



## TRAINING HAS NO END

By John Peponias

Physical fitness has become a major part of our society's culture, seemingly overnight. Now more than ever, people of all ages and backgrounds flock to Gyms, Health Clubs, Yoga and Pilates Studios that continue to sprout up all over big and small towns everywhere. Increased health consciousness and a greater public awareness of the long-term benefits and reduced health risks attributed to regular exercise, have helped to motivate a greater percentage of the general population to get out and work out these days. For many of us, training is a way of life.

So, now that we are all such fitness fanatics, what is the real goal here? What are we looking for? It cannot only be about people just trying to get a little healthier. For some, training is much more serious.

In the interest of making my point, I will take a moment to temporarily discount the "on-again and off-again" fitness fanatic, and the "looking to drop a few pounds" folks from our discussion. I would like to focus on those who have truly built their life around their training, and are possibly even professional athletes. Those who work to be above average, who strive to be among the best at what they do and continually regiment themselves to reach greater levels of proficiency in their practice—the few, the proud ...the dedicated. Let us talk about those who endeavor to be a *Better Human!*

We invest so much time and effort into training. To what end? The serious fitness enthusiast and/or athlete seems to work harder and more consistently than most. However, what is the objective in mind through this practice? Is there an expected result? Some might say the obvious, "to be the best, or in the best shape." OK. You work to become the best, and maybe you succeed! You are in great shape and have a great body! Congratulations! But, now what? Is this the end? Is this the finish-line?

The fact is, there is no true pinnacle of physical form! Think about it for a minute...

If there is no such thing as perfection, then there must always be room for us to improve. Therefore, all of us, as dedicated athletes, should work to find some fraction or measure of improvement in our individual disciplines. We must remember, it is the smallest of margins that often separate Olympians. Being a *Better Human* means that one works and trains with this theory in mind: "As I continue to practice, where can I advance"? Regardless of the type of training, sport, or exercise, improvement might come in many forms. Technique, speed, elapsed time, stamina, balance, strength, power, agility, etc., represent areas with tremendous growth potential. In some cases, unusual or superior skill develops in these areas because of the continual effort and desire to progress.

The point to understand here is that as we all work to develop and advance, we should never feel as if we're as good as we're going to get, or that you can't ever stop training if you want to maintain a degree or current level of fitness. Rather, we must be inspired by and focus on how beautiful it is to know that if you choose to, you could go on training forever, and forever you will find reward in your efforts. **Training has no end.**





## WORKOUT CORNER

Story and Illustrations by Luis Bonnet

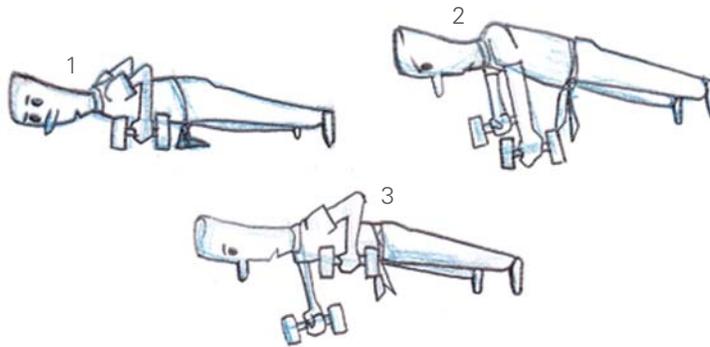
### The Push-Up Row



Push-ups are the one exercise you can never get tired of. There are so many different ways to do push-ups. Studying Kung Fu, I have done my share of push-ups and their many variations. I guess you could say I know a thing or two about push-ups. One great way I like to workout is to combine calisthenics exercises such as push-ups with my weight training. One exercise I like to do is what I call the push-up row:

1. Start by doing your standard push-up with dumbbells in hands.
2. After you push yourself up balance your body with one arm.
3. Lift your right dumbbell up to your right side. Performing a movement similar to a bent over row.
4. Slowly lower the dumbbell back down to its original position. This completes one rep.
5. Perform another push-up and repeat moves 2 to 4 with you left arm. This would make two reps.

I usually try to complete two sets of 12 reps. The push-up row makes a great cardio workout, which you will feel working your chest, back, triceps, biceps, and your transverse abdominals. It is also a very good way to workout more muscle groups in less time. You can also change your hand position when doing sets. You can perform each back row with an overhand grip, neutral grip, or underhand grip.





## FLEXIBILITY TRAINING

By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

As a martial artist, I've learned how to defend myself using various techniques. As a Master personal trainer, I've learned how to train everyone from young to old, and as a certified massage therapist I've treated athletes and also weekend warriors. The one thing these arts have in common is flexibility. This page will be geared towards flexibility and flexibility training. Before we go into flexibility training, we must understand a few basic things:

### Part One—Stretching

The word stretch is misleading. People think it's something they can make happen instead of something they have to allow to happen.

Definition: A stretch is a sliding elongation of overlapping protein fibers (actin and myosin) of the myofilaments past each other. This results in a lengthening of the myofilaments past their current resting length. Simply put, actin and myosin move away from each other when you ALLOW a muscle to stretch and return to it's resting location when it's not stretching.

Experiment in body awareness: There are 5 steps you should take in order to have a good stretch.

- 1) Isolate the muscle. Positioning of the muscle group should not load other structures like ligaments or joints. Example: When performing a calf stretch you should not feel any tension in the ankle, knee or ligaments around those joints.
- 2) Find Zero tension. Zero tension is when there is no awareness of tension in a muscle group because there is no load on the muscle group. Example: When performing a calf stretch on a step, wedge or wall, place the ball of the foot against the surface of your choice, Heel on the floor, keeping a 90° angle in the ankle. Balance yourself, hold on to something and make sure there is no tension in the calf being stretched. Be aware.
- 3) Find the first awareness. Gently create tension in the muscle. Example: Reduce the angle in you ankle until you create tension in the calf.
- 4) Don't overdo it—move slowly. This is where you ALLOW the stretch to happen, not force the stretch to happen. The muscle will be able to return to it's resting length a lot quicker when you apply gentle tension on the muscle, than if you move to quickly and overload the muscle, causing the muscle to guard itself and taking longer to return to it's resting length.





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5) Allow the loss of tension. The old hold for 10 to 30 seconds is incorrect. Hold a stretch until you feel a loss of tension. The gentle tension must be steady and constant on the muscle, if the muscle fibers are going to relax and slide past their current resting length. Duration of a stretch changes daily. Here are a few things that effect the duration of a stretch: The load on the muscle, the warm up before a stretch, the fatigue in the muscle, inflammation from injury and overuse.

Finally, Allow the muscle the time required for the relaxation/elongation to occur. You cannot make it happen. Do not watch the clock. Listen to your body and depend on your biofeedback, be aware. Use these five steps to begin your flexibility training. Remember—it's best to stretch after a good warm up, take your time, be aware and have fun.



Sean A. Archer is a Fitness Manager with Town Sports International; He is a Master Personal Trainer, PSC certified Massage Therapist, NASM and ISCA certified, a Corrective Exercise Specialist, Presenter Boxing/Certified Kickboxing and Certified 2nd degree Kung-Fu Wu-Su martial artist with over 15 years in the fitness industry.





## LEAFY GREENS IN THE DIET OF A FIGHT ATHLETE

By Blake Baxter, HHC

I am watching "Pumping Iron"<sup>1</sup> – the 1977 chronicle of Arnold Schwarzenegger's journey to his sixth Mr. Olympia bodybuilding title – and paying close attention to what Arnold and the other athletes in the film are eating. The most interesting scene centers on dinner at the home of bodybuilder Lou Ferrigno, the massive weightlifter from Brooklyn who threatened Arnold's dominance in the competition, and would later play the Incredible Hulk in the television series of the same name. Lou is sitting at the dinner table with his family. A massive mixing bowl sits in front of him. It is not filled with the typical staples expected from the sport: raw eggs, whole chickens, or an entire side of beef. No, the giant bowl sitting in front of Lou is filled with lettuce. I sit up, squint, pause and rewind the DVD. "Look at that bowl of lettuce!" I exclaim.

I had been reading for many years that increasing one's intake of leafy greens is an incredibly important part of any diet. Much of the information, however, related specifically to the anti-oxidant and cancer-fighting properties of leafy greens<sup>2</sup>. I hadn't heard about the advantages of leafy greens in athletic performance.

I associate leafy greens with a vegetarian diet, and the gaunt, dangly bodies of those who followed such a regimen. Myself, I practice Kung Fu, and when we spar we don't use gloves or pads. We fight bare knuckle. For fun, I watch more fighting, usually some form of mixed martial art, such as Ultimate Fighting or PRIDE, with doses of kickboxing and boxing thrown in for good measure. I had always assumed that keeping ones muscles conditioned and repairing injury required high amounts of protein, and not an emphasis on veggies – a sprig of parsley on a 20-ounce steak seemed appropriate.

So here I am looking at Lou Ferrigno, in monster form, expecting him to be downing 10 raw eggs, but instead he's eating what looks like a solid three pounds of iceberg lettuce. I decide to investigate further this link between muscle men and vegetables. I turn on my laptop and open my browser to an Internet search engine.

My first search "Lou Ferrigno diet" garners many hits. A 2001 interview with Mr. Ferrigno at the Detroit, MI Comic Con (a convention for fans of comic books) yields a short statement on diet:

"Balanced diet. I have meat, fish, eggs, fruit and vegetables. I eat proteins every meal. I like to keep my calories to maybe 3,700 a day. I eat how I feel but I don't over-indulge with sweets or anything like that. I don't eat that much."

There's a lot in that statement. First, 3,700 calories is a lot for an average person, but for a 6'5" 275 bodybuilder, it's a very reasonable caloric intake. Second, there's protein, fruits, and vegetables, but no grains, nuts, or seeds mentioned in his diet. "Lou Ferrigno's Muscle Mass Menu," published in Flex





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Magazine UK in June 2003, augments the diet with raw nuts, seeds, and whole wheat bread. Third, Mr. Ferrigno watches the sweets. I'm a little disappointed not to have found information pertaining to Lou Ferrigno consuming massive bowls of lettuce, but the evidence is still right there on the screen in Pumping Iron. As it is said, a picture is worth a thousand words.

I extend my inquiry, and, being a martial artist, investigate possible links between leafy greens and professional fighters. I use a top mixed martial artist, four-time Ultimate Fighting Champion Randy Couture, for my search. During his time, Mr. Couture was dominant force in mixed martial arts, delivering frightening beatings on his opponents in regular fashion. He held the light heavyweight championship at age 42. What I find surprises me.

I type "Randy Couture leafy greens" into an Internet search engine. There are lots of hits. Apparently, Mr. Couture is a big fan of greens, so much so that he endorses, and uses, a product called High-Energy Greens, promoted as "48 different alkalizing grasses, herbs, and vegetables"<sup>3</sup>. I seem to have happened upon a secret of devastating power – green vegetables! I am pleasantly stunned. In a 2005 interview, Mr. Couture stated:

"I try to stay away from the dairy products; a lot of broth, raw vegetables especially, and raw fruits. Try to incorporate as much of that into my diet as possible."<sup>4</sup>

An interview with Mr. Couture's nutritionist, Dr. Ryan Parsons, yielded another interesting statement:

"Everyday was started... with fresh greens, kale, spinach. Not your typical breakfast foods."<sup>5</sup>

According to the interview, Dr. Parsons incorporates large amounts of green vegetables into Mr. Couture's diet in order to counteract the build-up of acids caused by rigorous training, to re-alkalize the body and speed recovery times.

So, I'm seeing greens in a new light, not only as a staple food in the diets of "raw foodists" and vegetarians, but also in the diets of those who take part in very aggressive and muscularly challenging forms of athletic competition. In his book *Integrative Nutrition: the Future of Nutrition*, Joshua Rosenthal notes that Bruce Lee's favorite meal was Hiziki Salad<sup>6</sup>. Hiziki is Seaweed – another green!

Incorporating greens into one's diet is easy and takes little practice. Greens are in abundance in almost any market, although organic greens will likely have less chemical residues and pesticides (if any at all). If organic greens aren't available, grab the conventionally grown greens and wash them thoroughly. A great way to wash greens was demonstrated to me by an uncle, who handpicks his greens from his own farm in rural North Carolina. Fill up a clean sink or large cooking pot with water and thoroughly submerge





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the chopped greens several times. Letting them soak for several minutes or longer won't hurt either. Empty the water and repeat.

There are a large variety of greens to choose from. They include: Kale, Collards, Spinach, Mustard greens, Dandelion greens, Arugula, Beet greens, Endive, Chicory, Frisee, Romaine, Bok choy, Broccoli rabe, Green leaf lettuce, Red leaf lettuce

Greens can be incorporated into one's diet in a number of different ways. The easiest, of course, is the salad. Chop up the greens, include some other vegetables, and add some seasoning, herbs or dressing. Cooking greens is almost as easy, and there are several different ways. Retaining the flavor, texture, and nutritional content sometimes requires that the greens be cooked very quickly or lightly. An easy method, common in macrobiotic cooking, is to boil water, then turn off the heat. Dunk the greens in the hot water for a minute or so and remove. Cooked greens can be seasoned with a variety of ingredients. Combining chopped garlic, crushed sea salt and olive oil is a delicious option. Another easy cooking method is steaming.

For serious training regimens, a greens supplement like the one mentioned earlier might be in order, not as a substitute for fresh greens, but to speed workout and injury recovery, and help ensure that enough of the nutrients found in greens are being consumed in the daily diet.

I am forever grateful to have happened upon the image of Lou Ferrigno eating a mountain of lettuce during dinner. It helped change my attitude towards greens and led me on a journey to discover the benefits of these foods. It makes sense for athletes in all types of sports, not only bodybuilding and sport fighting, to incorporate greens into their diets. You would argue with the Incredible Hulk?

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4 <http://www.entertainmentworld.us/Movies/Randy.asp>. Dorrie Wheeler, 2005

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Blake Baxter is a Holistic Health Counselor and Kung-Fu instructor. He works with other martial artists to help them incorporate better eating practices and create awareness about the ways in which food impacts performance and recovery. Blake is the President of The Fifth Nine, Inc, an online holistic health counseling website. <http://thefifthnine.com>





## TODAY'S MARTIAL ARTIST

By Neal Zephyrin

What is a martial artist? Webster's dictionary defines "martial" as *warlike* or pertaining to war. An "Artist," according to Webster, is *one who practices a fine art or a very skillful worker or performer*. That would lead one to conclude that a martial artist is one who is very skillful at war. I surmise that being proficient in war is not the true goal of today's martial artist.

Without sounding prophetic or cliché, today's martial artist seeks to overcome his or her personal challenges through the practice and mastery of one's art. Most of us today do not fight professionally or enter any competitions, and yet we endure the rigorous training regimen of our respective art. We do this not for fame or glory, but for the personal satisfaction of knowing that if we can train our bodies to perform this Kata to perfection, or train our hands to break all these bricks, or train our bodies to support an unbelievable amount of weight, then we can be reassured that we can also overcome any perceived obstacles in our life.

Just as our arts have evolved over the years, so have martial artists. We have evolved into better persons. We are people who are capable of inflicting great harm, and yet we offer great knowledge to those who want to better their minds and bodies. We have evolved into people who know it is easy to settle disputes with violence, and yet we take the peaceful route, contrary to the actions of the most modern of societies (societies we look up to lead by example, and yet continuously come up short).

The skills we develop through our art transcend physical limits. We use them in board meetings, creating music, painting, designing, teaching, parenting, and in everyday relationships with family and friends. **Today's martial artist goes well beyond the application of his art for war. His skills are now used for peace.**





## WHAT STYLE SHOULD I STUDY

By Master Robert Thomas



As an expert kung-fu panelist for a number of years for the site allexperts.com, one question I was asked frequently was "what style should I study?" There is no easy answer to the question.

The style that one should study is determined by a number of factors:

- What is your purpose for learning?
- What styles are accessible to you?
- Do you want a vigorous style or one that is more sedate?
- Are you interested in offense, defense or both?
- What style may best suit your body type and athletic ability?
- Do you like to fight?
- Do you want a pure style or a hybrid style?

The answers to these questions will help you determine your disposition and ability to perform certain styles and match temperament to style. Once you make a preliminary determination, try to view as many styles as you can. If you are serious you should not mind doing this. The time and effort will pay off in the long run. There is so much reference material out there that you should be able to perform this study in a relatively short period of time. Visit as many local schools as you can to view different styles. Look at styles on the internet. Ask friends who are martial artists to help you search.

Once the styles are observed, study the characteristics of each style. Interview those who study the styles. Most martial artists are willing to tell you about the styles or systems they study. Determine whether the characteristics match your preferences and then make your choices. Narrow it down to two or three. Following these very basic guidelines will help you determine what style you should study. Once you find your style, the next step is to pick a school.

*Master Robert Thomas has been a member of the Chinese Kung-Fu Wu-Su Association since 1974, where he currently holds the position of Kung-Fu Wu-Su Master Instructor and Co-Director. He has also been an active panelist on the allexperts.com website since 1999, answering various questions concerning Chinese martial arts. Most recently Master Thomas was profiled in a documentary entitled "Natural Mystery," that aired on The Learning Channel (TLC) and was distributed worldwide. You can contact Master Thomas directly concerning martial arts issues at [kungfuwusu@aol.com](mailto:kungfuwusu@aol.com).*





## GYM RAT

Review by Shir "Terror" Konas

### The TRX Suspension Trainer



As die-hard athletes, traditional martial artists, boxers and MMA fighters, we already understand the benefits of using our bodyweight in training. If you spend as much time as I do at the gym, you've probably familiarized yourself with every possible type of strength, power and balance exercise by now (besides the fact that you probably have no life...). But what if you could take bodyweight training to a whole new level?

I first heard of the TRX Suspension Trainer during a friendly conversation with a fellow instructor at the gym. He was telling me that this new piece of equipment was invented by a Navy SEAL (I raised one eyebrow at the sound of this), and is used by both soldiers and police in the TSAC—Tactical Strength and Conditioning program (now he had my full attention). After hearing this, I had to check it out for myself.

Now, looking at this little piece of equipment, it really doesn't look like much at all: Two cables with handles at the end that can fit into the small compartment in your gym bag, without compromising precious space or adding unnecessary weight. But this little cable packs so much versatility and a world of benefits! it can be used practically anywhere, and, believe me, it's not for the faint-hearted—I was sore in places I didn't know I had muscles...

In short, you can use the TRX to improve sport-specific strength, balance and body awareness, utilizing multi-joint movements that help prevent injury; it can be used as a cardiovascular tool, a core-building system or a stretching apparatus as well, and of course, the all-favorite intense military-style workout it was originally designed for.

*Shir Konas is a certified 2nd degree Kung-Fu instructor, an Israeli Defence Forces veteran, a U.S. regional (Northeast) Kung-Fu forms gold-medalist, a martial arts group fitness instructor with Crunch Fitness in NYC and Brick Haus Fitness in Jersey City, NJ, and a total gym-rat.*

