Complex Training with Sandbags for Unstoppable Conditioning!

Sandbags are undoubtedly an extremely versatile training tool. For our combat athletes though, we often use combo movements as well as complexes to develop stamina that never ends!

Do not try to incorporate sandbag complex training into a young athlete’s program until he / she can hold proper form with bodyweight exercises as well other forms of exercise (loaded and unloaded).

With regards to program design, we simply mix together a few upper body and lower body movements together, trying to stick to a ratio of 1:1 of upper body : lower exercises. You can also do 4 or 5 upper body exercises in a row followed by 4 or 5 lower body exercises in a row, giving you an 8 – 10 exercise complex!

Here is a list of some sanbag exercises you can use for your complex training. Surely there are many more left out, and Josh Henkin has many more exercises up his sleeve (plus a sandbag manual and dvd).

1. military press
2. bent over row
3. squats
4. split squats
5. lunges (walking, alternate forwards, alternate reverse)
6. RDL’s
7. RDL / Good Morning Hybrid
8. Clean & press
9. Thrusters (front squat + military press)
10. Burpee + push up = clean and press (add a squat for more variation)
11. Turkish get Up (holding sand bag in farmer walk position against body)
12. snatches
13. cleans
14. high pulls (add a deep squat for a combo)
15. Deadlift, sumo dead lift

Plus many more exercises……

Let’s check out how you can improve endurance and conditioning with some complex training. Perform the complex for specific sets and reps, or, for time, which is a favorite of Steve Maxwell and the crew at Cross Fit. Timed rounds are super tough, but tons of fun!

**Complex 1**: Perform 6 reps ea. Exercise – perform 5 total sets or perform 3 rounds of 3 minutes ea.

1. sand bag squats
2. reverse lunges
3. OH press
4. bent over row
5. clean and press

**Complex 2**: Perform 8 reps of ea. Exercise or go for 4 sets of 2 minutes

1. squats while shouldering (8 reps in front, 8 reps left shoulder, 8 reps on right shoulder)
2. burpee – clean & press
3. RDL / Good Morning Hybrid

**Complex 3:** Perform 10 reps per exercise or 2 sets of 4 minutes

1. Turkish get ups
2. Walking lunges
3. RDL
4. Bent over row
5. Snatches

The above workouts are going to be challenging as all heck, especially number three! If you do any of the complexes for time, post your time for one round of the complex on the forum so we can see how you’re doing and perhaps inspire some friendly competition!

If you need to make things easier, try removing an exercise or two and slowly add in the exercises so you are performing a full complex. You can always lower the reps or vary the design of each complex on your own. Just be creative and blast away. You will soon realize that sand bags are bad ass and loads of fun!

Below you’ll find a few descriptive pics for the sand bag exercises. Enjoy the pain!
Above is the RDL / Good Morning hybrid – hold the bag close to the body for these. Hanging the bag straight down will be your basic RDL move.
For the snatch, think “speed” and really rip that bag up. This should be one smooth motion with no hesitation.
bent over rows: keep your chest high and back flat. If you find your back rounds out at the bottom, go lighter & do extra upper back work: shrugs, farmer walks with heavy dumbbells and kettlebells and face pulls using bands.

The beginning of the burpee combo
Explosively jump forward, ready to power clean the bag up explosively!

Now you’ve cleaned the sand bag, get ready to perform a deep front squat
explode out of the front squat and perform an overhead press

You can also perform the burpee – front squat – OH press for time, and nothing else. This will be a killer for conditioning but the rewards will be great!
Zach Even – Esh is a Strength & Performance coach located in NJ. For more Sandbag training articles and information visit www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com