

Eastern European Training Methodologies – How to Develop Powerful Athletes

Originally published 5 May 2020 · fatchfitness.com



The days of the Eastern Europeans dominating sport is largely gone (aside from a few sports such as weight lifting, wrestling, etc).

But for those who were fortunate to see first hand just how conditioned these athletes were and had a chance to peek into their training routines, certainly we have transitioned a long way from those golden days of super athletes and training methodologies that are largely forgotten (aside from some modern day extreme sports).

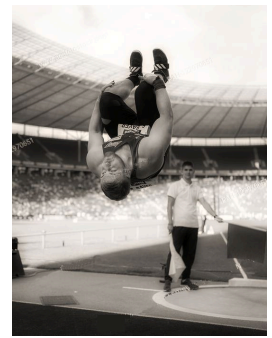
As an aspiring decathlete in the 1980's, I was obsessed with reviewing training programs and routines of the best athletes in the world. At that time, Eastern Europeans dominated the world rankings and these athletes had strength and power to burn and were so overall well conditioned that I was very interested in what these programs looked like.

A key factor in the Eastern European training approach was that of athletes being well-rounded. By this I mean that it was well understood that if you focused too much on a specific training type that you would quickly become imbalanced resulting in an increased chance of injury when competing.

I fondly remember seeing 100kg+ European athletes being able to move like gymnasts and they displayed an amazing amount of coordination (this included the shot putters and discus throwers).

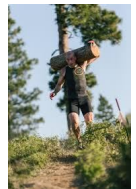
Unfortunately today, much of this variety has been removed from training, with sterile training environments, an increase in training specificity and overall loss of generalised athlete ability.

The goal of this article is to look at which aspects of these long gone training methodologies could we easily incorporate back into our fitness routines and how could this improve the overall conditioning of our clients.



One particular training routine that was popular with European multi event coaches was to send their athletes out into the wilderness and ask them to run through the local forest and climb trees, pick up logs and generally use what was provided in nature to overload the body.

What I loved about this was the simplicity of this approach. If you have never tried to pick up a large log and carry it any distance, you can't fully appreciate how this loading on the body is nothing like you experience in a comfy warm gym performing deadlifts!!!



Continuing with this theme, athletes would be required to flip stones, pick them up and carry them to some distance location and all the while running b/w these natural "Exercise Stations" and battling uneven surfaces and varying weather conditions.



Between these exercises, the athletes would be required to climb a tree, up a rope or onto a boulder – developing both mental and physical toughness.



Crossfit has attempted to regain some of this lost athleticism with combinations of raw and body weight strength combined with aerobic and anaerobic capacity.

A future article will delve into the myths around “Crossfit fitness” and why it isn’t as “functional” as it is promoted to be.

SUMMARY:

- In this time of isolation and gym closures, get out into the wilderness and experience conditioning as nature intended it.
- If you are fortunate to live close to a forest, go for a walk/run and climb over/under anything you find, try to flip a log or large stone – You will be sore the next day!!!

If you were interested in reading more about these old but very effective training strategies, you can find this information in a very good book titled: [Track And Field: Athletics Training In The G.D.R. \(East Germany\). Text-Book For Coaches And Sports Teachers](#)

© Fatch Fitness. More articles and videos at fatchfitness.com