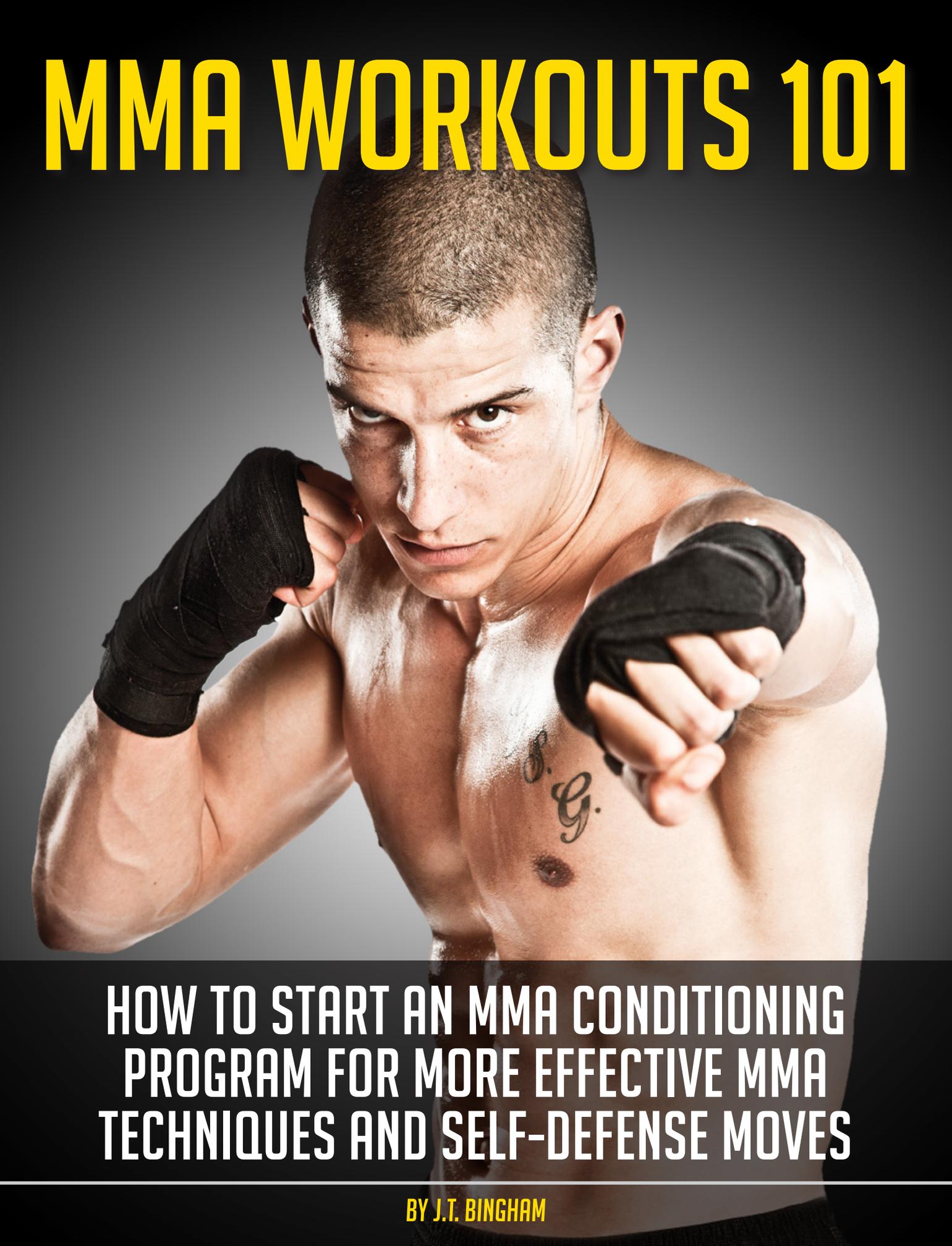


MMA WORKOUTS 101

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a young man with a short haircut, looking intensely at the camera. He is shirtless, showing his muscular physique and a tattoo on his chest that reads "J.G.". He is wearing black hand wraps on both hands and is in a classic fighting stance, with his fists raised and ready. The background is a plain, light gray.

HOW TO START AN MMA CONDITIONING PROGRAM FOR MORE EFFECTIVE MMA TECHNIQUES AND SELF-DEFENSE MOVES

BY J.T. BINGHAM

Athletes, coaches and fitness enthusiasts long ago determined that being in shape isn't just a matter of watching your waistline. It's a whole-body concept that's composed of three mandatory components: flexibility, cardio conditioning and strength.

As soon as you finished your first martial arts workout, chances are you came to the same conclusion. After throwing a few dozen front kicks, your hamstrings probably tightened up until the muscle fibers screamed. After traversing the gym floor a few times while firing off nonstop roundhouse kicks and reverse punches, you were probably wheezing like you'd just run a half marathon. And after finishing your first few rounds of grappling, you probably fantasized about how much more effective you'd be if you had an extra 10 pounds of muscle on your frame.

No matter when you came to that realization, there's no better time to shift into drive than now. To get you started on the road to success, *Black Belt* got some expert advice from [Kevin Kearns](#), a renowned fitness and conditioning coach who regularly works with mixed martial artists, including UFC veteran Stephan Bonnar.

What Body Part Do Martial Artists Neglect the Most?

The back — specifically, the latissimus dorsi muscles, Kevin Kearns says.
What's the best way to remedy that? With pull-ups.

STRETCHING

If you've been in the martial arts for any length of time, you know a thing or two about stretching. Problem is, some of what you know may be just plain wrong. Consider: If you've ever sat down, put your feet together and reached for your toes — and then "bounced" to get there — you're on the wrong path.

A recent university study warned athletes against such outdated ways of stretching, but it wasn't news to insiders like Kearns. "We have known for a long time that 'ballistic stretching' can lead to muscle tears and in-

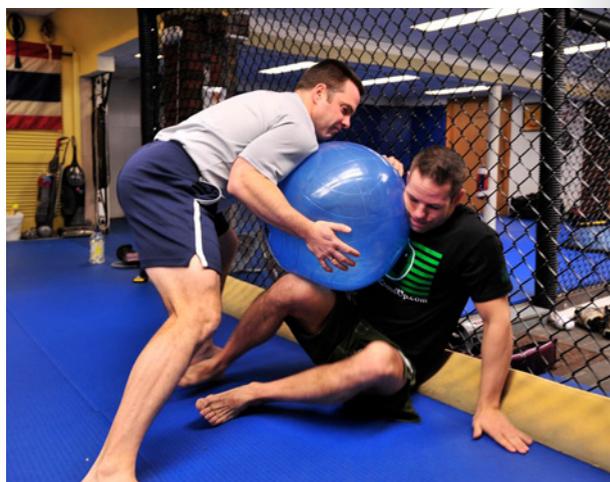


Photo Courtesy of Kevin Kearns

Conditioning for MMA can take many forms, but your efforts should address the whole body in three areas: flexibility, cardio conditioning and strength.

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juries,” Kearns says. “Bouncing-type stretches are something we would not recommend.”

What does he think of getting your stretch by slowly doing the movements you’ll be doing in class — for example, warming up for a session of kicks by doing light kicks? “If it works for you, great,” he says. “But in our time in the field with athletes, we’ve found that it

Photo Courtesy of Kevin Kearns



Just because you’re muscular doesn’t mean those muscles are conditioned to fight an opponent. “The form has to fit the function,” says strength and conditioning coach Kevin Kearns (left).

doesn’t improve flexibility as well as other forms of stretching.”

So what does Kearns advise? A moving stretch, in which you lightly run through a series of exercises designed to elongate the muscles on which your sport depends. One of his favorite modalities is yoga. “Yoga, they think, is at least 5,000 years old,” he says. “Something that’s been around that long cannot be bad. I personally perform hot yoga two to three days a week in conjunction with my other training and regularly recommend it for my MMA clients. There are plenty of benefits to be gained, including increased flexibility, overall wellness of the body, focused core training and the mind-into-muscle connection.”

If you’d rather engage in plain, old, martial arts-style stretching, use common sense. You can do it alone before class so there’s no peer pressure to get that split, or you can do it with a partner, who may be able to help you into certain positions and offer encouragement. “It’s a personal preference,” Kearns says. “You can gain range of motion

Where and When Should You Work Out?

Stretching

Where: home (once you know how to do it properly), MMA gym or *dojo* (where classmates can offer encouragement and assistance), health club (if you’re into yoga)

When: daily, if you want to maintain flexibility when you’re “cold”

Cardio

Where: outside, if possible (the scenery is better), health club (if you like the group thing)

When: three to five days a week, five to six if you want to shed pounds

Strength

Where: home (if you own a set of weights), health club (if you prefer state-of-the-art machines or need coaching)

When: three to five days a week to make gains

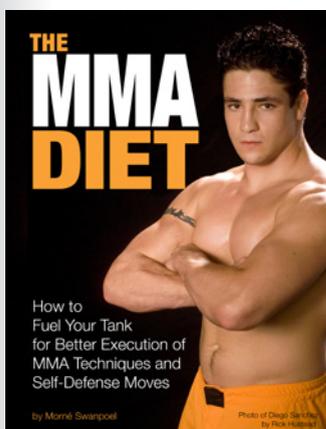
with pressure stretching [with a partner], but there needs to be a high level of communication between the parties to decrease the potential for injury.”

CARDIO

Ask a bunch of martial artists to name the big three of cardio training, and they’ll probably get it exactly right: running, biking and swimming. But the category also includes endeavors such as cross-country skiing, rowing, spinning and sessions on the StairMas-

arts, why not combine them and take an aerobic kickboxing class for twice the benefit in the same amount of time? Kearns is fine with that. “There’s benefit in anything that’s a change from the norm,” he says. “Just remember that the body adapts quickly, so it’s good to regularly shake things up a bit.”

In general, martial artists approach cardio training with one of two goals: to shed pounds or to improve endurance. Identifying yours will help you determine how often you need to work out. If it’s to burn fat, interval



What Should You Eat?

Having a stronger, better-conditioned body will boost your performance regardless of which martial art you practice. In fact, a fit body can make a big difference in a self-defense situation. MMA fighters are among the fittest athletes on the planet, so eat and work out like MMA fighters do to prepare YOUR body for action! We recommend this [FREE download](#) in which a full-time MMA conditioning and fighting coach gets you started on your path toward peak performance.

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ter — virtually anything that gets your heart rate up and keeps it there.

“Those forms of exercise will enhance your overall fitness and help you develop overall muscle endurance for your martial arts training,” Kearns says. “Plus, they will protect you against certain forms of disease.”

The key to deriving the most benefit from aerobic exercise is heart rate. “The zone that’s recommended by the American College of Sports Medicine is 50 percent to 85 percent of your maximal heart rate,” he says. “This, however, counts for aerobic conditioning, not anaerobic interval lactate training in which you can go higher than 85 percent.”

So if cardio training is good for martial

training may be the ticket.

“Steady-state aerobic exercise doesn’t yield long-term weight loss and will only keep your metabolism elevated for three to four hours after exercise,” Kearns says. “However, interval training, if you do it a minimum of three to five days a week, is an excellent way to lose weight. Five to six days a week is even better.”

Whether you schedule your cardio before or after your martial arts workout is up to you, he adds. “Personally, I recommend before so you can use it as a warm-up.”

So you have your cardio routine down pat and plan to go all out right up until the day before your next tournament. Good

idea? No way, Kearns says. "I recommend to all my athletes that workouts should be tapered before an event. You need to save it for the game."

STRENGTH

Strength training is the part of working out that people usually like because the results are most visible — after all, what male doesn't like people to notice his bulging biceps and pumped-up pecs?

Unfortunately, biceps and pecs aren't necessarily the muscles that make you a better fighter, grappler or tournament competitor. You need a whole-body [workout routine](#) that not only hits all the major muscle groups but also focuses on the ones that are specific to [MMA](#). You need to do it three to five days a week. And you need to mix things up every

Biceps: You can do curls until the cows come home, and your biceps will bulge, but you won't be doing that much to bolster your ability to fight. You won't even be improving your ability to [clinch](#) with an opponent and hold him close on the ground. "A biceps curl isn't the same motion as clinching," Kearns says. "The form has to fit the function."

In fact, the lats are an essential part of the grappling equation, including the act of controlling your opponent's head in the clinch. "The back and biceps work in a functional manner in this position," he says. "Since the lats are the larger muscle group, they need to be worked on more."

Arms: When it comes to [punching](#), the biceps are involved to a lesser degree than the rest of the body. What's more important? "The triceps, pecs and delts are all important



Photo Courtesy of Kevin Kearns

Your "MMA Workouts 101" Coach

[Kevin Kearns](#) has a bachelor's degree in exercise physiology. For more information about training with him in person and via DVD, visit [BurnWithKearns.com](#).

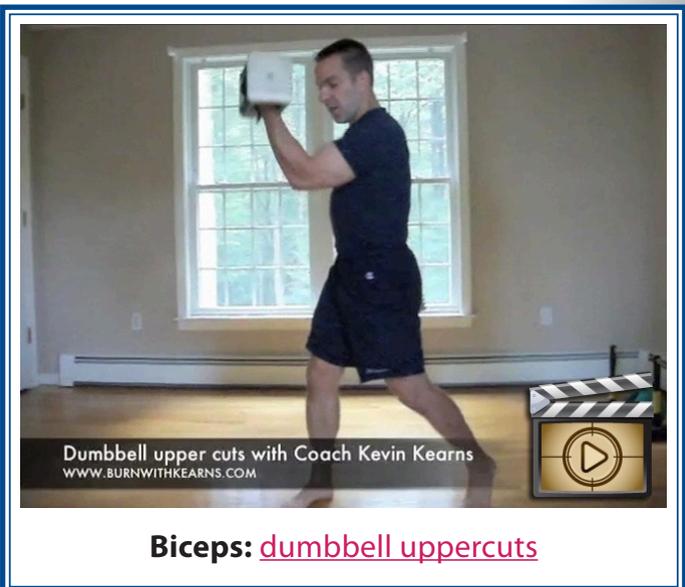
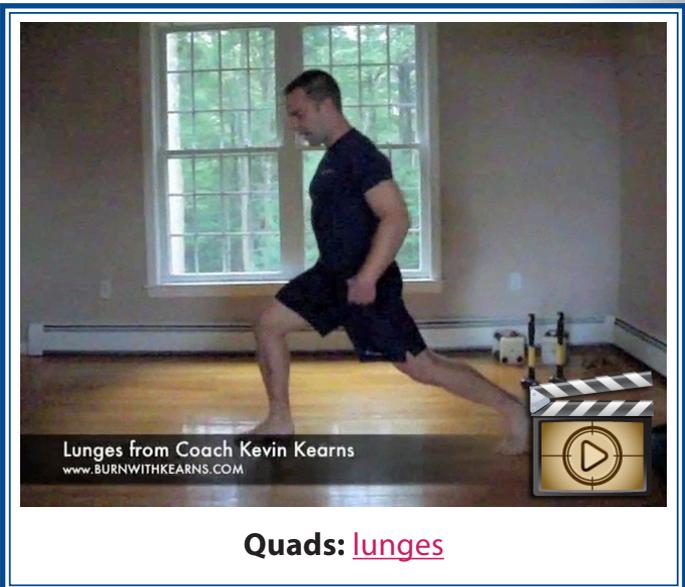
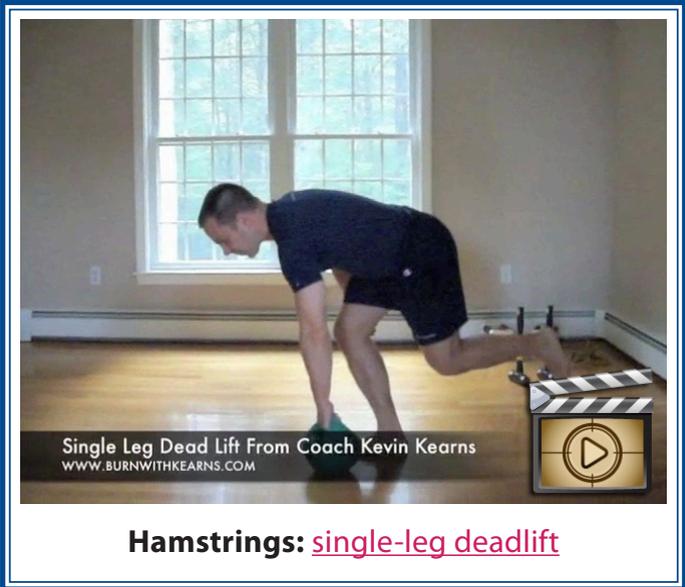
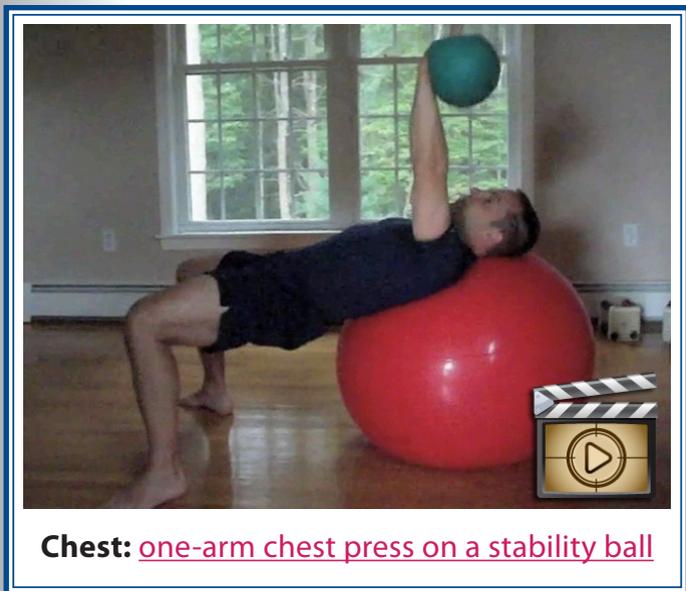
four to six weeks so your body doesn't get used to the workload and stop packing on muscle mass, Kearns says.

He offers the following to set the record straight on two popular muscle misconceptions:

for punching power and endurance, but it's the core and legs that generate the real power," Kearns says. "Your core — your abs and lower back — should never be overlooked because it's the well of all power in the martial arts."

To hit all the major muscle groups in the most time-efficient manner possible, he recommends the following exercises:

Lats: pull-ups





Bench Dips from Coach Kevin Kearns
WWW.BURNWITHKEARNS.COM

Triceps: [dips](#)



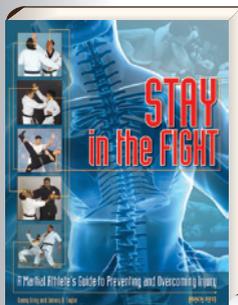
Shoulder Roll with stability ball
Coach Kevin Kearns from Burn with Kearns.com

Abs: shoulder rollouts using an ab wheel
(or [with a stability ball!](#))

The advice offered in this guide is designed to get you started on your way to enhanced fitness. Remember that you're not prepping for the next Mr. America contest or for the next Olympics; you're trying to build functional muscles, useful flexibility and ap-

propriate endurance for martial arts competition and [self-defense](#). ✖

Workout Books and DVDs



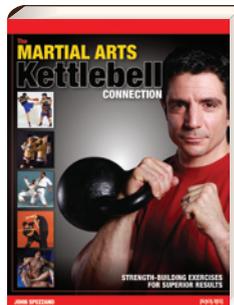
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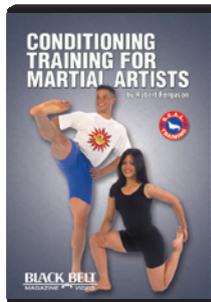
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