KETTLEBELLS

Year 2 MAY 2010 Nº2

KETTLEBELLS

A tool for the martial arts

Welcome to the second issue of Kettlebells. In this occasion we offer a bilingual version (Spanish-English), so that one of the few specific magazines of the subject can reach all the readers in the world.

It has been tough to bring this tool and its technique to Argentina. But all these efforts are paying off if you see all the new students and diversity of classes that this discipline adds every day. Since I journeyed to Los Angeles, where I could finally certify myself as a Kettlebell instructor representing the IKFF, Kettlebells are more popular in Argentina, classes, seminars and workshops in different states give people a chance to know this tool.

This year we are looking forward to the first certification given in Argentina, a small matter it may seem, but an historic one considering that it would be the first in South America. From now on a certified group will be the leading teaching force in Argentina.

We have also decided to organize a similar seminar as the one given in 2009 for the ones that do not want to do the certification but are interested in taking classes with Steve Cotter.

For this issue we have English spoken colleagues, like Sukie Baxter and John Wild Buckley that will enrich this number with their experiences. We have more tips, extracts from other publications and biographies from top Kettlebell figures from all over the world. We begin with a Qi Gong section, a very important element as a side training of IKFF.

As always, we invite you to check our web sites, where you will find information about the KB and schedule of the classes.

www.ikff.net

www.pesarusa.com.ar

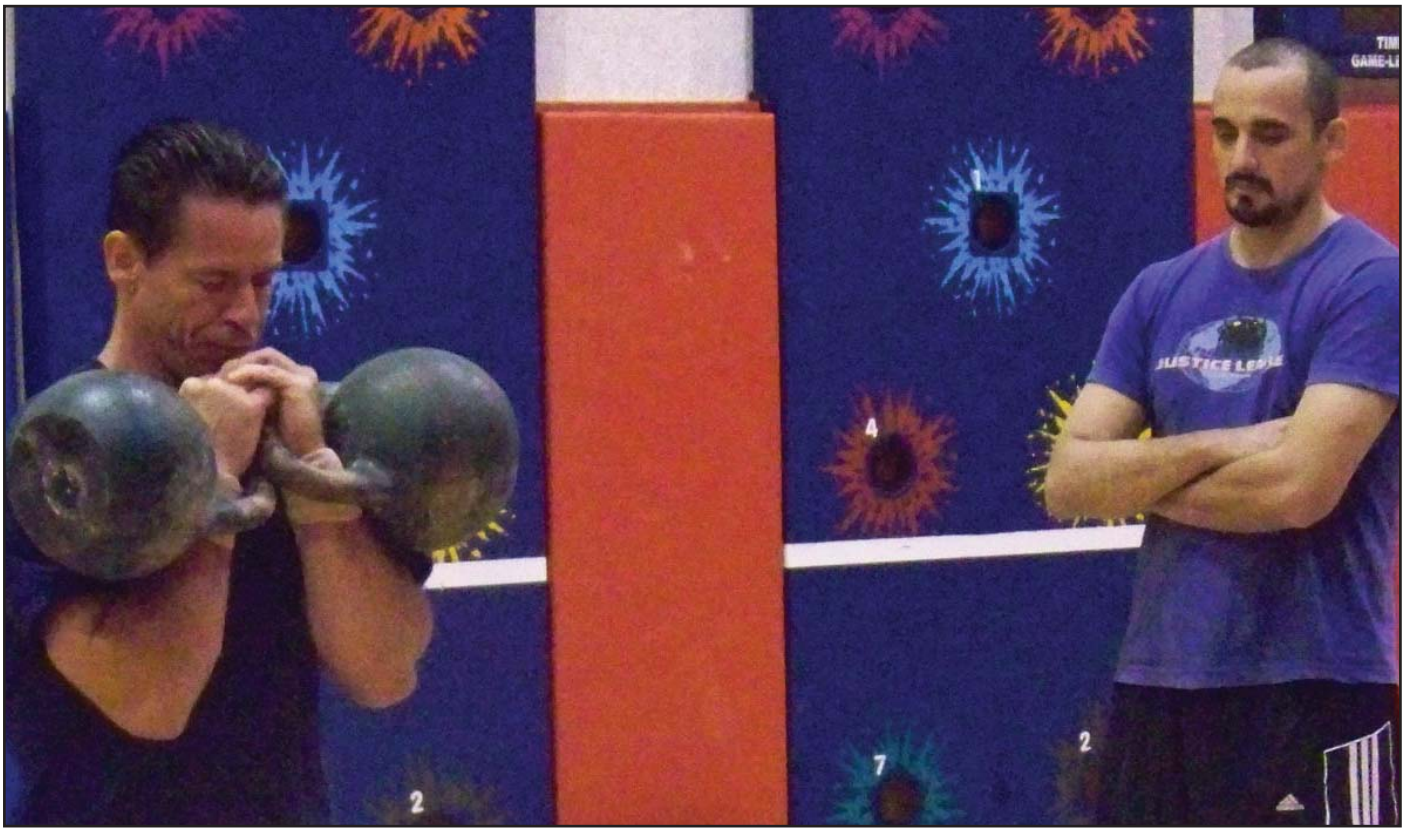
www.ikff.com.ar

And to the facebook groups were you can become part of the world wide web of Kettlebells.

IKFF ARGENTINA - KETTLEBELL

Jerónimo

First Kettlebells certification in Argentina



Certified Kettlebell Trainer Level 1.
May the 29th and the 30th

For the first time in South America, people will be able to train with one of the world greatest and renowned Kettlebell (KB) Lifter. In two full days people will develop the KB IKFF lifting techniques, including the most basic lifting techniques and its progressions, fundamental for a solid base on every trainer. The certificate will include theory and practice. It will instruct the graduate on how to give classes according to the KB system.
This is a unique opportunity for those who want to be the first KB certified trainers in Argentina and South America. In this certification each member will learn:

• Fundamental KB lifting techniques and variations.

• How to correctly perform the swing, the snatch, the clean and the jerk. All competitive lifting techniques from this Russian sport.

• How to achieve all your physical goals with a short time span.

• How to plan a program based on any gymnastic purpose for yourself or your students be that: strength, stamina, resistance, muscles or prowess.

• Exercises necessary to help you and your students train with no danger of getting harmed.

• The different types of energy needed to perform the press and squats.

• The importance of exercising with a time limit and how to lift more weight until you reach unthinkable boundaries.

• How the KB will train your body effectively to do any type of daily actions.

• How to mix the KB with other training methods so as to develop the utmost physical state.

• Why the KB system will make your body more resistant to injuries.

• Why breathe regulation is so important to improve your lifting technique and your physical condition.

As a CKT you will have exclusive access to:

• An international formation

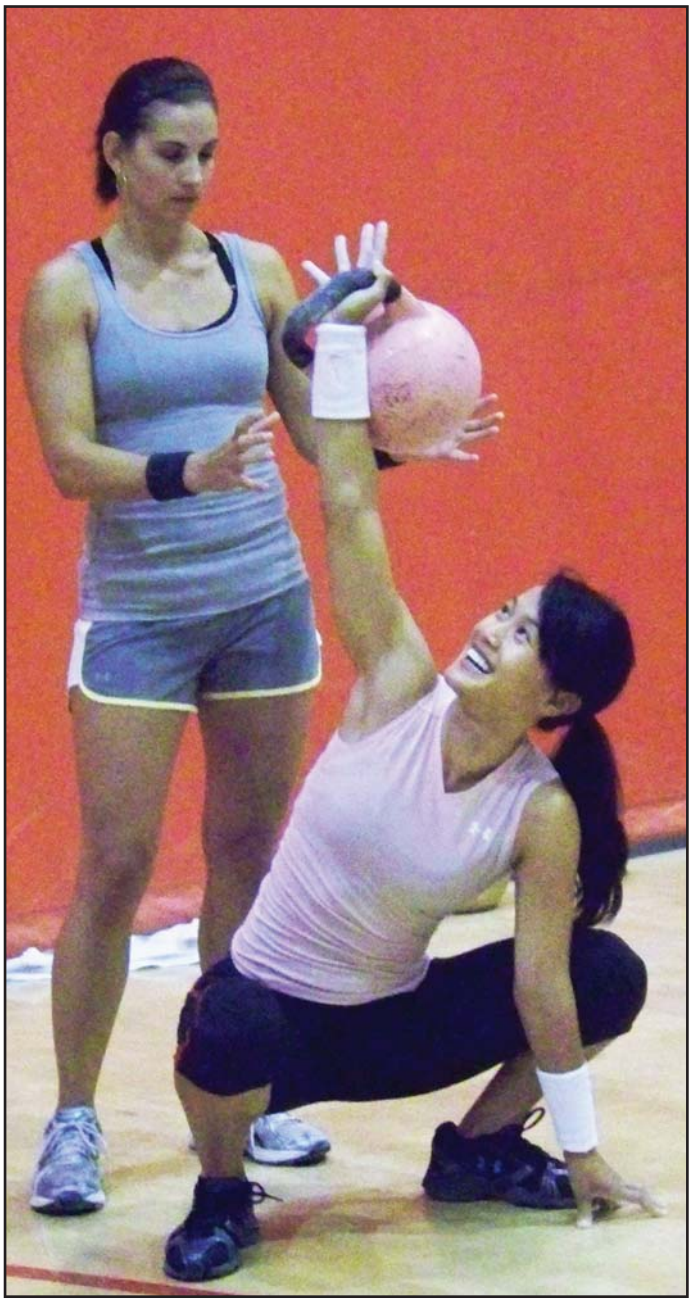
• Being able to teach the KB method for IKFF all over the world.

• Discounts over all IKFF products.

• Know the Lifting technique learned in seminars all over the world.

• Access to the official IKFF manual.

• The chance to appear in the international IKFF instructors address list.



How to sign up

In Buenos Aires, Argentina

Jerónimo Milo
(15)5416-9529
info@kettlebell.com.ar
www.ikff.com.ar

In Argentina and the rest of South America you can book your place through a bank deposit in an HSBC account.

Internationally

You can do it through the IKFF web site: www.ikff.net

*For specific information regarding the right provided by this certificate visit:

http://ikff.net/ckt/certified-kettlebell-teacher-ckt.html

For Great Discounts sign up before April 15!

From the practical point of view, we know that strength training for a martial artist should provide global movement skills that affect the body as a whole. The seclusion of a group of muscles should not be the aim of anybody's planning but to use as many muscle segments in one action. Focusing on muscle isolation is like betting on the segregation of our movements, something pretty useless when practicing Martial Arts. In the combat systems, be that traditional or modern, we shouldn't look fore more volume or separate actions in the muscle, but for the ability to be light, quick and resistant. Our movements should be efficient, generated and supported by our whole body structure.

In Martial Arts a lot has been said about different lifting methods to build power and resistance, but I personally believe that one of the most useful tools for this concept is the Kettlebell (KB). Many martial artists from the past sensed the benefit of lifting unanchored weights, similar to the KB. In Chinese martial arts we find stories within the Tai Chi Chuan style. Particularly in the Yang family they use to practice with unanchored rectangular weights. Also in other internal styles, like Bagua, they used to practice with stone balls as we see in pictures from Fu Cheng Sung. This type of work is also seen in many Karate styles, where they practiced with square pieces made from rock or wood to improve their grabs. These are some of the many lifting methods used in martial arts, but the most similar one to the KB training is the one used by Shuey Jiao (throwing Chinese method). Here we can find exercises comparable to the swing, the push press and the bent press. Within this system it is common to find a big compendium of juggling actions with the weight, everything done with the handled rectangular stones known as stone lock or iron lock.

Among the impressing amount of different methods born these years, Mike Mahler has created KB exercises specifically developed for Mixed Martial Arts. These imitate fighting movements like the duck walk, the snatch and the knee to the floor jerk, very useful to throw the opponent and for waist-down attacks. Also, Steve Cotter mixed many traditional kung fu postures to the KB training, achieving exercises that not only develop strength, but also dexterity and joints spaciousness. Many postures develop strength while stimulating our dexterity. He has also introduced methods and concepts from Chi Kung so as to make the lifting technique a much more efficient one.

Function in Martial Arts

From the utility perspective regarding the muscle actions we can say that the KB training gives a balanced and demanding workout to the martial artist extensional and bending musculature. The stimulation of the bending muscles will be useful for closure and compression techniques (mostly valued on grappling styles and on closing actions in punching styles). On the other hand, the job done on the extension part of the muscle will be useful for opening movements (necessary to strike in punching styles, but also used on grappling styles).

Fu Chen Sung

The constant movements with the weight will adjust and activate different stabilizing muscles, responsible of maintaining our balance under the pressure of the KB weight.

The somehow known “active rests”, when we rest under the pressure and weight of the KB, will give us the ability to regroup while maintaining a job. An important skill in fighting sports, where we are subject to many exhaustive rounds and where every breath could make the difference between victory or defeat.

The real objective of each exercise from the martial point of view

After this small introduction, let us see and test the real benefits of this tool for Martial Arts. We will relate the most important KB movements with some martial ones.

The Swing In its extension phase, it stimulates the extensional musculature (gluteus, low back). This movement is the same one as the one used to escape when we are in below other person in the grapling systems. The pelvis extension is the same motion that we will use when defending our position against a throw, doing a sprawl. The extensional musculature is also part of the muscles involved in jumping and in some cases kicking.

In the **push press** we find one of the most coordinative movements in classic martial arts. We are referring to the power wave generated by the extension of the legs and transmitted through the pelvis ending in the extension of the arm (when punching for example). To show this it could be illustrated with a punch, previously supported by the hips, coordinated with the extension of the legs and pushed from the waist. Also, in the KB technique, the elbow rests on the pelvis so as to, with the help from the legs, projected the weight through the pelvis facilitating the arm extension of the KB upwards.

The Jerk is a refined movement that will help us coordinate opposite forces. In its first phase it’s similar to

the push press, but on the previous moment of the extension we duck under the weight. By doing this and by flexing the legs we generate a movement opposed to the path action. On a standing posture (striking) it provides a sophisticated movement that few use: stepping backwards while punching. This will let us keep the distance at the same time that we back out even as we hit effective and powerfully.

In the ground (grappling) the most basic escape movement against an opponent on top of us is using the hips while we push with our arms on the opposite direction of the pelvis, just like in the jerk.

The squat with weight is an alternative way of improving the crouch. In traditional and modern Wu Shu styles, the crouches or similar half crouch are a constant. Crouching exercises with weight will break time barriers when improving this technique.

The windmill is a special exercise for the back and lateral musculature development (gluteus, low back, lateral) Ideal not only to strengthen the back, but also the flexibility required for hips based throwings.

The Turkish get up has been many times considered as the grappler's favorite. This exercise favors the initial force to stand from a lay down position, the power wave going from the knees and then balance to the standing posture and all the way back down. It has many ground uses, from twists to attacks, invertions or position changes.

The bottom up is excellent to stimulate the correct line up of the fist and the rest of the forearm maintaining a straight line between those two. Along with the bag and push ups using the fists, it will improve the stability between the fist and the forearm while performing a punch. This is sometimes underestimated by martial artists.

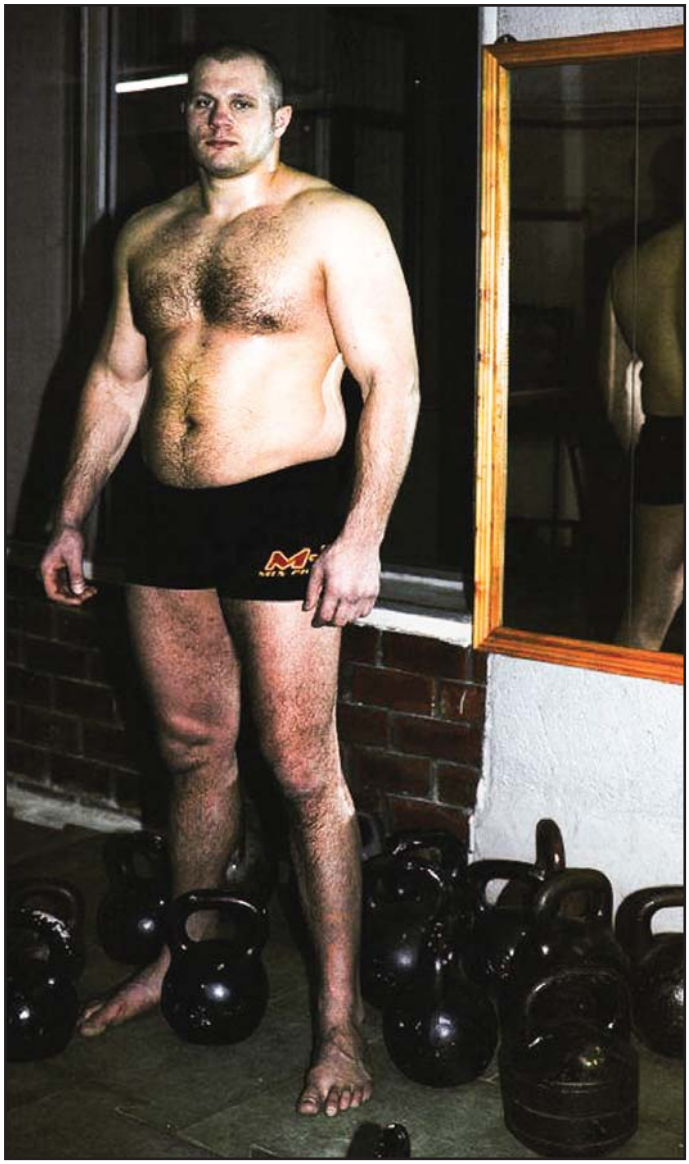
The classics leg exercises like the leg dead-lift or the pistol are real TNT for the kicking strength development in styles like Taekwondo, Kick Boxing or Capoeira. It's also very important to train the lower extremities for the execution of very low postures, as shown in some Chinese styles.

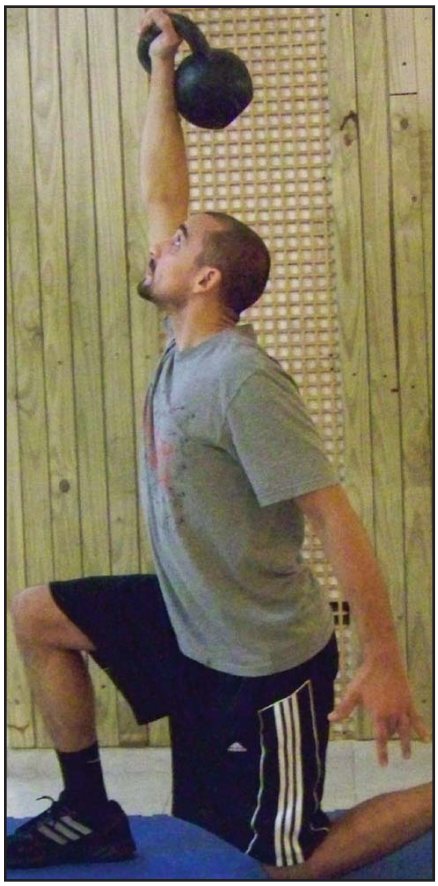
The juggling and the never ending types of KB throwings, combinations and games that can be done by throwing and catching the weight will improve our grip and grab abilities.

Stone lock found in chen´s Village. It was the Yang Lu Chan´s weigth tool for improving force.

Conclusion

We have a very complete training program for our strength and coordination difficult to match in terms of time, technique complexity and minimum tool requirements (just a pair of KB).
These are some of the exercises and relations with Martial Arts. The KB versatility permits a variety of exercises according to different needs. It can be adapted to movements particular of your own style or even innovate, depending on what you are looking for. The limit is only our own imagination.



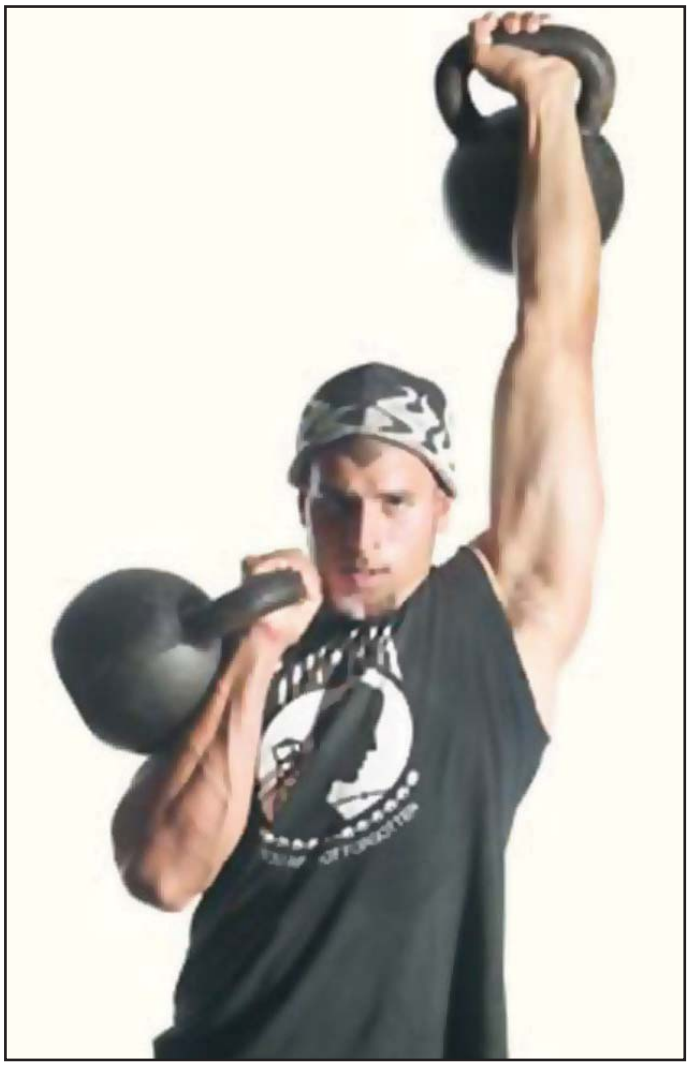


Kettlebell World icons: Mike Mahler

Mike Mahler is a power trainer and physical trainer that works in Las Vegas. For more than a decade now, he has represented the avant-garde of Kettlebells, giving dozen of seminars, writing and producing videos, what makes him one of the most experienced Kettlebell teachers in the United States.

His main objective while teaching is to obtain effective Kettlebell trainings that give size, strength, loose weight and physical preparation.
He has mixed classical routines and exercise with modern visions and adaptations, generating a complete system where hormonal progress is bettered by nutrition, training and a healthy life style.

In his book “Kettlebell training for MMA” he demystifies the classical martial arts trainings offering more functional exercises in relation to the movements used in competitions. This way he combines classical throwing exercises or defense moves with Kettlebell movements. Within this context he has trained champions from the UFC like Frank Shamrock, helping to introduce this tool to the MMA world.



His most known phrase, and that defines his concepts, is to “live aggressively”, not in a violent way, but as a proactive term. To live intensely as a warrior would, not accepting defeat and to having the courage to face any adversity in the name of ones own convictions.
Mahler says “I feel that power is more than you can do physically. Mental strength and willpower are the real components of power.”

Mahler has several DVD’s like: Kettlebell solution for size and strength or The Kettlebell solution for speed and explosive strength. On the editorial land he has written “Mahler’s aggressive Strength Kettlebell Workshop Manual”. He is also constantly collaborating and writing in health magazines.

For more information on Mike Mahler please visit his website on http://www.mikemahler.com/

The guidance – Snatch

The Snatch is the technique that needs more attention on its execution within the lifting Kettlebell (KB) program. The snatch is one of the most efficient, quick and less energy consuming ways to raise the weight over our heads. Plus, is one of the most important techniques and not for nothing, along with the jerk is one of competition techniques from Girevoy Sport.
We recommend first to try and do a good swing, what will allow you to dominate the extension phase of the pelvis, engine of the strength needed for the elevation of the weight. Also to control the stance called "lazy swing", this will help you transform the circular energy into a strictly ascendant one with a dynamic implementation of the technique.

Denis Kanygin, a well known KB trainer, has two tips on how to increase the effectiveness of the snatch. In his blog http://workoutiq.com you can find very valuable information on KB, fitness, and a proper body posture.

1 - On how to bend the knees at the end of the lifting

One way to increase the efficiency of the lifting, reducing the effort and therefore endure the exercise longer, is to slightly bend the legs in the final moment of the ascendant arc. This technique is also used in the execution of the jerk.

This tip can be used in our daily practice of the snatch or not, depending if we are practicing for fitness, time series or competition.

To do it we will start on the back swing. Along with the elevation we will stand on our toes, which will help us use and direct the whole body to an upward direction.

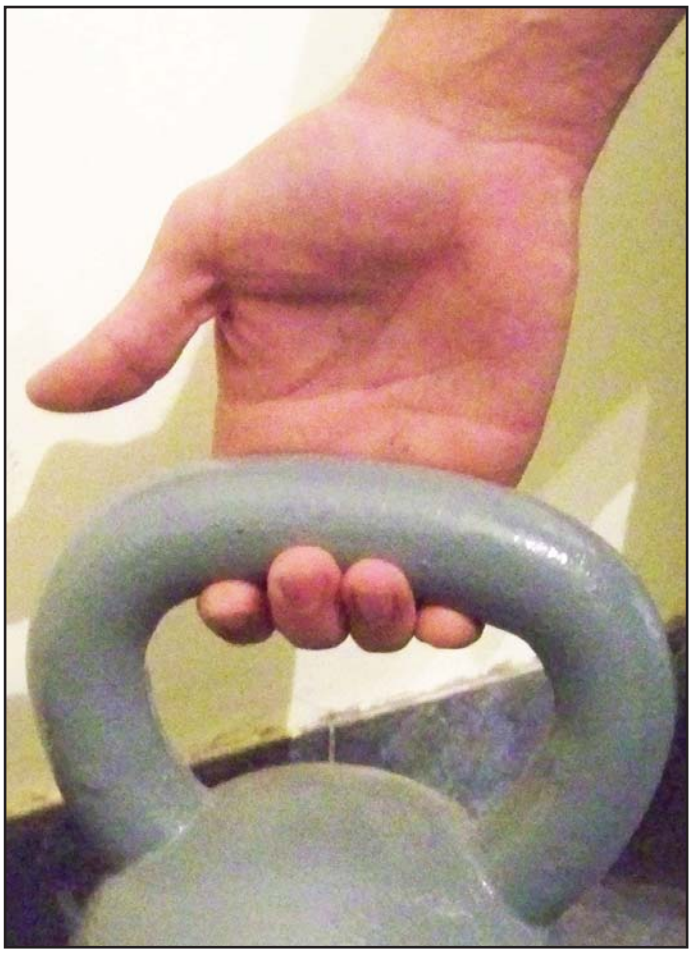
We will make the most of our lifted heels to step under the weight at the same time that we bend our legs and the pelvis receiving the impact the same way as in the jerk. This movement will diminish the effort of the arm and will facilitate its extension while maintaining the weight the same way as in the jerk.

* Daniel Paz

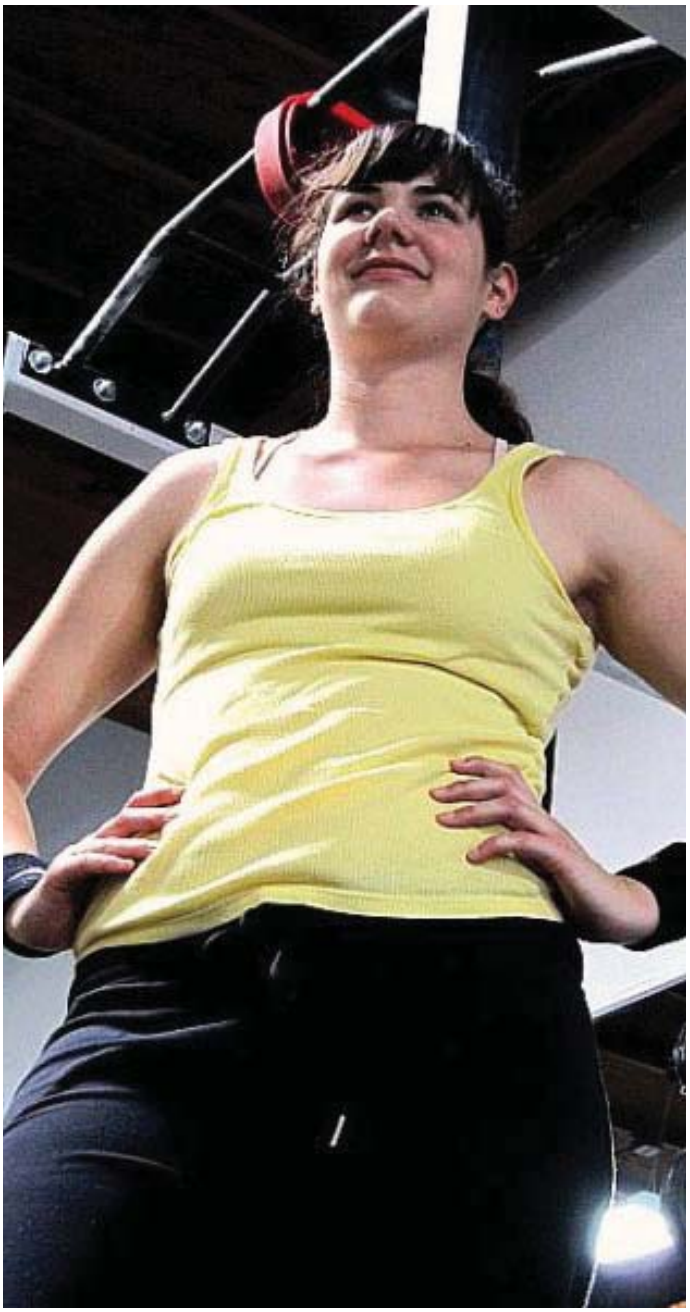
2- How to smooth the grab when the weight is going down.

Many times we have felt in the snatch, as the weight goes down fast because of gravity, our skin peel off from our hands. On short series it's not something important. But when you get to 10 minutes series and the hand is tired, the scratches could become so big that we would have to stop the exercise or worst.

To avoid all this problems, we will try to minimize the friction between the Kb and the palm.
While practicing the snatch, as the weight comes down we usually loosen the grip so that it falls, and before the back swing tighten it again. This type of actions accelerate the speed of the weight in its fall and affect the skin in the moment of maximum velocity. To avoid this, one should try to grab the weight sooner, when it's between our face and our chest. Immediately after leaving the extended position with the weight over our heads, as we perform the corkscrew wrist movement to let it fall, we will grab it with the fingers in a hook shape with the index finger under the thumb.
This type of grip, apart from not using the palm and avoiding the friction against the handle, it will provide us with an efficient hook that will, no matter how tired the hand is, maintain the weight without letting it fall. The difference with other grips is that the closure produced by these fingers will give us a powerful structure.
Slowing down the friction over the palm, holding the weight with the fingers, and grabbing it before it gets momentum, we will reduce the rubbing between the skin and the weight.
It will take quite some time for us to get accustomed to this technique and it might feel weak at first, that's why I recommend to practice the load only using the fingers, swings with the grip and most important: many cleans with all the weights that we use. Practice till we can comfortably go from having the handle in our palm to our fingers while the weight is coming down.
With this new technique within our arsenal we can combine the old palm gripping technique with the fingers one and thus switch from one to another in long series.
The health of our skin is very important for a constant and serious practice. It does not have anything to do with esthetics or beauty, it's a purely functional notion. We should be able to practice without being worried about pain or getting harmed in the most important point of contact with the weight, our hand.



Kettlebells and Soft Tissue Health



Kettlebells are well known for their ability to develop unparalleled strength and endurance minus the muscle bulk that goes along with traditional strength training methods. Additionally, kettlebell athletes have highly responsive and pliable soft tissue. Their tissue quality more closely resembles that of a dancer or yogi than that of a powerlifter or strongman, and response rates to bodywork are much higher, yielding greater results with fewer sessions. This is due in part to the forced relaxation that kettlebell endurance sets engender; it's also related to kettlebells' ability to stimulate the fascial mechanoreceptors, providing increased neurological input.

The tendency when lifting any kind of weight, whether it's a bag of groceries, a toddler, or a kettlebell, is to tense the body in preparation for load. Humans have mastered the ability to tense their muscles. On any given day in your gym, you can find someone pounding out sets like there's no tomorrow. Ask this guy to lie on the floor and relax completely and I guarantee you'll find that he holds various body parts off the floor, unable to let go. We've become accustomed to tension and even value high levels of muscular tonus. Americans, in particular, constantly seek the "hard body look."

Unfortunately, chronically contracted muscle fibers are detrimental to both physical strength and long term structural health. In terms of strength, muscle fibers that are already contracted have no potential energy; they cannot contract further, and thus, they cannot assist you in lifting a weight. This equals reduced strength. In terms of tissue health, healthy soft tissue is defined by its pliability and hydration. Unhealthy tissue is dehydrated, causing the ground substance (the fluid matrix in which cells are bathed) to become more viscous and loaded with toxins and metabolites. Contracted muscle fibers are not only constantly emitting metabolic waste, they are also unable to pump fluid into and around the cells. How easily nutrients are able to enter a cell is determined by the density of the fibrous matrix and the viscosity of the ground substance.

During a long kettlebell set, any unnecessary tension is eradicated through the sheer necessity of efficiency. It's simply impossible to simultaneously hold onto chronic muscular bracing and perform a high number of technically correct lifts. As the athlete relaxes and learns to contract only the muscle fibers required to lift the weight, his tissue becomes more soft, supple, and fluid. Also, excess muscle tissue is atrophied, leaving only strong, functional fibers in place. In a kettlebell athlete, every single fiber of a muscle is functional – able to both contract and relax. This explains the lack of excessive muscle bulk.

You are probably familiar with the proprioceptors in muscle tissue called muscle spindle fibers. These smart cells communicate the length of a muscle to the neurological system and prevent injury due to over

stretching. Recent research has uncovered four additional kinds of mechanoreceptors in fascia (muscle spindle fibers are the only proprioceptor not located in fascia), and I postulate that the dynamic, fluid movements of kettlebell training stimulate these. Because kettlebells are an integrated exercise, they provide sensory feedback from all areas of the body. Golgi tendon organs, located in joint capsules and ligaments of peripheral joints, decrease muscular tonus, preventing injury due to hyper contraction. Pacini receptors are sensitive to rapid pressure changes and provide proprioceptive feedback for movement coordination. Ruffini receptors inhibit overall sympathetic activity (the body's response to stress, as in the fight or flight response), and interstitial receptors, when stimulated, increase fluid supply to the tissue region. Stimulation of all four of these mechanoreceptors would explain the unique tissue quality found in kettlebell athletes.

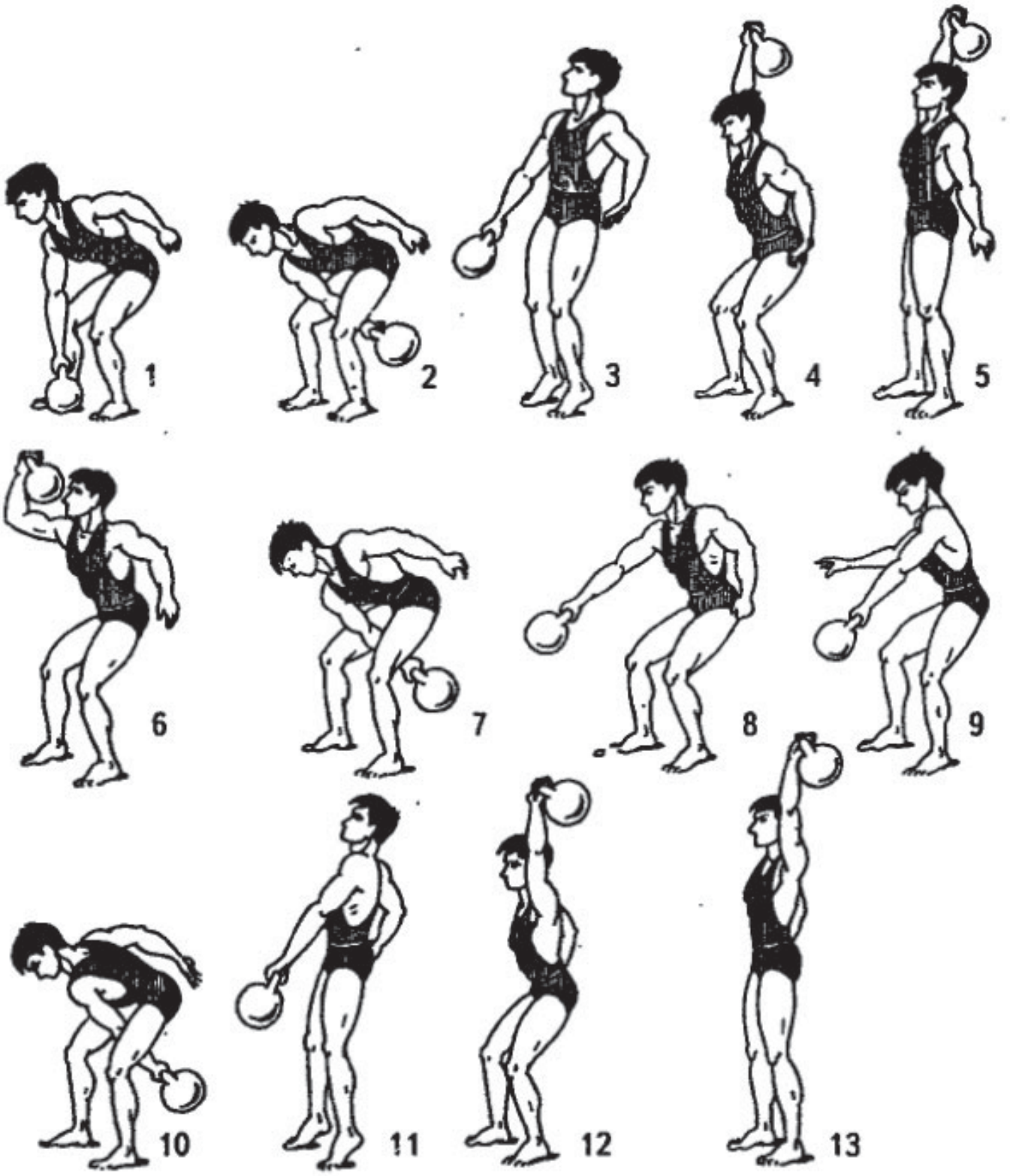
Kettlebells are the ideal tool for development of healthy, strong tissue. Using kettlebells for strength-endurance training creates tissue relaxation in chronically contracted muscle fibers, allowing greater fluid flow and enhanced cellular nutrition. It also pares down excessive muscle density that may be a block to strength and the local flow of fluid. Healthy tissue is imperative in maintaining longevity. Rigid, unresponsive connective tissue has been connected to chronic pain conditions. Additionally, kettlebells may stimulate the mechanoreceptors located in fascia. A 1993 article published in The Journal of Spine, the leading journal for the field of orthopedics, found that patients with chronic low back pain had almost a complete absence of sensory nerve endings in their low back. This was correlated to a plastic deformation of the area (twists and adhesions in the fascial tissue). The brain, with a lack of sensory input stemming from the low back, created an enlarged mental map of the area and the patients experienced pain. This is exactly the same process that happens with "phantom pain" in amputees. The lack of sensory input from the missing limb causes the brain to mentally map the area, creating a pain associated story. When amputees receive real stimulation through a prosthesis, however, the pain significantly decreases. Thus, including activities in your fitness regime that stimulate your sensory receptors is critical in maintaining a healthy body.

Sukie Baxter

http://www.sukiebaxter.com/

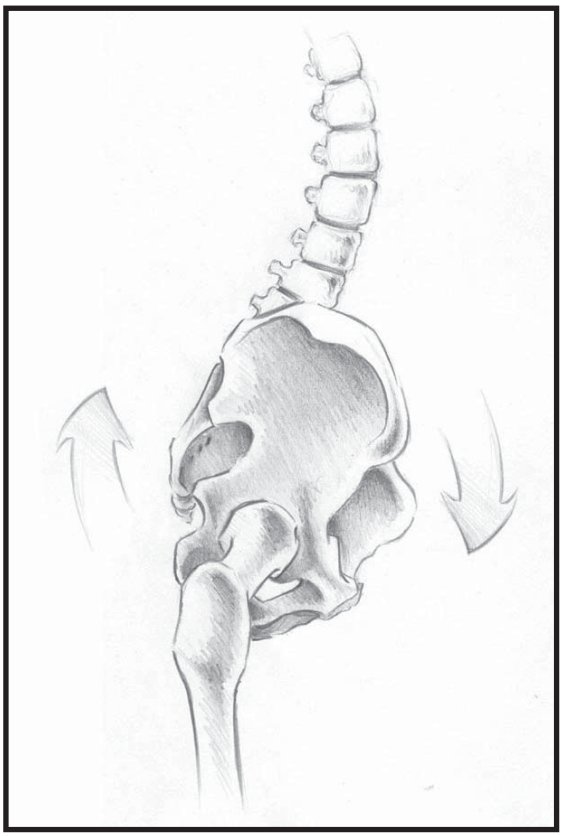
The Snatch accordance to: **ГИРЕВОЙ СПОРТ**

Illustrations that show the Snatch progression, published in the book **ГИРЕВОЙ СПОРТ**
Printed in Moscow in 2006



The following movements can be used to warm up before the Kettlebell (KB) exercises, to calm down after them or for coordination, posture improvement and general health purposes.
Generally, the pelvis has the most difficult body movements to understand and perform. Due to the amount of muscles and ligaments that make up this area, it's difficult to locate it or visualize it. As the joint connections are not in plain view, it's quite difficult to have an idea on how they work.

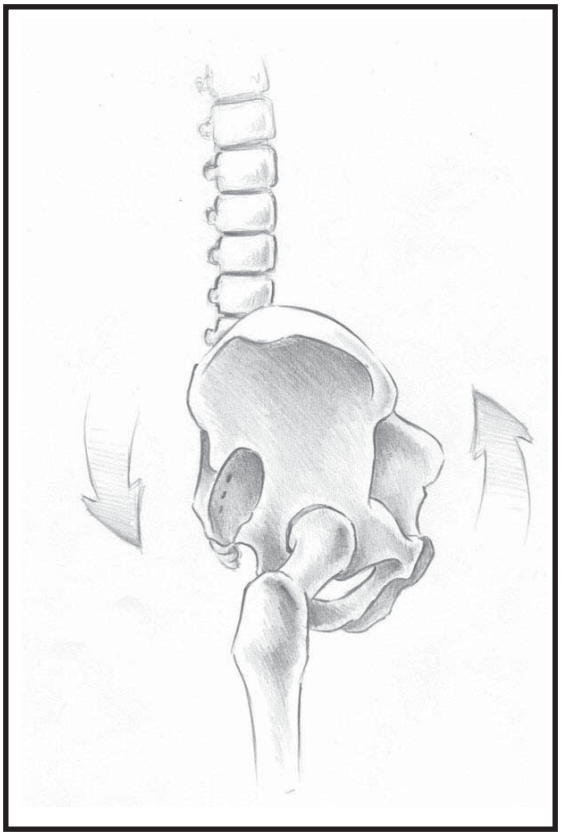
On top of all this, the pelvis is located on the sexual and excretion part of the body. The taboos and social conditionings over this area and its functions make it difficult for everybody to relax it or move it naturally. This is basically because of ignorance or embarrassment.
When doing kettlebells the pelvis is one of the most important corporal segments. It's not only the body core, but also the nexus between the top and bottom part of the body. It is the part of the body that we will use to transfer the energy up by extending our legs and the one used to support the weight as it goes down.



Anterior pelvic tilt

THE BODY AND OUR OWN PERSONAL HISTORY

All of our experiences and events in life somehow mark our body. For example some fear or trauma can generate that our shoulders bent forward to protect us from something. These events, resolved or not, can leave a stain in our body with us not even noticing it. The same happens with physical traumas, which can leave a negative mental conditioning.
Sometimes a posture or corporal movement changes when we modify something in our personality. And some other times, our personality changes when our body transforms. It's good to work from the body to shape the mind and from the mind to change the body.



Posterior pelvic tilt

How to loosen up and acknowledge our pelvis

To do this simple –yet difficult- exercise, first we should know the two movements of the pelvis that define the curve of spinal column.

To tilt the pelvis anteriorly we should swing the pelvis over the femurs forward. This will create an arch (or hump), that can be identified as the act of pushing your buttocks out.
To do a posterior tilt we should swing the pelvis over the femurs backwards. This will make the hump disappear straightening the spinal column.

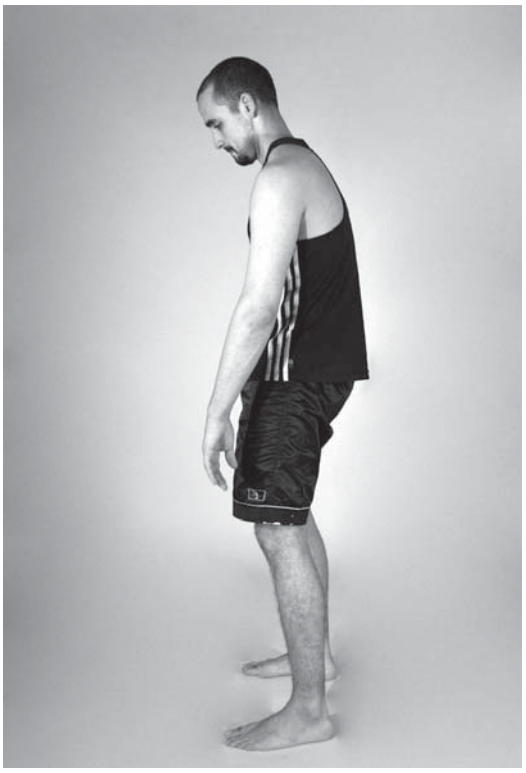
Standing with or knees slightly bent, we will try to perform this two movements one after the other in a cycle. At first we can help ourselves by grabbing the sides of the pelvis, so as to direct the movement.

When we get the general path of the movement, we will try to do it without the hands, looking only to move the pelvis and not the surrounding parts of the body. To check the correct execution of this exercise, we will stand with our heels, back and head laying against a wall, and without moving head or heels we will try to perform the same two movements.

This exercise will give us control over the position of the pelvis in many basic KB stances that will generate extra power when picking up the weights.

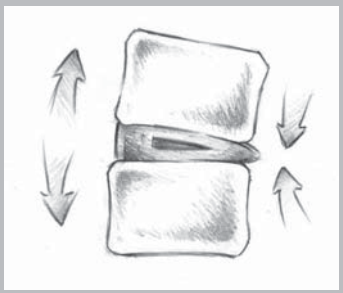
Once we dominate the wall exercise, we can do it in many different positions: standing, sitting or laying down.

This forward and backward movement of the pelvis works as an excellent exercise, that also stimulates the vertebral joints and massages the internal organs.



If you have any type of injury or pain in the back or doubt about your condition, please consult with a physician before doing this exercises.

We should never take this exercise to the extreme, forcing these two movements. The excessive or maintained pressure over the sides of the lumbar vertebrae could pinch them and provoke swelling or a hernia.

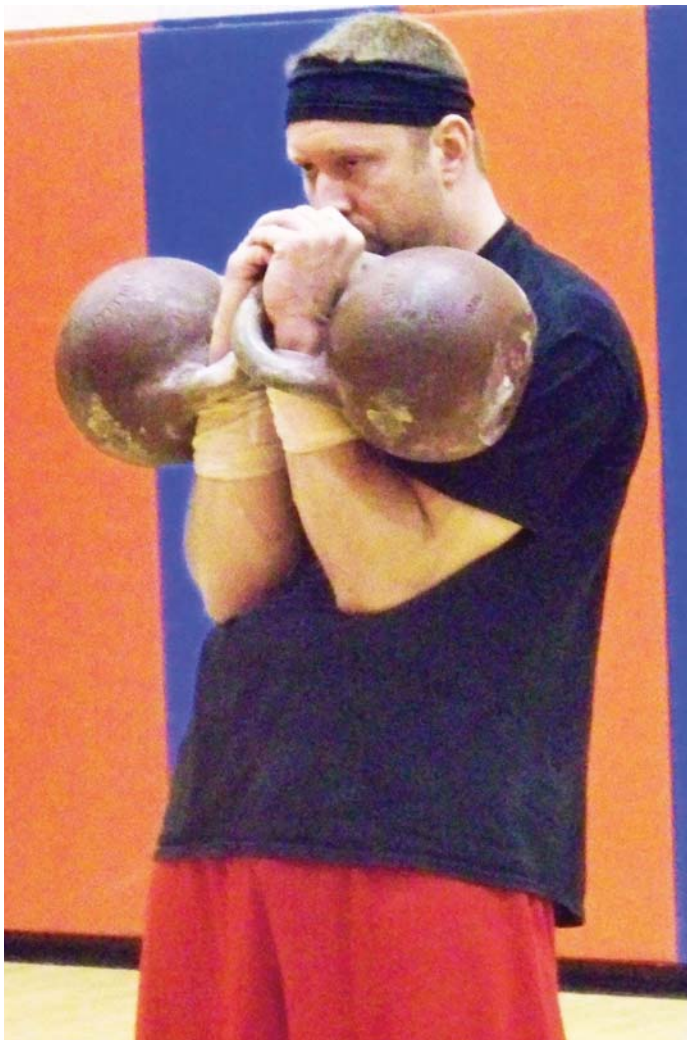


The Rack, it´s not just for resting

Recently I was talking with a couple of lifters who are new to the whole Kettlebell Sport game. We were discussing the rack position and one of them said that he needed to sprint his set because he had no rack but his friend didn't even need a rack because she didn't need to rest during her set. Personally I have been searching for my rack since I started Kettlebell training in 2004 and I have yet to find a position that is comfortable enough to be considered "rest". The way that I have learned to cope with the lack of rack is by pacing and slowly building up my endurance so I can complete a whole set without stopping. So far I have only made it about 70% through on my best day. Even though I am making progress there is still a major problem with my approach. The rack is not just for resting.

First, I think it is important to identify what the rack actually is. I like to split it into two parts, the waist up and the waist down. Most kb lifters are familiar with the rack as the position one holds the bells in above the waist. This is partially correct but incomplete. The rack is like an ice burg as most of it exists below the surface. Keeping your legs straight and your hips forward is the first key to a good rack position. Even if you can not get your elbows to rest on your hips, if your legs are locked and your hips are forward you are in a safer position structurally than if your knees are bent or if you are standing strictly vertical and the bells are out in front of your body. This is what I call the Standard Waist Down Position. It is a position that is present in in your Jerk, Snatch, Rack, and at the end of your swing. It is a position that you will need to master if you are looking to advance in this sport.

The rack position from the waist up is as natural as walking to some and world of mystery to others. If you can rest your elbows on your hip you have the kind of structural advantage that a 7' tall person has playing basketball. If this position does not come naturally to you it can be a long journey ahead. The most obvious advantage is that you can rest. If your legs are locked straight and your hips are forward you can rest your elbow on the top of your hip and let the weight of the bell rest on your structure as opposed to your musculature. This allows you to rest (at least a little). The rest is important but it is not the only reason to put your elbow on your hip.



During a Jerk set, you will be driving through your legs and your elbow will be bursting off your hip. Think about it like placing the elbow on the hip is pulling back the hammer of a gun and exploding with your legs though your hips is like pulling the trigger and going all Dirty Harry on your Jerk set. Jerking from the hip is such a huge advantage for a lifter. Not everybody does it but most lifters who can do.

As for the Long Cycle, the elbow to hip is key. Your clean must be deliberate and clear. The Long Cycle is two distinct movements. The clean is the first one. If you establish an elbow to hip connecting you will have no problem with fixation

Every time you swing you work your rack position. Every time you snatch or jerk you work the rack. In the long cycle you live in the rack position. It is where you can recover, reload, and blast off. Just remember, the rack is not just for resting.

John Wild Buckley CSCS

John Wild is the founder of the Orange Kettlebell Club which has hundreds of members in over a dozen countries. He has been teaching Kettlebell since 2004 and has competed in Kettlebell Sport on the professional level. John Wild was the first westerner in modern times to teach a Kettlebell workshop in Japan and he has had the honor of working with some of the best Kettlebell instructors in the world. John Wild is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist with the NSCA and he spent 5 years as a Personal Trainer with Equinox Fitness Clubs where he was a Tier 3 trainer. He is Pre and Post-Natal certified as well as a USAW Sport Coach in Olympic lifting.

John Wild Graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh in 2000 with a degree in English Literature and has written several articles and appeared in National and International Magazines and Newspapers. He lives in Oakland CA.

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