

GET ROPED INTO SOMETHING DIFFERENT

MAN:MACHINE



ROPES: NOT JUST FOR SKIPPING

Forget weights and treadmills – *ShortList* profiles three pioneering and unconventional workouts

1. BATTLING ROPES

All that heavy rope you see lying around the gym isn't for when power lifters fancy a bit of double Dutch, it's there for 'Battle Rope' training, which turns the hunk of hemp into a serious workout for the core, back, shoulders and arms.

A mainstay of swimmer Ryan 'Count My Medals' Lochte's fitness regime, it involves two 20ft anchored pieces of rope, which the user holds the ends of in each hand. "The workout usually begins by flicking the ropes up and down at speed, alternating between each side so that waves are created all the way to the anchor point," says strength and conditioning coach Paul Fallows. "Usually, a session will also consist of circle whips where the ropes are turned in a clockwise and anticlockwise direction."

Battling ropes can be picked up and used very easily, with minimal injury risk and sets of between eight and 20 reps are ideal for developing upper-body power and strength endurance. "It's easy to overload the lower body for this training goal, the upper body is slightly more challenging. This is where ropes provide an answer," reveals performance specialist Brendan Chaplin. "They're also great for targeting specific strengths such as grappling and tackling for contact sports like wrestling, judo and rugby because these sports place demands on the upper body in a way that ropes replicate well."

For more information see Kettlebellunion.com and Brendanchaplin.co.uk or ask your gym

2. A-GROW-BICS

In the background of this hour-long session run by state-of-the-art London chain Gymbox is a stretching rack that looks like it's come straight off the *Game Of Thrones* set. And the tortuous tool isn't just a light-hearted motivational threat; it's fully functioning and is employed during the session.

However, to begin with you are put through your paces with a series

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of bodyweight and gravitational moves including squats, aerobics, yoga, Pilates, suspension training and inversion training. "All of these exercises use bodyweight in order to elongate the spine and help you straighten up by improving muscle alignment or posture," explains Pierre Pozzuto, who is, unsurprisingly, the world's only A-Grow-Bics trainer.

Pozzuto attests that after using the workout for a couple of years he has managed to add more than 3cm to his height, and Gymbox is so confident in the concept that it promises to refund the money of any one who hasn't grown 2cm after following the programme for six weeks.

Training also involves repeated high-intensity sprint exercises, which can cause micro fractures in the bones, which as they repair will strengthen and grow over time. The sprints are also an attempt to release human growth hormone (natural levels of which usually begin declining after a man reaches his twenties), to promote muscle fibre growth. Which brings us to the rack, which Pozzuto insists is not a gimmick: "Stretching on the rack is a forced stretch, as opposed to the gravitational stretch caused by the hanging elements of the workout." So no pain, no gain.

The six-week course at Gymbox Holborn costs £200. To book, visit Gymbox.com

3. WAR MACHINE

The CrossCore War Machine may look like a modern-day version of the monkey bars, but it's actually the latest piece of US hardware to invade gym floors across the UK.

Originally designed to be used by the military, the War Machine differs from traditional suspension training as it allows you to add rotational movements to your exercises. This is why when you use one you will find yourself suspended underneath the cage from two handles attached to a pulley.

"When you 'pull the pin', the pulley system comes online putting

every move you make under tension because of the instability," says fitness expert and ex-Royal Marine Commando Rob Blair. "As you attempt to steady yourself, your core muscles – which support the spine and are the foundation for effective upper and lower body movements – are engaged."

A workout consists of a series of yoga-like moves and bodyweight exercises as you hang from the loops by your arms. The rotational element adds even greater strength and joint stability benefits.

"It takes a few sessions to get entirely comfortable with the pulley, but the machine can help with sport-specific actions from running to throwing as you learn to control your rotation," says Blair. "The increased control in your movements also reduces the stress on your joints and minimises the potential for injury. It's one of the best new training aids there is."

See Gocommandopersonaltraining.co.uk or Reebokclub.co.uk to try War Machine

TOP NEW FITNESS TECH



FORMULA 40 SHIRT
This training shirt helps resist the bacterial build-up from sweat, reducing immune system strain. £50; hpe-shop.com



CAMELBAK 2012 MULE
The three-litre water reservoir and tube means that you can stay hydrated and pedal for hours. £79.99; zyro.co.uk



PROSKINS LEGGINGS
Wear these under regular clothes – they are proven to aid muscle recovery after completing your cardio. £34.96; proskins.co.uk



FITBIT ARIA
This Wi-Fi smart scale uploads weight and BMI to your online account every time you step on. £99.99; fitbit.com



REEBOK WEIGHT GLOVE
The extra 0.5kg in each glove ensures your grip strength is being challenged with every rep. £19.99; reebokfitness.info