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The men who took down Osama bin Laden graduated from the military's most intense training program. Now, with this modified but intense SEAL training protocol, you, can have the kind of muscle, strength and endurance that separates those who man-up and those who don't.

GET SEAL FIT!

BY CRAIG DAVIDSON, SENIOR EDITOR
WORKOUT BY STEW SMITH, CSCS, FORMER NAVY SEAL

In the witching hours of May 2, 2011, a phalanx of heavily armored MH-60 Black Hawk helicopters took off from the Jalalabad airbase in Afghanistan, flying low between the shale and limestone cliffs hemming the Khyber Pass. The chopper's rotor wash stirred up the glassine surface of the Kabul River and tugged at the fatigues of the men positioned closest to the door; their eyes were fixed on the scrim of night sky above the river basin, minds ticking over the details of a mission that had been formulated since the receipt of critical intelligence regarding their target's location.

The choppers flanked north around Pakistan's industrial hub of Peshawar, operating on phantom power to avoid detection. Wind hissed through pinhole seams in the helicopter's airframe, and its blades thrummed against the men's eardrums—a concussive *bompha-bompha-bompha*, like the wing beat of huge metallic insects. The men onboard were keyed up and dialed in, yet infused with an unflappable serenity that seemed nearly inhuman in light of the fact that they would soon be engaged in a pitched battle that would transform the desert air into a deadly symphony, thousands of copper-jacket rounds singing through the darkness.

These men were Navy SEALs, and they were perfect weapons.

The helicopters reached the garrison suburb of Abbottabad, 70 miles from the center of Islamabad, where the target's compound coalesced out of the desert. The Black Hawks hovered over the west-facing courtyard, their blades ripping up fans of ochre sand. Ropes lowered and the men rappelled down rapidly. (SEAL recruits drill this “fast-roping” technique relentlessly at their Coronado, California, training base. Widely considered the most dangerous drill in the program, fast-roping often results in broken ankles and palms flayed open by the scorching friction of the poly-nylon rope.)

The SEALs fanned out as a unit, infiltrating the stronghold's inner sanctum, clearing it floor by floor. According to reports, the team reached the final unsecured room in the house and, to use the military euphemism, “neutralized the target” with two rounds from a SEAL-issue SIG Sauer P226 pistol: one in the chest, the second entering the target's cranial vault a few inches above his left eye. It's the classic “double-tap” technique: The shooter first immobilizes the target with a primary shot to

the torso, then incapacitates the central nervous system with a more precise shot to the head.

Osama bin Laden—the top suspect on the FBI's Most Wanted list, charged with the murder of U.S. nationals outside the United States and an attack on a federal facility resulting in death—was killed in action. Mission accomplished.

THE SEAL WAY

The SEALs—named for their ability to execute missions nearly anywhere: SEA, Air and Land—are proficient at underwater demolition, combat swimming, close-quarters combat and freefall parachute operations. The Delta Force (Army), Green Berets (Air Force) and SEALs form a trio of elite Special Forces detachments in the U.S. military.

Wondering what it takes to be a SEAL? According to Senior Chief Hans Garcia, a SEAL recruiter, he's not interested in your average swinging dick.

"We aren't looking for cocky kids," says Garcia. "The perfect candidate would be remarkably physically fit but pretty humble, an analytical thinker, a problem solver—someone who is very value-oriented and patriotic and puts service above self."

Mental toughness and grit are fundamental SEAL traits, according to Mark Devine, a former Navy SEAL, certified strength and conditioning coach and founder of SEALFIT (www.sealfit.com). "A SEAL must have an unwavering focus on his goals," he says. "He must make good decisions while under extreme stress and lead others while simultaneously taking direction from above. His loyalty to his team and teammates must be unswerving. SEALs 'embrace the suck' and deal with incredible discomfort, so they must be extremely fit."

Try the following workout, developed by former SEAL Stewart Smith, to add an extra dimension to your training and build a body capable of walking a mile in an elite warrior's boots.

THE WORKOUT

EVERYMAN'S MODIFIED SEAL WORKOUT TO BUILD MUSCLE, POWER, STRENGTH AND INCREDIBLE ENDURANCE

Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL Training (BUD/S) is one of the most challenging military programs in the world. A recruit's physical preparation has to be as diverse as the places in the world the SEALs operate. Even though a majority of the prep ought to be running and swimming long distances, in addition to building high-repetition muscle endurance using calisthenics, there is a definite need for core strength and the ability to create power through your movements. BUD/S students are required to do heavy lifting of logs and boats as a team. Good teammates will help a recruit complete these tiring trials, but having a strong core and the ability to generate power using your legs helps immensely.

Here, I present a workout that you can do up to three times per week on nonconsecutive days for the next six weeks. When you return to your regular resistance training, you'll see great gains in endurance and total-body power. This modified SEAL plan will give you a taste of what SEAL training is all about, too.

As they say in the Armed Forces: The more you train in peace, the less you bleed in war.

This workout has three gears: moderate, intense and total failure. Although a drill instructor might bark, "Go hard or go home!" we at MaxFit believe in devising workouts suitable to you, our readers. Realizing that different readers have different aims and experience levels, we've put together this chart to tailor your SEALs workout to your specific needs and goals.



EXERCISE	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
PUSH PRESS/HANG CLEAN/DEAD LIFT COMBO	3 sets of 10 reps with a light weight (less than half your body weight). Concentrate on proper form and activating the kinetic chain. Take a 1-minute break between sets.	Increasing-rep workout. 5 sets, starting at 10 reps and increasing by 2 reps per set (1st set: 10; 2nd set: 12; 3rd set: 14; 4th set: 16; 5th set: 18). Perform active rest in between—in this case, try jogging in place or moderate-tempo jumping jacks.	Max-rep workout. 100 reps in as few sets as possible. Rep until failure, rest 30 to 45 seconds, then resume. Focus on proper technique; if your form begins to drift south, take an active rest period (jogging in place). For the truly ambitious, try military burpees between sets, followed by 30 seconds of total rest before beginning your next set.
PULL-UP	Shoulder-width pull-ups, 3 sets of 10 reps with a break of 1 minute between sets. If you hit failure before your 10th rep, try chin-ups (palms facing inward and hands gripped closer together on the bar) or use a chair to help boost you up.	Submax superset pull-ups. "Submax" means that you should avoid hitting failure. If, for example, you usually hit failure at 15 pull-ups, aim for 10 to 13, but superset them with crunches (40 to 50 reps), followed by a 30-second rest. Then repeat the cycle, for a total of 5 to 8 sets. Remember: Your goal is to avoid failure when doing pull-ups.	Rep max pull-ups—100 pull-ups in as few sets as possible. Perform as many pull-ups as possible, switch to active rest for 1 minute (this can include jogging in place, 1-minute max push-ups, 1-minute max crunches or a combination of all three), then return to pull-ups until you hit failure; do more active rest, return to max pull-ups, active rest, until you complete 100 pull-ups.
WALKING LUNGE	2 sets, 8 steps per leg; rest for 60 seconds between sets	3 sets, 12 steps per leg; rest for 90 seconds between steps	3 sets, 15 steps per leg; rest for 90 seconds between sets
ATOMIC PUSH-UP	Standard push-ups, 3 sets of 10 to 12 reps. Concentrate on proper form on both the push-up and crunch phases of this exercise. Take a break of up to 1 minute between sets.	Submax superset push-ups. Follow the same schematic as presented in the pull-up box above: If you max out at 25 atomic pushups, aim for 18 to 22, but superset them with crunches (40 to 50 reps) or pull-ups (7 to 12 reps), followed by a 30-second rest. Repeat the cycle for 5 to 8 sets.	Max-rep atomic push-ups. The general rule is that you should double your max reps on pull-ups—meaning 200 atomic push-ups. Perform as many push-ups as possible, switch to 1 minute of active rest (running on the spot, 1-minute max pull-ups), then return to push-ups until you hit failure, active rest, max push-ups, active rest, until you hit 200 push-ups.
BARBELL ROW	3 sets, 8 to 12 reps to failure; 60 seconds rest between sets	4 sets, 8 to 12 reps to failure; 60 seconds rest between sets	4 sets, 12-15 reps to failure; rest for 60 seconds between sets

Make sure to warm up for 5 to 10 minutes beforehand: jogging in place, stationary cycling, jumping jacks, etc.

Do the entire workout two or three times per week on nonconsecutive days. Make sure to eat a protein-carbohydrate-rich meal within 90 minutes of the workout to ensure appropriate recovery and growth.

NAVY SEAL FAVORITE Push Press/Hang Clean/Dead Lift Combo

These three moves form a complex set that should be done in a continuous motion without rest between each exercise segment. Choose a light weight—the goal is not to lift maximum weight for one rep but create power through the body's kinetic linkages. For the average gym guy, this move will give you the strength to push and pull heavier poundages across a broad range of upper- and lower-body exercises.

TARGETS Quadriceps, hamstrings, hips, lower back, upper back and lats, shoulders and arms

IDEAL FOR Building muscle, strength and endurance that will improve most other exercises you try in the future. It teaches you how to create power using your legs and hips while easing the load on your shoulders.

SET-UP Place a barbell on the ground or on a low rack. The weight should be approximately 50% of your body weight (or whatever feels right for high reps).

ACTION Grab the barbell with a shoulder-width (overhand) grip and bend slightly at the knees (as if you were about to jump). Quickly, while rising onto your toes, pull the bar straight up along the plane of your chest. As the bar approaches chest height, bend your knees and swing your elbows forward to catch the bar in the crook of your fingers—your palms should now face upward and the bar should rest a few inches above your clavicle bones. Lower your body, squatting as deep as you can comfortably go. Driving through your thighs and glutes, push back up to a standing position and, without stopping, continue moving the bar upward, pressing it overhead. Lower the bar back to the starting position. That is one rep.

TIPS Use your legs to create momentum for the bar to move upward with greater ease. Relying solely on your arms for this movement will derail your efforts. Focus on technique with this lighter-weight exercise. Try to breathe normally, but you may find that this exercise will tax your endurance rather quickly. You can mimic these lifts with dumbbells or kettlebells if that feels more comfortable.



Cory Sorensen (exercises): Associated Press (Ghin-up)



NAVY SEAL FAVORITE

Pull-Up

Pull-ups are a great way to add muscle to your upper body, seeing as they require complete mastery of your own body weight. Your ultimate goal is to do 20 to 30 pull-ups per set—at that point, not only will you have added significant muscle mass to your upper body but you'll also have developed incredible endurance and muscle stamina. Try a chin-up pyramid, which will help regulate your intensity.

Pyramid-style pull-up workout: perform one rep, pause for 10 seconds, followed by two reps, pause for 10, followed by three reps, pause for 12 seconds, continuing up to 10 reps (increasing your pause times as needed). After hitting 10 reps, continually reduce the number of reps per set by one, nine, pause, eight, pause, seven, pause, etc, until you return to one rep. That will equal 100 pull-ups total.

TARGETS Lats, biceps, shoulders, forearms and grip strength

IDEAL FOR Generating significant hypertrophy throughout the upper body; grappling, rope-climbing simulation, climbing over walls

SET-UP With an overhand grip (palms facing away from you), grasp the pull-up bar with your hands spaced shoulder width apart. Hang from the bar with your arms fully extended and your chest high, accentuating the arch in your lower back. You can bend your knees and cross your ankles, if you choose.

ACTION Pull yourself up, squeezing your shoulder blades together and contracting your lats until your chin passes the bar. Hold the contraction for a second before lowering yourself in a controlled motion.

VARIATIONS Vary your grips from workout to workout. Actual SEAL recruits are tested using the standard pull-up grip, but add reverse grip, close grip and wide grip to work your muscles from a variety of angles and add symmetry to your upper body.



NAVY SEAL FAVORITE

WALKING LUNGE

TARGETS Quadriceps, hamstrings, gluteus maximus and total core

IDEAL FOR Creating well-balanced muscles in the front and back thigh areas; building lower-body (and systemic) endurance and improving performance requiring lower-body and hip-girdle involvement.

SET-UP Stand, holding a dumbbell in each hand, with your arms hanging straight at your sides, palms facing in.

ACTION Step forward with your left foot and lower your body until your left knee is bent at 90 degrees. Your left knee should stay in line with your toes, while the trailing leg should extend behind you, though the knee should not touch the ground. Bring your left foot forward—taking a giant step—and repeat, this time lowering your body until your left knee is bent at 90 degrees. Continue walking forward, alternating legs as you go for the length of the set.

TIP If possible, try to find enough floor space to walk on. The farther you can walk without having to turn around, the longer you'll challenge your quads, hamstrings and hips and stay stabilized. For the average gym guy, this movement will generate significant, well-balanced muscle tissue around your entire leg, improve hip stability and tighten your core. It will also improve your lower-body endurance, enabling you to train harder and longer in the future.

NAVY SEAL FAVORITE

ATOMIC PUSH-UP

Quite simply, one of the best full-body exercises ever developed.

TARGETS Chest, shoulders, triceps, abdominals, obliques, hips, upper and lower back and thighs

IDEAL FOR Adding kinetic complexity to the standard push-up, balancing the abdominals and lower back and opening the hips to create power generation for other activities (including intensifying your lower-body workouts)

SET-UP You have two options. Using a Swiss ball or TRX bands hanging from a chinning bar, assume the standard push-up position, with your feet either hooked into the straps of the TRX or your toes and shins balanced on the ball.

ACTION Perform a standard push-up, then, when you're back at the starting position, bend your knees and pull your legs into your chest or stomach, activating your abdominals. Return to the starting position in a controlled motion. Repeat the entire sequence until you hit failure.

TIPS If you are new to push-ups or can't reliably do more than 20 regular push-ups, the TRX/Swiss ball addition may not be for you. Get into a rhythm with the push-up/knee-up combination. Focus on exhaling on the push-up exertion phase. Try to breathe normally, but don't be surprised if this exercise gets you winded quite quickly.



HELL WEEK

"A true kick in the nuts!" — former SEAL

SEAL cadets spend three weeks in Kodiak, Alaska, for cold-weather training, enduring icy rains, subzero winds and submersion in water so cold, it sucks the air out of their lungs. Hell, even the "light" training weeks involve two-mile ocean swims, tying knots 15 feet below the water, four-mile runs in full combat gear and "drownproofing" (swimming with their feet and hands tied). But one week of training is so legendary that its name alone echoes in infamy.

"Hell Week is a true kick in the nuts," says former SEAL Stew Smith, CSCS. "It is impossible to prepare for it; you simply need a background of arduous physical activity and that 'never quit' attitude. It's the right mindset—not physical skill—that gets you through Hell Week."

Mark Devine, a former member of SEAL Team Three and founder of SEALFIT, echoes this sentiment. "Hell Week is largely mental," he says. "The body breaks down, after which you need to dig deep mentally and use your 'non-quit' spirit and teammates to survive. This is not unlike serious combat situations that the future SEAL may face."

Hell Week lasts 5 ½ days—120 hours, practically nonstop. Trainees are constantly cold, muddy and soaked. They run drills like "Wet and Sandy," where they are made to run into the ocean, swim, clamber back onto the beach, roll in the sand and back into the

ocean, repeating until exhaustion sets in. They are given four meals a day, one every six hours. Trainees consume up to 7,000 calories daily and still lose weight. They are allotted only four hours of sleep during Hell Week, although Smith says that you could earn a couple of extra minutes of rest: "If you won a race with your boat crew, you could sleep on the sand waiting for the last boat to show. The phrase 'It pays to be a winner' holds true during Hell Week."

The washout rate is high, but steel sharpens steel: The competition and comradeship that develop over Hell Week pulls graduates closer together, forging invaluable bonds.

"The latest SEALs class started with 245 trainees," says Smith. "By the end of Hell Week, there were 55 left. You can bet those 55 will not quit anything for the rest of their lives, and they won't quit on each other either."



Cory Sorensen (exercises); Getty Images (hell week)

Want to know more about the SEALs? How about their most elite unit: SEAL Team 6? GO TO MAXFITMAG.COM

NAVY SEAL FAVORITE

BARBELL ROW

TARGETS Bent-over barbell rows emphasize the middle and lower part of your lats. They

also integrate the rhomboids (upper back, close to your shoulders) and the middle of the trapezius in the high upper center of your back.

IDEAL FOR Generating significant hypertrophy throughout the upper back and secondarily the biceps; improving pulling strength.

SET-UP Using an overhand grip, grasp the barbell about shoulder width apart so that you can pull the barbell fully into your lower abs area. Bend at a 45-degree angle at the waist, maintaining a neutral arch in the lumbar spine. You can also bend at the knees slightly to remove pressure off your lower back and hamstrings. Make sure that you hold these bends constant throughout the set.

ACTION Use your lats (as well as biceps) to pull the weight up toward your navel, allowing your elbows to travel behind your back. Contract your lats and scapulae and hold the weight in this position for a second. Slowly lower the weight, fighting gravity, feeling the stretch along your lats. Keep the movement very smooth throughout.

TIP To encourage greater density in your back, overemphasize the contraction at the top of the rep, holding the weight in the peak position for an extra second or two. Also, avoid using momentum to boost the bar upward as your muscles begin to fatigue—this can lead to lower-back injury.

