

BACK TO THE BASICS SERIES: REAL FITNESS RESULTS
Feb. 12, 2016

Sled Training

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For optimal athletic and fitness development, cardiovascular training and general conditioning is very important. Conditioning refers to our cardiovascular and muscular endurance, and ability to withstand the rigors of strength training. Someone who is strong but has no conditioning will not achieve their potential, since they run out of gas before they can express their true strength! On the other hand, someone with great conditioning but little maximal strength can often get injured.

There are a multitude of tools or exercises one can use to improve general preparedness (GPP), but sled training is arguably the best tool available, since it pushes cardiovascular output as well as muscular strength and endurance, without causing any soreness. Sleds or prowlers are simply steel-made equipment that slides on the ground, has pegs for weights to be loaded, and can be pushed or pulled, for time. These are fantastic for many different reasons, and can be used by all levels, with very little learning curve.

First, sleds are joint-friendly, speed up muscle recovery, and use every muscle in the body simultaneously. Second, unlike traditional cardiovascular training machines, which only challenge pulmonary (aerobic) systems, the sled challenges this AND our neuromuscular system, at the same time. Thus, we not only improve cardiovascular efficiency, but also build muscle, strength, and lose fat, very quickly. Third, the sled training is almost impossible to get injured doing, and has no “eccentric” component, meaning there is no soreness that follows the training, no matter how hard you train.

The eccentric component refers to muscle “stretching” or lengthening, like the downward part of a bench press when the chest stretches. The concentric component refers to shortening of the muscles (squeezing), like the pressing part of the bench. Stretching and eccentrics is what leads to deep muscle soreness, or DOMS (delayed onset muscle soreness) that we sometimes get for 1-3 days after training hard. Sled training, like ice skating, has no eccentric component, so we can push very hard, get incredible training effects and results, and wake up the next day, relatively soreness free.

If you want to make a change, add in some fun and rewarding conditioning training, consider joining one of the YMCA’s new sled camps. The group training is done to

upbeat music in the gymnasium, and it'll whip you into shape before you even know it.

Have fun, build strength, lose weight, and no soreness? Win, win.