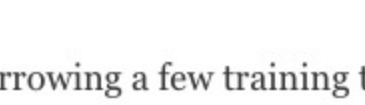




The MMA-Inspired Upper-Body Power and Speed Workout

Punch out your weak points and build power and quickness throughout your chest, shoulders, back and arms with this MMA- and boxing-inspired workout.

APRIL 25, 2022
KATY LOREN



But for the most part, we don't necessarily need to hone our fighting skills, which is why most of us tend to spend our time in the gym improving our aesthetics instead — you know, building some muscle here and there, leaning out, crafting curves, if that's your mission.

That doesn't mean, however, that borrowing a few training tactics from the best boxers and mixed martial artists on the planet couldn't do you some good. Training the way fighters do can do wonders for improving your power, strength and speed while also helping you sculpt your muscles.

"Yes, fighters tend to train for different goals than the average person, but what they do in the gym can deliver a lot of benefits for you," says Dan Roberts, a top U.K. strength and conditioning coach, founder of The Dan Roberts Group, and a former professional *muay Thai* fighter. "This workout will improve your upper-body power, speed and strength through a balanced variety of pushing, pulling and twisting movements."

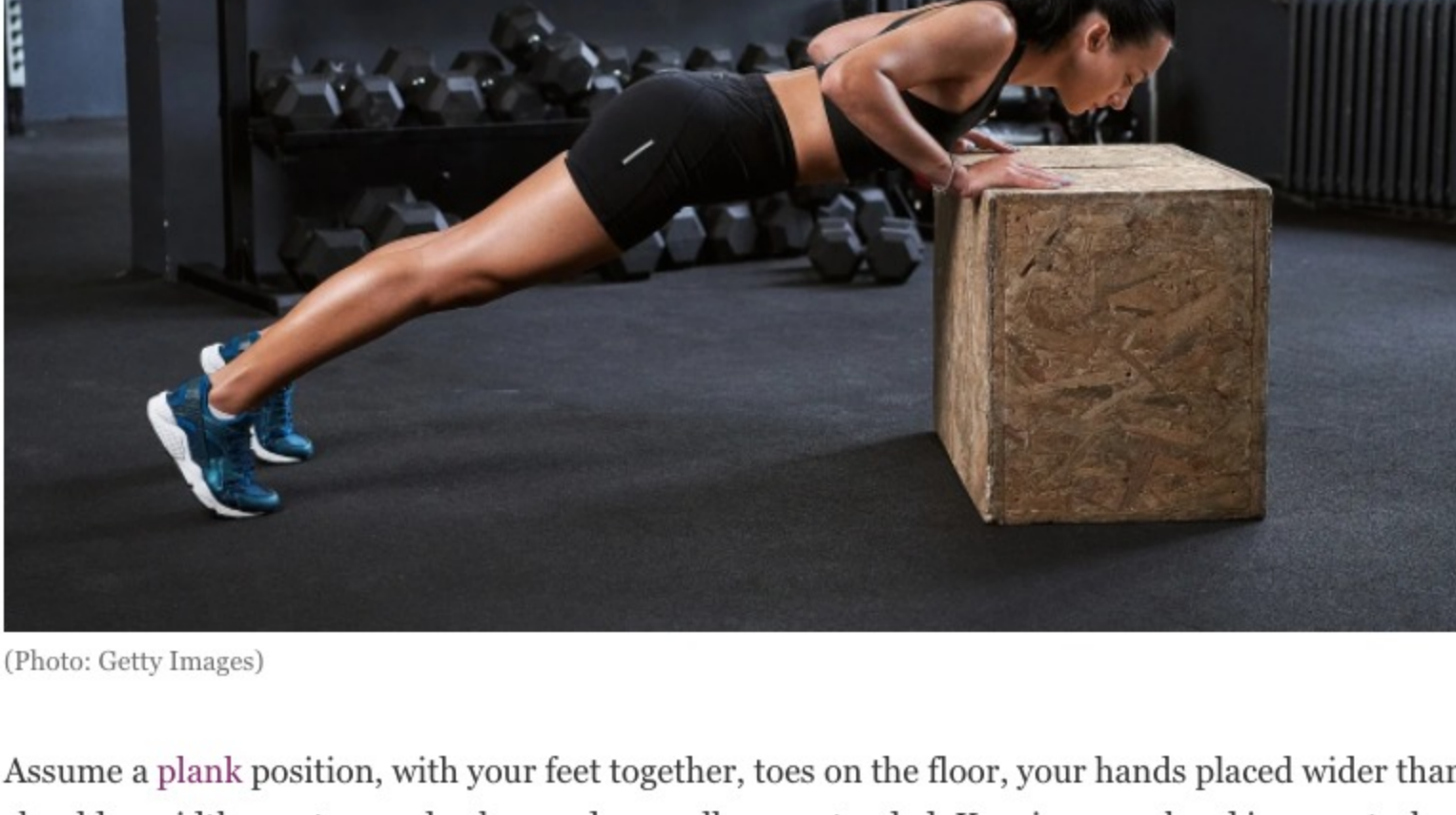
Here, Roberts lays out a six-pronged session that includes some old-school bodyweight favorites in push-ups and pull-ups — well, one half of a pull-up, as you'll soon see — plus a mix of medicine-ball slams, twists and a few rounds of shadowboxing to boot.

Altogether, it provides a great way to break you out of a rut, stimulating your back, chest, shoulders, biceps, triceps and core in ways you may not have experienced before. And with those quicker, more powerful fists at the ready, you'll be a bit more confident whatever comes your way out in the real world.

The Fighting Shape Upper-Body Power and Speed Workout

EXERCISE	SETS	REPS/TIME
Incline Push-Up	6	5
Swiss-Ball Weighted Russian Twist	3	20
Unilateral Landmine Press	4	10 (per side)
Eccentric Pull-Up	6	1
Heavy Bag Work	5	2 minutes
Medicine-Ball Slam to Floor	1	100

Incline Push-Up

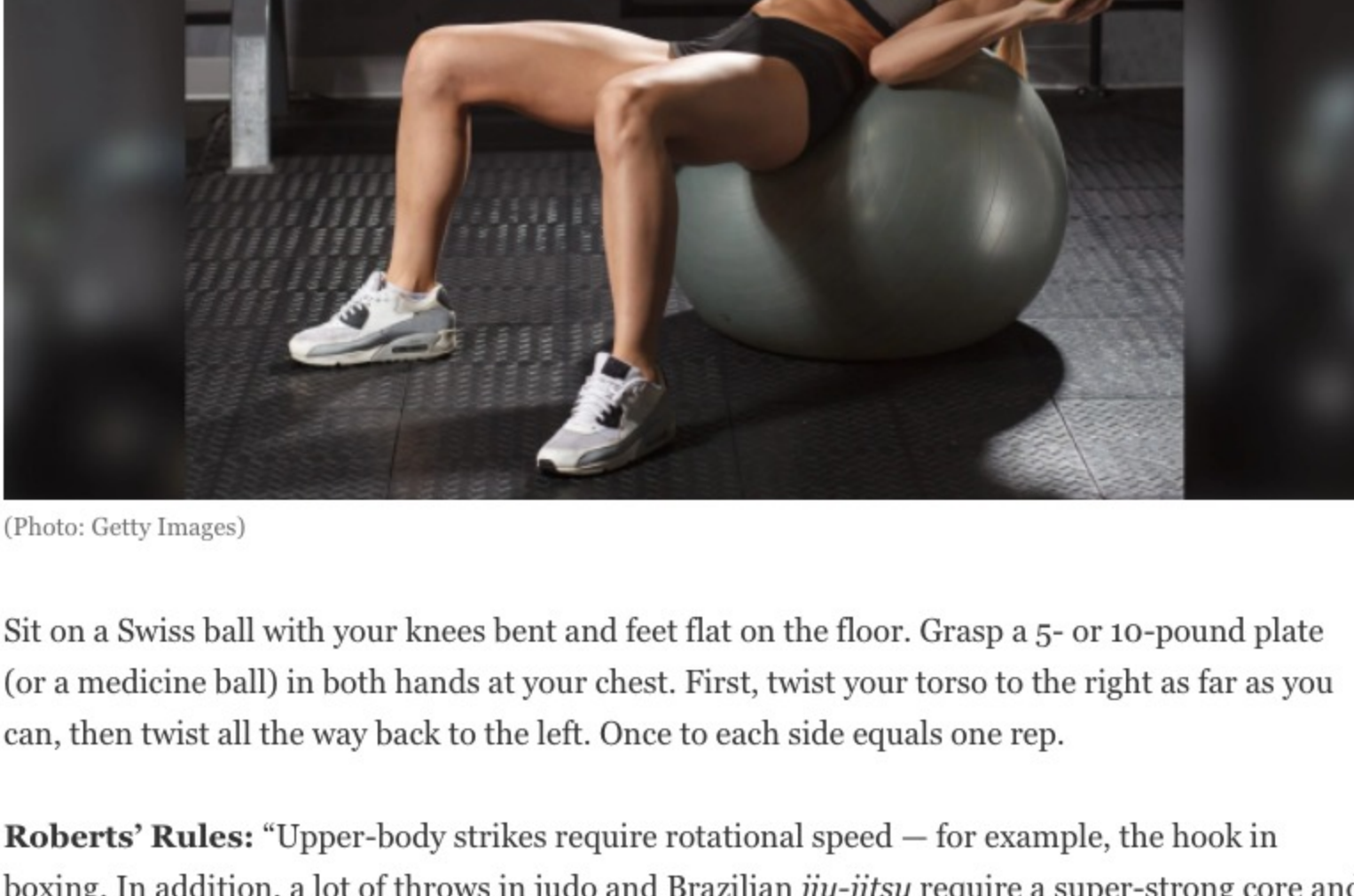


(Photo: Getty Images)

Assume a plank position, with your feet together, toes on the floor, your hands placed wider than shoulder-width apart on a plyo box and your elbows extended. Keeping your head in a neutral position and your core tight, lower yourself by bending your elbows to 90 degrees, then press through your palms until your elbows are straight once again.

Roberts' Rules: "This move develops strength and power in pecs, delts and triceps — and will increase speed and power of your punches. Keeping the reps low allows you to focus on doing the movement quickly and activating fast-twitch muscle fibers. For added activation of those fibers, do the last three sets plyometric style, where you push up forcefully so that your hands leave the box, and you do a hand clap before landing."

Swiss-Ball Weighted Russian Twist

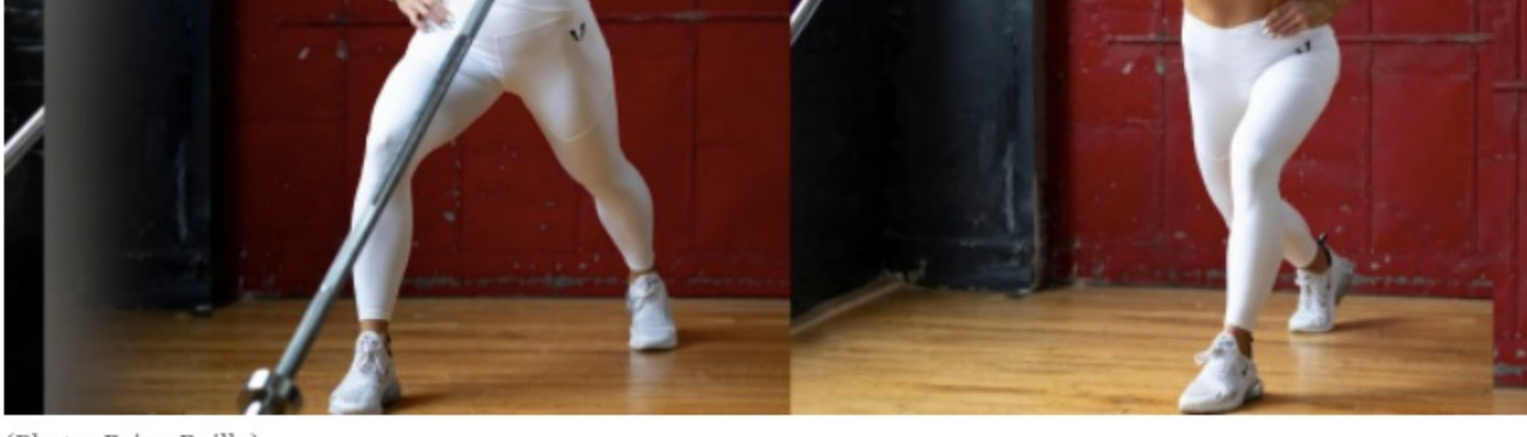


(Photo: Getty Images)

Sit on a Swiss ball with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Grasp a 5- or 10-pound plate (or a medicine ball) in both hands at your chest. First, twist your torso to the right as far as you can, then twist all the way back to the left. Once to each side equals one rep.

Roberts' Rules: "Upper-body strikes require rotational speed — for example, the hook in boxing. In addition, a lot of throws in judo and Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* require a super-strong core and good balance. For the first and third sets of this movement, use a slow 3-1-3 tempo — three-second twist, one-second hold of the contraction, three-second twist — to develop oblique endurance and the core. For your second set, do your reps quickly to develop rotation speed and dynamic balance."

Unilateral Landmine Press

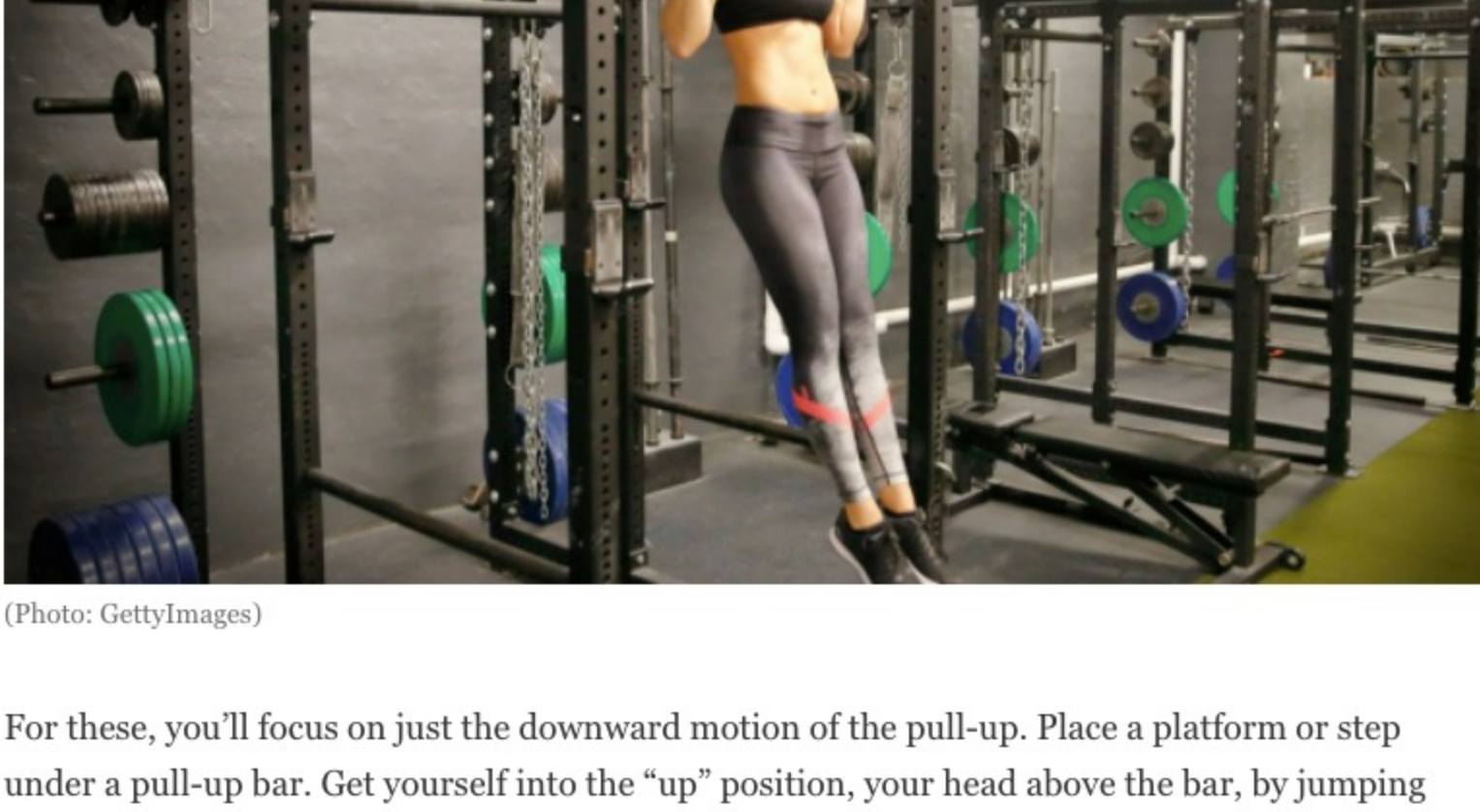


(Photo: Brian Reilly)

Place one end of a barbell in a **landmine**, load it with the appropriate amount of weight for your strength level — heavy enough so you can only get about 10 pressing reps — and stand facing it, holding the end of the bar in one hand so it's resting on the same-side shoulder. Lean slightly forward toward the bar, with your knees fairly straight but not locked, core tight, head up and back straight from head to tailbone. From this position, you'll extend your elbow to lift the weight up to full extension, then lower it back down to shoulder level. Do 10 reps with one arm, then switch to the other for another 10; that's one set.

Roberts' Rules: "For the first three sets, focus on performing the move explosively, which develops your punching power — mainly by working your shoulders and your triceps, as well. Do the final set very slowly, with a 5-1-5 tempo — a five-second count up, one-second contraction at the top and five-count down. This will build a burning sensation in the working muscles, thus improving your lactic acid tolerance, which is the exercise-science way of saying muscular endurance. The better your lactic acid tolerance, the better you're able to keep on punching and keep your guard up."

Eccentric Pull-Up



(Photo: Getty Images)

For these, you'll focus on just the downward motion of the pull-up. Place a platform or step under a pull-up bar. Get yourself into the "up" position, your head above the bar, by jumping while grabbing the bar with a shoulder-width or slightly wider grip. Hold that top position for a three-second count, then lower yourself slowly using a six-count until you reach the dead-hang, elbows-extended position. Rest 30 seconds, then repeat.

Roberts' Rules: "This will develop endurance in your finger tendons and forearm muscles, as well as strength in your biceps, shoulders and back — which is directly used for any floor-based martial arts system."

Heavy Bag Work



(Photo: Getty Images)

If you can, wrap your hands and put on a pair of boxing gloves. Assume a fighting stance, hands in a guard position and legs set with one forward, one back. From here, simply string together punching combinations, using an array of jabs, straight-on punches, crosses and uppercuts, as well as elbow strikes. Consider periodically switching your stance, with your left leg forward and right back and vice versa, so you can practice leading with both hands.

Roberts' Rules: "This is incredible cardio. As long as you're never done it, just stick to straight punches — jabs and crosses. For those with bag experience, try to do continuous combinations of two to five moves back-to-back. Stick with punches and elbow strikes — no kicks — to focus on the upper body, and be creative and aggressive. If your gym doesn't have a heavy bag or you're not ready for it, grab a pair of 3- to 5-pound dumbbells and shadowbox."

"I used to fight full time when I lived in Thailand, and every morning as a warm-up, I did 10 three-minute rounds on a heavy bag. Between rounds, I'd do 20 push-ups. So if you want to try what a pro *muay Thai* fighter does, feel free to give that a go!"

Medicine-Ball Slam to Floor



(Photo: Getty Images)

Stand with a 5- to 8-pound medicine ball at your chest in both hands, one on each side of the ball. Lift the ball overhead so that it's slightly back behind your head, elbows straight but not locked, and then forcefully bring it down, slamming the ball into the floor. Catch the ball on the rebound around knee to hip level, then immediately bring it back overhead for the next rep. Aim for 100 reps in total with no breaks.

Roberts' Rules: "Training like a UFC fighter doesn't just mean moving in new ways, it means thinking in new ways, too. Using exercises that are unpleasant and pushing through them builds resilience in the mind as well as in the body — it helps create a warrior mindset. Slamming the ball will develop power and endurance in your upper-body musculature and core in the same way doing 200 kettlebell swings would."

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