

15 grueling minutes

***If You're a Grappler and You Want To Get in Shape,
This Routine Is For You***

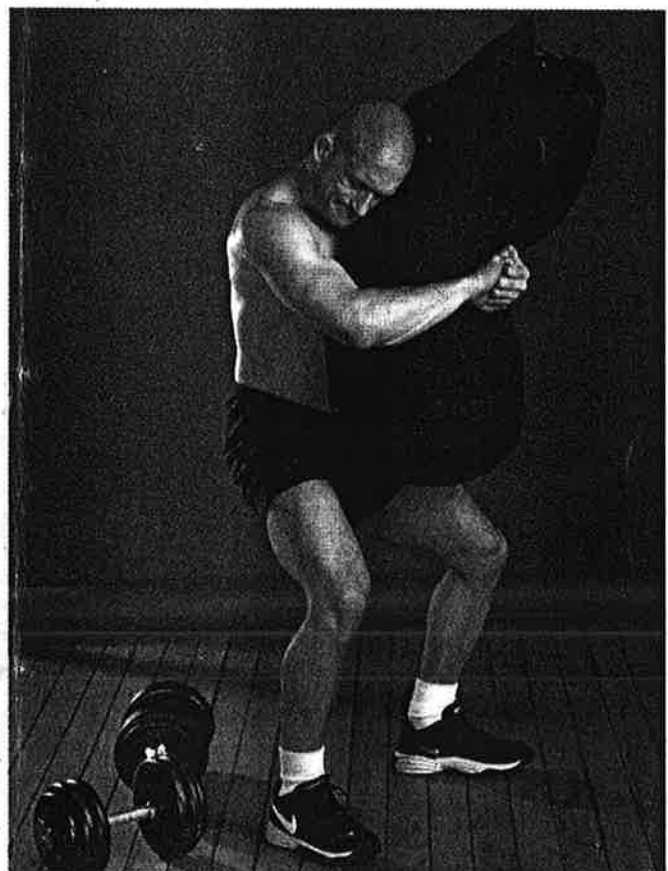
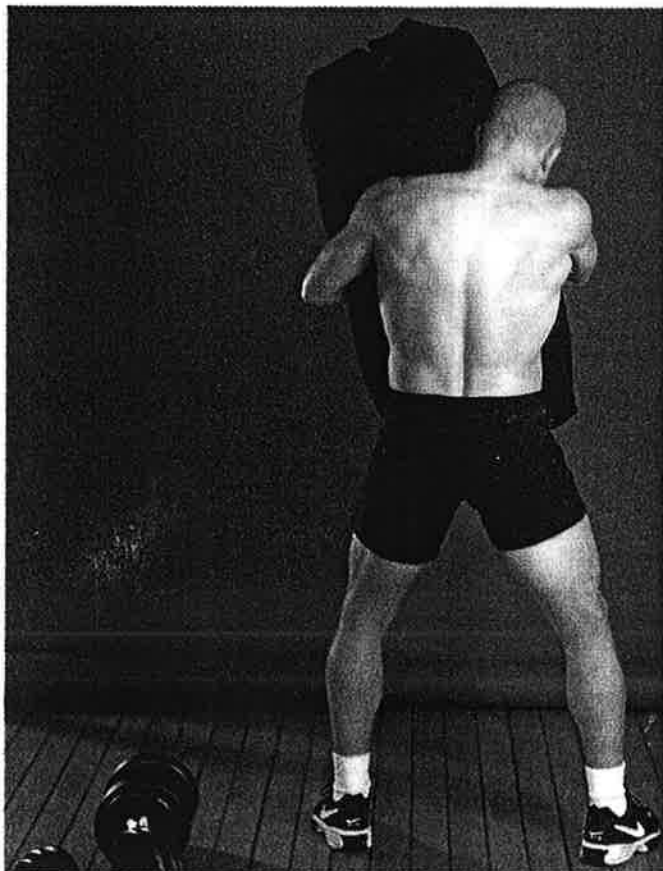
Story by Stephen A. Maxwell, MSE/Photos by Paul Sirochman

Unless you're a former POW, you're about to experience the most grueling 15 minutes of your life. If you're not lying face-down in a pool of sweat when you're done, you probably changed in a phone booth prior to the workout.

If you do find yourself lying face down in a pool of

sweat, don't feel bad. You're not alone. Most people can't get through this workout without prolonged and frequent rests. Others have to quit halfway through. Not surprisingly, no one has ever, ever asked to do more.

Some—but not many—are able to persevere and finish this routine. If you're one of them, be proud. You



e, without a doubt,
among the most
highly-conditioned
athletes on any mat.

A New Ball Game

As you know, grap-
pling requires a spe-
cific type of condition-
ing. You may be
the world's greatest
stand-up fighter, but
it's a whole different
ball game when you
get on the mat. And
coaches find that out
real quick. During live

wrestling, most rookies find themselves exhausted
faster than they can ask, "Where's the water?"

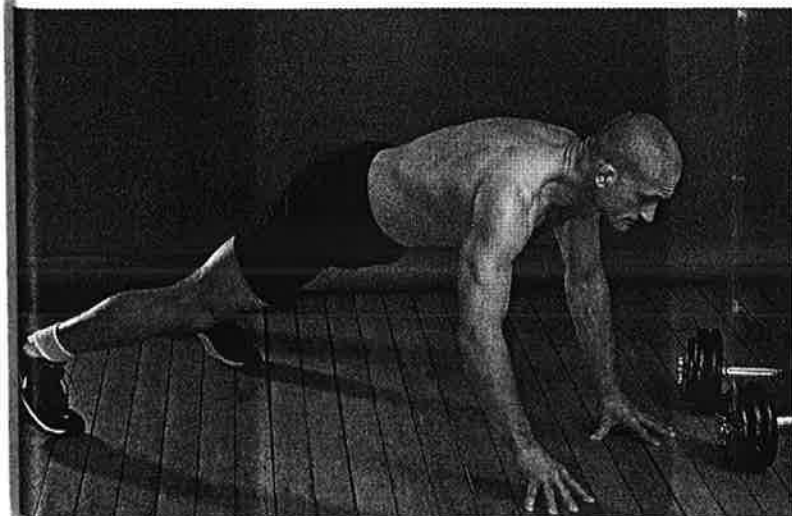
The simultaneous stress of the cardio-respiratory and
musculoskeletal systems is what makes grappling so
intense. Training your body to handle these combined
stresses is called metabolic conditioning. Arthur Jones,
who invented the famed Nautilus circuit, coined this
term during research at West Point during the 1970s.

\$1 Million

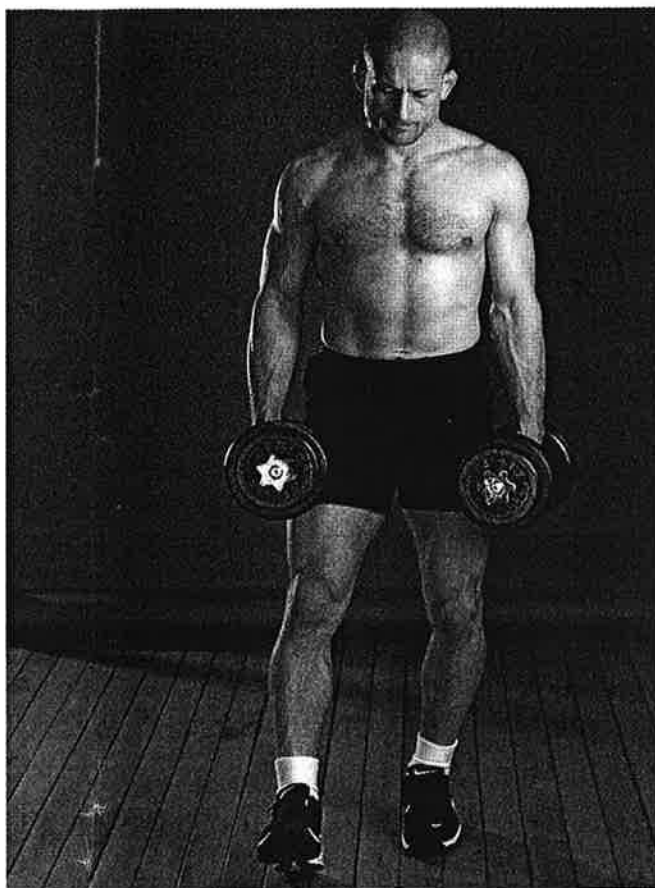
To improve their grappling conditioning, many
use a variety of cardio workouts, including running.



That may not
be a bad
idea, but it's
not the best
idea, either.
Low-inten-
sity endur-
ance work
such as run-
ning does not
stimulate



In this routine, you have to do the
farmer's walk (above) and walk with
the heavy bag (opposite page).



the type of adaptations needed for a tournament
grappling match. How about powerlifting?
Equally ineffective if there are long rests between
efforts. So where does that leave you? On the mat,
where else?

The best way to condition yourself for grap-
pling is to get on the mat and grapple. The more
time you spend on the mat, the better. In fact,
many top grapplers do not do anything other than
their daily sparring sessions. But that can also
lead to a problem. According to Kim Wood, the
strength coach for the Cincinnati Bengals and
many professional fighters, grappling is so de-
manding that any supplemental training can eas-
ily lead to overtraining.

So where do you go from here? Do
you do any supplemental training or
not? Well, consider this: In any contest
between equally skilled athletes, the
stronger, better-conditioned fighter
will almost always win. Sure, some-
times vastly superior strength can over-
come superior skills and technique. For
the most part, however, that is not the
case. In a five- or 10-minute match, the
smaller, weaker grappler is at a great
disadvantage. The only way a lesser
man has a chance is to hang in there

*By the time you get to the finger-tip push-
ups, you're going to be pretty darn tired. But
don't let up. You're not quite done.*

Your muscles are going to be screaming now, but push on. Grasp a 100-pound bag and continuously clean and press it from below your knees to over your head for 15 repetitions. Don't let it touch the floor. Kiai (shout) if it hurts.



until his larger opponent gets tired. In a timed match, however, there often is not enough time for this to happen. Thus, bigger and stronger really does matter in all timed competitive events.

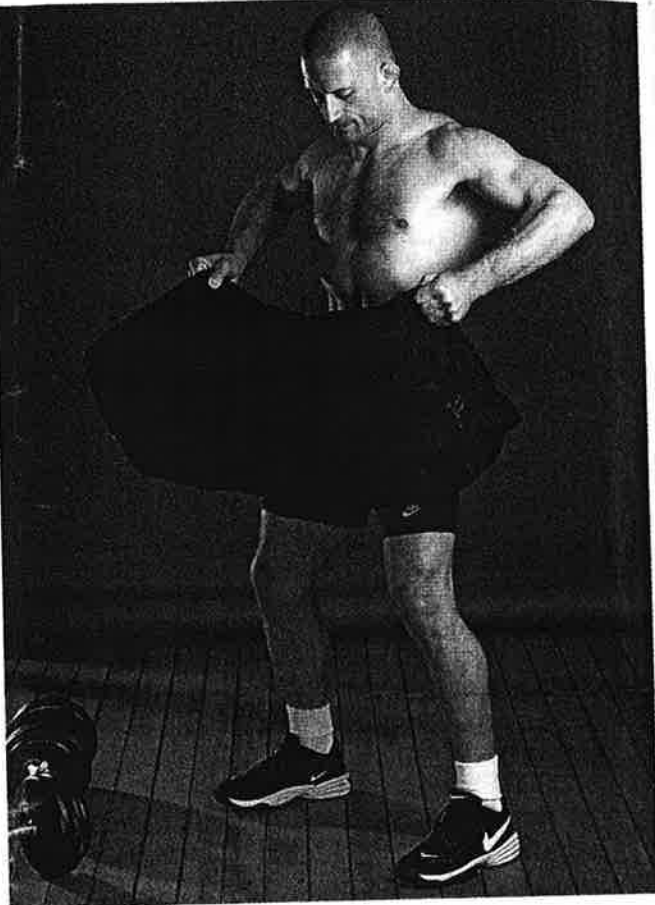
So what's the solution? Grappling is limited as a modality for continued strength improvement because it is impossible to progressively load your muscles. So here is the million-dollar question. How can you balance demanding grappling sessions and supplemental training, especially considering that you have to work, you have a job and you have demanding grappling sessions? The Sandbag Circuit, and you only need 15 minutes to do it.

Computer Technology

This workout is based on whole-body movements that stress your cardio-respiratory system while simultaneously loading your muscles. This is just like an intense grappling match, only it's much harder. This routine works your entire body as a unit in a way that is much more demanding than an actual match. In a match, you try to conserve your energy while forcing your opponent to use his. This routine will drive your heart rate up. Easy. How does this work? With sandbags.

Sandbags? You guys probably think that I am nuts. I can hear the skeptics now. In this day of computer technology and fancy weight machines, we're going to use sandbags? Darn right. There is nothing like lifting unwieldy objects to develop functional strength. Small, poor countries like Turkey and Iran use these crude devices and turn out medalists the way Canada turns out hockey players.

Because of their awkward shape and because the sand shifts when you lift them, you feel like you're trying to control a live, resisting opponent. However, it's harder because the sandbags are dead weight.



Getting Ready

One of the nice things about this routine is that you can do everything at home, provided you have a pull-up bar, parallel bars and dumbbells. If you don't, you can always do this at your local high school. With the exception of dumbbells, they usually have this type of equipment in the outside physical education area.

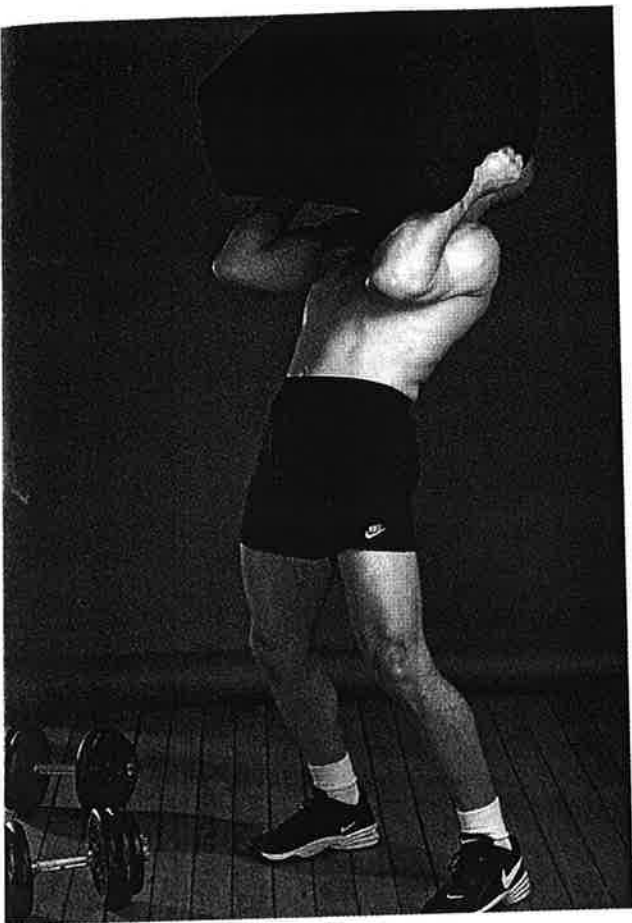
The first thing you need to do is get some sand, and it is cheap. You can buy it at any home-supply center in 50-pound bags for less than \$5. Stop by an army surplus store for the canvas bags. To make sure the bags are strong enough, double them up. You will also need to put some plastic trash bags inside so the sand doesn't leak out of the bags. Again, double them up.

You can make these bags a variety of weights. I have 50-, 80-, 100-, 150- and 200-pound bags. When you fill them with sand, don't pack them too tight. Loosely packed bags are a greater challenge. Furthermore, when there's room at the top of the bag, you can always add more sand later or even barbell plates.

These weights are not easy. You may want to start with considerably less weight, but make sure you have five bags. Now, you're ready to go.

This Baby is Tough

As a reminder, this program is not for the faint-hearted. This baby is tough, but you're going to love the results. If you aren't coming hot off the mat, make sure that you first warm up with some kind of cardio like rope skipping or stationary-bike riding to lubricate your joints, raise your heart rate and increase the



Unless you're Superman, you'll break into a sweat doing this routine. Guaranteed. Wimps need not apply. While this program is designed for grapplers, that doesn't mean stand-up fighters can't try it.

of it as a life-and-death combat situation ... you quit, you die. You are conditioning your will and your mind as you master your body.

ood flow in your muscles. Here we go.

- Bear-hug the 200 pounder, deadlift it and walk around for at least 30 seconds. When you pick up this bag, make sure you bend your knees. You'll quickly discover that sandbags force you to use a round-back style deadlifting, just like in combat. If you are not used to this type of lifting, start lighter and progress gradually.
- Drop the bag and perform as many chin-ups as you can. Using an underhand grip, start every repetition with a dead hang and make sure you bring your chest up to the bar. Move slowly and don't stop between reps. You probably won't be able to perform chin-ups for more than 30 or 40 seconds.
- Wrest the 200-pounder off the floor again for another grueling 30 seconds.
- Drop the bag and do a set of dips. Move slowly and do not rest between reps. By now your body should be in a serious oxygen debt and you're probably sucking wind like a vacuum hose. This is just the beginning.
- Grip the 150-pound bag by the canvas (like gripping a uniform) and walk around for 30 seconds.
- Reverse your grip and do a second set of chins. Right now you are asking yourself what kind of nut wants to work out this hard. The answer? The kind of nut who wants to be able to grapple all-out for six to 10 minutes with gas to spare while his opponent lies gasping at his feet.
- Grip the 150-pound bag by the canvas and follow-up with a set of fingertip push-ups. If you're not staggering by now, have a friend place a call to *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*. You're reeling, but you can't quit now. Think

• Pick up a pair of 120-pound dumbbells and walk around for 30 seconds with them hanging at your sides. This is called the farmer's walk.

• Drop the dumbbells. Jump up and wrap your legs around a heavy bag or a partner's waist, as if you were in the guard position and do abdominal curls. When you can't do any more, hang on with your legs until they give out. At this point you are tapping into your very survival mechanism. Don't stop now.

• Time for the farmer's walk again. Try to walk for at least 30 seconds. After that, bear-hug the 100-pound bag and hold a half-squat position (or horse stance) with your thighs slightly above parallel to the ground and your back straight. Try to hold this for 90 seconds.

• Now, as every fiber of your body screams, finish this off by grasping the 100-pound bag by the canvas and continuously clean and press it from below your knees to over your head for 15 repetitions without letting it touch the floor. Oh, I forgot to warn you, you may want to have a puke-bucket handy.

• Don't forget to wind up with some neck work, both rear extension and front flexion. Then you can stretch.

It Ain't Easy

I told you this was not going to be easy. But believe me, it's well worth the effort. This routine will get you into shape. If you're really dedicated, you'll probably do this two or three times per week. And each time you'll try to do it a little faster or increase the duration of each set. Congratulations. You're on your way to the top. **MAT**

About the author: Steven Maxwell is co-owner of Maxercise Sports and Fitness in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and the 1999 Pan American champion.