

MEDICINE BALL TRAINING

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In recent years, with the explosion of the health and fitness industry, many new products have helped add variety to training programmes. Most have their merits; however in simplicity and effectiveness few are able to match the medicine ball. Certainly the medicine ball seems a dated piece of gym equipment; however fitness experts are now again realising its value and adaptability to anybody's workout.

The resurgence of the medicine ball is largely due to its adaptability and simplicity. It is appropriate for use by athletes of all levels and all ages and can provide an all encompassing workout - including warm-up and injury prevention exercises.

Increasingly my clients are enjoying the benefits of training with medicine balls, particularly the XLR8 Bounce series of medicine balls which come in a range of sizes, offering further options and flexibility to a workout.

Dynamic Warm Up Exercises

Modern theories on warm-ups concentrate on a series of more dynamic, focused exercises, specifically tailored for a chosen sport rather than the older more general approach. Various drills should be employed which will warm the muscles required in the ensuing workout, to prepare them for more strenuous exercise. While it is also important to prepare the cardiovascular system with light jogging, a focused, specific warm-up can easily be designed for any athlete using medicine balls. The speed component of a med ball warm-up can also be increased, preparing the muscles for more dynamic contractions.

Typical warm-up exercises using a medicine ball are....

Torso twists

Squat overhead press

Squat + chest press

Lunge + twist

Muscular Endurance and Strength

The range of exercises applicable to the medicine ball allows the individual to train according to the demands placed on their body in their chosen sport, or in everyday life. It is absolutely essential that an athlete's work out is specific to his or her needs. Both fast twitch (endurance) and slow twitch (strength) muscle fibres can be developed to their potential, given a medicine ball and a suitable programme. The diversity allowed by the XLR8 range of bounce balls, which offers balls of varying weights, will help the athlete build muscles in the required manner. Today, in any modern gym athletes from a range of sports will be seen employing medicine balls.

Training Variables

Muscular endurance: 12 + reps with <60 seconds rest

Muscular strength: 6-12 reps with 60-90 seconds rest

Exercises commonly used to develop muscles with the medicine ball are...

Lower Body

Deep squat press
One leg straight leg dead lift
Wobble board squat + press

Upper Body

Medicine ball wood chops
Alternating press ups
Three quarter press ups on two medicine balls

Muscular Power

A combination of speed and strength, developing muscular power is obviously vital in most competitive sports, and again choosing the right range of medicine ball exercises will prove ideal in power training. The trunk of the body, at its centre of gravity, is the body's power plant - where each movement begins. There are a number of traditional exercises using the medicine ball specifically designed to increase power in this area.

Training Variables

Muscular Power: 1-6 reps with 2-5 minutes rest

Examples of power with XLR8 Medicine balls include...

Med ball Slams
Backward overhead toss
Kneeling throw to press up
Explosive lateral press ups

Injury Prevention

Anybody who has suffered muscle or joint injury, with the benefit of hindsight, will recognise the value of injury prevention exercises. A 'rehabilitation' programme is easily designed using a medicine ball. The majority of 'prehabilitation' programmes should focus on stabilisation and coordination of muscle groups. Low impact exercises with the medicine ball are proven injury prevention methods, reducing the risk of muscular and joint injury. My clients are always provided with an injury prevention schedule suited to the demands of their sport.

Examples of injury preventions exercises include...

Decelerating shoulder stabiliser 1-3kg XLR8 med ball
Plank with two medicine balls
Washing Machine