



Issue 02
February 2008

1

IT'S ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE!

By John Peponias

As someone who has always been active in sports and thrives in competitive environments, I am constantly analyzing and reviewing various practice and training methods, looking for new ways to advance and gain an edge. I think it's fair to say that most of us train with similar objectives in mind. However, it seems that we also have a natural tendency to focus primarily on what **physical** changes we might make to our training to improve performance.

Aside from the physical fine-tuning and adjustments that most athletes make to their technique and routines, there is one glaring, distinguishing factor, which separates many evenly matched opponents. It is not physical ability, raw talent, work ethic or even discipline! While these are all obviously important, often times the real difference between competitors lays in their mental approach to challenges. For example, you carry yourself as a winner, you see yourself as a winner, and eventually, you win! You position yourself for this reality.

If you look up the word **attitude** in a thesaurus, you will find the following:

ATTITUDE

Noun: 1. The way in which one is placed or arranged: *pose, position, posture*. See POSTURE. **2.** A frame of mind affecting one's thoughts or behavior: *outlook, position, posture, stance*. See ATTITUDE. **3.** The way in which a person holds or carries his or her body: *carriage, pose, posture, stance*. See POSTURE. **4.** A general cast of mind with regard to something: *feeling, sentiment*. See ATTITUDE.

There is definitely something to be said for how a positive mind-set or outlook on training and competition can impact and propel us to reach greater levels of achievement. Moreover, the folks that approach most everything they do with the same optimistic attitudes, seemingly live a better quality of life, and embody what it means to be a *Better Human*. We are all familiar with the notions that "negative people attract negative energy", "you only get out of something, what it is you put in to it", "karma", "manifest destiny", etc. In contrast it's interesting how those perceived as being "positive people" attract positive results, success, and other positive influences. Your general cast of mind makes all the difference in competition and in life. Think about this basic concept as you prepare for training, or any challenges you might face. Remember: It's all about **ATTITUDE!**





WORKOUT CORNER

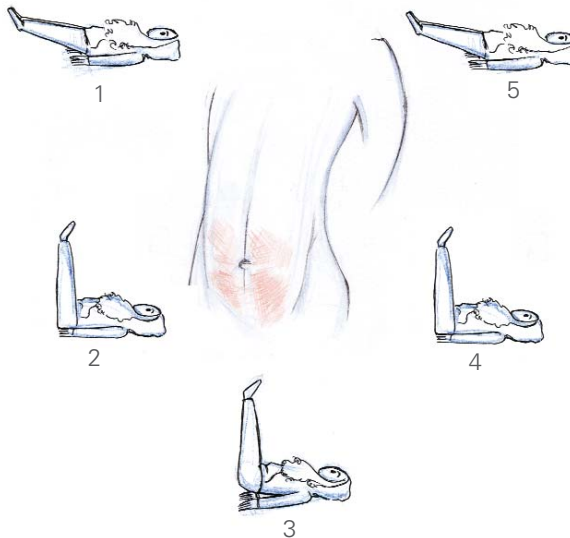
Story and Illustrations by Luis Bonnet

Leg Raise Variation



1. Start with your arms by your side or under your buttocks if you need more back support. You want to raise your legs 6 inches off the floor. Make sure to keep your toes pointed.
2. Now lift your legs until your toes are pointing straight up in the air performing a leg raise.
3. From this position here you want to lift your hips off the floor. It is very important to make sure that you do not lift your back off the floor. Meaning this movement should be very small. This will put emphasis on you lower abdominal muscles.
4. From here you want to lower your hips back onto the floor.
5. Lower your legs until they are once again 6 inches off the floor. This completes one repetition.

Perform a set of 30 reps. To make this workout more challenging you may add ankles weights. Can you feel the burn?





FLEXIBILITY TRAINING

By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

Part Two—Skill Stretch vs. Basic Muscular Stretch

To re-cap part 1, we discussed stretching, what it is and how to do it. In part 2 we are going to discuss two types of stretching, what they are and which one you should be doing.

1) Anatomical structures and joint movement.

In order to understand the difference between Skill and Basic muscular stretches we must first understand a few anatomical structures. Bone, consists of the bone matrix (spongy bone and compact bone), the periosteum (bone covering). Ligaments attach bone to bone. Tendons attach to the periosteum and muscle which are attached to the tendon.

Movement in the joint occurs when the tendon which is attached to the periosteum, crosses the joint, the muscle contracts or extends which in turn increases or decreases the range of motion by degrees in the joint.

2) Muscular/primary or basic stretch.

These are stretches that only isolate one muscle group at a time for example the hamstrings.

3) Skill level stretches

These are stretches that load more than on muscle group and places a heavy load on the tendons and ligaments of the body.

Example: the straddle stretch. This stretch places a load on the adductor muscle group and the medial hamstrings; it also places a heavy load on the adductor and hamstring tendons and knee, pelvis and lumbar ligaments.

Ligaments are the most elastic during puberty and adolescent growth; they have to be in order to keep up with the rapid bone growth that occurs at this time. This is when skill stretches are best used learned and maintained through adulthood.

If the ligaments were not elastic we would all suffer from ligament tearing. Performing skill stretches as an adult can cause great damage to the ligaments and tendons. Basic muscle stretches are recommended for adult athletes. By performing basic muscle stretches it's possible to achieve a greater range of motion, even achieve a split with hard work and the right stretching program. Improved range of motion is an important part of most martial arts training, and should be part of their daily practice. Age, genetics, body type, gender, does play a part in how far you can take your flexibility.





Issue 02
February 2008

4

FLEXIBILITY TRAINING (cont'd)

By Sean A. Archer



Sean A. Archer

The earlier you start the better, so let's start by performing these basic stretches:

Leg stretches

Follow the 5 step method from last month's article and stretch these muscle groups:

- > Adductor muscle group
- > Hamstring muscle group
- > Quad muscle group
- > Calf muscle group
- > Gluts and piriformis

If you don't know how to stretch these muscles please consult a fitness professional or read my article on the above stretches next month.



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.





MY PYRAMID

By Blake Baxter, HHC

Taking the USDA Website for a Test Drive

In 2005, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) updated their 13-year-old nutritional guidelines, known as the "Food Pyramid." Many Americans were already familiar with the Food Pyramid, since these guidelines were used to determine menus for public schools, the armed forces, and in federal prisons¹. The new guidelines, now known as "My Pyramid," are intended to reflect more contemporary findings on health and nutrition, such as emphasizing exercise as part of one's daily activities². Also, the new guidelines are intended to take a person's unique, individual characteristics into account when making dietary recommendations, including aspects such as weight, height, age, and level of physical activity.

This sounds like an encouraging step in the right direction for the USDA, which, in the past, had been accused by various groups and organizations of putting the interests of the agriculture industry ahead of those of the consumer³. (It is the US Department of "Agriculture," after all.)

I decided to take the new pyramid for a test drive. Early one Saturday morning, I sat down in front of my laptop with a cup of coffee (I would find out soon enough if I should be drinking coffee at all) and surfed on over to <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>. I had every intention of using the new My Pyramid guidelines to discover the USDA's recommendations for my personal diet. I was in for a surprise.

The Home Page

The USDA My Pyramid homepage welcomes me with the greeting "Steps to a Healthier You." Already, I am encouraged by the personal touch. There is a picture of the new Pyramid, which, to my confusion, has no food within or around it whatsoever. However, right below the Pyramid is a statement "One Size Doesn't Fit All," which seems to clarify the mystery: a personalized Pyramid is order, and I am directed to the My Pyramid Plan box on the right side of the screen, where I can submit my age, sex, and activity level. Before doing so, I quickly peruse the rest of the homepage, which is literally surrounded in choices for other information, across the top, down the middle, and along both sides:

My Pyramid Plan | Inside the Pyramid | My Pyramid Tracker | Tour My Pyramid | Tips & Resources (listed twice) | Dietary Guidelines | Tip of the Week | My Pyramid Blast Off | For Kids (listed twice) | For Professionals (listed twice) | Related Links | About Us | News & Media | Site Help | Online Ordering | Contact Us | En Espanol

I'm starting to get a little concerned that this exercise may take a little longer than I had anticipated. Refocusing, I enter my vitals into the My Pyramid Plan box and click Submit.





MY PYRAMID (cont'd)

By Blake Baxter, HHC

My Pyramid Plan

I am taken to a new page "My Pyramid Plan" and cartoon drawings of food have appeared all around the base of the pyramid, plus a colorful list of the foods I am supposed to be eating and the appropriate amounts. It takes a few minutes of squinting to realize that the food drawings do not reflect the amounts; it's a generic cornucopia of raw and cooked foods, and packaged products.

My Pyramid Plan advises the following diet:

Grains: 9 ounces; Vegetables: 3.5 cups; Fruits: 2 cups; Milk: 3 cups; Meat and Beans: 6.5 ounces

I wonder how many ounces a bowl of oatmeal might constitute, or even more perplexing, how many cups of fruit is an apple? Not to worry, because right next to each listing is a button that says Tips. I am determined to find out how many cups of fruit an apple will provide, so I click on the Tips button next to Fruits.

I am taken to a new page within the same browser window, "Inside the Pyramid" where I am greeted by the question "What counts as a cup of fruit?" Perfect, that's exactly what I'm wondering, so apparently I've navigated to the right place. Or did I? I am informed of the following information:

"In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or 1/2 cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group."

So, 1 cup of fruit counts as ... 1 cup of fruit? If I want further illumination (and I do), I am instructed to "Click here to see chart!" I do, and a brand new window pops open, with a chart listing a limited number of fruits and their equivalent amounts relative to the Pyramid.

"Apple" is there, and I discover that 1/2 large apple, or 1 small apple, counts as 1 cup of fruit. Interestingly, there is no listing for 1 large apple, but I guess I can consider that to be 2 cups of fruit, since 1/2 large apple, counts as 1 cup. Not being exactly sure what a "large" or "small" apple might be, I find I can use the measurements listed in the chart: small apple = 2.5" diameter, large apple = 3.25" diameter. I grab a tape measure and go to the kitchen, because I have no idea how many inches around the apples I've been eating this week might be. I make the mistake of measuring the circumference, which is almost 11", and I know something is off. A quick search on Google exposes my error and I return to the kitchen. As it turns out, the McIntosh apples I currently have are approximately 3.25" in diameter.





MY PYRAMID (cont'd)

By Blake Baxter, HHC

The other fruits listed are: Applesauce (I didn't know that qualified as its own fruit), Banana, Cantaloupe, Grapes, Grapefruit, "Mixed Fruit," Orange, Mandarin Orange, Peach, Pear, Pineapple, Plum, Strawberries, Watermelon, Dried Fruit (raisins, prunes, apricots), and 100% Fruit Juice. For most of these items, 1 cup equals 1 cup. I'm glad to have that confusion out of the way.

Shockingly, what counts as a large apple (3.25"), does not count as a large orange. A large orange, according to the USDA, is 3 1/16th inches diameter. That information might not be so easy to incorporate, since I can't imagine any two oranges are really within 1/16th of an inch of being the same size of each other. I find myself slipping into a disturbing day dream: a group of scientists in white lab coats slicing and measuring samples of oranges from around the world, busily jotting notes on their clipboards and coming to the conclusion that a large orange is 3 1/16th inch diameter. My emotional state is best described as befuddled, although amazement also applies.

Grapes are listed as an actual count of individual grapes: 32 "seedless" grapes count as one cup. No instruction is given on how to count seeded grapes.

What I find more confusing than the amounts is how the Pyramid considers canned fruit such as peaches, pears, and pineapples, to be the same as raw peaches, pears, and pineapples, considering how most canned fruit is packed in sugary syrup. It would seem to me that a lot of sugar is sneaking into the diet while counting fruit in this manner. I decide to get back to My Pyramid Plan, so click back in my browser window and find myself back at the Inside the Pyramid page describing Tips on Eating Fruit. I have forgotten that it was 3 clicks forward to get to the food chart, so I'll need to click back again. However, before doing so, I quickly scan the Tips. Halfway down the page, under the heading "For the best Nutritional Value," I am advised to pick canned fruit packed in 100% fruit juice, rather than syrup. I'm relieved to find that listed somewhere, although not on the chart where it would have been most helpful.

Next I study the four other food groups advised under My Pyramid Plan: Grains, Vegetables, Milk, and Meat & Beans. I also go through the same procedure as I did with fruit to discover how much of each category I am actually getting in my daily diet. More confusion is in store, as I find that 1/2 cup of oatmeal (my daily breakfast) only counts as 1 ounce of grains, even though 1/2 cup is technically four ounces.

My Pyramid Tracker

Three hours have passed. I feel no closer to actually being able to implement My Pyramid Plan into my daily diet than when I started. Perhaps I need a training course to help use this website, because





MY PYRAMID (cont'd)

By Blake Baxter, HHC

apparently I am still at a remedial level. For more interactive and customized advice, I find that I can create a login ID and password and start submitting my dietary intakes and physical activity into My Pyramid Tracker, which will in turn attempt to analyze my daily nutrition and exercise.

I create a login ID and password, and begin entering my dietary intakes, which requires entering a food or beverage, then searching a list of possible matches, then entering the amounts consumed based on the previously discovered interpretations and calculations. I'm having about as much fun as trying to determine my health care benefits using my insurer's website (hint: not fun).

Conclusion

Maybe it's my level of education or just my impatience. I seem to think that a "white collar" professional like myself, who's worked in the computer industry for several decades, should be able to use the USDA website to understand his diet. Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the case. If one word describes this experience, it's "discouraging," with "frustrating" running a close second. While the information is obviously well researched, the human experience on the USDA website leads one to believe that understanding diet and nutrition is probably too confusing and time-intensive to be accurately performed by individuals for themselves. Hopefully, this was not the Department's specific intent. If not, then a reworking is in order – one that allows a reader to quickly and more easily determine the best steps towards improving one's diet, and encourages better eating habits by making such habits easy to understand and adopt, without requiring a complex series of mathematically bizarre and comical calculations. As it stands today, the information in the USDA's My Pyramid is as challenging to digest as the poor diets that created the need for such a set of guidelines in the first place.

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2 Willet, Walter. *Eat, Drink and Be Healthy*. Free Press, 2001

3 Nestle, Marion. *Food Politics*. University of California Press, 2002

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>





THE COMPLETE MARTIAL ARTIST

By Neal Zephyrin

Mixed martial arts (MMA) is taking the national and international arena by storm. With organization like WEC (World Extreme Cage Fighting), Pride, and the most recognizable, the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship), it appears there is no stopping this meteoric phenomenon called MMA. The National Geographic Channel in their *Fight Science* series has showcased MMA fighters as the most dangerous martial artist in the world. But let's slow this gravy train and investigate this new hype called "MMA".

The concept for a tournament to discover the world's best fighting style was the brainchild of Art Davie, a Southern California based advertising executive.

Davie met Rorion Gracie in 1991 while researching martial arts for a marketing client. Gracie ran a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu school in Torrance, California. Meanwhile the Gracie Family had a long history of Vale-Tudo ("anything goes") matches in Brazil. Davie became a Gracie student.

In 1992, Davie proposed an 8-man single elimination tournament called "War of the World" (WOW) to Rorion Gracie. This tournament would feature martial artists from various disciplines in a no-holds barred match up. WOW promotions was created to develop the tournament into a television franchise. WOW sought a television partner and approached pay-per-view producers, HBO, Showtime, and Semaphore Entertainment Group (SEG). Showtime and HBO declined, but SEG became WOW's partner in 1993.

SEG contacted video and art film director Jason Cusson to design the trademarked "Octagon". SEG also created the name for the show as the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). Rorion Gracie's younger brother, Royce Gracie, was one of the original fighters on the show. It featured fighters from various disciplines such as judo, wrestling, karate, etc and pitted various weight-classes against each other. The show drew over 85,000 viewers on pay per view and Royce Gracie went on to take the UFC crown, catapulting Gracie's JuJitsu as the undisputed martial arts style in the UFC.

After years of controversy and outcry from this new sport, SEG was on the brink of bankruptcy when they were approached by casino executives Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta and boxing promoter Dana White in 2001, with an offer to purchase the UFC. By this time, many rules were in place and the UFC was no longer a one style vs. another style match-up, but a franchise that included fighters who had training in kickboxing, boxing, and grappling.





THE COMPLETE MARTIAL ARTIST (cont'd)

By Neal Zephyrin

The Fertittas purchased the UFC for \$2 million and created Zuffa, LLC. In 2005 Spike TV and the UFC teamed up to launch the reality television show *The Ultimate Fighter*. While the UFC is the biggest and most profitable mixed martial arts franchise, it is not the only franchise, as we eluded to earlier.

But is MMA a martial arts system? And can we make the bold conclusion as National Geographic made that Mixed Martial Arts fighters are the deadliest fighters in the world? To answer these questions one must understand the basic meaning and essence of mixed martial arts. To date, many fighters in the UFC or the WEC do not come from a traditional martial arts background such as Tae Kwan Do or Kyokushin Karate. Many of them are either wrestlers or boxers who learn additional kicking and grappling techniques to add to their arsenal of fighting techniques. So with the right training environment an average individual can be trained to compete in a mixed martial arts competition in as little as three months. That was clearly evident in *The Ultimate Fighter* reality show. Many on that show were not martial artists, and yet they learned a few grappling techniques, a few throws, a couple of kicks and punches and they became versed in the mixed martial arts system. This is the mainstream view of mixed martial arts.

But mixed martial arts has been in existence for hundreds if not thousands of years in many traditional martial arts styles. For example, the Greek martial art system called Pankration dates back to 400 BC and includes a brutal mix of wrestling, boxing, kicking, strangleholds, and pressure locks. This system is still practiced today and is reputed to produce the deadliest fighters in the world. Then there is JuJitsu. The words "JiuJitsu" are partially derived from the words "ju," meaning soft and harmonizing, and "jitsu," meaning methods or technique. Some historians believe that JuJitsu originated in China and was imported in the 1600s to Japan, where it was tempered with and fused with indigenous Japanese martial arts, and utilized by the samurai until their disbanding in 1867. This fighting system included throws, striking, choking, joint manipulations, and ground fighting techniques. However the JuJitsu styles were pared down and made a hybrid by Jigoro Kano in 1882 to become the sports judo. (Gracie's JiuJitsu almost exclusively involves grappling and joint manipulation from the ground).

China also had its joint-locking and grappling art. Qin Na (Chin Na) is the name of this art and it was practiced by the Shaolin priests as early as 525 A.D. The Shaolin System was the premier martial arts organization in China with Qin Na being a well-developed component of their fighting arsenal.





THE COMPLETE MARTIAL ARTIST (cont'd)

By Neal Zephyrin

There are many other traditional martial arts systems in the world that include not only strikes and kicks but also grappling, throws, and joint-locking techniques to make for a complete martial artist. Notice I did not say mixed martial artist, but instead used the term complete martial artist (CMA). These systems take practitioners many years to become proficient in their respective arts, and many more to master. Whereas the mixed martial artist only has to learn enough techniques to become proficient for their next bout, the complete martial artist learns all aspects of what their system has to offer and spends a lifetime mastering their respective system.

My conclusion: Whereas the mixed martial artists that make up the UFC and WEC and other MMA franchises are tough in their respective sports, **the complete martial artists are truly the deadliest fighters in the world.**



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HOW DO I CHOOSE A MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL?

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

Continuing the theme from my last article, this month I decided to write about finding the right school. How does one go about picking the right school? In this article we will explore the answer to that question.

First, follow the tips from last month's article, "What Style Should I study?" Once you have decided what to study secondly, begin to think about where.

Types of Schools

There are many different types of schools to choose from. You have the chains like a "Tiger Schulmann's" or the legendary "Tracy Studios." There are individual schools, like most Martial Arts Schools in New York. Then there are workshops or what I may term impermanent schools. These are basically classes taught at a "Y" or within adult education programs and sometimes at Colleges and Universities.

Commitment Level

You will need to decide whether you want to study for a short time or over the long term. If you have chosen to, for example, learn just self-defense and want a few techniques to master without a lot of commitment, choose a workshop or impermanent school. These will afford you a lot of lesson in a short period of time. Training will range from informal to very formal and very intense. If you take the workshop approach, I caution you that you must study hard on your own to really master the techniques and make it worthwhile. If you want to become an expert, a teacher, or study for quite some time, go to the chain or an established single school. These schools invest in you and are seeking students for the long haul. If they are established schools they are seeking cash flow and will usually teach you slower, but teach you with a full curriculum if you make a commitment. At least that's the theory.

To Compete or Not Compete

Determine whether you want to go to a school that competes or a school that is non-competitive. Keep in mind, just because a school competes and you see their walls lined with trophies, does not mean they are better. What it does mean is that they are probably better at competitions and possibly better known. Competition is a way of marketing a school and proving technique in the sports arena. It does not prove effectiveness of technique in true combat situations. If you thrive on competition and have the need to prove yourself, join a school that competes. If you want to know the art for the sake of the art and for your own personal knowledge, pick a non-competitive school. This is purely preference.





HOW DO I CHOOSE A MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL?

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

Picking one over the other is no better and no worse. If you like a competitive school but don't want to compete, make sure you can opt out. If you like a school that does not compete, before you sign up ask what their policy is on individual competition under the school moniker or under your own using their system.

Consistency of Instructions

Find a school that has consistent instructors. One of the worst things you can do is attend a school where you have a different instructor every class. This situation is not good because there is no way the instructors can truly gauge your performance and monitor your progress. In my own school I have seen first-hand that a lack of consistent instructors can destroy a class and crush morale. Do your best to determine how long the instructors have been teaching and find out if you will have the same instructor for each class at least 75% of the time or more. Having a consistent instructor should mean you will obtain consistent instruction if the lesson plan is followed correctly and your progress is monitored.

Now that I have you thinking, there are some fundamental elements that should be present in a formal school. Look for these if you choose a formal school;

- > A line of succession (What is the lineage of the system)
- > A lesson plan
- > A ranking system
- > A common language
- > A formal way to communicate and relate amongst rank holders
- > A set of rules of conduct

The same rules apply when seeking a school that applied to determining what to study ask friends, Visit schools, Interview instructors and examine what you want.

Another option not covered here is taking private lessons from a qualified instructor. How do you find one and what do you look for? Stay tuned...

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 served as an expert on the allexperts.com website for 6 years, February 2002 to February 2008, 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.





GYM RAT

Review by Shir "Terror" Konas



The Lebert Equalizer Total Body Strengtheners

As I was walking around the expo area of the ECA NYC World Fitness Convention, a flash of bright yellow caught my eye; I walked over to the source of the color, and discovered a new world of possibilities:

Marc Lebert, creator of the Lebert Equalizer, introduced me to this great piece of equipment, and with the help of his team demonstrated some of the things it can do.

The Lebert Equalizer is made of two parallel bars, which took me less than 10 minutes to assemble. These bars can be used as a set of two, and each could be used separately as well. They are surprisingly versatile and can be used to develop strength, balance, flexibility, and even improve agility. The Equalizer is so simple and versatile, anyone can benefit from it – it is incredibly effective for the very beginner, the hard-core athlete and even for physical therapy patients.

I couldn't wait to test the Lebert Equalizer in the martial arts environment, and after performing several of the recommended exercises, we decided to push it a bit and get creative... see photos below.

Overall, our fighters liked the Lebert Equalizer and the fact that they can get a great, challenging workout across the board. We loved the fact that it can be easily moved around and stored away. We'd love for it to have some sort of a height extension, and a heavier base (weight inserts?) for better stability on the floor.

For more information, visit www.lebertequalizer.com



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