

Power-training for fighters

Part 4

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Core Strength indispensable for top-performances.

Core Strength, another wonder training, I hear some people think when reading the title. I can assure you it's a necessary form of training that rightly receives more and more attention from fitness-gurus and trainers. I've mentioned the word 'core-training' in my previous articles and in this article I'll discuss this more extensively. Core-training are an indispensable and very important part in many training scheme's of the biggest sportsmen in the world. For example Michael Phelps (8 times swimming gold at the Olympic Games in 2008), Usain Bolt (the fastest man on the 100 and 200 meters) and the entire top-skating world. As a serious fighter this part can't miss or you'll miss an essential part of your training.

What is your core and why is it important?

Your core is globally the midsection of your torso, especially the area around you back, stomach and pelvis. Around these you have deep muscles and muscles on the surface. The muscles you see on the outside, for example the six-pack and muscles you see on the back, are the muscles on the surface. What we can't see but are really important are the deep transversal abdominals (m. transverses abdominus) and deeper smaller back muscles (m. multifidus and m. rotatus). These muscles are important for stabilizing of the spine and torso. Consider your core as a power center from where the strength is transferred from the ground to the arms and legs. Every major movement you start, whether it's a punch or a kick or lifting a garbage bag, it starts with contracting the muscles in your core.

Misunderstandings about abdominal training

Well-known abdominal exercises such as sit-ups, crunches and leg-raises mainly exercise the superficial abdominals and oblique abdominals. Back training with fitness equipment mostly exercise the muscles on the surface, these muscles are minimally needed for stability and coordination in the core. It's often thought that when someone has a clearly visible six-pack that person naturally has a powerful core. This isn't true per se, six-pack is a muscle on the surface and says nothing about core-strength or core-stability.

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Always consult a certified or professional trainer even your physician in case of any doubt.

Another misunderstanding is that you get a defined six-pack by performing a lot of crunches and abdominal exercises. Unfortunately, I have to let you down, many crunches and sit-ups (I hear some sporters do 200 to 300 a day) will provide you with back pain or a hernia rather than a six pack. Vary your abdominal training and pay attention to core-stability. A six-pack is for the greater part a matter of genetic predisposition and dieting.

Back to some better messages, core-training gives you a better guarantee to punch and kick more powerful, stand more stable while fighting, move coordinated and what's also important is that many back and groin pains are prevented with a strong core-stability and power.

Complex forms of core-training also lead to improvement of coordination because we learn how to contract and use many muscles at the same time which improves the interaction of muscles.

We can roughly divide 2 sorts of core-training:

Of both forms I'll provide you with some practical examples:

- **Static forms: you can't or can hardly see the torso move during these exercises, while the torso does provide internal power to stay stable in a specific position.**

1. The plank: you lean on 2 elbows and the front part of your feet (toes) with your nose facing the mat, keep your back stretched and straight. Hold this position for 15 seconds and repeat this 6 to 8 times. Vary with duration and number of reps later on. A variation to this exercise is rising one leg from the ground and maintain the stable straight position of the torso. You can also do this by stretching one arm to the front so you have 3 points of support. In a more advanced stage you can stretch one leg and one arm crossed so you have 2 points of support.

2. The side plank: you lean on the outside of your foot and on your elbow and press your hip sideways up until you're body is stretched. Vary with number of reps and duration of maintaining stretched position.

3. While standing with legs 50 cm apart, pull with both arms sideways stretched on a cable or an elastic cord and feel the tension in the midsection of your abdominals.

- **Dynamic forms: you can see movements in the torso in every direction, these forms can be done calmly as well as explosively.**

Lean with your back on a Swiss-ball and make slight rotations under resistance of a cable or an elastic cord that's attached next to you.

Stand in a push-up position with your legs on a step and pull your knees one by one to your shoulders while you keep your back stable.

Stand between 2 cables and pull one towards you while you push the other away. Repeat this a couple of times. Vary with the duration of holding this position and with the weight. Midsection stays stable.

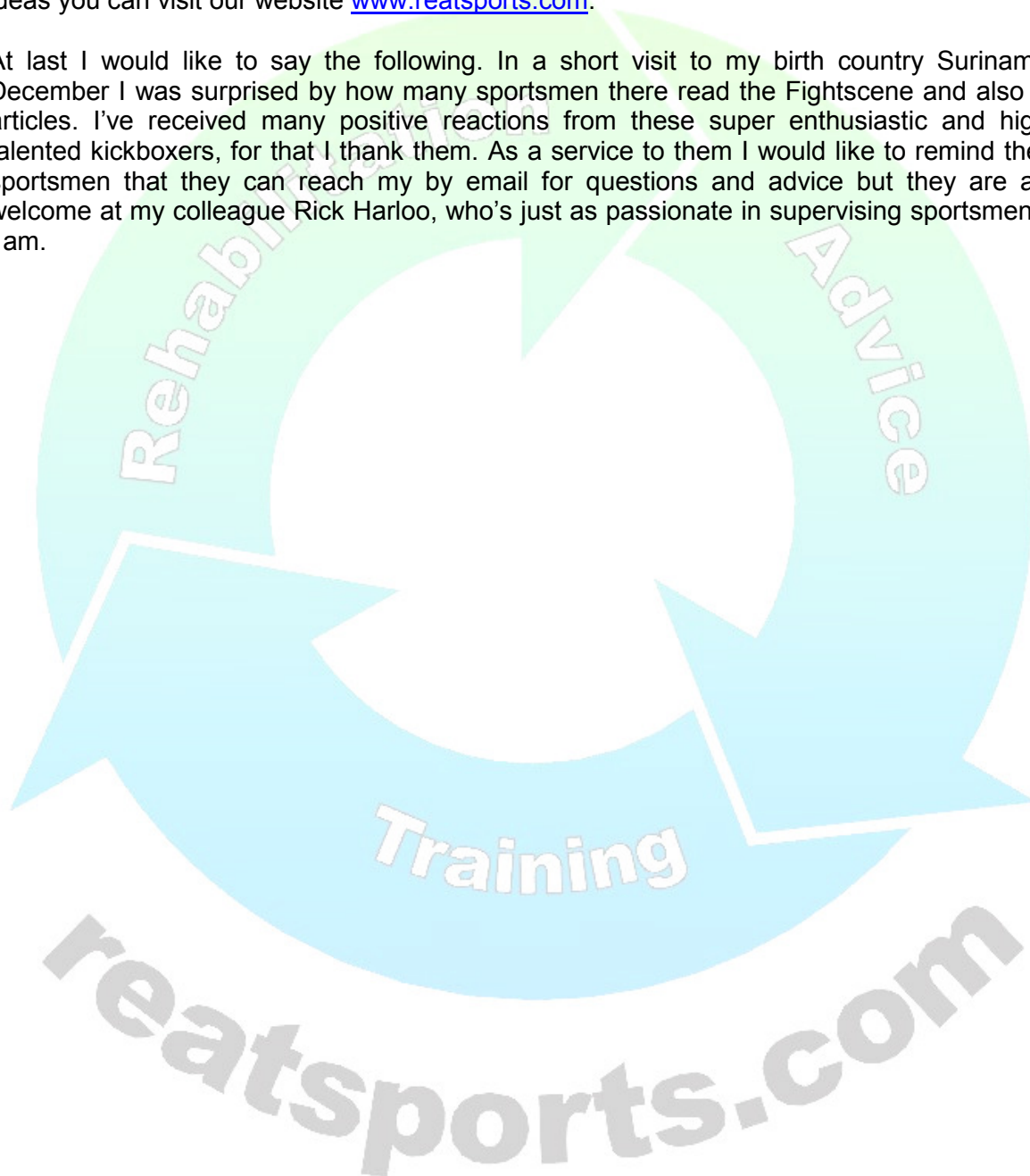
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When composing core-training make sure you don't compensate by for example bend your back or make other weird uncontrolled turns with your torso.

Some guidelines, choose simple exercised in the beginning and pay attention to technique and performance. Alternate static and dynamic forms of training in your training program. Start with single exercising forms and later do multiple exercising forms. Start with movements in one direction and later do 3-dimensional movements. For more exercises and ideas you can visit our website www.reatsports.com.

At last I would like to say the following. In a short visit to my birth country Surinam in December I was surprised by how many sportsmen there read the Fightscene and also my articles. I've received many positive reactions from these super enthusiastic and highly talented kickboxers, for that I thank them. As a service to them I would like to remind these sportsmen that they can reach my by email for questions and advice but they are also welcome at my colleague Rick Harloo, who's just as passionate in supervising sportsmen as I am.



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