional training requirements and lifestyle.

This program came about through my own experiences and requirements. I've spent a combined total of approximately twenty years in the military and federal law enforcement. A considerable amount of that time has been in physically demanding units, as an infantryman, paratrooper, and later as a Hostage Rescue Team member. At the start of my journey, I was a 150lb teenager. I wasn't particularly strong, but I was motivated to excel in my field, mostly out of necessity. Fitness and strength used to be a very serious job requirement in certain military units. If you weren't in shape, life was hard. My interest in peak performance started at this time. I wanted to increase my strength, I *needed* to increase my strength in order to operate.

During my time in the military, I was exposed to exercises and operations involving sleep deprivation, overexposure to

the elements, hours of ruck marching with loads that weighed up to a 100lbs plus, attack maneuvers, digging foxholes and setting up defensive perimeters through the night. Anybody that's spent time in an infantry, spec ops, or combat arms unit will know exactly what I'm talking about here and might be nodding (or shuddering) in recognition.

Cardiovascular fitness was vital, but strength was a key requirement as well. Think about the load bearing capability and general resiliency required by a soldier in an infantry platoon. The military did a great job of keeping our cardiovascular system primed through regular unit PT, but didn't spend any time on proper strength training. The closest we got was high repetition push-ups, pull-ups, and carrying around heavy logs. These types of exercises have their place, but for developing maximal-strength they are very limited. I always saw military PT as being more about developing *the will to keep going* versus *training* or *improving* actual physical skills. Curious thing, even though I did lots of push-ups and pull-ups almost daily, my total numbers in those exercises stayed relatively the same. Only after I added progressive strength training did my numbers shoot up - even though I wasn't doing any extra push-ups or pull-ups.

I made a lot of mistakes in the beginning. I started out as many of us do, with the typical bodybuilder style of training. I got a little bigger and slightly more muscular, but I wasn't really getting much stronger. I was constantly sore, which caused unnecessary suffering during my regular duties. Morning PT with the military started to become painful. My

new muscles had a bit of a 'puffy' look to them as well. It dawned on me that bodybuilding wasn't making me much stronger in real life. Not only that, it was beginning to hinder me during military exercises or operations in the field. And if I wasn't 'pumped' in the gym, my muscles didn't look all that impressive either. I had peaked with a bench press of about 185lbs. Pretty mediocre. I was stuck and couldn't seem to lift any heavier. Of course, there were days where I felt great and energized and I'd lift a few more pounds than usual, but then I'd eventually drop back down to what seemed like my baseline. And vice versa. Other days I was fatigued and wouldn't be able to lift as heavy. I saw others that were my size lifting much more than me, so I couldn't accept that I was reaching my limits.

There was an extremely fit special operations soldier that trained at the base gym. A serious individual that didn't spend a whole lot of time socializing during his training. He looked impressive. He was muscular and ripped in the way that fighters or boxers are, as opposed to bodybuilders. He had a dense hard look to him, and did things in the gym that appeared superhuman, even to the other soldiers. I noticed a few interesting things when it came to his weight training. He would lift extremely heavy. His sets consisted of low repetitions, and he always racked the barbell before reaching failure. He looked relaxed and almost surgical while training. I never once saw him use cables, medicine balls, or anything like that. Nor did I see him perform isolation exercises like bicep curls or calf raises. His strength training seemed very basic; squats, bench press, deadlifts, weighted pull-ups. I was curious as to how he could lift as much as he

did, be as muscular as he was, and perform functionally the way I knew special operations soldiers had to. He advised me to look into something called 'periodization' and progressive strength training. He told me there was a major difference between bodybuilding and developing strength. Improving strength didn't necessarily improve size and vice versa. At the time these weren't well known concepts in my circle. It sounded pretty far-fetched. I mistakenly and ignorantly wrote his success off to genetics.

Fast forward several months. The day came around that changed my strength training completely and set me on a completely different path. I was in a bookstore, browsing the fitness section looking for a new program. I had been saving up for Arnold's Bodybuilding Encyclopaedia. While searching it out, I saw a very plain looking book on 'Periodization', by Eastern European authors I'd never heard of. Curious after my chat with the spec-ops soldier earlier in the year, I had a look. The book had charts, graphs and various complicated looking calculations. Things I'd never seen in a weight training book. I remember having Arnie's book in my other hand and being frozen with indecision, unable to decide which one to get. I only had enough money for one. Ultimately I ended up going with the periodization book, because Arnold's book looked like more of the same of what I was already doing, and the periodization book was something I'd never seen. It must've appealed to my military mindset at the time, my penchant for organization, structure, and having a plan.

The periodization book opened the doors and introduced me

to the concepts of periodization, and other Eastern bloc training ideologies.

Within 18 months I brought my bench up to 300lbs utilizing periodization and structured progression. Not terrible for someone that weighed about 150lbs, and had plateaued at 185lbs. My squat hit the 400's, and I was doing weighted pull-ups with 60lbs-100lbs on my back. Now I wasn't setting the world on fire with those numbers back then, but I want to give you an idea of how using correct training methods allowed me to progress. Keep in mind I lived on an Army base, and had full time military duties which included morning PT almost every day, (translation - 'fun' runs anywhere from 2 to 6 miles five days a week along with a healthy dose of calisthenics). My lifting routine would be interrupted by weeks or months of field time while on training exercises or operations. Long periods of uninterrupted training time were simply nonexistent.

In the field we did no PT and lived on rations. Our ration packs didn't contain organic boneless skinless chicken breast, or low carb entrees. In fact, I'm not really sure what they were. The chocolate bars seemed like the healthiest part. We slept in shifts. Even with these obstacles, my strength increased dramatically over time. Not because I was a special snowflake, but because I had learned effective training principles.

As my maximal-strength went up, everything became easier. As mentioned earlier, my push-up and pull-up numbers shot up. We had several monthly all-ranks Company level PT tests consisting of maximum push-ups,

pull-ups, sit-ups, 10km run etc. so I was clearly able to note any progress over time. In every one of the PT tests I took part in post periodization, I regularly hit the top three. It was around this time I met my goal of passing our brutal paratrooper selection, and earning my wings. I attribute a large portion of that success to the introduction of progressive strength training. Real world strength made everything easier, plain and simple!

Being an obsessive bookworm, I read and researched further, and started becoming familiar with concepts in the strength world. Concepts such as low rep training, strength vs hypertrophy, frequency, and the general uselessness of isolation exercises as compared to compound lifts. My programming changed over time, while staying true to the core fundamentals. I added new techniques to meet my unique needs more effectively.

After I left the military, I started a new career in Federal Law Enforcement. During that time, I spent several years on a Hostage Rescue Team. Once again, fitness had become an occupational priority.

My cardiovascular conditioning requirements had changed, but my need for a high base level of strength had increased. The HRT gig required far less of an endurance base than the military, but I still needed a high level of strength. Picture running up a flight of stairs wearing heavy body armor, carrying weapons and various tools, and then dealing with the situation at hand. Usually that would happen after having spent hours containing a residence or stronghold

prior to entry. If an operator just had great 'cardio', but little strength, it wasn't going to happen.

At this point in my life, I no longer lived on a military base. I was out in the 'real world'. No longer in my 20s, with dozens of additional mundane chores and duties eating up my time. I was dabbling in mixed martial arts as well. My strength-training had to adapt further. My world was no longer based around training, albeit I still had a very real occupational need for maximal strength. I couldn't spend two hours in the gym devoted to the barbell. I had to run, I had to work on general conditioning, MMA, and other work related skillsets. But I didn't want to sacrifice the least bit of the strength I had developed. I subscribe to the theory that it is a foundational fitness domain from which most other physical attributes benefit.

I played around with other strength programs at this time, but none met my particular requirements. Some were designed exclusively for powerlifters, others didn't leave me enough time or energy to devote to cardiovascular training. Some just plain didn't work and made me plateau fast because of a load progression that increased too quickly. Some had no progression at all.

Ultimately I returned to my original programming and made more changes. I modified it so I spent even less time in the gym, made it flexible enough that I could increase or decrease the amount of sessions per week, and focussed on core maximal-strength principles. I ruthlessly eliminated any hypertrophy elements. It worked. My strength shot up again. I was spending less than an hour in the gym. I freed up a

considerable amount of time and energy to develop other domains such as aerobic/anaerobic conditioning and strength-endurance. I was able to shift my focus when required.

It was during this time period that the final version of Operator template was born. When training time became scarce and I needed to focus on higher priorities, I would switch to the now popular two-day Fighter Template.

As you progress through this book, you'll learn about Operator and the other templates. You'll be shown in detail how they can be used to greatly increase your strength while adapting to your unique situation. TB is successfully being used around the world by numerous military, LEO, and first responder types with varying needs for strength. They range from SOF soldiers and detectives, to people with family commitments and limited training time. MMA types/combat athletes also tend to find success with this programming. Like tactical athletes, they can't devote their training time to strength work alone. You'll find that although TB is flexible with many options for incorporating it in your training, the backbone of the system remains the same throughout. Don't confuse flexibility with not having a plan.

The result of my modifying, adjusting, and experimenting for two decades is the book you now have in front of you. From the trenches. Not untested theory that sounds like it should work. This is what has worked for me, and for numerous operational athletes.

But talk is cheap. Periodically you'll be required to test your strength levels. Testing will clearly show whether or not you've increased your abilities, a simple enough measure of program effectiveness.

3rd EDITION

Tactical Barbell: Definitive Strength Training for the Operational Athlete was originally designed for a very small niche, the operator or tactical team member looking for an efficient way to get strong. That strength plan had to be compatible with existing training; usually intense conditioning and/or endurance work. It had to take into account disturbed sleep patterns, varied shift schedules and sometimes lacklustre nutrition. TB delivered - 'Operator' and 'Fighter' are now widely used strength templates in the operational world. Our users include tactical law enforcement, active duty Marines, special operations personnel, private military contractors, firefighters, paramedics and combat athletes.



TB Rep with the Marine Corps at 29Palms

As an operational athlete you're in a unique category. Your schedule might constantly change and probably includes graveyards. If you're special operations or infantry, you might even spend the occasional Monday to Friday with your eyes open. Your diet is rarely perfect. Try finding a healthy meal at 0400 hours while on patrol. Donuts anyone? Sure, once in a while you remember to pack protein bars or prep your meals, but that isn't the norm. Good luck trying to maintain "good sleep habits" or "sleep hygiene" whatever that is. And it goes without saying you can't neglect cardiovascular training to gain a few pounds in the squat rack.

If the success of your training relied on staying within those rigid parameters and having the perfect little lifestyle, then you'd be in trouble. Luckily this isn't the case. If it were, every single special operations/tactical LEO member would

an out-of-shape mess. Think about it. None of these characters can even spell 'sleep hygiene'.

The reason TB is so successful is because we take a different approach to developing maximal-strength. Instead of making sure all the uncontrollable variables (proper sleep, peak nutrition, no cardio etc.) are in place for one big push in the weightroom, we train sub-maximally and use weapons like frequency and load manipulation. Strength is 'practiced'. We train with the mindset that we won't be operating at optimal frequency most of the time and structure our training methods accordingly. So if you don't get your usual 17 hours of sleep, relax, all is not lost.

In this edition we're going to expand on our strength training method and refine some of the earlier approaches. Small tweaks, corrections, and best practices that have emerged over the past couple years as a result of having thousands of new minds using and modifying TB to suit their unique goals.

Here's some of the new material. If you're already an experienced TB user/reader, **there are some significant changes, make sure you read the Chapters that relate to the following:**

OPERATOR + OPERATOR I/A

The set scheme/template for standard Operator has changed slightly.

Op I/A is our intermediate/advanced 'floating' strength template found in this edition only. When you can no longer

maintain the frequency of regular Operator, this is the next step. Original/regular Operator is our most popular, effective, and efficient template to date. But at some point as you get stronger and stronger, you'll outgrow it. Your recovery needs will change. Your need for manipulating volume will change. This is Operator part 2, and the slight changes will allow you to continue using it for the rest of your training 'career' after you graduate from regular Operator. If you're a pure tactical athlete, this template will ultimately be your bread-and-butter when it comes to maximal-strength development.

FIGHTER TEMPLATE (BANGKOK VERSION)

This version of Fighter contains progressive strength-endurance training in addition to maximal-strength. For those of you that require an element of strength-endurance in your training year round.

The program now consists of three core templates - Operator, Zulu, and Fighter. Each has an I/A version.

STRENGTH ENDURANCE

Strength-Endurance (SE) basics were covered in Tactical Barbell II: Conditioning. We're going to go a little more in-depth in this book. You'll be provided with a couple new ways to train and program SE, along with dos and don'ts. You'll also find an introductory/beginner SE model exclusive to this book. A gentler, kinder SE template.

INCORPORATING DEADLIFTS

Some thrive on higher volume deadlifting, others need to be carried away on a stretcher if they do more than one work set. In this chapter you'll find several options for including this finicky exercise in your cluster. You'll learn how to customize the volume and frequency based on your needs/abilities.

FORCED PROGRESSION

An alternative to the Retest method for intermediate/advanced lifters.

ONE

PRINCIPLES RESULTS

First and foremost, Tactical Barbell values results over elegant, popular, or attractive appearing methods that may not deliver. **Results speak.** Just because something is new or different does not necessarily make it more effective. Just because something is complicated or has more moving parts does not necessarily make it superior. This program has a built in mechanism for you to measure your results. Tactical Barbell is for the operator or trainee that needs a reliable, repeatable system for gaining strength.

SIMPLICITY

Tactical Barbell fully buys into the notion that ‘simplicity is the ultimate sophistication’. In the tactical arena, simplicity wins out over complicated. You won’t find medicine balls, cables, pulleys, balance boards, or vibrating belts in this program. Fluff free. We take the direct route to goals and focus on excelling at the basics.

EXPERTISE

You shouldn’t be satisfied with mediocre or average

programming. Tactical Barbell will set you on the path to superior results. Everything has been tested, used, and taught by those in the field. No coaches here coming solely from a position of theory, whom have never served fulltime on a tactical or combat-arms military unit.

TWO

OBJECTIVE

'Iron is full of impurities that weaken it; through forging it becomes steel and is transformed into a razor-sharp sword. Human beings develop in the same fashion'

Morihei Ueshiba - Founder of Aikido

Chances are, if you're in the tactical arena, military, or SWAT, there is a Jack of All Trades aspect to your training. Operators are always trying to figure out how to get good at everything; strength, endurance, anaerobic capacity and muscular-endurance to name a few attributes. Unfortunately, you can't stop at 'good'. You have to become well above average. It's a constant juggling act. Some programs deliver great metabolic conditioning, but lack proper strength or endurance protocols. You start excelling in that one area, but your strength and endurance start lagging. Other programs deliver great strength training, but they leave you with less time or energy than you'd like to work on your conditioning. Some may even require you to

carry a lighter cardio load and consume an excessive amount of calories for success.

As a tactical athlete you have to master multiple fitness domains. This book covers two of them;

1. Maximal Strength: the ability to generate force
2. Strength-Endurance: the ability to generate force over an extended period of time.

Let's briefly touch on **maximal-strength for the tactical athlete**. When I use the term 'tactical athlete' or 'strength training for operational athletes' you might envision doing push-ups in combat boots just before sprinting up a hill while covered in mud. Fortunately, this has nothing to do with strength-training, tactical, or otherwise.

This is why Tactical Barbell exists:

1. **Maximal-strength is a foundational physical attribute for the tactical athlete.** In English, this means it's very important and contributes to the development of other attributes. For example, Maximal-Strength is involved in expressing explosive power, and it also converts to things like strength-endurance. The more you have, the more of those other things you can have. It doesn't work in reverse. If you've spent time in a combat arms military unit, you won't ever deny the benefits maximal-strength provides in terms of resiliency, load bearing capability, and injury prevention.

2. **The most *efficient* way to increase maximal-strength is through the use of barbells**, due to the ease of incremental loading and the amount of weight that can be safely handled. More on this later.
3. **The best barbell programs that currently exist aren't designed with the tactical athlete in mind.** Most of the good ones were developed by people that are powerlifters or pure strength athletes & coaches. These programs are excellent, but rarely compatible with an operational lifestyle and don't take into account the need for the athlete to simultaneously train other fitness attributes.
4. **Most existing 'tactical' fitness programs give progressive barbell work lip service only.** You'll get an occasional front squat or push-press or some other 'tactical' lift mixed in with box jumps and burpees. But no sustained and calculated progression model. The tactical community still tends to equate anything barbell related with bodybuilding, i.e. barbells will make you big, bulky, slow, and useless in the field. They're for muscle-heads in tank tops. They have a hard time separating the *tools* from the *attribute* of maximal-strength.
5. **TB is a barbell strength program designed specifically for tactical athletes** using correct principles and **best practices** to increase maximal-strength while taking into account the need to

simultaneously train other fitness attributes. We'll show you how to put all the pieces together.

We're not going to give strength training lip service by having you do a token amount of squats or presses once in a blue moon with no progression or systematic improvement. You'll be provided with a system of training that will greatly increase your maximal-strength and strength-endurance (SE). While leaving you time and energy to train other attributes such as conditioning/cardio, or occupational/sport specific skills training.

You will be able to plug this program into your current training lifestyle. You can make it the focus of your training, or you can adapt it around your priority work. You choose how much or how little of your time you want to devote to maximal-strength development.

The programming is simple, and you'll be able to measure your results through periodic testing. You'll be using calculated load progression. When you hit the gym you'll know what exercises you're performing, how many sets, reps, and how much weight you're lifting in advance. In the big picture, you'll be able to manipulate exercises, templates and blocks of training time to fit your goals.

The system is template based, but the sessions are customized for you. Every weight you lift will be based on your own personal one repetition maximums. Meaning the total amount of weight you can lift once. Don't stress if you're not familiar with this, it'll all be made crystal clear. You'll be surprised at how simple using maximums are, and

you'll wonder how you got by without them. What I want you to take from this is that whether you're currently squatting 500lbs or just the bar, the program will be tailored to you and your current level of strength.

This is not a program specializing in bodybuilding or competitive powerlifting. There are plenty of more suitable resources out there for those specific goals.

Conditioning, although equally important isn't covered in this volume. You'll find detailed conditioning protocols and a systematic approach to improving your energy systems in Tactical Barbell II: Conditioning.

Basic nutrition will be touched on. Nutrition can be a very personal approach with all the various diets and styles of eating out there, so I won't go into any great depth.

Supplements. I am going to give you my personal experience with a variety of supplements. Some have made a **significant** difference in my own training, and others were a total waste of money.

Bottom line, this book is all about **strength training for tactical athletes**. People that require raw strength within an occupational role, with the added complexity of having to be equally talented in other attributes. The objective of this book is to give you the strength piece of the puzzle for your unique operational world.

THREE

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM

'Action is the foundational key to all success.'

Picasso

First, read the *entire* book. Then choose and customize your program. Reading it all first will allow you to understand the flexibility of the programming and all available options.

There's no need to have all the answers right now, but as you read through the book, mull over the following points in your head;

Where on the list of desired physical attributes is maximal-strength? Is it high priority, number 1 on your list? Or does it take a back seat to skills work and conditioning? Maybe you need an equal dose of both strength and conditioning.



This ties in to how many sessions per week you're going to devote to strength. Two, three, or four. Have an idea of how much time you can spend in the gym per session. If you can train frequently but only for a short period of time, then Operator or Zulu template might be a fit. If you can only spend two days a week in the gym, but have some flexibility with the duration of your session, you might consider selecting a higher number of exercises and pairing it with the two-day Fighter template. If strength is low on the list of priorities but still needs your attention, you might choose a minimal number of exercises and go with Fighter template. This is a very popular combo for endurance athletes such as marathoners or triathletes. This is the lowest effective dose. It'll get the job done and you'll be pleasantly surprised at your results with this minimalist approach. Fighter template + Squat/Deadlift, along with a few sets of push-ups as a finisher is becoming a very popular combo with competitive distance runners using the system.

Take a hard look at your situation. Don't overestimate the amount of training time you have. If you're humming and hawing between thinking you might be able to train 3 days or 4, go with 3. Err on the side of the least amount of time you'll consistently stick to.

Other things to keep in mind. As a tactical athlete your goals will have to work within your logistics. Are you currently serving in the military; infantry or some other physically demanding unit? When you're in garrison is your training schedule vastly different from when you're overseas on ops? What about equipment availability. Maybe in garrison you can dedicate 4 days a week to strength, but only two when overseas. You'll find the various templates can be switched up as your circumstances change. The versatility of the exercise 'cluster' concept will have you covered for any changes or deficiencies in equipment.

Are you a serious combat athlete that trains and prioritizes fight skills 3-5 times a week? If so, you might want to consider the 2-day Fighter template.

Are you a 9-5 office worker with no other physical demands in life? You'll have the opportunity to shoulder a heavier training load compared to the average tactical athlete.

Are you primarily interested in strength for a seasonal sport? You can establish a solid base of strength off-season by doing a heavy strength template for a few months prior to tapering off and working exclusively on your sport specific skills.

You might cycle through all of the above. We'll have you

covered. Become familiar with the material and you'll be ready to pivot and adapt to any changing training situation.

So pick a template that fits your weekly schedule. After you decide on a template, pick or create an exercise cluster. Clusters are simply exercise groupings that allow you to customize and tweak your program further. There are minimalist clusters with only two lifts, ranging up to clusters with 6 or more. A heavy cluster with 4 or more exercises turns a 2-day template into more of a substantial strength-prioritized program. A standard or minimalist cluster makes a 3 or 4-day template high-speed/low-drag and more manageable.

After you decide on a template and cluster, head into the gym and test your one repetition maximums for all exercises. Then simply plug your numbers into your chosen template and execute. For the purposes of this program, you don't have to test a one rep maximum, you can test a 3 to 5 rep maximum and calculate from there - so don't stress if the idea of testing a one repetition all-out effort isn't your cup of tea. Testing is very simple, and it will all be made clear in an upcoming chapter.

To recap:

- Read the entire book.
- Decide how many sessions/week you can allot to strength training
- Pick the template that fits your allotted time
- Choose or create an exercise cluster
- Test your maximums for all exercises in your

cluster

- Plug the numbers into your template
- Execute
- After 6-12 weeks, retest and repeat

Here are a couple examples of the program in use. These examples aren't meant to entertain; they're meant to give you an idea of how you can fit TB into your life. Don't worry if some of the terms are unfamiliar at this point.

MAX – FIGHTER TEMPLATE

Max is a police officer and an amateur boxer. He's in his 40s and trains year-round. He trains at his boxing gym three times a week, which includes skills, bag work, conditioning and sparring. The training is demanding and takes a toll on his energy levels. Max wants to up his game, and believes additional strength training and cardiovascular conditioning will benefit. He knows increased strength and conditioning will serve him on the street as a general duty/patrolman.

As a boxer, Max doesn't need powerlifter-levels of freaky strength. But maximal-strength converts to power if transitioned correctly. Goes without saying, power for a boxer is extremely beneficial. But choosing one of the 3 or 4-day strength templates might be overkill for his particular schedule and requirements. Heavy strength training 3-4 days a week on top of his current lifestyle would probably cause fatigue and be detrimental to his boxing classes. Max has to take into account his age, recovery abilities and free time. He can't afford to go to work feeling exhausted and

zoned out all the time. Being a police officer requires him to stay sharp and on his toes all shift.

But Max is a smart cat, so he goes with the 2-day Fighter template. He strength trains twice a week with a cluster containing only 3 major lifts. He continues to box three times a week. Max adds a longer endurance type run once a week to touch up his cardio outside of boxing class. His strength sessions are brief, so occasionally he adds a 20-minute higher intensity conditioning session **after** his barbell training (think MMA style bodyweight workouts, tabata, burpees etc.).

Max is now up to six days a week of training. Boxing three times, brief strength training twice, and one longer steady state run. And occasionally a short metabolic conditioning session after his strength training. If Max has a draining week at work or a social function, he can drop the long steady state run. This frees up his time and gives him two full days in the week to recover. Or he can keep the roadwork and drop the metcons after his strength work. The point is he has flexibility and options. He's taking his physical abilities to the next level in a way that makes it all manageable. Max's power and stamina have improved due to correct progressive strength training techniques and the addition of a little extra cardiovascular conditioning. He gets muscular and powerful, without a bulky physique that slows him down in the ring due to its high metabolic price. Max is a good example of the typical 'tactical athlete' that struggles to figure out how to incorporate an effective strength program into a busy life.

At the other end of the spectrum we have John. John works as a civilian analyst at his police department. He's in his mid-twenties and not involved in any extracurricular sports other than the occasional hockey game. John wants incredible amounts of strength and decent conditioning. His job is a very steady 9 to 5 type of gig which involves living in a cubicle and working on his computer all day. John decides to use Zulu template, which consists of four strength sessions per week. He decides to go all-in and picks a cluster containing six major exercises. Remember, other than his training John's lifestyle is relatively sedentary. John performs 3 exercises per session, four days a week. He runs for 2-3 miles twice a week on the days he's not lifting. And finally one day of complete rest every week. John sees great results within a relatively short period of time because his focus is narrow and his schedule allows him to stay consistent. He also has few other demands on his energy levels which allows for quicker recovery.

The above examples illustrate two different situations that call for different approaches. They're almost at opposite ends of the spectrum. A one-size-fits-all plan rarely works in the real world.

THE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS

All this program requires for success is for you to show up and go through the motions.

You will know in advance what exercises you're going to perform, number of repetitions, and exactly how many pounds you'll be lifting. All you have to do is **execute**. Simple, but not always easy. There's no guess work, no superhuman willpower required, and it won't take any strength that you don't already possess. That is the nature of a progression-based program like TB.

However, if you frequently miss training sessions you'll stop positively adapting to the increased loads. You'll start backsliding. Keep doing this often enough and you'll be spinning your wheels with no result. In the beginning it's especially important to stay on track. As you gain experience and increase your baseline levels of strength, you'll have more leeway when it comes to skipping sessions or taking chunks of time off.

You don't have to work like an animal to get results with this program. **Aim for being consistent**. Physically put your body in the gym or on the track when you're supposed to, even if you feel exhausted and think your session's going to suck. Don't try to fire yourself up. Just go through the motions if you have to. Keep doing that over and over and you will be pleasantly surprised over time with the massive changes. Your motivation will increase as you experience

success. Motivation tends to grow *after* success strangely enough.

JERRY SEINFELD'S SECRET

Consistency is the secret formula, the magic bullet. Seinfeld gave some important advice to a fellow comic that was following in his footsteps. Advice that Seinfeld believed contributed to his success:

He (Seinfeld) told me to get a big wall calendar that has a whole year on one page and hang it on a prominent wall. The next step was to get a big red magic marker.

He said for each day that I do my task of writing, I get to put a big red X over that day. "After a few days you'll have a chain. Just keep at it and the chain will grow longer every day. You'll like seeing that chain, especially when you get a few weeks under your belt. Your only job next is to not break the chain."

"Don't break the chain," he said again for emphasis.

You can apply the above to this program. Your only job is to go to the gym on the designated days. It's inconsequential whether you have a good session or a bad one. Go through the motions if you have to. A year later when you look back and see your new strength numbers and your transformed physique, you'll be pleasantly surprised. Consistency and persistence can move mountains. Don't break the chain.

Write it down if you have to - **CONSISTENCY WINS**

FOUR

OPERATIONAL ATHLETES

The term 'tactical' or 'operational' athlete gets thrown around a lot in this book. I'll define what that is for the purposes of this program. A unique breed, tactical athletes may be required to physically operate at a superior level in stressful situations and dangerous environments. Due to the requirements of their chosen profession, tactical athletes are rarely specialists. They require mastery over a variety of attributes including limit-strength, conditioning, and job related skillsets. Training time and energy has to be divided accordingly. It is counterproductive for the tactical athlete to specialize in any one skill to a high degree.

Operational Athletes include but are not limited to the following:

- Military Personnel, particularly SOF or Infantry/Combat Arms soldiers
- Tactical Law Enforcement; SWAT/HRT/ERT/ESU
- Other Law Enforcement; Patrol, K9, Street Crime Units
- Firefighters and paramedics

- Combat athletes; martial artists, MMA, boxers
- Private Security Contractors (PMC)
- Civilians looking to develop a high level of skill in multiple fitness domains

MINDSET

If you're coming to TB from another style of training, powerlifter-based for example, you'll need to look at fitness from a different angle. You'll need to adopt the mindset of a tactical, or operational athlete.

Operational athletes place an equal value on strength and conditioning.

One is not more important than the other. If you can bench 400lbs but can't run for 6 miles without stopping, then your big bench is useless. If you can run a marathon in record time but can't strap a hundred pounds to your back and ruck for several hours over mountainous terrain while hungry and fatigued, then it might be time to hit the squat rack.

Operational athletes strive to be superior in multiple fitness domains, not elite in one.

Your dreams of deadlifting 1000lbs have to die. Instead, your goal is to be the guy that can deadlift 500-600lbs and still complete a marathon.

Being superior in multiple fitness domains is elite.

Think about it.

It takes an organized, strategic, disciplined, and focused mind to achieve superior ratings in **multiple** physical qualities simultaneously. Not just 'good', but 'superior'.

Your 'personal records' and 'best times' will fluctuate throughout the year.

This occurs because of less-than-ideal training situations, constantly changing environments, and while temporarily shifting focus to work on other physical attributes. Stop thinking in terms of 'PR'ing every session, and think in terms of improving the attribute of strength over the long haul. PRs or maximums are used by the tactical athlete to gauge progress and operational-readiness. Not as a goal in and of itself. They're used to calculate future blocks of training and to assess results of prior training. Don't stress if your bench press 1 rep maximum drops by a few pounds while you're running a base building block. As long as your strength is increasing over time in the big picture, fluctuations up or down in the present mean nothing. Chart your overall progress over months and years, not weeks.

An Operational Athlete trains for performance first.

If you're trying to figure out whether to cut or bulk, or mulling over how to bring up your lagging calf muscles, you're reading the wrong book. We've found over the years, that things like aesthetics, fat loss and all the rest take care of themselves if you focus on improving your performance. A body that can generate double or triple the amount of force it used to is going to go through some dramatic physical changes. In other words, as long as you have your

nutrition and conditioning somewhat in check, you will be more than satisfied with your 'look'.

FIVE

STRENGTH VS HYPERTROPHY

If you've been in the strength and conditioning world for a while, you'll probably already know the difference. Feel free to skip this. For those who have never been exposed to this concept I'll give you a general overview.

In this book we are primarily interested in developing **maximal** or **limit** strength: *the ability to generate force*. Hypertrophy on the other hand refers to *developing muscle size*.

Think about it in terms of bodybuilders vs powerlifters. A bodybuilder's primary goal is to train for aesthetics. They are judged in their sport by how they look, NOT by how they perform. Some will lift heavy weights by virtue of their training regimen, however they may not be proportionately strong. A powerlifter needs to be strong in a way that allows him to generate force and lift the heaviest weight possible. They are judged on their performance, not on the appearance of their physique. Powerlifters lift far heavier weights than bodybuilders, yet they don't resemble bodybuilders and can sometimes be much smaller.

A wrestler needs the type of strength that allows him to generate force against his opponent. Yet he must adhere to a weight class. A gymnast needs incredible amounts of strength to generate the force required to perform various physical maneuvers. What does a wrestler's musculature and build look like? What about the gymnast? Have you ever taken your girlfriend or boyfriend to a Cirque De Soleil show? Cirque De Soleil is an incredible display of maximal strength. Now compare the aforementioned athletes with professional bodybuilders on stage.

So what does all this tell us? Training for size and strength are different animals. Of course there's overlap, but we're focusing on optimization. Training for size or hypertrophy may cause increases in strength, just as training for strength may cause some residual hypertrophy or size. But if size is your goal, strength training alone is not the most efficient method to get there, just as if you're primarily training for strength, bodybuilding is not the way to do it.

If bodybuilders represented the pinnacle of athletic **strength**, then you can bet every Olympian or paid professional athlete that required strength in his chosen sport would look like a bodybuilder. They are in the ultimate competitive field and will use whatever works to get the job done. Make sense? Bodybuilding is a unique and demanding discipline unto itself, but in this program the focus is on strength not aesthetics. Training with weights for function rather than appearance. The type of function that a wrestler, or gymnast displays.

People are sometimes surprised when they meet real life

military spec-ops personnel and find many are small, wiry, or average looking. Most look nothing like Arnold Schwarzenegger in Commando. Many look disappointingly underwhelming. Because this program is geared towards the tactical operator, mass is not going to be the primary focus. Having said that, depending on your chosen template, how much you eat and how much conditioning you do on the side, you can still get big. In fact, if you're male and you're not careful with your conditioning and nutrition, you might get a little bigger than you want.

Being a tactical athlete, you need to extract the ingredients that make powerlifters brutally strong, and adapt them to your training in a fashion that allows you to develop your other tools simultaneously. Most of you can't sustain a full-bore powerlifter style approach to training. For example, you can't put on a ton of weight to give yourself a better mass-strength ratio. You certainly can't discontinue long bouts of cardio. This is where Tactical Barbell comes in.



We're not going to discount extra lean body mass

completely. Far from it. For certain athletic endeavours, size IS beneficial. Mass becomes functional. Think football, or hockey. Certain tactical athletes that are skinnier than average might benefit with a slight increase in overall mass to promote resiliency and structural strength. Comes in handy when rucking with heavy loads and other tasks. Firefighters are another subset that come to mind - wearing upwards of 60-70lbs of gear and hauling around chainsaws, ladders and breaching tools. Keep in mind you will grow lean body mass as a side effect using all of the 3-4 day templates in this program. In fact, some of you may have to take a few active steps to *minimize* hypertrophy if it becomes cause for concern. More on this later.

Your strength and muscle gains on this program will benefit all the other aspects of your training, not slow you down. Again, think sprinter, combat athlete, gymnast.

Weight training generally causes different types of adaptation to muscle tissue. Sarcoplasmic hypertrophy, and myofibril development are the two we're going to discuss.

Sarcoplasmic hypertrophy is generally induced by typical bodybuilder style training, 8-12 repetitions against a submaximal load, the goal being to increase muscle size. Concepts like muscle failure, isolation exercises and several exercises per body part play a role in developing muscular hypertrophy. This is not the most efficient way to develop maximal-strength. This is good for aesthetics, and becomes functional if one has a need for mass or weight in their given endeavor, such as the aforementioned football linebacker. To simplify, sarcoplasmic hypertrophy primarily

gives you muscle size. *Too much sarcoplasmic hypertrophy can be detrimental to athletic performance depending on your sport or activity.* Notice I said *too much*. Some trainees can comfortably function with more size than others, there are many different factors involved. Generally speaking, the heavier you are for your frame, the harder your heart has to work. Deciding on how much muscle mass you need depends on your role and situation. The candidate working his way through military SOF selection is going to feel every extra ounce. As will anyone in an endurance/aerobic based role. The underweight firefighter or SWAT member on the other hand will probably have an easier life by putting on some muscle mass. None of this is written in stone - your training history, experience and genetics all play a role. There are always exceptions.

Myofibrillar development is generally increased by intense contractions against maximal loads for about 1-6 repetitions, resulting in an increased ability to generate force (strength). Myofibrillar adaptation is what this program is all about. Again, to simplify, myofibrillar development improves maximal-strength, or your ability to generate force.

The two can be complementary, more hypertrophy may allow for more myofibrillar development, which allows for more hypertrophy and so on.

In this program we're going to try and avoid *excessive sarcoplasmic hypertrophy*. Make no mistake, you will become far more muscular over time with this program, but we're going to try and minimize the excessive bulk. As one

TB reader puts it, you want to be Wolverine, not the Hulk. Food and conditioning load play a huge role, but so do training practices.

To recap, don't mistake bodybuilding for strength training and don't mistake muscle size for strength or capability. Ask anyone that trains a combat sport, Muay Thai or BJJ - when an overly buff-bodybuilder-type student joins the class, the students internally sigh in relief because they know he'll make for an easy sparring session. Bodybuilders and strength athletes may use some of the same tools, i.e. bench or squat, but they are training in very different fashions for different goals. Strength training, powerlifting and bodybuilding are not the same.

So can you get strong without putting on excessive mass? Of course. Wrestlers need to be extremely strong, but can't gain unnecessary mass due to weight class. They can't become bulky like Mr. Olympia. But you can bet their coaches have them on programs that are making them incredibly strong - minus the mass of a bodybuilder. How are they doing that? That's the angle this program is coming from.

SIX

STRENGTH VS CONDITIONING

'The first virtue in a soldier is endurance of fatigue; courage is only the second virtue.'

Napoleon

The goal of **maximal-strength** training is **to increase the amount of physical force you can generate**. Large heavy loads are handled which triggers strength adaptation. The adaptation results in increased muscle mass, thicker stronger bones and joints to effectively handle increased loads. Surprisingly, decreased body fat is also part of the package. But most importantly as stated your body increases its ability to generate force.

Conditioning can mean various things, but in the Tactical Barbell lexicon, it primarily refers to your energy systems (aerobic/anaerobic) and work capacity. We lump these together because unlike maximal-strength training, they play well with each other, and in some cases can be trained simultaneously without detriment, using complementary techniques.

We tend to think of conditioning as jogging, sprints, skipping, etc. But, conditioning is not limited to traditional cardio. You can use weights, bodyweight exercises, burpees, hit a punching bag and swim. Some conditioning programs combine various modalities such as sprinting, weights, and plyometrics in a single session.

Let's talk a little more about combining certain activities. You may be familiar with group conditioning classes that combine weights with anaerobic HIIT style training. Even though these group workouts have you playing with barbells and getting a massive pump, you are not strength training. Your strength, or ability to generate force will not improve very much. For substantial strength increases you need to incrementally progress with maximal and near maximal loads. The load you lift on Monday, prepares you to lift a slightly heavier load on Wednesday, which prepares you to lift an even heavier load on Friday - to use an oversimplified example. Think about group conditioning classes. You might deadlift during your workout, and then not revisit the deadlift for a couple weeks. By then you have lost any net strength gain or training effect. You're back to square one.

Let's add to that; proper strength training requires loads that you can lift for roughly 1 - 6 repetitions. This generally requires a focus solely on strength in a session. If you are fatigued from doing 400 meter sprints followed by 100 burpees, and you attempt to lift near maximal-loads, you're setting yourself up for long term failure, and possible injury. You're not training in the most efficient manner to increase strength. You're primarily improving your anaerobic

capacity, and possibly a little strength-endurance depending on the workout. Not effective strength training.

Think about it. I want to train my strength. In order to increase the amount of force my body can generate, I have to lift loads in the 70%-100% range for 1 - 6 repetitions while avoiding muscular failure. Avoiding failure allows me to increase the amount of times I can lift that heavy object. If I fail too soon, I'm out of the game too early. Over the course of my training as my loads near the 90%-100% range, my repetitions will be lower and lower. I want to succeed in lifting the assigned weight, so that my body can adapt by learning how to generate more force, and lift it easier the next time around. If I fail because I am fatigued from doing a hundred burpees 30 seconds ago, I won't be able to safely lift a 90% load for 3 repetitions. I've sabotaged myself. **My maximum-strength is not improving, because I am too fatigued to provide the appropriate response to the stimulus required to increase strength.** My anaerobic/aerobic capacity is improving because of the hundreds of burpees, and I might gain a *little* bit of strength by virtue of handling heavier objects. That's assuming I'm a beginner when it comes to handling weights. More experienced lifters will *lose* a significant amount of strength going from traditional strength training to a mix-n-match type workout with no systematic method of progression.

If I want to improve my conditioning, let's say with a focus on strength-endurance and the anaerobic system, I could sprint, do a hundred burpees, and then do 50 repetitions of

barbell bench press with a *light* weight. Let's say 20% to 60% of my one repetition maximum. But my maximal-strength, or the amount of overall force I can generate on the bench press won't be going up because of that session. Get me? Why is the amount of weight important? Because the more weight I can get used to pushing around equals the more force I can generate, which equals greater maximal or limit-strength.

Let's touch on another topic, the occasional feud between body weight exercises and barbells. We'll compare push-ups and the bench press. Some newcomers to 'tactical' style fitness have this attitude that push-ups are more 'functional', more authentic, and better than the bench press. They believe the bench is only for gym rats concerned about getting a pump and checking themselves out in the mirror. They know better and only do real exercises like kipping pull ups and burpees.

Again, the *purpose* of maximal-strength training is to train the body to **generate more force**. You do this by lifting very heavy loads, which force your body to adapt. The science is established. As mentioned previously, the loads have to be heavy enough, so that you can only handle them for 1 to 6 repetitions. If the loads are lighter, your body isn't shocked enough for that particular type of adaptation (maximal-strength) to occur. If I can lift a light weight or apply force one hundred times in a row, it is not enough of a stressor to induce maximal-strength improvement. But it falls within the practice needed to develop a different sort of adaptation: strength-endurance. So after training with

higher repetitions and lighter weight, I won't be able to lift heavier in the future (i.e. generate greater force) but I'll probably get better at performing more repetitions with that light weight. Great strategy to develop strength-endurance, but not maximal strength.

Now let's see how this applies to push-ups/bodyweight work vs weights. With push-ups, I am limited in how much of a load I can use because of my bodyweight. Now if you're a beginner or you can only do three push-ups without falling flat on your face, guess what - you're training maximal-strength! You are falling within the high tension/low rep boundaries required to develop it. But this only lasts until you can do about ten to twenty push ups, then you're back to strength-endurance generally speaking. At 10-20 reps, you're no longer generating enough tension to improve maximal-strength. Your ability to generate force won't increase.

So how do we solve this? If I'm interested in developing max-strength, then obviously doing 100s of push-ups everyday isn't going to budge the needle. How about we add some artificial weight to increase my body weight so I'm back to only being able to do three push-ups before falling on my face. I put a 50lb plate on my back. Now I'm happy because I'm working on maximal-strength again. That temporarily solves the problem. Down the road, we run into the same problem. I need more weight again. 50lbs on my back isn't doing it anymore, because I can do over 10 with ease now. But it's going to be awkward adding even more weight, putting a couple hundred extra pounds on my

back while doing push-ups...maybe we can create a bench of some sort with a rack so I can handle super heavy weights and still strengthen the same muscles (i.e. pectorals, triceps, shoulders etc). We can call it the bench press!

Don't get me wrong, things like push-ups are a great tool. They can work particularly well for developing attributes like strength-endurance. On the other hand, one-armed-push ups are a decent maximum strength developer when you're on the road sans equipment. But still not as *efficient* as the bench press for a long term systematic approach. On the flip side, the bench press also works for strength-endurance. Use a very light weight - and lift for high repetitions. Of course for the tactical athlete, the push-up is usually a better strength-endurance choice, because a lot of occupational fitness tests contain them. So getting in a little specificity helps.

The argument about push-ups or other bodyweight exercises being more functional than the bench press or traditional weights, is a moot point. They both serve a purpose. It all depends on what attribute you are training.

ATTRIBUTES VS TOOLS

Attributes or fitness domains are things like maximal-strength, speed, strength-endurance or aerobic capacity. Tools are things like bench press, sandbags, kettlebells, hills, and your bodyweight.

For the operational athlete, *training is about improving the*

attribute, not about getting better at using the tool.

Think in terms of training an attribute. Then choose the best tool to train that particular attribute.

Some tools are more efficient at training certain attributes than others. For the goal of developing the **attribute** maximal-strength, a **tool** like the bench press is far superior to the push up, simply because it allows you to lift more weight in an incremental systematic fashion, which allows for greater force generating in the long term. It's more efficient. If you want to make life difficult for yourself then go press logs or lift boulders and rocks and shit. Or find more difficult variations of bodyweight exercises. Have fun trying to incrementally progress. If you want to get as strong as you can as fast as you can with minimal fuss, then stick to the boring barbell. As an operational athlete, efficiency is king.

Training all the other necessary attributes are extremely important. Just understand the differences and the best training practices for each attribute so you get the most benefit. What works for developing strength-endurance, may not work for developing max-strength. Different fitness domains call for different approaches; low intensity, high intensity, all out efforts, high repetitions, and other techniques depending on the attribute being trained.

Maximal-strength training calls for a unique approach. You have to be rested between lifts. You are avoiding muscular failure in order to give your body the best chance at lifting the near maximal load, thus forcing adaptation. You are not

working out, you are training. You may not look very busy, resting for long periods of time on the squat rack before doing another low repetition lift, but we're concerned with results, not in whether we appear to be working out hard enough. Save the impressive displays of athleticism for your conditioning days or your sport. When you develop massively above average levels of strength, you won't be concerned that you look too relaxed in the gym on your strength days.

For the tactical athlete both strength AND conditioning are a must. If you neglect one or the other, you are doing yourself a major disservice. Just understand that strength will increase far more dramatically if you train it as a separate entity. When you become strong, and you pay equal attention to your conditioning, you'll ultimately be far more athletic than the average trainee that mixes and matches everything in a single session. Those types of programs are great for GPP phases in your training or anaerobic work. Never mistake that kind of workout as strength training. Even if you're doing Olympic lifts, presses and the rest. Don't mistake the tools you're using for the attribute you're training. Tools vs Attributes. Training in that fashion has its own merits, but without a system of load progression any strength gains will be limited.

Who's going to be stronger in a year, someone that incrementally and systematically lifts heavier and heavier loads, or someone that sporadically lifts different weights at different times without any planned load progression, mixed in with burpees and box jumps? Both styles of training have

their place, but one will increase your max-strength dramatically, the other will not.

Maximal-strength training is a unique animal. You're not lifting the barbells to challenge yourself, you are training to improve a skill. Not working out or exercising so you can enjoy an endorphin rush. Your goal is to increase your strength in the most efficient manner possible. You are not working on your aerobic capacity. You are not working on your anaerobic conditioning. You are not working on strength-endurance. You are working on increasing the amount of force/tension you can generate. If you attempt to combine lifting maximal loads with high intensity anaerobic conditioning in the same workout, you won't get much stronger and you might be setting yourself up for serious injury. You might get a great anaerobic workout, but you are not developing maximal strength in the most efficient manner. Keep the high intensity, all-out workouts away from your strength sessions. Keep them in your overall training plan of course, but schedule everything appropriately. See *Tactical Barbell II: Conditioning*, for how to put everything together and design your training plan.



Think of the old Tortoise and Hare fable. When you approach your strength training, be the tortoise, grasshopper. Go slow and focus on progressing. Slow and steady. When you're conditioning, be the rabbit. Go all out if required.

Conditioning is extremely important for the operator. Again, just understand how to properly train each attribute. If you only train strength and neglect conditioning, you may become incredibly strong, but you're going to be a mess getting up a flight of stairs, and you won't last long in the tactical world. **DO BOTH equally**. When it's time to train strength, train strength. When you're conditioning, change gears and work on your conditioning.

SEVEN

PERIODIZATION & PROGRESSION

'I didn't give myself enough breaks during the training year to recover. I didn't understand the power of periodization.'

Alberto Salazar

Periodization is just a fancy way of describing planned training progression. Because going 100% all the time simply does not work in the long run. There are many styles of periodization.

There's block periodization wherein you focus on mostly one fitness domain at a time before moving on to the next. For example, block 1 would be several weeks focused on aerobic base building, block two might be maximal-strength and work capacity, and block 3 could be sport specific drills.

Periodization can also refer to how you manipulate frequency/volume and progression within the context of strength training. This is what we'll be focusing on in this book. There are many different models, such as linear and undulating periodization. Some of the more popular strength

programs you might be familiar with utilize linear style and are very effective in certain situations. Other Soviet or Bulgarian models exist that are even more impressive, but less well known to general enthusiasts.

In a nutshell, periodization for our purposes is this. You are going to find out what you can currently lift, your maximums. Based on your maximums I am going to provide you with templates that use your numbers. You'll be lifting various percentages of your numbers until you approach your limits, at which point you'll back off, go light, and start again. Then you'll retest, and do it all over again, with your new maximums. The intensity and volume will vary from week to week. This is long term game.

When I first got into weight training, the theme sold to me was 'Go 100% all the time bro - push your limits dude - if you're not constantly progressing you're doing it wrong - no pain no gain man!' Followed by a high five.

Now depending on your goals there is a time and place for that kind of attitude. Everything is relative. For example, if I'm doing an MMA style conditioning workout involving intervals of explosive activity that call for all-out effort, then yeah, that's a good time to go 100% to force adaptation through overwhelming stress.

The problem with this when it comes to strength training is this. Strength is like a skill and should be trained like a skill. This is what I've noticed with new trainees that struggle with strength training. As beginners, they pick up weights and make gains for a little while *no matter what they do*,

just from the virtue of handling heavy objects for the first time in their lives. They will train with fury and 100% maximum effort every workout. Then they will inevitably hit a plateau relatively quickly. On days where the stars are aligned and they're well rested, they may break through that plateau by several pounds. Next session they're back to where they started, or a few pounds lower. They'll chalk it up to having a bad day or being tired. This cycle repeats for years. The average gym rat trains on emotion and feel. Frustration eventually sets in and they start adding in various assistance exercises to hit the muscles 'from all angles' in order to break through their seeming limits. This may or may not help. It generally doesn't make much of a big picture difference for those without some sort of progression model. As the years go by they may make small incremental changes in their numbers if at all, but usually they tend to stall out. For those inclined, performance enhancing drugs may enter the picture at this stage.

Now no program will keep you progressing forever in leaps and bounds, but smart progression will definitely put the math in your favor and get you closer to your potential. In my experience it's far superior to lifting by feel or trying to go 100% all the time. When you attempt to train at your maximum all the time you're going to burn out and get injured. When training without a plan I stalled at a bench press of 185lbs at roughly 150-155lbs of bodyweight. Terrible. I was struggling with 185lbs for months and couldn't really bust past it by more than a few pounds depending on how I felt during any given session. Same with the rest of my exercises. Once I started progressive strength

training, I almost doubled my bench in a year or so. My other lifts shot up dramatically. With the proper plan in place I easily surpassed what I mistakenly thought was my limit.

Now are you going to see this kind of progress every year you use calculated progression? No of course not, no program on earth exists that keeps doubling your lifts every year. People new to strength training or periodization make big leaps and bounds in various exercises, then the gains may slow down, but there is a general upward trend. An advanced lifter that's been in the game for years benching 500lbs and deadlifting close to a 1000lbs will be making very small incremental improvements, in contrast to a new trainee that's just starting. However, with no planned progression, the chances you'll be making any significant strength improvements over time are slim. Fail to plan, plan to fail.

There's a reason professionals have an 'in season' and 'off season'. You can't go 100% forever and keep making progress. There are times to dig deep, and there are times to lay back, hone your skills, and recover for the next push. You want to have longevity, not be one of the masses that get excited and energized about something for a short period of time and then move on to the next shiny object, goals left unmet.

Enter periodization and intelligent progression. It starts you off slowly, ramps your efforts up over time and then brings you down for a planned and calculated recovery. Then you do it all over again and push to a higher peak.

Periodization gives you a plan. Before you set foot in the gym, you'll know what exercises to perform, number of sets, number of reps and load. Sounds a little different from hitting the gym and doing a 'chest and tris day' right?

The model we use calls for you to use certain load percentages based on your maximums. Certain weeks are designed to be easy, others more intense. When it comes to strength training, **intensity** refers to weight or load in relation to your one rep maximum, not how much you're sweating.

Train smart. Don't mistake frantic activity for progress. The only thing that matters are end results, not who's sweating the most. Your test of spirit may not involve playing with barbells or doing kipping pull-ups in the gym. It may be in the ring, leading a platoon in Afghanistan, or kicking down the door of your local fortified crackshack. Strength training is simply a tool to keep your edge.

Another important concept regarding the progression model we're going to use - it takes longer than you might think for the body to adapt to a certain load or stressor.

Think about it. If I put you to work breaking concrete blocks with a 10lb sledgehammer, would you adapt after just one day on the job? Would you come in the next day and fly through it? What about one week on the job? How would someone who's been doing that job for five years compare to you after you've spent two weeks on the job? Get what I'm saying here? This is the issue I had with some of the other strength programs I tried. You were encouraged to

increase the weight very quickly, sometimes every workout. This is a fine approach and it has its place in the right situation for the right trainee, but in my personal experience it wasn't an effective approach for me.

Do you think your body adapts completely after a one-time exposure to new stimulus? A little bit? For beginners maybe? Would your body's adaptation be greater if you stayed with that stimulus for a longer period of time? As in, what would happen, if instead of adding weight *every* workout, you added weight and then stayed with that same weight for several workouts? Would the adaptation be solid or more established for lack of a better term? Food for thought.

In the TB model, we're going to stick to one load for several workouts before moving up. We will make bigger jumps in weight progression, but also stay with that load for a longer period of time. **EVEN IF IT FEELS TOO EASY.** Very important for success in the long term. We are going to build your strength on a solid unshakeable foundation.

LOAD

I've incorporated a very simple progression model, that'll generally keep your weights within 75%-95% of your one rep maximum. I won't get into the science here, but these are generally accepted as good ranges to use for maximal strength training. If you want the science, look into the works of Verkhoshansky, Medvedyev or Tudor Bompá. I highly recommend it if you're interested in that kind of thing.

REPETITIONS

As mentioned above, generally reps in the 1 to 5 range are great for strength building. Higher reps, 6 to 12 are used more for muscular hypertrophy (think classical bodybuilding), and even higher reps have been touted as effective for everything from power endurance to fat burning. I'm going to keep it simple here. There are others out there that can address the science and intricacies far better than I. For the purpose of this book understand we'll generally be using between 1 to 5 reps per set to achieve our goals.

REST INTERVALS

This is one of the most important parts of the program. It is **key** when it comes to being successful with this program. It's generally accepted, and it's been my personal experience that you should be rested for each set to build strength. Avoid muscle failure. Yes you read that correctly: **AVOID MUSCLE FAILURE.** Muscle failure is primarily helpful for muscular hypertrophy, not strength. We are not training for sarcoplasmic hypertrophy, or as I like to call it, 'puffy muscle'.

I don't like rules, I prefer guidelines. But this is the exception. I am going to give you the Golden Rule for this program. **DO NOT** deviate from it. **DO NOT** be flexible with it. **DO NOT** exercise your right to be a special little snowflake and change it. Never ever feed a Mogwai after midnight. You want results with this program? Here it is:

THOU SHALT REST A MINIMUM OF TWO MINUTES BETWEEN SETS

Not a minute, not 90 seconds. *Not even if you feel completely rested before the two minutes is up.* Don't trust your body in this case. Notice the Golden Rule states 'a minimum'. That's right. The idea is that you are fully rested for the next set, so that we avoid muscle failure. Take as long as you need, as long as it is a minimum of two minutes.

Two minute RIs will still give you quite a bit of residual muscular hypertrophy in my experience. If you want to minimize hypertrophy further, look to 4-5 minutes of rest+. You decide. I find 2 to 3 minutes a happy medium. If I'm feeling fresh after a set, or working in a circuit fashion, I use 2 minutes. If I'm not recovering sufficiently with only 2 minutes, I'll bump it up to a 3 or 4 minute RI. My preceding sets give me feedback for the length of rest interval I'll be using for future sets. In one session my rest intervals can range anywhere from 2 to 5 minutes. If you find you are getting a little too big for your liking over time on this program, that's your cue for you to increase your rest intervals and/or manipulate your diet and conditioning.

On training days calling for heavier loads with weights you've never handled before, it's not uncommon to rest **five to ten minutes** between sets.

A word on rest intervals as they relate to hypertrophy. 17-year old sprinter Allyson Felix deadlifted 300lbs while weighing about a hundred pounds herself. As a competitive runner, her coach Barry Ross wanted to totally minimize weight gain. Her strength training protocol consisted of using **5-minute** rest intervals. This ensured 90% ATP recovery and minimized sarcoplasmic hypertrophy. In short, she got

really strong without gaining mass. So if you really want to limit hypertrophy I suggest you do the same. 5 Minutes is the sweet spot. Of course you have to watch your nutrition as well. Rest intervals are just one variable in controlling hypertrophy. If you're fine with some muscle mass, then stick to 2-3 minute RIs.

The Golden Rule only applies when training maximal strength as outlined in this program. Not for hypertrophy, muscular endurance, power, or conditioning etc.

So, for you die hard strength types that don't want the least bit of extra mass along with your superhuman strength, I'm going to make a suggestion. Take the Golden Rule further and rest for a minimum three to five minutes to allow for complete ATP regeneration and minimal sarcoplasmic hypertrophy. This may be of particular importance to fighters, military operators, runners, or anyone concerned with weight, or weight class. For the rest of you, stick with two to three minutes. A general rule of thumb is the longer the rest interval, the more strength without the mass. That is - with the 1-5 rep scheme we use. If you use a higher rep scheme like 8, you'll be more apt to develop hypertrophy regardless. Goes without saying food and conditioning load are key ingredients in putting on mass as well. They all work hand in hand.

The Golden Rule exists because most beginners don't give themselves a chance to develop strength properly - they cut themselves short with the bad habit of going for muscle failure. It's been pounded into your head by bodybuilding based sources for years - go for failure, feel the pump, drop

sets, a million reps etc etc. So the Golden Rule exists to untwist that idea. Short rest intervals have merit for increasing hypertrophy and strength-endurance. But they're an obstacle when it comes to developing max-strength. Long RIs are a simple overlooked principle that can be a game changer for many.

STRENGTH BLOCKS

In this program, a block is 6 weeks. There is no re-testing or forced progression for at least 6 weeks. You can test beyond 6 weeks; 12 weeks, 18 weeks +, but not before. I personally find 12 weeks (2 blocks) optimal for the average multitasking operational athlete.

EIGHT

EXERCISE CLUSTERS

'I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.'

Bruce Lee



A “cluster” is simply a group of exercises. Bench press, deadlift and squat is a cluster.

You will be provided with suggested exercise clusters to go with each template. There are minimalist clusters with two major exercises, standard clusters with three, and heavy

clusters with four or more. You will choose based on your goals.

Always keep in mind we're training for performance, not to get good at a particular exercise. You won't find a cluster containing an exercise for every little body part you have. In the TB world, strength training is the skeleton over which we drape things like work capacity, endurance, speed and power. Focus on getting extremely strong in a small handful of balanced compound lifts.

Choosing a cluster helps you customize your program and aids logistics. If your schedule allows you to train frequently, but you have less than an hour available each session - you might choose a minimalist cluster, or fewer exercises. If you can only dedicate two days a week to strength training, but can spend over an hour in the gym during per session - you might choose a heavy cluster to go with that 2-day template. Don't worry about all this right now. After you finish reading the book you'll understand how to select a cluster. Things to keep in mind when choosing:

- How many days per week are you going to devote to maximal-strength training?
- Which ties into - what template are you going to use?
- How much time/energy are you going to spend on other training?
- Will your other training cover off certain exercises or movements? For example, some military personnel do daily pull-ups as part of

unit PT. If you're in this situation you might not want to choose a cluster that contains bodyweight pull-ups. It's inefficient.

- If you're only strength training twice a week, you might want to beef up the number of exercises in your cluster.
- If you're strength training 3-4 times a week, you might want to streamline your cluster depending on what the rest of your training schedule looks like.
- You might be the kind of athlete that requires the absolute bare minimum when it comes to maximal-strength. Consider a two exercise cluster along with a 2-day template for the lowest effective dose.
- Do certain exercise clusters appeal to you? Are they beneficial to your specific needs?

The various templates along with recommended clusters will be covered in upcoming chapters, so just keep the above in mind. Once you pick a cluster, you'll stick with it for the duration of your training block. You can change up clusters when you start a new block if you want. We're not focussed on variety for variety's sake, we want results. If you become bored with your exercise selection mid-block, too bad ride it out. For the maximum strength game, if you keep changing things up, you will slow down your progress. Change things up during your conditioning sessions if you get bored easily. Keep the strength training relatively consistent.

MINIMALIST CLUSTERS

A minimalist cluster is 2-3 exercises. Great for athletes or tactical types that are heavily involved in other forms of training or sports which place great demands on their energy systems. Perfect for those with a limited amount of time per session. Also a good fit for lower priority strength (marathon runners or endurance racers come to mind); pair a minimalist cluster with the two-day Fighter template and you're set.

They're excellent if you can train frequently, but your sessions have to be short for some reason. A colleague that works in an Economic Crime Unit hits the gym five days a week but only gets 45 minutes or less after work to train, due to family commitments. She finds training strength three times a week with two major exercises ideal, as it fits within her allotted time.

I don't have to explain this to more experienced or advanced strength athletes, but some of you that are newer to the game may be scratching your head and wondering 'are such a low number of exercises enough to get ultra strong?' Absolutely. As mentioned above, research the minimalist strength training Coach Barry Ross administered to high school sprinter Allyson Felix, the 17-year old with the 300lb deadlift. Under Ross's coaching, Felix broke all of Olympian Marion Jones' high school 200m records, and ran the fastest 200m in the world at the age of 17. Ross credited much of that success to a very minimalist strength program consisting of deadlifts, push-ups or bench press, and some core training and plyometrics. The deadlift was the only consistent barbell exercise in her strength training.

Let's say I just focus on two exercises. I hit bench press and squat for a year or two, and bring my maximums up to 300lbs and 500lbs respectively, have I not become significantly stronger? Even though I'm not also doing a dozen assistance exercises? Do you think I'll have a weak overhead press after getting to a 300lb bench? Even though I haven't touched the OHP all year? Will I be bad at doing dips? This is an extreme example of course, to get you thinking like a tactical athlete. Efficiency.

STANDARD CLUSTERS

A standard cluster is 3-4 exercises. Usually 3 lifts only, or three lifts plus 1 bodyweight exercise. For trainees who place a high/equal emphasis on strength in relation to their other skills. Very versatile, and goes well with all of the templates. Standard clusters tend to produce the best strength and body composition results and are easily balanced with a heavy conditioning protocol.

HEAVY CLUSTERS



Heavy clusters are 4 + exercises and are used almost exclusively with Zulu or Fighter. Some trainees find 4 the

ideal number, others prefer 5, 6, or even 7-8 lifts depending on goals/priorities/allotted training time. Keep in mind using more than four or five major exercises becomes tougher to maintain if you're also running a more intense conditioning program alongside.

A WORD ON CHOOSING CLUSTERS

Be aware of your recovery abilities when choosing a cluster and template. If your lifestyle is not conducive to great recovery, then choosing a heavy cluster with a 3 or 4-day template isn't a great idea. Marathon runners are a good example. You have no business doing a bench/squat/deadlift cluster with Operator template in season.

If you're unsure of your recovery capabilities, start with a less intense cluster and change it up in the future after a block or two if needed. You'll have to make the decision based on your background, experience, and recovery capacity. There is more than enough flexibility within the program to thoroughly customize your approach for each and every phase of your training.

If you're new to the game, err on the side of doing less and ramp up as necessary over time. This concept applies to every part of this program.

NINE

THE TEMPLATES

Three templates make up the Tactical Barbell maximal-strength system. They're loosely categorized by frequency (sessions per week) and how you prioritize strength. The templates are Operator, Zulu and Fighter. Each template has a standard version. This is what you start with. Each template also has an intermediate/advanced or I/A version. This is what you move on to after you outgrow the standard version.

Operator is the standard issue TB template for operational athletes. It is the backbone of the program. Three days a week.

Zulu is our max-flex template. Four days a week, each lift performed twice. This is for you if you want to use a large number of main exercises, and a variety of accessory lifts. Zulu can be manipulated to be very conditioning-friendly, or alternatively very strength-biased for those that want to focus just on lifting. Great if you need flexibility when it comes to scheduling regardless of your conditioning load.

Fighter. This is our two-day template, second only to

Operator in popularity. Used extensively by mixed martial artists, endurance racers, and others with a lower need for maximal-strength along with a heavy conditioning and skills load. If you're primarily training to run marathons, training with heavy barbells three times a week is a poor use of your time. At the same time, maximal-strength will improve your performance and shouldn't be neglected. Fighter paired with the appropriate cluster is the answer.

Regardless of what template you choose, you can further scale and customize your training by choosing the appropriate cluster for your goals.

To get the most out of this program, I strongly suggest you do no extra *heavy* barbell training on non-strength days. Stick to conditioning or sport specific training.

I've given the templates nicknames, like 'Zulu' or 'Operator', in part because it sounds more Gucci than calling them 'Template #1' or '#2' etc. and of course each has a bit of an inside story behind it.

TEN

OPERATOR



Operator template is the standard Tactical Barbell strength model. It was the original. Designed for tactical types looking for an ultra-efficient way to gain extreme levels of strength, while doing heavy conditioning work on the side. It is our most popular template by far. It allows for the perfect and equal balance of strength and conditioning.

Operator consists of two templates. Regular and Intermediate/Advanced (I/A). Regular is

used first until it becomes unsustainable. After that a switch is made to I/A. More on this later.

Operator is rooted in Eastern European methodology in the sense that lower-intensity frequency is stressed. You don't 'workout', you go and practice your strength.

Think back to that sledgehammer-breaking-rocks example earlier in the book. Operator works in a similar fashion. You pick a handful of major lifts. You hit those lifts frequently throughout your week. During each session you don't burn yourself out or push too hard. You stop while you're still fresh. Meaning you can train squats and go for a run immediately afterward -*that* fresh. You 'practice' strength. You 'practice' each lift. Think about the simplicity and sheer effectiveness of such an approach. When you frequently practice lifting a heavier weight throughout the week, that weight starts feeling light relatively quickly.

Now contrast that with a more typical approach. Make sure you get perfect rest, perfect nutrition, take pre-workouts that pop the blood vessels in your eyeballs. Psyche yourself up. Now get on the bench and work as hard as you can to press as much as you can during that session. After you're finished, don't revisit the bench for another week. Make sure you eat like a horse and avoid any form of exertion because you might lose weight which will weaken you for your next big push.

See the difference?

You've no doubt heard of things like 'old man strength' or 'farmboy' strength. Some of these people seem unnaturally

strong even though they've never set foot in the gym. That's usually the result of manual labour of some kind, wherein force is exerted against objects repeatedly and frequently over time, over the years. Things like lifting and stacking bails of hay, construction work, wrestling with sheep, or whatever. Most of the time the weight being handled by these types isn't going to be anywhere near as heavy as what you'd normally throw around in the weight-room. Operator uses similar principles, but because the weights we use are heavy, and progression is calculated, you'll blow 'farmboy' strength away.

Now, we're not playing with bails of hay or sledgehammers. The weight we're using is going to be considerably heavier. So we can't work quite as frequently as the farmboy can. But we do the next best thing. We scale the frequency until it's more compatible with the weight we're going to use. Keeping in mind, the more frequent the better. The heavier we get the less frequent we have to be in order to recover in between sessions. The more frequent we get, the lighter our loads have to be. We don't want to sacrifice load for frequency either - because maximal strength requires a certain intensity to develop. Going too light is a waste of time. And when it comes to frequency, unless you're extremely advanced or use steroids, practicing each lift once a week is a poor approach for developing maximal-strength. It's just not enough. So we have to find an ideal balance between frequency and load.

Eastern Bloc strength science has done that for us.

Generally speaking, Eastern Bloc approaches favour lifting 3

or more times per week as being optimal, and 1x per week as being least effective. This is for each lift by the way. So bench pressing 4 x week is more optimal than benching once a week. I've found that for the cross-training athlete that values strength as much as conditioning, three times a week is the sweet spot.

These are the principles behind Operator template. All of them have to be in place for success:

1. Training must be frequent (3 x week)
2. Loads have to be heavy enough to trigger maximal-strength adaptation.
3. There has to be sufficient recovery between training sessions.

We've already covered frequency. #2, if you trained with 40% of your 1 rep max everyday for a year you wouldn't get stronger. You'd probably get weaker. So loads have to be in the range required to increase strength.

#3 if you're not recovered sufficiently in between sessions, you'll plateau and enter overtraining territory. Progress will come to a halt. This wouldn't be an issue if you were using lighter 'farmboy' weights or a 40%RM. A kind of strength-endurance adaptation would take place and you could work in this fashion everyday. Some people in parts of the world do just that.

Ultimately after you remove all the noise, effective strength training revolves around balancing these three things;

frequency, intensity (load), and recovery. So if there's one thing I want you to take away from this book, it's this:

FREQUENT HEAVY LIFTING WHILE AVOIDING FAILURE/OVERTRAINING

That's the ticket to quicker, bigger strength gains. Really think about that statement. If you can practice heavy (enough) lifting on a frequent basis while stopping short of overtraining - you're golden. Once you understand and get a feel for that principle, you pretty much understand how to develop strength.

The reason Operator is so successful is because it epitomizes this principle. Each lift is performed 3 times per week. Intensity and loads are waved in order to keep the trinity balanced.

In order to harness the power of that frequency, a sacrifice has to be made. That sacrifice is the number of lifts per session. With Operator, we want to hit each lift three times a week. If you use five or six exercises, that becomes a pretty long session. It becomes unsustainable and inefficient. It's too much. So we take a very Spartan approach and ruthlessly cut away all excess until we're down to a small core number of lifts. Then we put all our energy and focus into getting very strong in those core lifts. Getting strong in those core lifts will get us strong all over.

I can put all my energy into the bench press, squat and deadlift, use Operator's progression model and get very strong in all three. Relatively quickly - because my focus is

narrow. I'm not wasting precious training time on twenty different accessory lifts. Ultimately those accessory lifts distract me and slow me down. How? By cutting into my training time - time that could be used to hit the main lifts more frequently. And by cutting into my recovery time. If I do a bunch of tricep curls, cable pull-overs, and push-ups - I won't be optimally recovered for my next upcoming bench press session in two days (frequency, remember). Which slows down my progress in said bench press. Now if I was benching only once a week - then I can blast the hell out of myself with all the chest-friendly accessories I want. But once a week isn't optimal for the average trainee. Make sense? Remember, 'blasting' a muscle or muscle-group falls into bodybuilder/hypertrophy territory. Ask yourself why you're doing accessory work. What are you truly gaining from it?

Accessory work definitely has its place. Advanced/competitive weightlifters, strength specialists, or powerlifters, can use accessory work as an indirect approach to get over humps and break plateaus. These are specialists that have been hammering away for years at the basics. The basics got them to where they are, not their accessory lifts. In my opinion, beginners and intermediates need to focus on the basics - especially when it comes to tactical fitness.

This is how I see it. You can pick a small handful of core lifts and do them frequently throughout the week. Get ultra-strong in those lifts relatively quickly because you're not doing anything else + the increased frequency. Or you can

pick a whole bunch of lifts, along with accessory exercises. Practice all of them less frequently, take a lot longer to get to mediocre/average levels of strength in all of them.

As a tactical athlete, you have to give other physical attributes your attention as well. You're not a powerlifter. Which brings me to another point. You'll be getting plenty of accessory work if you're following a proper conditioning protocol, such as Black or Green as found in TBII. You'll be getting burpees, kettlebell work, sprints, dips and all the rest. They won't be at maximal-strength load/reps, but they don't need to be.

What happens if you neglect a lift? Try it. Do a bench/squat/pull-up Operator protocol for 12 weeks. Don't do a single deadlift. After 12 weeks, try working up to a deadlift single - and then tell us what the result was. You probably already guessed it, but chances are, your deadlift is or has stayed at a respectable number. In fact, some of you may even have a *heavier* deadlift. Squatting and benching in an optimal, frequent manner has increased your overall strength. That's the beauty of compound lifts - they tend to strengthen and activate more of your body. A lot of the muscles used to squat, are the same muscles used to deadlift. The above is an example only. I'm not suggesting you shouldn't deadlift.

Use a little common sense when choosing your cluster and ensure it's balanced. There are many ways to get balance. For example, this is a popular cluster amongst some hardcore tactical types:

Bench Press/Squat/Weighted Pull-up

Where's the deadlift? There isn't any. What?! The horror... the horror! What you're not seeing here is that these types are also doing a conditioning protocol that includes heavy kettlebell swings, hyperextensions and the like. They're getting more than enough pulling and posterior work on their conditioning days. Heavy deadlifts take more from them than they give for their particular lifestyle.

Balance can be obtained through activities outside of your max-strength protocol.

Your conditioning template (TBII), sports, and skills training. So don't panic if your strength cluster doesn't contain one lift for every 13 vectors or 17 planes of movement.

Operator exemplifies the concept that **maximal-strength is the skeleton or framework that other physical attributes are draped over**. Take on this mantra if you're truly interested in being fit in multiple domains. It's a minimalist ultra-efficient approach that increases overall strength rapidly. Few programs will ramp up your strength as quickly as Operator.

Goes without saying, Operator is not suitable for those that want a wide variety of exercises. Operator is most effective when used with 3 main lifts + 1 deadlift option, or 3 main lifts + 1 bodyweight movement. If you want a more traditional approach that allows for all the main lifts plus accessories, then look to Zulu template.

The way Operator works is that all the lifts in your cluster

are performed *every* session three times a week. Here's an example using our go-to Operator cluster of Bench Press/Squat/Deadlift/Weighted Pull-up:

Day 1: SQ/BP/WPU

Day 2:

Day 3: SQ/BP/WPU

Day 4:

Day 5: SQ/BP/DL*

Day 6:

Day 7:

**See the chapter "Incorporating Deadlifts"*

OPERATOR TEMPLATE

DAY	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
1	3-5 x 5/ 70%	3-5 x 5/ 80%	3-4 x 3/ 90%	3-5 x 5/ 75%	3-5 x 3/ 85%	3-4 x 1-2/ 95%
2						
3	3-5 x 5/ 70%	3-5 x 5/ 80%	3-4 x 3/ 90%	3-5 x 5/ 75%	3-5 x 3/ 85%	3-4 x 1-2/ 95%
4						
5	3-5 x 5/ 70%	3-5 x 5/ 80%	3-4 x 3/ 90%	3-5 x 5/ 75%	3-5 x 3/ 85%	3-4 x 1-2/ 95%
6						
7						

The above is Sets x Reps x percentage of your one repetition maximum. For example, Week 1/Day 1 calls for 3 to 5 sets of 5 reps at 70%RM. Week 6/Day 1 calls for 3 to 4 sets of 1-2 reps at 95%. I **strongly** recommend you stick to the minimums for your first block. Build up your volume over time if required. There's no need to hit the maximum

number of allowable sets and reps right off the bat. Some trainees use the minimum doses for certain exercises, and max sets/reps to target problem areas. One client was fine with squats and deadlifts, but always struggled with bench press. He'd use minimal sets/reps for his squats, and use the maximum allowable for his bench. Pure tactical types may never need to go beyond the minimums.

Retest your maximums or force progression every 6 or 12 weeks. (covered in the "Testing" and "Forced Progression" chapter.

At least one day of complete rest per week. You can decide when you want that day. It doesn't have to be at the end of the week, it can be in the middle or whenever. The days that are left blank are for you to organize the rest of your training. They can be used for conditioning, MMA training, swimming etc. As with the off day, the strength sessions do not have to fall on Days 1,3 and 5. Adhere to the general principles - train three times a week, with one day in between strength sessions (i.e. no back to back strength sessions).

If you're running this template long term, I recommend you take a few weeks off every 3-6 months or so to allow your CNS some recovery time. Good time to go on leave.

SUGGESTED CLUSTERS

You can choose to put together your cluster however you like. But these are the clusters we use with Operator and Operator I/A, our Tactical Barbell "best practices". Over the

years, we've found these combos to be the most effective alongside a high-speed low-drag template like Operator.

The first cluster is recommended for the following:

- SWAT/HRT/ERT/ESU etc.
- Tactical Law Enforcement (K-9 etc.)
- Recreational athlete
- Generalist/Cross-training athletes
- First Responders

This is our go-to cluster for almost everyone. Very compatible with Black Protocol or higher intensity conditioning. We sometimes refer to it as the 'SWAT cluster' but that's not an official term by any means.

Squat

Bench Press

Weighted Pull-up*

+ Optional Deadlift (see the Chapter "Incorporating Deadlifts")**

*stick to bodyweight pull-ups until you can do at least 10.

** we typically go with 1 deadlift session per week using 1-3 work sets. No WPU's that session. Just BP/SQ/DL.

Here's an example of what a week looks like using the 1 x week DL option: Day 1: BP/SQ/WPU

Day 3: BP/SQ/WPU

Day 5: BP/SQ/DL x 1 work set

Here's an example using the 3 x week (1 work set) DL example: Day 1: BP/SQ/WPU + DL x 1 work set

Day 3: BP/SQ/WPU + DL x 1 work set

Day 5: BP/SQ/WPU + DL x 1 work set

Three work sets, once a week:

Day 1: SQ/BP/WPU

Day 3: SQ/BP/WPU

Day 5: SQ/BP/DL x 3 work sets

Read the chapter **Incorporating Deadlifts** for details.

People in the fitness community tend to enjoy going back and forth over which exercise is better, i.e. bench press vs overhead press, front squat vs back etc. We're back to square one in some cases with the whole 'one is more functional than the other' argument.

This is how I look at it. For a minimalist approach like Operator, I generally favor substantial compound lifts like the back squat and bench press for the average trainee. Simply because they allow you to lift more weight overall. Most people have a squat and bench press that's significantly heavier than their OHP and front squat. So if you're slinging around more weight in general every session, chances are you'll get stronger faster. More efficiently.

If you're HRT/SWAT/ERT you can get away with more maximal-strength work than say a military special operations soldier. Take advantage of it. SWAT members generally don't require anywhere near the same endurance base as SOF, so you'll be able to put more time and effort into more substantial barbell lifts to get strong and build armor. If you're infantry or SOF and you're using the BP/SQ cluster - start out cautiously and use a training max for your first few blocks. Or use the next cluster instead.

Next cluster, recommended for:

- Infantry
- SOF
- Endurance Athletes/Adventure Racers
- Mixed Martial Artists/Combat Athletes
- Trainees using Green Protocol

Also known as the "Grunt" cluster:

Front Squat

Overhead Press

Weighted Pull-up*

+ Optional Deadlift (See Chapter "Incorporating Deadlifts") **

*stick to bodyweight pull-ups until you can do at least 10

** Consider Trapbar or Romanian deadlifts as an alternative.

Same general idea, with this cluster you'll be slinging around less weight overall using "less demanding"

exercises. Less interference with intense endurance/cardiovascular training.

You can use any of the deadlift options shown earlier.

These two clusters aren't set in stone. You can mix and match. Swap out back squats for front squats in the 'SWAT' cluster, or the OHP for Bench in 'Grunt'. Keep the principles in mind. If you're an operator that leans more towards the endurance/heavy cardio side of things, consider the 'Grunt' cluster. If you're more of a strength and power athlete, stick with the bigger bang lifts.

You can create your own cluster based on your needs and training situation. Here are some others used by users/readers.

Bench/ Squat/ Deadlift (no pull-ups/client gets pull-ups during his conditioning) Bench/ Squat (client does extensive kettlebell work on the side) Bench/ Deadlift

Bench/Squat/Clean and Press/BW Pull-ups

Squat/Overhead Press/Deadlift

Squat/Overhead Press/Weighted Pull-up

Deadlift/ One arm push-up/ Weighted Pull-ups Pistol Squat/One arm push-up/ Bodyweight Pull-ups (client is focused on bodyweight work) Muscle-ups/Squats

Keep in mind that TB is primarily used as a system by athletes that cross-train multiple fitness domains. So what you may not be seeing here are things like dips, push-ups, kettlebell swings and burpees and anything else secondary

training might provide on conditioning days. You're just seeing the maximal-strength piece of the overall training picture.

When putting together a cluster for Operator, always keep in mind you'll be performing each exercise in your cluster three times a week. Some choose to switch up clusters every block or three. So you might do twelve weeks of Bench/Squat/Pull-ups, followed by six weeks of Overhead press/Deadlift/ Power Cleans for example. Personally, I like staying with the same cluster for most of the year. I get my variety through my conditioning protocol.

Use no more than 3 main lifts with Operator. A fourth bodyweight exercise is acceptable. If you're starting to panic because you can't do BP/SQ/OHP/DL + a hundred accessories every week - don't. Look to Zulu template for a more traditional approach. I will warn you though, once you get a taste of Operator and the results it brings, you'll have a very hard time going back to more traditional templates and lifting programs.

OPERATOR I/A

In this chapter you're going to be introduced to the Operator Intermediate/Advanced template or I/A. **This replaces the Op I/A presented in TBII.**

As previously discussed, the frequency provided by regular Operator template is optimal for our purposes. The 'secret' to it's effectiveness lies in it's balance between frequency, intensity, and minimalism. Only 3-4 exercises are used, and those exercises are hit three times a week at various submaximal loads. It allows you to "practice strength" frequently while simultaneously avoiding overtraining/CNS burn-out.

At some point, that kind of weekly frequency is going to be an issue as you develop greater levels of strength. The obstacle becomes recovery. When you're a heavy lifter, one day in between Operator style sessions may not be enough time for full recovery or perceived recovery. Particularly if you're also running a concurrent conditioning protocol. Which you should be. If you don't recover sufficiently, you won't be able to complete your strength training sessions, and some of that fatigue will carry over to your conditioning sessions and vice versa.

That tipping point comes around at different times for different people. Individual work capacity varies greatly across the board. There are individuals that stay on regular Operator for years. Some have to make the switch a little sooner.

Don't be in a rush to switch to Operator I/A. Regular Operator provides more frequency. When you're a beginner you can handle that kind of frequency, so take advantage of it and the improvements it'll bring. Don't be in a rush to switch to I/A thinking that 'intermediate' or 'advanced' means 'better'. It doesn't. It's just an alternate strategy to take into account an intermediate/advanced trainee's increased need for recovery in between sessions.

There are exceptions that might want to start with I/A immediately. Certain first responder types with a 4 on 4 off or similar shifting might want to get on I/A as soon as possible simply for the logistics and flexibility. After all, being able to train is better than not being able to train. I/A is a comfortable fit for Watch-type shift rotations. It's also suitable for those of you that are already at an intermediate/advanced strength level - especially if you're incorporating heavy conditioning in your training for the first time. Although I'd still recommend trying a block of regular Operator first.

Essentially, Op I/A provides optional/additional recovery time in between strength sessions. It's different from all the other templates in the book in that it's a 'floating' or 'perpetual' template. Your training won't be set up within a weekly 7-day cycle. Rather it's based around a set number of strength sessions. After the sessions are completed, the block is over. You won't be thinking in terms of a training week, but rather in terms of what the next day is going to bring. More on this later, it's pretty simple.

Here's how it works:

1. First, we extend your recovery time by giving you the **option** of taking one OR two days in between your strength sessions.
2. Now that you have more recovery time available to you, you'll be given the option to adjust the volume. Instead of capping at a maximum of 5 sets (as per regular Op), you'll be able to do up to 10 per session.

That's it. This very simple adjustment will make a significant difference in your training at the intermediate/advanced level.

You can choose to take two days off in between **all** of your strength sessions all the time like this: Day 1 - **Operator I/A**

Day 2 - Conditioning or Recovery

Day 3 - Conditioning or Recovery

Day 4 - **Operator I/A**

Day 5 - Conditioning or Recovery

Day 6 - Conditioning or Recovery

Day 7 - **Operator I/A**

Or you can self-regulate and change it up like this: Day 1 - **Operator I/A**

Day 2 - Conditioning

Day 3 - **Operator I/A**

Day 4 - Recovery/Off

Day 5 - Conditioning

Day 6 - **Operator I/A**

Day 7 - Recovery/Off

Simple. **Take one OR two days off in between your strength sessions as needed.** Maybe you had a very gruelling Operator session with the maximal number of sets allowed and now you need an extra day to recover in between. Or you feel energetic and ready to go for your next strength session, so you take just the one rest day. Perhaps a conditioning session took more out of you than you anticipated, so you adapt and an extra day before you hit Operator again.

Op I/A relies on your ability to self-regulate and understand your personal parameters. You need to be able to control the ebb and flow of your exertion, recovery, and time management skills. These are intermediate/advanced skills and this self-knowledge comes about after years of training. Experienced lifters and those that have used standard Operator for a respectable length of time are far better at self-regulating. Novices tend to over- or underestimate their work capacity and recovery abilities. They either drive too hard and try to do the maximum all the time (which is counter-productive), or they take any slight ache/soreness or pain as being in 'over-training' mode and immediately decide they need a week off.

Let's talk about adjusting the volume.

Now that you have more time to recover, you have a little more room to push during your strength days. You have the option to do more or less work. With I/A, you can do anywhere from 3-10 sets per exercise per session. Be wise with your approach. It's rare that you'll need a full 10 sets for any given exercise, but the option is available to you should you need it. One trainee of ours was always weak in the weighted pull-up department. His other lifts were fine and progressing steadily, but WPU's always lagged and improved *very* slowly. Op I/A gave him the opportunity to give his WPU's more attention. So he'd do 5-8 sets of WPU, and stuck with the 3-5 for his other lifts for a period of time.

The flexibility and practicality of OP should be beginning to sink in. If you have a heavy conditioning session planned for the following day, you might want to stay in the lower set range and do the bare minimum. Maybe you want to spend a solid month or two really focusing on your max-strength, so you work the upper set ranges for the majority of your OP sessions, taking comfort in knowing you have two full days to recover in between strength workouts. Or you get a call-out that turns into a 24-hour standoff and interrupts your scheduled strength session - no prob, just bump it to the next day.

As you can see, you're not really tied into the concept of a 'training week' with I/A. You do your sessions as they come up, and after the cycle is over you start a new one.

OPERATOR I/A – PROGRESSION

1. 3-10 sets x 5 reps 75%
2. 3-10 sets x 5 reps 75%
3. 3-10 sets x 5 reps 75%
4. 3-10 sets x 5 reps 80%
5. 3-10 sets x 5 reps 80%
6. 3-10 sets x 5 reps 80%
7. 3-10 sets x 3 reps 85% *
8. 3-10 sets x 3 reps 85% *
9. 3-10 sets x 2-3 reps 90%*
10. Retest/Force Progression/Or Repeat Block with same numbers.

Simple. Nine sessions per block. One OR two days in between sessions. You can use your in-between days for conditioning, recovery, skills training, or sports. The only rule of thumb is that you rest completely *at least* one day per week, i.e. one day in 7.

*For the advanced, feel free to play around with load%, particularly for the last couple of sessions, i.e. # 7 through 9 can **all** be 90%, or all 85%, or perhaps 8 and 9 are 90% and 7 remains at 85%. If you're not in a tactical role, and don't

carry a heavy conditioning load, you might want to play more in the 90% zone. Have at it.

DEADLIFTS

You can use any of the strategies outlined in the chapter Incorporating Deadlifts for I/A. If using the once a week strategy, then that simply translates to once within three sessions when using I/A. **Another Deadlift strategy unique to I/A is to switch between WPU's and Deadlifts every session.**

SAMPLE TRAINING BLOCK

Here's an example taken from the training journal of an ERT member that **always** keeps two days in between Operator I/A sessions. You don't have to do this. You can have just one, or a mix of one and two throughout the entire block. I've added in the "Week" heading to make it easier on the eyes and to give you a mental picture, but as previously mentioned there's no need to think in terms of traditional weeks with OP. Simply do what comes next. Don't worry about the conditioning sessions in the example below, you'll be familiar with them if you use TBII. You can sub in your own conditioning. For now, just look at the placing of the Op I/A sessions: WEEK 1

Monday: **Operator-Perpetual (OP) 75%**

Tuesday: LSS Run x 45 minutes Wednesday: Off

Thursday: **OP 75%**

Friday: HIC - Apex Hills Saturday: Off

Sunday: **OP 75%**

WEEK 2

Monday: HIC

Tuesday: "E" session – Triples Wednesday: **OP 80%**

Thursday: OFF

Friday: HIC – Apex Hills Saturday: **OP 80%**

Sunday: OFF

WEEK 3

Monday: HIC – 600m Resets Tuesday: **OP 80%**

Wednesday: OFF

Thursday: E Session – Funrun Friday: **OP 85%**

Saturday: HIC – MeatEater Sunday: OFF

WEEK 4

Monday: **OP 85%**

Tuesday: LSS Run x 60 minutes Wednesday: HIC – Fobbit Intervals Thursday: **OP 90%**

Friday: OFF

Saturday: OFF

Sunday: OFF

WEEK 5

MONDAY: Retest or Force Progression and Repeat.

When using Operator Perpetual, a block is roughly four weeks long. As you can see, massive flexibility along with the opportunity to self-regulate. Don't forget you decide how hard you're going to work during your OP sessions. If you've got brutal conditioning or work related operations ahead –

stick to the minimums. Three sets will be just fine. Or maybe 3 sets for one exercise, and maybe 4-6 for others. If you're in the mood to really ramp up your strength work, then go beyond. But don't go so hard you sabotage future training sessions. You get the idea. If you accidentally overdo it and you can't get out of bed the next day to do your conditioning - don't sweat it. Take the rest day and do your conditioning the day after.

OPERATOR I/A EXAMPLE – SOLDIER X

This is an example of the typical experienced TB user that's in a tactical role. If TB had one standard program or template, this is what it would look like.

Soldier X as we'll call him is Canadian Forces /Special Operations. He's in his early 30s and carries a heavy conditioning load. He's built up a sufficient base level of strength over the years.

His base strength, along with his demanding conditioning protocol makes him a perfect fit for Operator I/A. He uses the following cluster:

1. Front Squat/ OHP/ Weighted Pull-up/Deadlift

One work set of Deadlifts every 3rd session in place of WPU.

X wants to generally minimize muscular hypertrophy, so he rests a full 3 to 5 minutes between heavier sets, instead of the recommended 2. Between the longer rest intervals and his demanding endurance/cardio load, X stays lean, mean and muscular.

His conditioning consists of long 'Fun-Runs' which last anywhere from 5 to 20 kilometers, and may involve calisthenics or wearing a heavy weighted pack. X spends a lot of his work-time with a heavy ruck on his back, and frequently goes on marches involving hills

and timed uphill 'hikes' or hill runs. His programming looks something like this when in garrison:

Monday AM Unit PT: 5-10k run or Fun-Run / PM: **Strength#1** - OHP/F SQ/WPU

Tuesday AM PT: 15km ruck / PM: Optional HIC (from TBII)

Wednesday AM PT: 5-10k Fun-Run / PM: **Strength#2** - OHP/F SQ/WPU

Thursday AM PT: 5k Tempo run / PM: OFF

Friday AM PT: Floor hockey / PM: OFF (Friday night)

Saturday AM: **Strength#3** OHP/FSQ + DL x 1 work set / PM: OFF

Sunday OFF

His mornings are usually taken up by unit PT as you can see. The intensity varies, and the schedule and number of sessions change from week to week. In the above example, he took only one day in between strength sessions on Monday-Wednesday. Later in the week he took two days in between strength work. This too changes from week to week, depending on how he feels, what he's got scheduled and how the rest of his life fits around it. Lots of flexibility. On the Saturday he's got more time to play with - so he might stick around in the gym and play with accessory exercises or do a quick HIC. X has built up to this kind of work capacity.

This is a pretty typical schedule in combat

arms/infantry-type units. The mornings belong to the unit for PT, so many soldiers like to do their own training in the gym in the evenings or after shift. They get used to training twice a day. If you want to develop this kind of work capacity, read Tactical Barbell II: Conditioning.



X's schedule isn't set in stone. It's roughly what a typical week looks like. He's frequently deployed overseas, which can interrupt his training cycle. Upon his return to a more stable situation, he simply retests his one rep maximums and starts a new block. Although X's lifestyle is not conducive to steady uninterrupted strength gains, this program has given him an incredible strength base, along with a dramatic overall increase in physical ability over time.

OPERATOR EXAMPLE – SWAT

This is another example of a typical TB approach, using **regular** Operator. Carlos is 34 years old and belongs to a fulltime municipal SWAT team. He's responsible for the majority of his own strength and conditioning, with the occasional team PT session thrown in. For SWAT duties, he doesn't require a tremendous endurance base - so he focuses on strength, and shorter high intensity conditioning sessions. Once a year he runs an 8-week Base Building block (Tactical Barbell II) to develop an appropriate aerobic/endurance foundation. After Base, this is what his training looks like: Day 1: BP/SQ/WPU

Day 2: HIC

Day 3: BP/SQ/WPU

Day 4: HIC

Day 5: BP/SQ + DL x 1-3 work sets Day 6: OFF or E (Endurance) every other week Day 7: OFF

A simple, extremely effective approach using a Bench Press/Squat/Weighted Pull-up/Deadlift cluster. HICs = High Intensity Conditioning; hill sprints, track work, kettlebells, metcons etc. On most Day 5s, he'll only do minimal sets for squats, because he wants to give the DL some love.

In another couple years, when his lifts get too heavy to do every other day, his week might look like this after a switch to Operator I/A: Day 1: BP/SQ/WPU

Day 2: HIC

Day 3: OFF

Day 4: BP/SQ + DL x 1-3 work sets Day 5: OFF

Day 6: HIC

Day 7: BP/SQ/WPU

Day 8: HIC

Day 9: BP/SQ + DL x 1-3 work sets Day 10: E - Long Steady State Runand so on.

ELEVEN

ZULU



Zulu is an excellent template for both tactical athletes, and recreational weight-room oriented lifters. It's max-flex because of the time it leaves you to train other attributes. It's a good fit if you have to do both your strength and conditioning in a single session. Sessions are relatively brief, approximately 20-30 minutes depending on weekly load and exercise selection. This leaves you with time following the session to devote to skills training, conditioning, or bicep curls bro. Or you can do nothing at all and call it a day. If you have only an hour to train, 20-30 minutes of strength work, followed by 20-30 minutes of conditioning on a

regular basis is an efficient way to make the most of your time.

Zulu is popular with strength-oriented recreational trainees that tend to use a lot of accessory exercises in addition to the main lifts. Let's say your session calls for bench press and squat. After you complete those two main lifts, you can move on to things like incline dumbbell presses, hamstring curls, pistols, or whatever assistance work you like. I don't prescribe the rep ranges for assistance work, because it varies depending on your objective. It can be higher rep, shorter RI work for a hypertrophy focus, or lower rep and explosive if you're looking to throw in some power work.

If you're more of a pure tactical athlete and less interested in traditional accessory exercises, then you'd be able to do conditioning or skills work after your main lifts instead. Running, HIIT, kettlebell work, MMA drills, calisthenics or HIC/E from TBII are all options.

Zulu revolves around a cluster of 4-6 main lifts+ performed over 4 days through the week. Each lift is practiced twice a week. If you can handle the volume, you can use up to 6 or 7major lifts + accessories. If you're a tactical athlete I recommend you stick to 4 or less + optional accessories. The more lifts you take on, the longer each individual session will take of course.

As with the other templates, there are two versions of Zulu. **Standard** and **Intermediate/Advanced (I/A)**. Standard can be used by anyone from beginner to advanced, looking for a 'Do This' style program where everything is laid out

step by step. I/A is for intermediate/advanced lifters that have a more in-depth interest in strength training, and want flexibility when it comes to weekly volume and intensity. I/A provides broader parameters to work with and allows you to customize your strength training to a higher degree if you know what you're doing.

How it works is like this. First pick a cluster from the list provided at the end of the chapter. Let's use one of the recommended Zulu clusters as an example: **Bench press/ Squat/ Deadlift/ Overhead Press** Then you divide your cluster in half, like this: **Bench/ Squat**

Deadlift/ Overhead Press

We'll call the Bench/Squat session 'A' and the Deadlift/OHP session 'B'

Sessions 'A' and 'B' are then each performed twice a week. This is the recommended weekly scheduling: Day 1: **A - OHP/ Squat**

Day 2: **B - BP + Deadlift x 1-3 work sets** Day 3:

Day 4: **A - OHP/ Squat**

Day 5: **B- BP**

Day 6:

Day 7:

The above example uses one of the Deadlift options from the chapter **Incorporating Deadlifts**. You can use any DL option, including Deadlifting twice a week.

ZULU STANDARD

DAY	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
1	A 3 x 5 / 70%	A 3 x 5/ 80%	A 3 x 3/ 90%	A 3 x 5/ 70%	A 3 x 5/ 80%	A 3 x 3/ 90%
2	B 3 x 5/ 70%	B 3 x 5/80%	B 3 x 3/90%	B 3 x 5/ 70%	B 3 x 5/80%	B 3 x 3/ 90%
3						
4	A 3 x 5/ 75%	A 3 x 5/80%	A 3 x 3/90%	A 3 x 5/75%	A 3 x 5/80%	A 3 x 3/ 90%
5	B 3 x 5/ 75%	B 3 x 5/ 80%	B 3 x 3/90%	B 3 x 5/ 75%	B 3 x 5/ 80%	B 3 x 3/ 90%
6						
7						

The above is Sets x Reps x Percentage of your one repetition maximums.

Retest your one repetition maximums every 6 or 12 weeks.

The actual weekly schedule can be changed as long as you stick to the principles; one rest day, no back to back same-session sessions, all 4 sessions completed within 7 days.

ZULU I/A

DAY	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
1	A 3-5 x 5 70%	A 3-5 x 5 80%	A 3-5 x 3 90%	A 3-5 x 5 75%	A 3-5 x 3 85%	A 3-5 x 1-2 95%
2	B 3-5 x 5 70%	B 3-5 x 5 80%	B 3-5 x 3 90%	B 3-5 x 5 75%	B 3-5 x 3 85%	B 3-5 x 1-2 95%
3						
4	A 3-5 x 5 70%	A 3-5 x 5 80%	A 3-5 x 3 90%	A 3-5 x 5 75%	A 3-5 x 3 85%	A 3-5 x 1-2 95%
5	B 3-5 x 5/ 70%	B 3-5 x 5 80%	B 3-5 x 3 90%	B 3-5 x 5/ 75%	B 3-5 x 3 85%	B 3-5 x 1-2 95%
6						
7						

The above is Sets x Reps x Percentage of one repetition maximums.

Retest your one repetition maximums every 6 or 12 weeks.

This template is for intermediate/ advanced lifters that want more flexibility within their strength training. Notice that I/A allows you to choose 3 to 5 sets per exercise, and uses heavier loads than Standard.

There are several ways to use this flexibility. If you're

training strictly for strength, you might back off when you start approaching muscle failure. So you start with bench press, you're feeling great after 3 sets and have more in you. You perform a 4th set and start feeling slight fatigue around your last couple reps. You decide you'll back off while still fresh, and stop. So you end up completing 4 sets of bench press. You move on to squats. Your legs feel great and you go for the full-pull and complete 5 sets of 5. You've finished up your training for the day. Tomorrow, you're on to workout B - Deadlift and OHP. You're also planning on going for a hard 2-mile interval run after you finish up with the weights. Knowing this, you stick to 1 set only for Deadlift, and 3 for OHP. Second session of the week you go back up to 5 sets because you have a rest day following. Make sense?

Here's another consideration. Hypertrophy. Higher volume contributes to mass gain. If you want to put on a little more beef go with 4 to 5 sets each session instead of 3.

ZULU: A MINIMALIST APPROACH

I want to bring your attention to a particular way Zulu is being used by some. This came to our attention from several Crossfitters that use TB to build supplementary maximal-strength. A minimalist cluster (only two exercises) with Zulu, like this: Day 1: Bench Press Day 2: Deadlift x 1-3 work sets Day 3:

Day 4: Bench Press Day 5: Deadlift x 1-3 work sets Day 6:

Day 7:

This is a good approach for someone that prioritizes something like Crossfit but needs to improve that underlying maximal-strength base. The lift of the day will probably take you roughly 10-15 minutes give or take. Easy enough to do your WOD before or after depending on your priorities. I favor doing strength work before conditioning, but if you decide to do it after then make sure you rest for 5-10 minutes first. What you have here is a structured skeletal approach to building a maximal strength foundation, along with the ability and time to layer an intense HIC, E or WOD over top.

In this example the bench and deadlift are the broad-strokes used to get stronger overall in an efficient manner. A variety of other movements are provided by your supplementary conditioning protocol/WODs when using this type of approach - pull-ups, swings, box jumps, cleans etc. Efficiency is a must for the tactical athlete. This works well

not only with Crossfit-like activity, but it's also compatible with the conditioning protocols in TBII.

Here's another minimalist approach using Bench/Squat/Deadlift. The Deadlift option of 1 x week is used in this example: Day 1: SQ

Day 2: BP

Day 3:

Day 4: SQ

Day 5: BP + Deadlift Day 6:

Day 7:

A solid approach that allows you to combine the big 3 with a conditioning protocol. On day 5, you might stick to lifting only, and skip the conditioning, or do a lower intensity session.

Read the chapter "Incorporating Deadlifts" for more programming options.

ZULU: SUGGESTED CLUSTERS

Bench press/ Squat/ Overhead Press/ Deadlift

Bench press/ Squat / OHP/ Deadlift/ bodyweight pull-ups
Bench press/ Squat/ OHP/Deadlift/ Weighted pull-ups
Bench press/ Squat/ OHP/ Deadlift/ Power Clean Pull-ups/ One-Arm Push-up/ Pistol Squats/Deadlift
Muscle-ups/Pistol Squats/ One-Arm Push-up/ Deadlift
Weighted pull-ups/ One-Arm Push-up/ Weighted Pistol Squat/ Deadlift
Bench press/Squat/ Deadlift/ Weighted pull-up/ Overhead Press
If you're not an experienced lifter, and you're interested in developing maximum strength in the most efficient way possible, I recommend you use one of the first three clusters on the list. Advanced trainees can put together their own clusters, including Olympic lifts, hybrid/mixed bodyweight-barbell clusters etc.

If you pick a cluster containing five or more exercises, you still divide them into two 'A' and 'B' sessions. Let's take the third cluster for example. We could divide it like this:
Session A - Squat/ OHP/ Weighted Pull-up

Session B- Deadlift / Bench press

Too easy. 4 to 5 is the suggested ideal number of lifts in your cluster, but you are free to include more if you wish.

ZULU EXAMPLE - DT

DT is a serious recreational trainee. His primary interest lies in getting as fit as he can by utilizing barbells, bodyweight training and conditioning. He understands the importance of basic barbell work when it comes to developing maximal strength, but his true love is calisthenics. So he uses Zulu to get the best of both. His lifestyle is relatively sedentary outside of his training. He has an office job with a steady schedule.

DT's cluster: Squat/ Bench Press/OHP/Deadlift. He's using the option of Deadlifting once per week for 1-3 work sets.

Monday: BP + One Arm Push-ups/Pull-ups Tuesday: SQ/OHP + Pistols/Ring Dips Wednesday: HIC

Thursday: BP/DL + Pull-ups/One Arm Push-ups Friday: SQ/OHP + Pistols/Ab work Saturday: HIC or E

Sunday: OFF

HIC = High Intensity Conditioning session, E = Endurance session (TBII). Any form of cardiovascular or metabolic conditioning works. Optional depending on your goals.

The rep/set/RI scheme for his bodyweight work does **not** have to be in line with the TB principles. The TB principles in this book relate to developing maximal-strength only. You would do the appropriate amount of reps/sets as per your specific goals as it relates to your calisthenics (or any other assistance work).

More traditional assistance work can be used as well. Dips, dumbbell exercises, curls, cables etc.

ZULU EXAMPLE – AMIR

Amir is a police officer looking to get in shape to eventually try out for his department's ERT/tac unit. Because of family commitments and scheduling issues, he's got a limited amount of training time. He'll have to combine his strength and conditioning in one session.

Cluster: Squat/Bench Press/Deadlift (1 x week DL option)

Day 1: BP + HIC (High Intensity Conditioning session) Day 2:

SQ + E (Endurance/slow steady state) Day 3: OFF

Day 4: BP/DL + Pull-up ladders Day 5: SQ + HIC

Day 6: E

Day 7: OFF

The strength part of his training session is relatively brief. 15-25 minutes. After finishing his lift, he moves on to conditioning work, HIC or E. If it's HIC, it involves short duration high intensity work like sprints, burpees, hills etc. Depending on what HIC he chooses workouts can be anywhere from 10-30 minutes long. "E" sessions are slow and steady, designed to build up his aerobic foundation. They run anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes +.

TWELVE

FIGHTER THIS IS TACTICAL BARBELL'S TWO-DAY TEMPLATE. IT'S BECOME POPULAR WITH ATHLETES THAT REQUIRE THE BARE MINIMUM WHEN IT COMES TO INCREASING MAXIMAL-STRENGTH. RECOMMENDED IF MAXIMAL-STRENGTH IS A LITTLE LOWER ON YOUR LAUNDRY LIST OF TRAINING PRIORITIES. NOT ALL ATHLETES NEED THE SAME LEVELS OF STRENGTH. PRECIOUS TRAINING MAY HAVE TO GO TO HIGHER PRIORITY DOMAINS. FOR EXAMPLE, INCREASING STRENGTH WILL BENEFIT WEAK MARATHON

RUNNERS TO A DEGREE, BUT SAID MARATHONER SHOULDN'T SACRIFICE EXCESSIVE TIME OR ENERGY IMPROVING MAXIMAL-STRENGTH AT THE COST OF LOGGING MILES. IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO DEVOTE THREE DAYS A WEEK TO A HEAVY LIFTING PROGRAM, WHEN YOUR GOAL IS TO EXCEL AT MARATHON. THE BULK OF YOUR TIME HAS TO BE PUT INTO YOUR ROADWORK. IT'S THE SAME WAY WITH OTHER SPORTS IN VARYING DEGREES. IT'S A BROAD SPECTRUM. SOME ATHLETES MAY NEED MORE STRENGTH THAN MARATHON RUNNERS BUT LESS THAN FOOTBALL PLAYERS FOR EXAMPLE.

If you're an athlete first, and a lifter second - Fighter

template might be for you. Some examples; competitive runners, triathletes, adventure racers, boxers, and Brazilian ju-jitsu practitioners. Fighter template frees up a significant amount of time for the athlete to focus and train other skills or attributes.

What makes Fighter more effective than many twice/week lifting templates is that you are maximizing the frequency of several major lifts in that limited period of time. It's a simple concept that works very well. Whereas many two day templates have you perform each major lift only once per week, Fighter has you perform them twice a week. You'll sacrifice being weaker in a larger number in the name of getting stronger with fewer exercises. Think about it. If you're using Fighter template, you are most likely training for something more than being good at doing a variety of barbell lifts. You simply want increased levels of overall strength while still having the time to put most of your energy where it belongs - training your sport specific skill or conditioning.

Here's a sample schedule, using Bench/ Squat/ Deadlift/ Weighted Pull-ups: Day 1: BP/ SQ/ WPU

Day 2:

Day 3:

Day 4: BP/SQ + DL x 1-3 work sets Day 5:

Day 6:

Day 7:

As you can see, lots of blank spaces in the week. Lots of room to fill up with heavy conditioning, sport specific drills, bodyweight work etc.

You can do fewer exercises twice a week and thus progress faster (= become stronger faster) or you can do the variety show with a dozen exercises split over two workouts that you hit only once per week...and progress at a slower pace. But hey, at least you won't get bored. With Fighter, since you're only lifting twice a week with (at least) two days in between sessions, feel free to tack on a few accessory exercises if you like.

FIGHTER TEMPLATE

DAY	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
1	3-5 x 5 75%	3-5 x 5 80%	3-5 x 3 90%	3-5 x 5 75%	3-5 x 5 80%	3-5 x 3 90%
2						
3						
4	3-5 x 5 75%	3-5 x 5 80%	3-5 x 3 90%	3-5 x 5 75%	3-5 x 5 80%	3-5 x 3 90%
5						
6						
7						

The above is Sets x Reps x Percentage of one repetition maximum.

Retest/Force Progression/Repeat every 6 or 12 weeks.

Notice the option to do 3 to 5 sets per exercise. As long as you're doing the prescribed minimums, doing extra sets is

entirely up to you. If you're having a slow training week and you have time and energy to kill, go for it.

Fighter strength sessions don't have to be set up on Day 1 and 4. The idea is to spread them out as evenly as possible within your training week. I probably don't need to say this, but don't schedule them back to back.

FIGHTER I/A (AKA BANGKOK VERSION)

Bangkok is a unique version of Fighter designed to keep strength-endurance in the mix. It goes like this: **Week 1**

Session 1: 3-5 sets x 5 reps 75%

Session 2: 3-5 sets x 5 reps 75%

Session 3: Strength-Endurance Circuit (Alpha) 3 x 10

WEEK 2

Session 1: 3-5 sets x 5 reps 80%

Session 2: 3-5 sets x 5 reps 80%

Session 3: SE (Alpha) 3 x 20

WEEK 3

Session 1: 3-5 sets x 3 reps 90%

Session 2: 3-5 sets x 3 reps 90%

Session 3: SE (Alpha) 3 x 30

This example uses A type strength-endurance circuits. You can also use B or T type. We'll cover all that off in the Strength-Endurance chapter. For now, the rule of thumb is you can do your SE session anytime in the week, but have at least one buffer day in between it and your next maximal-strength session. So you could do a maximal-strength session on Monday followed by SE on Tuesday, but not the other way around.

A versatile template, good for MMA/Combat Athletes, SOF, or anyone that desires a constant element of SE style training.

CLUSTERS

Suggested strength clusters for Fighter template: Squat

Bench Press Weighted Pull-up Deadlift Squat

Bench Press Clean and Press Rows

Front Squat Overhead Press Trapbar Deadlift With Fighter, you can choose to deadlift twice a week, or use one of the other options provided in the Deadlift chapter. As always, experienced or knowledgeable lifters feel free to create your own cluster more suited to your situation. And keep in mind there's no rule saying you have to stick to one cluster forever. You can switch clusters every block or two if you desire.

Tons of options far as your SE clusters go. Think circuit training. Kettlebells, bodyweight exercises, barbell complexes, or a mix of everything. This will be covered off in the SE chapter.

FIGHTER EXAMPLE-THE MIXED MARTIAL ARTIST

Michael is a Narcotics officer. In addition to his duties as a drug cop, he's heavily involved in mixed martial arts. Michael was satisfied with his conditioning for the most part, but strength was a bit of a struggle for him. He found 3x a week strength programs too much, they'd leave him too fatigued and stiff for MMA. It felt unbalanced for his needs - too much barbell time in relation to his MMA goals.

Fighter template was the perfect fit. He'd tried other two day templates, but they rarely did more than maintain his existing strength levels, if that.

Fighter template limited his strength training to twice a week which freed him up considerably. His MMA classes provided him with the bulk of his conditioning. His strength increased steadily, and his fighting benefited.

Cluster: Front Squat/OHP/Weighted Pull-ups/Deadlift Day 1: MMA

Day 2: FSQ/OHP/WPU + DL x 1 work set Day 3: MMA

Day 4: OFF or Optional Conditioning day Day 5: FSQ/OHP/WPU + DL x 1 work set Day 6: MMA

Day 7: OFF

In this example the DL is used every session (twice/week), but for only one work set.

FIGHTER (BANGKOK) – INFANTRY SOLDIER

Private Bloggins is active duty, regular force infantry. He has mandatory unit PT 4-5 days a week. This usually consists of long runs, push-ups, pull-ups and ruck marches. PT takes care of Bloggins' general endurance and work capacity, but his maximal-strength was lacking. He wanted a template that would increase his strength, without leaving him too fatigued or weak for his duties and daily PT. Tom selected Bangkok, as he liked the idea of improving his strength-endurance. Strength, strength-endurance and resiliency are all vital attributes for an infantry soldier.

Cluster: Squat/Bench Press/Weighted Pull-ups/Deadlift **SE**

Cluster: Kettlebell Swings/Push-ups/KB Renegade Rows/Goblet Squats/Hanging Leg Raises Monday AM: Unit PT / PM: **SQ/BP/WPU**

Tuesday AM: Unit PT

Wednesday AM: Unit PT

Thursday AM: Unit PT / PM: **SQ/BP + DL x 1-3 works sets**

Friday AM: Unit PT

Saturday: **SE Circuit (B)** Day 7: OFF

Bloggins uses the once/week Deadlift option, and he'll do anywhere from 1-3 work sets depending on how he feels. He doesn't do WPUs on Deadlift days. He uses the 'Bravo' or B type E circuit progression.

THIRTEEN

INCORPORATING DEADLIFTS



There are a lot of people that can't handle higher volume/higher frequency deadlifts. Particularly if they're also carrying a heavy conditioning load. For others, it's just another exercise - no different than squatting or pressing. I'm going to provide you with a few options for including Deadlifts in your cluster with different levels of volume and frequency.

You have three options:

1. One work set per session
2. Three work sets per week/done in a single session

3. One work set per week

OPTION 1

An example of Option 1, submitted by reader 'Drew', a municipal SWAT TL.

Many of us were having trouble with high volume deads. This small modification really ramped up our performance, and keeps everything manageable. Just thought I'd share, and thanks again for the great programs that complement our "particular set of skills" lol.

Day 1: Back Squat/ Bench Press + Deadlift x 1 set Day 3: Back Squat/ Bench Press + Deadlift x 1 set Day 5: Back Squat/ Bench Press + Deadlift x 1 set Do only one work set of Deadlifts per session. Do 1-3 warm-up sets first using approximately 40%-60% RM. You get frequent sub-maximal deadlifting with this approach.

OPTION 2

An example using Option 2, submitted by reader 'M.E.S. A', a Tier 1 soldier: Day 1: Front Squat/ Bench Press/ Weighted Pull-up Day 3: Front Squat/ Bench Press/ Weighted Pull-up Day 5: Front Squat/ Bench Press + Deadlift x 3 Work Sets So only one deadlift session per week, but all 3 work sets are done as per Operator template. Doing weighted pull-ups progressively and consistently will take your game to the next level. Try it. Bodyweight pull-ups should be substituted until you can hit 10 strict reps.

OPTION 3

Submitted by civilian client and mixed martial artist Kyle, using Operator template.

Day 1: Front Squat/ Overhead Press/Weighted Pull-ups Day 3: Front Squat/ Overhead Press/ Weighted Pull-ups Day 5: Front Squat/ Overhead Press + Deadlift x 1 Work Set This is similar to Option 2, with one difference. Deadlifts are done for only one work set. A good approach for a mixed martial artist like Kyle. He has to balance getting as strong as he can without that strength training being detrimental to his recovery and interfering with his MMA training. It's a fine line. As you can see, this cluster would have a relatively low impact on Kyle's weekly training load. One work set of deadlifts per week is as minimal as it gets.

When choosing an option, take into account your goals, conditioning load, and capacity for recovery.

FLEXIBILITY

As you can see, there are many different ways to plan your training. Templates can be used year round, or for several months in a row.

Here's some food for thought;

You can use a minimalist cluster with Operator. Strength training three times, a week but your sessions will be brief because of the low number of exercises.

You can use a heavy cluster with Fighter template. So you're going all out with four major exercises, but only twice a week. You get a lot of strength training bang for your buck, but you're only spending two sessions in the gym for strength. The trade-off is that your sessions might be slightly longer than the typical session. Great if you have other commitments throughout the week.

For the absolute bare minimum, you could use a minimalist cluster with Fighter template.

There are many combinations. You can divide your training into various blocks by manipulating the clusters and templates. You can plan a 12-week Operator block with a standard cluster, followed up by a 12-week block using Zulu + a new minimalist cluster. You can adapt the program to your changing lifestyle, seasonal sport, or travel.

Our standard issue clients (tactical police, firefighters, and military) typically tend to gravitate toward Operator or Zulu

paired with a conditioning protocol from Tactical Barbell II year-round.

TB can also be used in a seasonal fashion. Use a strength-heavy template off-season, and taper to a more suitable template in-season.

An extremely fit firefighter uses the program like this. He does a 12-week strength block with Tactical Barbell, followed by 12 weeks of Crossfit, 12 weeks of TB, 12 weeks of Crossfit...and so on. When he's running TB, he uses Operator and his conditioning consists of aerobic base building work. Long steady state runs and other low intensity activities. His unique approach covers all his bases; maximal-strength, aerobic/anaerobic development, work capacity and metabolic conditioning.

Lots of potential combinations.

FOURTEEN

MAXIMUMS & TEST DAY

'However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results'

Winston Churchill

In this chapter I'm going to cover off testing your one rep maximums, how to do it and when to do it. One rep maximums, or rather the idea of one rep maximums are mandatory for your success in this program. A one rep maximum, is simply the heaviest load you can lift once. We are not focussed on competitive powerlifting in this program, so we are not going to be as exacting.

So no need to panic, you won't need to find two of your buddies to take to the gym on test day to spot you, while you perform death defying lifts that pop the blood vessels in your eyeballs. You don't actually have to test a ONE rep maximum for success with this program. What I recommend and what has served me well is testing a three to five rep maximum, and then calculating your one rep maximum using one of the many free programs on the internet that

allow you to plug in your numbers and calculate. If you would rather test an actual one rep maximum, that is perfectly fine as well. I have done both and tested them against each other. In my experience I have found a 3-5 rep maximum is very accurate at calculating a one rep maximum. If I am off by a pound or two, I don't care, because I am interested in seeing obvious overall gains in strength between test days. If my gain in the bench press after a 6 week phase was actually 10.5lbs and not the 9lbs I calculated, it makes no difference to me in the big picture. Remember, we're not training to peak for competition. We're training for year-round big, noticeable, increases in strength.

TEST DAY

So this is how it works. You have chosen your template, your exercise cluster and the length of your strength phase. You have it all written down in your workout notebook. Now you're going to rest for two to three days, meaning no weights, no heavy duty cardio, or sparring etc. When you're all rested up, you're going to go into the gym and warm up. Let's say ten minutes of skipping. Then you're going to hit the first exercise in your cluster. Let's say the bench press. You're going to put on a light weight and do a warm up set of five to ten reps. Rest for two to five minutes. Then you'll put on a little more weight (still relatively light) and perform another set of five to ten reps. Rest for another two to five minutes. Now you'll add on some more weight, something you can lift for roughly six to eight reps and do a set of four to five reps. Now you're going to move in to your test zone.

So you're going to add weight to give you a load you think you can lift for about three to five repetitions max. You're going to rest for five full minutes, and then lift for as many reps as you can. If you easily hit ten, you need far more weight on the bar - just rest for five minutes, and repeat with a heavier load. If you manage to get five or less reps before your form falters or you fail, that's just about right. When you can't raise the bar for another rep with good form, you're done. Write down the number. Do the same for the rest of your exercise cluster.

When you get home, or gain access to the internet, go to one of the many sites that calculate your one rep maximum for you. I like to use www.exrx.net, however you can just plug 'one rep max testing' into google and you'll get numerous options. It'll ask you to put in the weight you lifted and how many times you lifted it. Then it'll not only give you your one rep maximum for each exercise, it'll give you all the major lifting percentages we use in our templates. Done. Treat test day like test day, not a workout. Go into the gym, take your time with each exercise, relax and get your numbers. This isn't your workout. You're just collecting data so you can start your program.

When you have your numbers, plug them into your chosen template. Take a day or two off, then begin your training.

WHEN TO TEST

For best results re-testing every 6 or 12 weeks is recommended. These are suggestions. You can go longer

than 12 weeks, but it's not recommended you test any sooner than 6. 6 is the minimum.

Over time as my strength increased, it took longer to adapt to the heavier loads. If I had been impatient and pushed fast and sloppy and retested in 3 week blocks I would've hit plateau territory relatively quickly and gotten nowhere. Keep that in mind. As you begin to lift substantially heavier and heavier loads, naturally your gains will slow. By this time you will have gained sufficient experience to manipulate your recovery, training plan, and retest dates, to optimize your results. In my experience, the longer I've stayed with the same load, the more of a new personal baseline type of strength they become, and it was easier to set new maximums.

As mentioned above, you can wait longer than 12 weeks to re-test. For example, you finish up your first 12 weeks with Zulu, but you still feel like you're struggling with the loads. You haven't 'grown into them' as much as you like. Although you are allowed to retest at the 12 week point, you decide you're going to stick with the same numbers for another 6 weeks and NOT retest until you feel a little more solid on your lifts. That's fine and that's a very smart thing to do. You will gain a far more durable strength base over time by exercising patience.

On the flip side, you may finish the first 12 weeks and feel like the weights were too light all the way through, perfect. For you, retesting at 12 weeks is ideal for that particular block.

Bottom line, as you progress through your strength blocks, you don't have to retest at the given times - those represent the *suggested* amount of time you have to put in before retesting. As you gain familiarity with the program, you can decide to retest every 6, 12 weeks, or longer. If you're unsure, err on the side of waiting longer between testing.

TESTING BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES AND WEIGHTED BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES

Testing the barbell lifts given in this program are straightforward. You'll notice that a few of the exercise Clusters contain bodyweight exercises, such as pull-ups and weighted pull-ups. These will be tested and incorporated differently.

WEIGHTED BODY EXERCISES

When testing a weighted body exercise such as weighted pull-ups, there are two methods.

The first is, I use my own bodyweight to figure into the calculation. Let's say I weigh 150lbs for the purpose of this example. On test day, I work up to doing pull-ups with an additional 50lbs in my backpack. I max out at 5 pull-ups with 50lbs. I calculate it like this, I add the 50lbs to my hypothetical bodyweight of 150lbs, which gives me a total of 200lbs. So 200lbs x 5 reps is what I enter into my One Rep Max calculator online. **That gives me a one rep max of 225lbs.**



I start Day 1 Week 1 of my chosen template which calls for 3 sets of 5 reps of 70% of my one rep max. 70% of 225 is 158lbs. So I simply add 8lbs to my pack and complete the required reps and sets. Round up or down if you don't have precise plates. Now what if your numbers called for you to do less than your actual bodyweight on certain days? Simple, just use your bodyweight.

The second option which is much simpler, is to just calculate your maximums using the extra weight you're carrying. So to use the above example, I complete five pull-ups with 50lbs in my backpack. I simply enter 5 x 50lbs in my one rep mx calculator, which gives me a one repetition maximum of 56lbs. Now, keep in mind, calculating this way will give you heavier loads. So if you're pretty good at bodyweight exercises and hitting high numbers, you may want to use this method. If you're still struggling to do five pull-ups, the first method will build you up slowly with lighter weights.

So to recap, if you struggle with bodyweight exercises such as pull-ups, use the first method. It will give you lighter

loads and more of a gradual buildup. If you're already putting up impressive numbers - use the second method of testing.

BODYWEIGHT EXERCISES

With bodyweight-only exercises we focus on increasing repetitions vs increasing load. So there's no one repetition maximum here. We test for maximum number of repetitions.



Let's use push-ups as an example. On test day I warm up with a few sets of 10 push-ups, and then I'm ready for a maximum effort. I rest for the required 5-minute interval, then I perform as many push-ups as I can until failure. I hit 80 push-ups. 80 is my 'one rep max', or rather my 'max' for push-ups. When my template calls for 3 sets of 5 repetitions using 70% of my 1RM, I will perform 3 sets of 56 push-ups, as 56 is 70% of 80. In the case of bodyweight only exercises, ignore the listed repetitions. All too easy.

For both bodyweight and bodyweight+ exercises, everything else such as rest intervals, sets, and progression remain the same.

FIFTEEN

FORCED PROGRESSION FORCED PROGRESSION IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO RETESTING.

Retesting uncovers weakness, and tells me what lifts I need to work on for a longer period of time. So let's say I've gone through two blocks with bench/squat/deadlift. My bench increased by 20lbs after the first block, and 10lbs after the second block. My squat by 45lbs and 30lbs. Now let's say my deadlifts are stubborn. After my first block, I only gained a 5lb increase, and after my second, I gained nothing and there's no change. With Retesting, I'd continue future blocks with my new squat/bench numbers, and the same old deadlift numbers. As I get stronger through heavier bench/squatting, this should help my little problem child lagging deadlift. Because the muscles I use to squat and bench are becoming stronger, and those muscles also assist with deadlifting.

Ok, that's great. But what if even more test days go by and that deadlift continues to remain unchanged? Or fluctuates up and down by a few lbs? The answer is you can Force

Progression. Or add another 10lbs to that deadlift (and the other lifts in your cluster) when calculating for your next block. Nothing new. We borrow this concept from linear progression models and more traditional strength training approaches. Add 5-10lbs when calculating your next 1RM. Do the typical linear progression thing - 5lbs for upper body, 10lbs for lower body. Just to make it crystal clear, you are adding that weight to the 1rm, not to every lifting session. So let's say for the past three blocks my deadlift is stuck at a 1rm of 300lbs and doesn't seem to be budging. I will calculate my new 1rm as 310lbs. Then I will use the number 310 to calculate the weekly lifting loads.

This is typically how we put it all together with new lifters starting TB:

1. Very first block is always 12 weeks followed by Retest method.
2. Retest every 6 weeks thereafter to take advantage of newbie adaptation.
3. When that fails/slows down - Retest every 12 weeks to adapt more thoroughly before attempting to level-up.
4. When that fails/slows down, Force Progression every 6 weeks
5. When that fails/slows down, Force Progression every 6-12 weeks.

The above is done over the course of an athlete's lifetime. Think in terms of years, not months.

DECISION TIME

Ultimately, at the end of every 6 or 12 week block you have to do one of three things;

1. Retest and continue with the resulting numbers.
2. Force Progression and continue with the new numbers.
3. Stay with the same numbers for another block or until you feel you've mastered a particular load.

It takes a very disciplined and farsighted trainee to go with Option # 3. Most are in a hurry to progress *now* regardless of how shaky they might be on a particular lift.

A note on weighted bodyweight movements. Unless you're an advanced calisthenics athlete (i.e. you've been on American Ninja Warrior), I *highly* recommend you stick to the method of testing that incorporates your bodyweight in the calculation.

SIXTEEN

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



I'm going to take you step by step through the process from beginning to end. You probably already have a good grasp of how this program works, if not, this will put all the pieces together and clear up any unknowns.

Kane is a high functioning member of a police Emergency Task Force. He's in his mid-thirties, has trained for most of his life, and has a reasonably healthy diet. His duties include hostage rescue, gaining entry into barricaded drug houses, high risk arrests, and even rural patrol. Body armor, and gear have him carrying loads of 30lbs - 60lbs, sometimes more, depending on the duty. Kane may have to sprint for short distances, go hands on with criminals, or run through the woods on a dog track for several kilometers. After a burst of exertion Kane may have to recover sufficiently to fire his weapon accurately.

Strength, aerobic, and anaerobic conditioning are all equally important for him.

Kane is going to design a training program that includes strength, anaerobic conditioning, and some endurance/aerobic conditioning. He decides Operator is the way to go.

Step 1, he plans out a rough weekly schedule that takes into account the attributes he has to train: Day 1: Maximal-Strength

Day 2: Conditioning (anaerobic/metabolic/work capacity)

Day 3: Maximal-Strength

Day 4: Conditioning (anaerobic/metabolic/work capacity)

Day 5: Maximal-Strength

Day 6: Conditioning (aerobic/endurance/strength-endurance) or OFF every 2nd week Day 7: OFF/Recovery

Kane decides on the following maximal-strength cluster: Squat/ Bench Press/ Weighted Pull-ups/ Deadlift Kane stays out of the gym for a couple days and rests up. On Test Day he's got his notebook and he's ready to test his maximums on his chosen lifts.

Kane jogs slowly on the treadmill for about ten minutes to warm up. He starts his testing with the squat. After a few warm up sets, and a final five-minute rest interval, he squats 375lbs for 5 reps before his form starts faltering. He jots down '375 x 5' in his notebook. Kane moves on to the bench press. After his warm up sets he puts up 230lbs for 3 reps. He documents '230 x 3' in his notebook. He pulls a deadlift single at 300lbs. He notes '300lbs x 1' in his book. For weighted pull-ups, he does 3 reps with 50lbs on his back. He incorporates his bodyweight (180lbs) for a total of '230lbs x 3'

Kane's all done for the day. He heads home, gets online, googles 'one rep max calculator' and puts in his numbers. His squats at 375lbs for 5 reps give him a one rep max of 422lbs. His 230 x 3 bench press gives him a max bench of 244lbs. Deadlift he already knows is at 300lbs. WPU becomes 245. So this is what he's got in his notebook:

MAXIMUMS

Squats - 422lbs

Bench - 244lbs

Deadlift - 300lbs

WPU - 245lbs

Kane's ready to start Operator. Week 1 of Operator calls for 3 to 5 sets of 5 with 70% of his maximums. He goes back online and plugs in his numbers. Here now is a more detailed look at week 1: DAY 1 Maximal Strength

Bench press: 4 x 5 with 170lbs (70% of 244lbs - his Maximum) Squat: 3 x 5 with 295lbs (70% of 422lbs) Weighted Pull-ups: 5 x 5 using bodyweight (70% of 245 minus his weight of 180lbs = 170) He rounds down on the weights if necessary. When it comes to weighted pull-ups, he won't need to add weight until the calculations bring him above his own bodyweight. He weighs 180lbs. His 1rm is 245. 70% of 245 is 170lbs, which is lighter than what he weighs. So no adding weight on the pull-ups for Kane today.

With Operator, he can do anywhere from 3 to 5 sets per exercise. You'll see variations throughout his log. This session he gave his Bench and Pull-ups a little extra attention. He kept the squats to a minimum 3 sets. It could have something to do with the conditioning session he's got coming up on Day 2.

DAY 2 CONDITIONING

Apex Hills from Tactical Barbell II w/24kg Kettlebell DAY 3 Maximal-Strength

Bench press: 5 x 5 with 170lbs (70% of 244lbs - his

Maximum) Squat: 3 x 5 with 295lbs (70% of 422lbs)
Weighted Pull-ups: 5 x 5 using bodyweight Kane does a full
five sets for BP and PUs. He keeps the squats at 3 sets.

DAY 4 CONDITIONING

3 Mile Tempo Run

DAY 5 MAXIMAL-STRENGTH

Bench press 3 x 5 with 170lbs (70% of 244lbs - his
Maximum) Squat 3 x 5 with 295lbs (70% of 422lbs) Deadlift
1 x 5/135lbs, 1 x 3/185, **1 x 5/210lbs** He cuts back on the
overall volume this session. Minimal number of sets for
bench and squat. Deadlift is done for one work set of
210lbs. No pull-ups today.

DAY 6 CONDITIONING

Long/Slow Steady State Run x 60 minutes DAY 7 OFF

Rest/Recovery

When he gets to Week 2, Operator calls for 80% loads. So
he'll be adding a little weight to his pull-ups. 80% of 230lbs
is 184lbs. 184lbs minus Kane's bodyweight of 180lbs = 4lbs.
He'll round up and carry a 5lb plate in his backpack when
doing pull-ups during week 2. Kane is using the method of
testing weighted bodyweight exercises which takes his own
bodyweight into account.

After 6 weeks (one block) Kane has the option to retest his
maximums, force progression, or use the same numbers.
Kane doesn't feel solid on all of his lifts yet and decides to

complete another block using the same numbers. So he repeats another 6-week block using the exact same numbers. After 12 weeks of Operator, Kane now feels he's adapted strongly to the weights. He's handling the weights relatively easily now, even the heavier 90% loads. He feels 'solid'.

After his 12th week, he takes two to three days off in preparation for testing. He goes into the gym, feeling rested, and retests all the exercises in his chosen cluster. Kane's gained 20lbs on his bench press, 50lbs on his squat, 55lbs on deadlift, 10lbs on his WPU's. The bench is a new personal best for him. Excellent results considering his already high numbers/intermediate level, and his relatively heavy conditioning load. Newer lifters tend to have greater increases than intermediate/advanced trainees.

Kane calculates his new numbers using his new maximums...and plans another 12-week Operator block with the new numbers.

SEVENTEEN

STRENGTH-ENDURANCE

Strength-Endurance (SE) is the ability to produce resistance or generate force over an extended period of time.

Doing 100 push-ups is an example of SE. When your legs give out before your lungs during a long hard ruck march - your SE is lacking.

When you train strength-endurance, break away from your typical barbell/max strength-training mindset. Switch gears. SE is trained using very light loads (20%-40%RM/bodyweight etc.) and high repetitions. Rest intervals are severely shortened and at times removed completely. If you're fixated on how much you're lifting, you're doing it wrong.

We'll get into the nuts and bolts below, but first I want to touch on something. Muscular endurance is derived from maximal-strength. Generally speaking, the higher your levels of max-strength, the further you'll be able to take your strength-endurance. This doesn't happen automatically. You do need some form of conversion process - which is where our SE training comes in. You need to do

some form of muscular-endurance work to help express some of that max-strength as SE. If you belong to certain military units or you train MMA, you get some of that conversion - because you're most likely already doing high repetition work throughout the course of your day. It can be in the form of skills training - pads, heavy bag work, circuits before class, or it can be more direct - like having to do push-ups and pull-ups all the time during military PT. So again, some form of conversion is important. That's why a world class powerlifter can't necessarily drop and do 100 push-ups.

We run into a slight dilemma because of this. If you train SE for a while and neglect maximal-strength - what happens? Your max-strength levels slowly drop. Since max-strength acts as a feeder for SE, what do you think will happen to your SE? Correct, it'll start to plateau and eventually your numbers will go down. Which is why people often stall out very quickly when doing specialist 'push-up' or 'pull-up' only programs for a lengthy period of time.

One of our readers shared an example of this. He decided to use a specialist push-up program to beef up his numbers for an upcoming entry level law enforcement Physical Fitness Test. The program had him doing various numbers of push-ups on the hour, every hour or two, for several weeks. Prior to starting this, he tested his push-ups in the low 60s. He neglected his regular strength training for the most part throughout. When he finished the program, he retested and was shocked to find his maximum number of push-ups had

dropped from the low 60s to mid/high 50s. Not only that, but he felt like he had to fight for every rep. He felt weaker.

So the moral of the story is training SE by itself should only be done in small doses. Periodically you have to go back to the watering hole and 'top-up' your maximal-strength. Or train SE in a way that you can train max-strength concurrently. With the TB system, you'll have plenty of options.

If you're not getting any SE in the course of your life, then periodically doing short 3-6 week SE blocks are ideal. Same with if you're training for something specific like Special Operations.

If you are getting sufficient SE (i.e. you train MMA with SE type drills, or in the military and do push-ups and such all the time), then once a year as part of Base Building (see Tactical Barbell II) is enough. If you want a little more, do a single SE session in place of your E training or HIC once in a while. Most of the HICs and Es in Tactical Barbell II contain SE. That's not by accident. The point I'm trying to make is DON'T OVERDO IT. The general trainee is much better off focusing on maximal-strength while doing a little conversion here and there peppered throughout the training year.

A standard approach used by those already on tactical teams/SOF is to initially do the SE found in Base Building, followed by getting more SE through Fun-Runs/GCs/HIC for the rest of the year. This way max-strength is run concurrently throughout the year, and it becomes efficient because several (compatible) attributes are trained at the same time.

Doing one Fun-Run a week will give the average trainee

more than enough SE. Another excellent approach is to do a 3-6 week SE block after every 6-12 weeks of maximal-strength.

To sum up, pick one of these two options when incorporating SE in your training year:

1. Do short 3-6 week SE blocks after every 6-12 weeks of Max-Strength.

OR

2. Get your SE *regularly* and *indirectly* through your conditioning and/or sport-specific skills training. Meaning through things like HIC, GC, Fun-runs, Triples etc. and/or through pad drills, heavy bag work (if you train combat sports for example), and the countless push-ups and pull-ups you'll be prescribed during your day-to-day life in certain military units. Or whatever your sport/vocation is. This option allows you to concurrently train maximal-strength throughout the year. Using Fighter template (Bangkok) falls in this category as well.

EIGHTEEN

SE CIRCUITS

We use three types of circuits to develop SE. Two based on repetitions, the other based on time.

Alpha and Bravo are repetition based, our go-to templates when doing an SE focused block. Tango is time based, and a good method to use when doing one-off SE sessions here and there throughout your regular training cycle.

ALPHA

If you're relatively lacking in strength-endurance, or new to fitness, this is the model you should start with. It's the basic/entry level SE program for beginners or those new to cross-training. It goes like this: WEEK 1

3 Circuits x 10 repetitions 0-90 Second RI in between sets 2-3 Minute RI in between circuits 3 Sessions per week

WEEK 2

3 Circuits x 20 repetitions 0-90 Seconds RI in between sets 2-3 Minute RI in between circuits 3 Sessions per week

WEEK 3

3 Circuits x 30 repetitions **0-2 Minute** RI in between sets 2-3 Minute RI in between circuits 3 sessions per week

EXECUTION

Use a cluster containing 4-6 exercises. Let's look at an example using the following SE Cluster: 2 Handed Kettlebell Swings Push-ups

Goblet Squats

Inverted Ring Rows

Kettlebell Romanian Deadlift Time, and controlling it, is everything when it comes to SE. You'll be going from one exercise to another circuit style. Your mission is to not go over the allowed rest-interval times between exercises. The combination of shortened rest-intervals and higher repetitions trigger the muscular endurance adaptation. So with that in mind, before you start your session, lay out each station so that you can get to it within the allotted time as you make your rounds through the circuit. This might affect your exercise choice. If you work out at a busy gym and the bench is always in high demand - you probably won't want to include bench press in your SE cluster. Barbell floor press on the other hand...

Choosing exercises for SE should never ever be a problem - because you can always rely on good old bodyweight if you must. Don't pick an exercise station you might end up having to wait for as you make your way through the circuit.

Week 1 Day 1 calls for 3 circuits x 10 reps of each exercise. 0-90 seconds of rest in between exercises. So it'll go like this: Do 10 2H Kettlebell Swings Rest 0-90 seconds

Do 10 Push-ups

Rest 0-90 seconds

..... until you work your way down to the KB Romanian Deadlift.

At that point, you've completed one circuit. Now you can rest for up to 3 minutes. Repeat two more times and you're done. Here's your challenge - try to minimize the rest intervals as much as you can, while still being able to complete the assigned reps. If you feel ready to move to the next exercise at 30 seconds instead of 90 - then go for it. You complete the next exercise, but then feel exhausted at the end of it - elongate the rest and take your full 90 seconds. If you can do two exercises back to back without a rest interval, even better.

In other words, your objective is to get through the entire circuit as quickly as possible while completing all the reps. This doesn't apply to your rest in between *circuits*. There is no need to cut the rest short in between circuits. Take the full 3 minutes if needed. I encourage you to be relatively well rested before your next flurry of activity. Don't go over the 3 minutes though.

Notice in Week 3 (30 reps per exercise), you have a full two minutes to rest in between exercises if needed. **If needed.**

Same objective - try to minimize that RI in between exercises.

Be smart. If you're a SE beginner, take advantage of the full rest interval at first. Get a feel for things. Move through your circuits efficiently and calmly. As you get better and better, start cutting down the RIs.

So what do you do if you can't complete all the reps consecutively? No problem. This is meant to happen, and it will happen to everyone at some point. For some it'll happen in the 10 rep range, for others it'll happen on circuit number 3 in the 30 rep range. Just pause and rest for a bit and continue until all reps are completed. Let's say you're on week 3, and you hit a wall at push-up number 22 (you need to hit 30). Just rest for a few seconds, and squeeze out a few more. So you do this and manage 5 before falling on your face again. Simply keep repeating the process. Rest for a few moments, and squeeze out the last few. If you ever choose to do Bravo circuits down the road, this will happen with quite a bit of frequency. Expect it. No one flies through all the circuits flawlessly all the time, especially in the beginning.

BRAVO

Bravo SE circuits are for the intermediate/advanced trainee or those that want more of a challenge. When you get proficient at fully completing Alpha circuits with minimal rest interval times, you may want to move on to Bravo if your goals call for it. The average trainee won't need to do Bravo. You could stick with Alpha for the rest of your life and work

on bringing your RI down to zero for all three circuits. Alpha is more than sufficient for the majority of training goals. Bravo is more for those on the path to SOF, tactical law enforcement, or competitive MMA. A scaled down version of Bravo circuits are used during Base Building Block (Tactical Barbell II), so this will be familiar to many of you.

WEEK 1

3 Circuits x 30 repetitions per session 0-2 Minute RI in between sets 3 Minute RI in between circuits 3 Sessions per week

WEEK 2

3 Circuits x 40 repetitions per session 0-2 Minute RI in between sets 3 Minute RI in between circuits 3 Sessions per week

WEEK 3

3 Circuits x 50 repetitions per session 0-2 Minute RI in between sets 3 Minute RI in between circuits 3 Sessions per week

EXECUTION

With Bravo, use 4-8 exercises in your cluster depending on your ability. Works particularly well with bodyweight exercises and kettlebells. Execution is identical to Alpha.

TANGO

These are simple, time based circuits. A little harder to

measure or progress, so they're great for one-off sessions in the course of your regular training block. If you're running Black or Green protocol, they can be used in place of E sessions occasionally. **You can also use Tango instead of Alpha with Bangkok version of Fighter.**

1-3 sessions per week

2-3 circuits per session

1 minute of exercise/AMRAP

1 minute RI

2-3 minute RI in between circuits EXECUTION

Use a Cluster containing 4-8 exercises. You'll be doing AMRAP (as many reps as possible) in the allotted time:
Barbell Push Press AMRAP x 1 minute RI 1 minute

KB Goblet Squat AMRAP x 1 minute RI 1 minute

Romanian Deadlift (barbell) AMRAP x 1 minute RI 1 minute

V-Ups (abs) AMRAP x 1 minute RI 1 minute

Barbell Rows AMRAP x 1 minute Rest 3 minutes

Repeat x 1-2

LOAD

SE is NOT about how much weight you're using. It's about completing the repetitions in the shortest amount of time. The weight or loads you use provide almost token resistance. If you want a number, roughly 20-40% of your

1RM. Don't worry about getting the loads just right. Just throw on a little bit of weight, use a light kettlebell, bodyweight etc. and get to it.

You will use the SAME weight/loads throughout your entire 3-week block.

When it comes to SE, load is NOT important.

NINETEEN

PROGRAMMING SE

There are several ways to go about programming SE in your TB protocol.

1. Pepper your training year with short 3-6 week SE focused blocks.
2. Get SE work through your conditioning and skills/sports training.

METHOD 1

This is a decent approach if you're not getting SE through any of your other activities. Your training revolves around strength & conditioning for the most part and you don't seriously participate in any other extracurricular activities/sports at this time. You might be preparing for SOF or something similar, and you're in training mode for the majority of your time. In this case, a good approach is to do 6-12 weeks of maximal strength work, followed by a 3-6 week SE blocks, and repeat throughout the year. So it could look something like this: Weeks 1-12 Operator Template
Week 13 Rest/Deload

Week 14-16 SE (Alpha)

Week 17 Rest/Deload

Repeat

METHOD 2

Consider this approach if you're already getting SE on a regular or semi-regular basis through other activities in your life. If you're in certain military units, you might have mandatory PT, so you're most likely getting lots of daily push-ups, pull-ups and the rest. Same with if you train MMA, Muay Thai or something similar. You're most likely doing a lot of pad drills, heavy bag work, and even conditioning circuits during your classes. If that's the case, you can stick to getting a little extra SE here and there through your TB conditioning sessions; Fun-Runs, GCs, and certain HICs. You can still do SE focused blocks if you really want to, but take into account your ability to handle that kind of high repetition volume on top of what you're already doing. My recommendation would be to do SE focused blocks when you're in 'off-season' mode or on leave. Let your sport or military life take care of your SE, you take care of the attributes they don't provide; maximal-strength and appropriate conditioning.

SE PROGRESSION: 6 WEEK BLOCKS

I've outlined the basic 3 week models for strength-endurance circuits in the previous chapter. For most of you that's all you'll need. 3 weeks at a time is more than enough for the general trainee looking to get extremely fit in

multiple domains. In this section, I'm going to give you a few more options for those looking to run longer (6 week) SE blocks. Here they are:

1. Reduce RI
2. Alpha-Bravo Method
3. Add Resistance

REDUCE RI

Reduce the rest interval. No change here, this is the standard approach as described in previous chapters. Work on reducing your rest intervals while completing all assigned reps. This is done over time. When running a 6 week SE block with this method, weeks 4-6 are a repeat of weeks 1-3. Focus on reducing your rest intervals over the 6 week time period.

ALPHA-BRAVO METHOD

With this approach, the first 3 weeks are run using Alpha progression, and weeks 4-6 are done using Bravo. You'll start off week 1 using 10 reps per exercise, and by week 6 you'll be up to 50.

ADD RESISTANCE

For this method to work, you have to choose exercises which allow you to incrementally increase weight. Barbell complexes, or weighted calisthenics (weight vest) for example. With this approach, after your first 3 weeks are up, add 2-5lbs to each lift and repeat weeks 4-6.

Example; You're doing Alpha circuits and one of your exercises is the push-press at 55lbs (bar + 10lbs). Weeks 1-3 you'll use 55lbs for the push press throughout. After 3 weeks are up, add 5lbs bringing your push-press to 60lbs. Weeks 4 to 6 will be a repeat of 1-3 using 60lbs now instead of 55lbs. Do this with all of the exercises in your SE cluster. You can add anywhere from 2-5lbs to each lift.

Remember, start week 1 very light, using roughly 20%-40% RM. Don't get caught up in finding the perfect starting number. Don't bother testing your 1 rep maximums for SE. Guesstimate.

BEYOND 6 WEEKS

I don't recommend training SE for more than 6 weeks at a time. Switch back to maximal strength for a block or two and then return to SE using one of the above options.

IS SE MANDATORY?

No. Listen, if you're just interested in getting as strong as you can and being well-conditioned, you don't HAVE to do any SE work at all. Chances are you're going to get some anyway if you're following the TB conditioning protocols. SE is for you if you're interested in focusing on it for whatever reason. Maybe you're an operator of some sort, or want to be. Or you're doing your first fight camp for a competitive bout. Maybe SE has always been a weak area for you and you want to bring it up to speed along with the rest of your abilities. But if your only priority is maximal-strength, then why waste time and energy on SE? SE is more for the

tactical professional or those planning to be tactical professionals. If you're a recreational trainee, it's totally optional (after Base Building).

SE CLUSTERS

SE clusters are circuits of 2-8 exercises. They can be kettlebell circuits, barbell complexes, bodyweight, sandbag, or a mix of everything. Create your own, or use one of the following examples.

EXAMPLE 1

2H Kettlebell Swings KB Goblet Squats KB Renegade Rows
Single KB Deadlift KB One Hand Floor Press Example 2

Barbell Push-Press Barbell Front Squat Barbell Rows

Romanian Deadlift Knees to Elbows Example 3

Push-Ups

Air Squats

Pull-ups

Dips

Crunches

Box Jumps

EXAMPLE 4

KB snatch Dumbbell Bench Press Goblet Squat

Hyperextensions Inverted Ring Rows Example 5 (Minimalist)
KB Swing

Goblet Squat

GENERAL SE & CLUSTER GUIDELINES

- Use 2-8 balanced exercises. Exercises should hit upper body, lower body, legs, abs, back etc. Balance appropriately when doing a minimalist 2 or 3-exercise cluster.
- Choose exercises you can lay out before hand so you can get to them in time during your circuit. Rest intervals are important for successful SE training. If the bench at your gym's always being used, and you're going to have to wait for it in the middle of your circuit - it's a bad choice. Use something else.
- No need to test RMs before an SE block. Guesstimate roughly 20%-40% RM for each lift. When in doubt, go light.
- Objective of SE circuits: Complete all reps in the circuit as quickly as possible. Try to remain within the allotted rest interval time. This may not happen at first, especially if you're using Bravo circuits. That's okay, your abilities will improve over time regardless.
- Don't train SE by itself for more than 6 weeks at a time without returning to maximal-strength for a block or two. Train SE as long as you want if you're simultaneously training max-strength.

TWENTY

NUTRITION

This is a big topic with a ton of variables. I am not a scientist or nutrition expert. There are numerous styles of eating which suit different people in different ways. I will discuss some of my experience with various diets and what I currently do, in a very general sense. I have experimented with the Zone, Paleo, Anabolic and intermittent fasting diets amongst others.

When you choose a diet or rather an eating style, you have to consider a few things.

Are you eating and training for aesthetics? Are you looking to lose weight? Are you an athlete that uses food to fuel performance? Are you eating for general health so that you can live to be one hundred years old?

Performance. Health. Aesthetics.

Eating for performance may not always be conducive to health. Eating for aesthetics may not always be conducive for performance. The exact same principle applies to your training by the way.

I'll give you a few examples. Anytime I've been on a carb restricted diet, my performance suffered. I didn't have staying power in the gym. I gassed out fairly quickly during MMA training or high intensity conditioning workouts. In addition to low energy, my libido took a nose dive. Carbohydrates hold water in the body, so initially it seemed like I lost a few pounds fairly quickly and I could see even more muscle definition. For a newcomer this may seem like quick weight loss, but keep in mind you can fluctuate a few pounds everyday depending on water intake and other factors. That's not true fat loss. I would maybe eat in this fashion if I was sedentary, or training in a moderate fashion for health and aesthetic reasons. Not as a competitor, and not if I needed to summon any degree of intensity. That being said, I know a few people who tell me they thrive on a carb restricted diet. Your mileage may vary. On the whole, I am extremely wary of any 'diet' that has you almost eliminate an entire food category. Severely restricting fat from your diet will nudge you toward hormonal imbalances. Saturated fat and cholesterol are required by the body for things like generating testosterone. Recent studies suggesting that low carbohydrate + low fat diets are substandard for supporting testosterone and other hormones.

Hormones have a huge impact on your training and body composition. Testosterone contributes to muscle gain, fat loss, libido, mood, and it antagonizes cortisol. A very important player in the training world. Consider how much harder it is for the average woman to put on muscle mass and lose fat compared to the average man. Testosterone is a

big part of that. So if you're very active, lifting heavy weights, and whatever else, it may be a good idea to think about supporting your testosterone levels through diet. That goes for men and women.

One of the best ways to support healthy hormone levels, is to ensure you get enough fat and cholesterol in your diet. Fats that are found in salmon, red meat, nuts and eggs. Cholesterol is the building block for various hormones. If you don't get a sufficient amount, as an active male (or female) your hormones will pay the price.

That being said, ultimately your training and diet should be geared to whatever helps your particular end goal. Again, performance vs health vs aesthetics. Sometimes you have to sacrifice one to excel in the other. Fighters and wrestlers do ridiculously unhealthy things to make weight in the name of performance.

As a tactical athlete, jack-of -all -trades, I found my best results with a diet consisting of 30% protein, 35% carbohydrate, and 35% fat. My performance, health and aesthetics seemed to benefit the most with that ratio for my lifestyle.

Here are a few of my experiences and observations trying out various eating styles;

FREQUENT FEEDING

This was the first eating style I tried when I started training seriously. When my schedule was stable for long periods of time, this worked for me. I'd eat roughly five or six times a

day. I didn't obsess about or count calories. I based my meals around a protein source, ate sufficient carbohydrates and fat. I would eat roughly 30 to 40gms of protein per meal, in the form of tuna, chicken breast, steak, and fish. I'd eat a moderate amount of carbohydrate at each meal, including wholegrain bread, brown rice, vegetables and fruit. I'd get fats from nuts, meat, eggs, etc. A typical meal for me would've been chicken breast, with a serving of quinoa, carrots, and salsa. Almonds and berries for dessert. I'd eat at least three of my daily meals as whole foods. The remaining meals consisted of protein powders/shakes or protein bars. I believe whole foods are vastly superior to powdered shakes and bars, but my lifestyle wasn't always conducive to spending hours preparing food and then carrying around six meals with me every day at work. If you're in an environment or lifestyle that allows you the time for that type of food prep then stick with it -in your case there is no need for protein supplements. They were a necessary evil for me at times. I tried not to overdo the bars, as I found most of them to be of poor quality.

Once a week I had a cheat day. I ate whatever I wanted, in whatever quantity I wanted. This meant pizza, trips to McDonalds, chocolate bars, whatever. I suggest you don't overdo cheat days until you reach a body fat level or look you are satisfied with. Establish that first. In the meantime, maybe have a big cheat meal and a few treats instead of gorging yourself all day.

I kept my diet pretty simple and generally ate the same

things over and over again. My cheat days made it very easy for me to eat clean during the rest of the week.

I also fasted for a day, once every couple of weeks, or once every couple months. Fasting was very effective for me in terms of body composition, and energy levels. It was like hitting a big reset button.

When I ate this way, I had a body fat of approximately 7% to 10% without trying very hard. I was consistent over time with training and food. I trained roughly five or six days every week using Operator (regular) for strength, and various conditioning workouts for the remainder of the week. Every once in a while I'd have a drink or sweet on non-cheat days. It's what you do consistently that'll give you your results. Again, aesthetics were not my primary goal at this point in my life, it was performance.

INTERMITTENT FASTING

I experimented with this for roughly three months. I did a form of intermittent fasting which had me eating from about 1pm to 9pm, followed by a fast until 1pm the next day. During the 8 hour 'feeding window' I would aim for the same daily macronutrient/caloric intake as per my conventional diet. One gram of protein per pound of bodyweight, roughly 35% of my calories from fat, roughly 35% of calories from carbohydrate. I ended up eating about three meals during my 8 hours. Some of the meals were large, others were more like glorified snacks. In the mornings while in a fasted state I had more energy, and focus. It was a relief not eating

six times a day. I had no interest in having my life revolve around my meal planning.

Unfortunately, this just turned into a form of caloric restriction for me over time. I naturally ate less due to the smaller feeding window. I had an unpredictable schedule, so if I ended up on shift or call-out during my 'window' it would screw up my feeding time and affect daily caloric intake. Sometimes in a rush to make up deficiencies, I'd force myself to eat more later in the evening - which affected my sleep. Ultimately in the long run I lost weight, became weaker in the gym, and my training performance suffered. This was probably my own fault, for not being able to eat sufficient quantities during the 'window' due to a varied schedule and unexpected call-outs/ops. I include this to point out possible pitfalls for first responder/tactical types with incompatible schedules.

This might work for you if you have a stable schedule and you're disciplined when it comes to making sure you get all your macros and calories during your feeding window every single day.

OTHER EXPERIENCES

For a couple years toward the end of my military career prior to law enforcement, there was a period of time I *was* focused on aesthetics. Sort of. Performance was still priority, but I decided to bear down on diet to get ultra-lean. I brought myself down to a body fat level of sub 4%. I did this using a modified Zone diet. I changed it so I was getting one gram of protein per pound of bodyweight. This ended up

increasing my total fat and carb intake as well, because the Zone concept had to do with eating correct ratios or 'blocks' of macronutrients. I used Tactical Barbell Operator template, high intensity intervals 1-2 times a week in addition to unit PT in the mornings with the military. I was training twice a day 4-6 days a week and had a highly regimented schedule at this particular point in time. I became somewhat OCD. I was measuring meals/macronutrients and eating the exact same portions every day. Cheat day was a cheat meal once a week. I curtailed all my social activities. I was afraid to miss a workout or go out in the evenings for fear of jeopardizing my diet and training. I was having no fun at all. However, it was at this time I hit about 150lbs, sub 4% bodyfat, a bench press over 300lbs along with competitive running times. Looking back, I'm glad I experienced this kind of discipline once, but it wasn't really worth it for me. You can come to the same results with a more gradual and consistent approach. My lifestyle is far better now with a slightly higher body fat level and far less OCD. I'm much stronger, at almost twice the age. The idea of being that overly concerned to the point of measuring food seems a little ridiculous and silly to me now in hindsight.

WHAT I DO NOW

I eat roughly four to five smaller meals per day. Each meal contains anywhere from 30-50gms of protein. I eat a portion of healthy carbohydrates alongside my protein source. Brown rice, quinoa, potatoes and veggies. I get fats through my protein sources (fish, steak, eggs etc.) and through eating things like nuts and cheese occasionally throughout

the day. If I haven't met my daily protein intake after my last meal, I'll have a protein shake or bar to make up the difference before the day is done. I don't count calories and I don't overthink things. Once a week I'll have a cheat day. The beauty of training with a consistent strength & conditioning protocol 4-6 days a week is that the fat melts off and the muscles develop without much effort. Focus on training consistently and improving your performance. Everything else will fall into place as long as you adhere to intelligent eating guidelines and exercise some common sense.

SUMMARY

Although diets and eating styles can be highly personal, there are a few universals when it comes to improving **performance**. Keep the following in mind if you're struggling;

I've noticed that the BIGGEST mistake the general trainee makes when trying to improve performance is LACK of food. Countless times I've been approached by trainees stating that they do this program or that program but they can't seem to put on any muscle no matter what they do. Or they feel fatigued and don't recover quickly. When I ask them about their food intake, nine times out of ten they are eating significantly less than they should be. It has nothing to do with the program. They're using diets pitched at sedentary overweight individuals whose main mode of exercise is walking, housework, or easy elliptical/treadmill type movement.

When it comes to protein, I am a believer in the idea that you need roughly one gram of protein per pound of bodyweight daily. I've found my best improvements in body composition, energy, recovery and strength when I adhere to this guideline. There are people that will say you need far less, and others that'll say you need to double that. When I ate lesser amounts of protein for any length of time, muscle mass, energy levels, and recovery diminished. I didn't notice anything drastically different when eating more than 1gm per pound daily. These are my own anecdotal observations,

and science seems to have a different opinion every year, so take from it what you will. I am of the opinion that bodybuilders can teach us a thing or two about muscle mass and recovery based on their time in the trenches, so I choose to err on the side of higher protein intake. That sounds like some sort of meathead slogan, 'I choose to err on the side of higher protein intake' but it works for me.

This, along with a sufficient amount of carbs and fat to fuel activity is key. It's not popular to say this right now, but if you're an athlete and you train on a regular basis - you're probably going to struggle if you restrict carbs. Both in the performance and physique department. It's going to be an uphill battle convincing true believers that carbs aren't the enemy, so I'm not going to bother trying. At some point the trend will shift, and people will come to their own realization that their performance and health are being affected on low-carb. That's all I'm going to say about that.

Regardless of what eating style you choose, i.e. the Zone, Paleo, Weston Price, intermittent fasting etc. I suggest you make adjustments so you get one gram of protein per pound of bodyweight daily. And by that I mean the muscular bodyweight that you are aiming for. So if you want to weigh an athletic, ripped, muscular 185lbs, you should aim to eat 185 grams of protein daily, divided between three to six meals/shakes etc. I'm going to state the obvious which is that you're doing this while on a training plan, not on vacation or hiatus for several months. And eat your FAT. If you're noticing drops in libido and energy, one reason could be a lack of sufficient dietary fat and cholesterol.

If you're significantly overweight or underweight, give yourself time. Contrary to the hype, it's going to take you longer than 6 weeks to get into great shape. There's no need to be hard on yourself. Give yourself at least a year of consistent training and good eating habits. Until then, forget about the scale and the mirror. Worry about getting yourself to the gym and track consistently. You *will* look like a ripped beast in time if you consistently follow the TB strength and conditioning protocols. More importantly you'll perform like one too.

1. Eat to fuel performance.
2. Train to improve your performance. Do strength AND conditioning.
3. As your performance improves, everything else will fall into place - including health and aesthetics.

Ultimately I believe consistency trumps any special supplement or diet. If you are regularly training your program, eating generally healthy foods, eating *enough* food, and staying active you will be strong, lean and muscular. It'll be more effortless than you think. What I've noticed is that people get excited about a new diet or exercise program, do it for a week, get bored and miss workouts. Then they start up again for a few days, start and stop, start and stop etc. Then they're surprised that nothing's changed a year later. The same people will start to argue about minutiae like whether carrots are good or bad for you, or the merits of whey protein vs egg protein, meanwhile they're drinking two or three beers a night and

don't follow the program they've chosen for one week straight without interruption. The carrots ain't making you fat. We've all been there. Stop it. **CONSISTENCY WINS**

GENERAL NUTRITION GUIDELINES

- Calculate your daily protein requirements.
- Divide your protein requirements into 3-6 manageable portions over the day
- Add a sufficient amount of carb and fat to each protein portion. These are your meals.
- If your performance/recovery are poor, ensure you're eating enough. EAT MORE.
- If quantity is not the issue, look to composition. Ensure you're getting adequate carbs and fat.
- Protein bars and shakes are not magic muscle potions. They're simply a convenient way to meet your daily total protein intake. For some of us it's difficult eating six steaks a day to get a sufficient amount of protein.
- If you want more on eating for specific goals like weight loss, I recommend looking into **Precision Nutrition**. Google it. They're a solid performance based source of information, and they generally don't get carried away with fads and trends.

TWENTY-ONE

SUPPLEMENTS



I'm going to go over some of the supplements I've used in training. I've used many over the past 20 years. Some have made a significant difference, others have had no effect, and some have had a negative impact. Supplements affect everyone differently, keep that in mind when reading my recommendations. Another thing. Supplement companies vary greatly in quality. Some are total garbage run by the scum of the earth and do not contain what's stated on the label. Make sure you buy from a reputable company, or you'll be left shaking your head wondering why supplements

'don't work'. **You DO NOT NEED supplements** to be successful with this program. They can be helpful, that is all.

CREATINE MONOHYDRATE

I've found creatine monohydrate to be extremely useful for muscle size, and muscular endurance. That's **monohydrate**. Not any other form. Most of the studies showing benefit use the monohydrate form. The others tend to be marketing gimmicks used by supplement companies to differentiate their product from the competition with a 'newer' 'more fantastical' 'super absorbable' form of creatine.

I use five grams a day. I buy a brand that contains micronized creatine monohydrate from 'Creapure'. Several brands contain this version. On days I work out or train, I put five grams of creatine in my post workout shake. My shake consists of 30-40gms whey protein, 30gms of simple carb, either frozen fruit or dextrose, and five grams of creatine monohydrate. On non-workout days I use the creatine by itself (no dextrose) with water or blended frozen fruit. I notice increased muscle size, increased strength, work capacity and power. Personally, creatine makes a significant difference for me in my strength training. If you want more details, along with studies, read this: <http://www.tacticalbarbell.com/supplements/supplement-review-creatine-magic-bullet/>

PROTEIN POWDER

I use protein powder for convenience, as it makes it easier

for me to get my daily required intake of protein. I usually stick to simple whey protein powders. I believe whole foods/meats are the best source of protein, but with my lifestyle and serious lack of cooking skills I can't conveniently get the amount of protein I need on a daily basis through solid meals. Otherwise I'd be spending all day gorging myself on meat. I also don't have the time or inclination to spend hours in the kitchen preparing multiple meals a day that I then have to carry around with me at work etc. So two or three of my meals will include protein powder or a protein bar simply to meet my daily protein requirement. If you're finding it hard to get your daily protein intake through solid foods, powder can help make up the deficit.

PROTEIN BARS

Protein bars come in handy for me when I'm at work. They are portable and convenient. I treat each bar as a meal. Aim for a quality bar that contains little or no sugar. Many of the bars out there, especially the tasty ones, contain enormous amounts of sugar, and are little better than candy bars.

Protein bars are generally poor quality when compared to real food. I don't consider them particularly healthy. They're good for two things in my books - getting in daily protein and calories while travelling or when inconvenient (in the field/on ops etc.). Undereating and inadequate protein will decrease your performance.

My rule of thumb is that I never exceed one bar a day, and I only eat protein bars on days that I am at work. I eat no

protein bars on my days off. I do allow for more leeway with the bars when I travel, sometimes eating two or three daily depending on the availability of real food. I'd rather have a couple protein bars over a bunch of snacks picked up at a gas station or airport. This applies if you're in the field or on Ops too. Protein bars can be healthier than rations, or a good way to supplement them if you're out on a lengthy recce patrol and need to carry food on your person.

CAFFEINE

I use caffeine tablets pre-workout. I use roughly 100-200mg half an hour before training. I don't know whether caffeine gives me any tangible real world increases in strength or performance, but it definitely effects my mood and perceived energy levels. Caffeine has come in handy when trying to head into the gym after a long hard shift when motivation levels are not optimum. You can buy several months' worth of caffeine tablets for about ten bucks. I've tried expensive pre-workout powders, and most of them simply contain these major ingredients:

Approximately 300mg caffeine/caffeine derivative per serving (sometimes given a fancy name such as methylxanthine or guarana).

Creatine

Arginine

It's the massive dose of caffeine giving you that perceived energy boost. You've probably noticed the energy effects tend to taper off with continued use...that's you developing

tolerance to high dose caffeine. Pre-workouts are very expensive compared to buying the individual supplements by themselves. Ten bucks for a two month supply of caffeine tablets? Or fifty to sixty on an expensive pre-workout? You decide.

ZINC/ZMA

There is some controversy over this one. ZMA is marketed as a testosterone booster. It contains zinc, magnesium and vitamin b6, in specific quantities in specific forms. What it boils down to is this. A zinc deficiency causes lower testosterone levels. Athletes or persons that train regularly can easily become zinc and magnesium deficient. Zinc won't boost your testosterone levels beyond normal, but it may address training induced deficiencies, thus 'boosting your testosterone'. Studies confirm zinc supports both testosterone and thyroid function during periods of heavy training.

I myself have found a difference in my mood, libido and energy levels when I supplement zinc vs when I don't. I sometimes alternate between ZMA and zinc by itself, usually in the picolinate or Optizinc form. I train noticeably harder when taking ZMA, and occasionally it puts me in the mood to do twice a day workouts. This could be because of the magnesium content as well. Magnesium plays a huge role in physical wellbeing and recovery for athletes. Your experience may vary, mine was very positive.

One caveat. In my experience it can be very easy to overdo the zinc, contrary to popular marketing. Stick to 20mg or

lower a day, and even with these amounts be aware of how your body's reacting to it. I found with 30mg supplementation over time I would start getting the symptoms of lethargy, physical weakness, and malaise typical of zinc's effect on copper levels. Zinc depletes copper, and copper in small amounts is vital to energy production, dopamine and other important functions. A safe bet would be to take zinc every other day. Zinc also has antagonist effects with iron and magnesium, so be cognizant of overdoing the zinc and inducing a deficiency in another mineral, especially if you are an endurance athlete. Many multivitamins contain zinc as well, so keep that in mind. Moderation is extremely important with zinc.

MAGNESIUM/POTASSIUM

This is a big one, and highly recommended. Magnesium is responsible for many functions, including ATP generation/support (the energy molecules of your body), effects on your heart muscle, and involvement in the detoxification process. It may help prevent cardiovascular disease, and regulates high blood pressure, amongst other things. I recommend magnesium glycinate, or a combined magnesium/potassium supplement. Magnesium/potassium deficiencies are not uncommon, due to widespread pre-workout stimulant/ energy drink use these days. Also, most eat a very high sodium diet, and sodium and potassium have an antagonistic relationship. You might be surprised at how drastically a marginal potassium or magnesium deficiency can affect you.

MULTIVITAMIN

Every two to three days I take a multi as 'insurance'. Consider this if you're diet's not as nutrient dense as it should be.

BCAAS

I personally don't use BCAAS and don't think they're necessary. Seems like a supplement company money grab to me. You can cover off all your amino acid needs with a decent protein powder and good nutrition. Another thing to keep in mind if you use, they can compete with tryptophan. Tryptophan is a building block of serotonin. In a nutshell, BCAAS can deplete serotonin levels and put you in a depressed state of mind. When I played around with them they consistently put me in a foul mood. There's research indicating that BCAAs deplete not only serotonin, but *also suppress tyrosine/catecholamines*. Catecholamines are the body's natural stimulants. If you suppress catecholamines *your physical performance may suffer*. The study suggests taking tyrosine with BCAAs prior to exercise to enhance effectiveness and negate the catecholamine suppression. It's not worth it. Take the tyrosine by itself. There *is* one situation in which BCAAs could be useful. And that's if you're training in a fasted state. I won't go into detail as that's beyond the scope of this book, plus I haven't looked into it deeply enough to provide proper information. If you want more details and studies, Google is your friend. Your mileage may vary. Make your own decision.

VITAMIN D

I am skeptical that Vitamin D is the cure all that it's being made out to be. But, the majority of research seems to indicate that it's a smart idea to get tested and supplement until you reach a reasonable level. People are popping D like there's no tomorrow. I personally avoid mega dosing D, and take about 1000-2000mg every other day. My general rule of thumb is that mega-dosing *anything* is never a good idea no matter what the current science says. Because that same science tends to unearth new things years later. Like 'oops... vitamin D interacts with substance x in the body in a previously unknown way...maybe we shouldn't have told you to mega-dose.' If you do a lot of research, you know that many contradicting studies on the same topic co-exist. Keep that in mind when you start getting too attached to a study. Moderation is usually the safe bet.

FISH OIL/EFAS

Avoid mega-dosing. Use as directed. I prefer eating fish a couple times a week. Again, I am a little skeptical that fish oil is the magic it's made out to be.

To recap, supplements are not necessary. Personally, I can say that creatine, caffeine, and getting sufficient quality food on a daily basis have made the most difference in my training. Scientific studies are helpful when making your decisions, but keep in mind time has shown that new studies are released frequently contradicting or shedding new light on other studies, so don't put all your faith in them. Not to mention various studies may be funded by parties with vested financial interest, others aren't conducted to a high standard, etc. Collect all the

information and opinions, but make the final decision yourself.

TWENTY-TWO

FAQ'S



What if I'm in the middle of a strength block and have to travel on short notice, and can't continue my program for a few weeks?

For those of us that live in the real world this is actually a fairly common problem. Fortunately, there is a relatively easy fix. When you return, and you have access to weights, and the gym, you have a couple options. You can retest your numbers and do a short three week block to bring back the

muscle memory. Then you can retest again in week 4 and continue with your new numbers.

Or if you weren't too far into your strength block before having it interrupted, you can restart the block at Day 1 /Week 1, or try the weights you used one week prior.

So for example, I'm in week 3 of my program, starting to lift 90% of my maximums. I am feeling good, and putting up the weight, progressing well. Then I'm called away to travel for a conference or short deployment. I'll be gone for less than a week, but I won't have access to a serious weight room.

I'm fairly confident I haven't lost a lot of strength during the four days I was away, but it's not a good idea to dive right back into week 3 at 90% where I left off. Instead, I will back up a week, and start at Week 2/Day 1, which will have me lifting 80% of my maximums, and I will continue my template from there.

Now in that same situation if I'm gone for longer, let's say about ten days to two weeks, I would personally either restart at Week 1/Day 1 with my last tested maximums. Or I would retest and do a short three week 'catch up' block, and then retest in week 4, and start a new phase from there.

What about bicep curls??!

If you're a pure tactical athlete don't waste your time with this or other isolation exercises. Use that time to train other more important attributes. Incorporate weighted pull-ups in your cluster. WPU's grew my biceps faster and better than

curls ever did. You might be surprised at how your overall musculature (including biceps) will grow by lifting heavy with major compound movements. Biceps, triceps, calves etc develop dramatically and indirectly through heavy compound work and your complimentary conditioning program.

If you're more of a recreational trainee, curls, abs, and any other accessory work can be incorporated with Zulu template. Perform your accessory exercises after you finish with your max-strength work. The strength work in Zulu takes approximately 20-25 minutes, plenty of time for more work after. So if accessory work is an important part of your training, stick to Zulu. Accessory work for aesthetic purposes is usually done with lighter loads and higher rep ranges. Program accordingly.

This One Rep maximum stuff's a headache, can I just guess or estimate my maximums instead of having test days?

No. You will not succeed with this program if you skip or guesstimate your one rep maximums. And it's not a headache, it's actually very easy after you've gone through it once.

I feel pretty fresh after my workouts, and feel like I can do a lot more or go heavier. Should I do more or lift heavier?

NO! This is one of the BIGGEST mistakes new trainees make on this program. They are generally used to a bodybuilding type of workout which encourages muscle failure, feeling the burn, and getting 'skin splitting pumps'. This is the opposite of what we want because we are developing

strength, not hypertrophy. We want to stay as fresh as possible so we can train as frequently as possible. That frequency brings about the desired strength.

If you feel relatively fresh after your strength session – you are doing it RIGHT. Do not do a single extra rep. Do not do a single extra set. Do not do a single extra exercise. DO NOT ADD MORE WEIGHT.

All that extra energy you have? Use it after you finish your main lifts and do some conditioning, cardio, accessory work, or kettlebells. Or punch the heavy bag and do some hill sprints.

I don't really like the exercise cluster I chose, I want to do the cluster that has weighted pull-ups in it, but I 'm in the middle of a strength block. Can I just drop the deadlifts and add in the weighted pull-ups?

No. If you feel very strongly about your exercise selection, finish up the block, and then retest with your new cluster of choice. Have a little discipline and see the cluster through your entire block, and then switch. We're in the game for the long haul. Do not switch exercises mid-block. You will lose consistency and progression. If you're like me, probably you will benefit from doing the exercises you don't like.

Should I do my cardio/conditioning before or after my strength session?

Do your cardio/conditioning sessions *after* your weights. Being fatigued prior to your strength session may be

detrimental to your lifts, but being pre-fatigued for your cardio is almost a bonus.

What if I can't complete the higher repetition demand of the bodyweight exercises included in my chosen cluster? My harder workouts sometimes call for three sets of 20 reps which I can't always complete.

No problem here. The bodyweight exercises (NOT the weighted body exercises) are treated differently from the rest in this program. So while you might finish up benching 250lbs for 3 sets of 5 with no major issues completing the repetitions, this may not be the case for doing any bodyweight exercises. For example, if your session calls for 3 sets of 20 pull-ups as in the question above, you may bump off the first set no problem, rest two to three minutes, but find you can only complete 18 in set 2. No problem, just rest a few seconds and complete the last two reps. And so on. Some of you may develop enough that after a standard rest of 2 to 5 minutes you are able to complete each high repetition set with no problems - if that's the case - great, stick with that. If not, simply rest a few seconds get back on the bar and keep squeezing out low rep sets until you hit your numbers. The bodyweight exercises are a bit of an anomaly in this program, they provide a bit of a strength-endurance element if you choose those particular clusters. They don't really fit in with the regular strength exercises provided, but they provide a useful addition to the Minimalist clusters, and are a great example of how you can begin to incorporate a little strength-endurance in your work.

Keep in mind, the *weighted* body exercises such as weighted pull-ups, are treated exactly like the standard exercises, bench press, squat etc.

As a tactical athlete, I recently discovered kettlebells and want to incorporate them in my program. Can I do this?

Absolutely. Kettlebells are top of the line training tools when used correctly. They are especially good for strength-endurance, conditioning and general resiliency. There are many ways to include kettlebells. You can use them after a strength session as a finisher. For example, finish up all your barbell work, rest a few minutes, and end your workout with 100 swings. You can also use them on separate conditioning days, with higher repetitions. Kettlebells are incorporated frequently in the TBII protocols. My opinion is to stick with the methods taught by Pavel Tsatsouline or Valery Fedorenko. Avoid the new 'American' kettlebell movements being taught in some corners of the web.

What kind of conditioning do you recommend? What do you think of long distance running?

The answer here is, it depends. Performance. Aesthetics. Health. Are you in a unit or sport that requires elements of endurance? Think infantry, special operations, boxing, and triathlons. Or are you training to stay in shape for personal reasons and want to remain healthy overall? Long distance running has gained a bad reputation lately, with the craze over high intensity interval work. But it has its place. Long steady state cardio develops a base level of endurance that assists even during your short high intensity conditioning

sessions. If you're an athlete or serve in a unit that has that endurance component, you should be worried about performance, so you have no choice, do it. I guarantee you won't pass SAS selection doing just burpees and sprints.

If you do not have those concerns, and you're primarily training for health, fat loss, and muscle gain, you'll gain more overall benefit with the majority of your conditioning being of the shorter duration high intensity type. Stick with sprinting and short high intensity conditioning sessions. Maybe throw in a long distance fun run once in a month.

If you're a tactical professional looking for a comprehensive conditioning system, read *Tactical Barbell II: Conditioning*. It covers developing energy systems for elite performance in the operational arena, and is fully compatible with the strength templates in this book. All of the major fitness domains are covered, aerobic base training, work capacity, anaerobic systems and strength-endurance to name a few. It's a systematic approach based on scientific training principles, not a series of laundry-list 'workouts.'

What about Olympic lifts?

I haven't included O lifts because they should be learned properly with instruction. I don't believe they are inherently dangerous or anything like that, but they require relatively more technical skill than the standard lifts. If you're inexperienced, you might injure yourself a little more easily if you don't have the technique down. That's something a tactical professional can't afford to do, when conventional lifts exist that do the job. They definitely have their place in

developing power and explosiveness. If you know what you're doing and believe you'd benefit from them, I won't stop you. Include them in your cluster and manipulate the repetitions and loads as you see fit.

I'm not military or SWAT, can I still use this program?

Yes. This program ends up being highly customized due to template/cluster selection and the nature of using one repetition maximums. Whether you're squatting the bar or 600lbs, you'll be loading and progressing based on your own numbers regardless of ability.

I'm training to be a police officer, Hostage Rescue Team member, Green Beret etc. What template should I use?

If you are training to be a police officer, read and implement Tactical Barbell: Physical Preparation for Law Enforcement. If you're looking to get into a higher end tactical unit or special operations group, there is no one answer for this. Individual units have a wide variety of physical requirements. Most military selection courses contain a heavy endurance component, and devoting too much time to strength may be counterproductive. Other teams may have specialized requirements, like being a proficient swimmer, or focus on heavy ruck marches that last for days up and down the mountains. My advice is to research the exact physical entry requirements and plan accordingly. Think of it this way. 'What do I have to do/ how do I have to train to pass selection?' As many of you in the field can attest to, in some cases, what's required on selection may be different from what's required to perform well during

actual daily duties. Train and prepare for what you're facing accordingly. Spend a few years building a high base level of general strength, endurance, and conditioning (this can be done with TBI and II) and then plan a period of specificity training 4-6 months out from your selection or testing.

I'm a woman. Is this program going to give me bulky muscles?

No. First, it is relatively difficult for a female to put on heavy muscle mass unless you're taking hormones, steroids or testosterone. Secondly, male or female, this program is not aimed at hypertrophy or size, it's geared toward strength gain. Increased strength doesn't automatically equate to increased size or bulky muscles. Most men *will* likely gain residual hypertrophy on this program unless they manipulate rest intervals, conditioning, and nutrition to minimize same. Lifting heavy weights in a manner designed to increase strength generally results in a harder denser look, as opposed to a bulky or puffy look.

Do I need a spotter? I've never lifted 90% of my max before.

You don't need a spotter. The beauty of this program is it ramps you up closer to your max in a slow progressive manner, so that when you do reach the heavier loads, you won't be overwhelmed. Also, if you've never trained for strength before with the unique longer rest intervals/load manipulation, you may be pleasantly surprised at how much you can lift in a given session. Keep in mind all the loads are based on your own one repetition maximums. If the 2 to 10 minute rest interval before a heavy lift doesn't give you

peace of mind, then by all means employ a spotter. Personally, using this program exactly as laid out, I've never needed one.

That being said, never do anything that feels unsafe. There is nothing wrong with using a spotter on a couple sets if you want a little insurance.

I'm consistently failing on my last couple reps, what should I do?

This is not a common problem if the program is followed correctly. However, if it does occur, first try this. Extend your rest period by a minute or even two. Rest a full 3 to 5 minutes if you have to. That should do the trick. This should allow you to finish your sets consistently and develop your strength properly for future sessions. If that doesn't work, and you have a hunch that maybe the load for whatever reason is beyond your capabilities, knock off 10lbs-30lbs off that particular exercise's one rep maximum and recalculate your numbers for the rest of the block. One step back, two steps forward. On the other hand, if you're having this happen during a bodyweight exercise, such as pull-ups - that *is* common. When you fail on a pull-up, just rest for a couple seconds and squeeze out the rest, one at a time if necessary, until the set is complete.

Can I perform my exercise cluster in a circuit fashion? If so can I shorten my rest intervals?

You can perform your exercises in a circuit fashion, or in any order you like. For example, if you're using the cluster containing bench, deadlifts and squats, you can set it up so

that you're doing a set on the bench, followed by a set of squats, followed by a set of deadlifts, until you complete all required sets for each exercise. You can also stack a couple exercises back to back. So you'd set up the bench and squat, and then go back and forth between the two until your sets are completed. Then you'd hit the pull-up bar and finish up your workout with your remaining required pull-ups.

The Golden Rule still applies. You cannot shorten your rest intervals. You must rest a minimum of two minutes between your exercises, even if conducting your workout in a circuit fashion. After you finish a set on the bench, wait *at least* two minutes, before moving on to the squat rack.

I've been using Operator for several weeks now and the weights still feel heavy and unmanageable. What should I do?

This can be a fairly common issue depending on your age and concurrent conditioning protocol. The simple solution is to use a training max. The training maximum was made popular by **Jim Wendler** in his excellent strength training program: **5/3/1**. A TM is simply 90% of your true one rep max. So if your one rep max for bench is 300lbs, you'd pretend it was 270lbs. 270 would be your training max, and the number you use to calculate your bench for the entire block. You can do this with all of your lifts. Recommended if you're simultaneously running a conditioning protocol, or if you're an older or advanced lifter.

Is Tactical Barbell better than program x or program y?

Yes. Seriously, it all depends. The best program for you depends on your goals and lifestyle. Most importantly the best program for you is one that gives you **RESULTS**. There are many paths to the same outcome, so choose the one that gives you what you want in a way that fits your lifestyle. There is no one 'Holy Grail' of training programs for everyone. There are lots of great strength programs out there. There are plenty of bad ones too. Some may work for certain people better than others. Some are designed with a very specific or narrow population in mind, and others are designed for 'everybody'. Depending on where you are in your training career you might benefit more from one style over another. Pick any legitimate proven program and stick with it for a substantial amount of time before coming to any conclusions. I am going to suggest, that when choosing a strength program, you look for some sort of progression model. **Most** effective strength programs are all based on the same principles, with slight variations. Those variations can make all the difference. Some programs are a perfect fit for people that lift and only lift, but impractical and unsustainable for those that cross-train. I've used many strength programs throughout the years, and for my goals, TB is the program I would've wanted without a doubt from the very beginning. It's not for everyone. If you're looking to compete in your first powerlifting meet, there are better options out there that deal with specialization, and peaking protocols. If you want to take up the discipline of bodybuilding and step up on stage, there are more suitable programs.

TWENTY-THREE

DEBRIEF

'A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week.'

Patton

I set out to write the book I would've wanted 20 years ago when I was getting into the tactical world. If I could sum it up in one sentence it would be 'a simple strength system for extreme results'.

No frills, no unnecessary complexity, pared down, and brutally effective.

Stick with it. No deviation, no distraction. Stay consistent. After you experience the measurable results on this program, it'll be impossible to go back to training by feel, 'instinctively' or whatever. Don't confuse flexibility with not having a plan.



There are two principles in this book which are responsible for 90% of the results you will see with this program.

The first is frequent heavy, sub-maximal lifting while avoiding muscle failure.

The second supports the first, which is the longer, 2-minute minimum rest interval.

With the first principle, you're lifting the submaximal loads with the same exercises several times throughout the week before adding more weight. Program X may have you add ten pounds to your bench every time you bench. This program will have you benching two to three times a week with the exact same weight every time, before adding more. Your body is given a longer amount of time to adapt to the new stimulus. You are growing into a higher base level of strength through repetition. What started out feeling heavy eventually feels light.

The second principle is such a small insignificant thing on the surface, yet it's widely neglected by most. That tiny little bit of extra rest-interval translates into more work being successfully completed during a session, which compounds over time and turns into massive strength increases.

We love hearing about your training progress and ways you've combined the program with your conditioning, sport or profession. Send us feedback anytime at www.tacticalbarbell.com. If you have any questions at all, send us an email. Better yet, join myself and other TB users on our forum:

<http://tacticalbarbell.com/forum/index.php>

We've got plenty of great posters including tactical professionals, military, police officers, athletes, marathon runners and martial artists. Extremely fit and experienced people that will take the time to assist you with specific goals and setting up your TB training protocols.

WHAT'S NEXT?

This book covers strength; force generation, armor building, and resilience. Strength is extremely important for the operational athlete, but it's only one half of the equation. The other side of the coin is conditioning, or developing your energy producing systems. Your gas tank. The ability to spar hard for several rounds, ruck march for hours, and pick up and run a half marathon if required. You won't get there by bench pressing or squatting. If you're a tactical professional, training your aerobic/anaerobic system is not optional. The second book in this series **Tactical Barbell II: Conditioning** will teach you exactly how to develop superhuman stamina and work capacity. If your "cardio" mainly consists of sprinting, metcons, and HIIT, you're doing it wrong. You're missing out on developing the system that provides you with 90% of the energy you require for your

daily activities. Whether that daily activity consists of infantry battle drills or hitting the gym - the unique and frequently overlooked training method we teach will significantly boost the energy you have available to you to perform these tasks. TBII is fully compatible with the strength templates found in this book. Both books mesh together as a complete strength & conditioning system designed to develop the attributes required by high performing operational athletes.

We look forward to your success.

Amat Victoria Curam