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# Boxing

## Join the

## FIGHT CLUB

Anyone brought up on a diet of Rocky films will have probably felt the urge to train like Balboa aka Sylvester Stallone, with running, skipping, shadow boxing and medicine balls dropped on your stomach! Boxing training is certainly a great way to get fit, but if you want to stand toe to toe with an opponent, you'll need supreme physical conditioning, not to mention mental focus and skill. A ring rusty **John Shepherd** joins the pros to learn the ropes.

### What it takes to be a boxer

#### Roadwork

If you've digested every Rocky film (apart from the last, which was indigestible) then you'll believe that boxing training is based on running. Yes, the films did get it right to a degree, but perhaps the amount of running was overstated. As Burbidge explains, "I usually get Lenny to run for the duration of the fight, so if it's a 12 x 3 minute round contest, he does 36 minutes." The trainer further explained, "Boxing is an explosive sport, not a slow steady one, so I'll get Lenny sprinting between lamp posts, jogging and then going again to get him ready for the ring." Having said that Lenny will run on each of his five training days up until the fight and it forms the first element of the boxer's three daily workouts.

#### Circuits

To develop the speed, power and anaerobic 'power endurance' needed circuits are a must for boxers. The combination of body weight, medicine ball, weights and plyometrics (jumping exercises) gives the fighter numerous physiological qualities that will enable him to endure the contest.

Burbidge uses specifically constructed circuits and they form the mainstay of Daws' preparation (see box). During early fight preparation circuits are performed before specific boxing work, such as sparring and padwork. However, as the fight nears their intensity is reduced and they are performed after the specific work.

#### Weight training

Not all boxers train with weights, Ricky Hatton who fights at the same weight as

Daws for example does not. However, Daws does but as a light-welter weight he has to maintain a 10 stone weight, so he only works out with light-weights in order to keep his body weight down. Weight training is a useful training means especially for boxers less concerned with weight gain (notably heavy weights), however the potential gains in size need to be balanced against potential losses in speed and agility.

#### Explosive power

Explosive power is developed through sparring, pad and bag work and via dynamic drills – many of these are performed in the circuits. Relevant exercises include the squat jump with medicine ball throw. Specific agility circuits are also relevant – of which more later.

#### Learning from the pro's

Ian Burbidge is a former amateur boxer and trainer to Lenny Daws – former British light welter-weight champion (see panel). Burbidge trains Daws five days a week, twice a day when gearing up for a fight. The time required to prepare the fighter depends on the number of rounds. The trainer explained that the minimum would be 6 weeks for a 6 round fight. However, if the fight was longer, for example, 10-12 rounds then another 3 to 4 weeks would be added to increase Daws' stamina and ring readiness. To fill you in - in the slightly underworld nature of professional boxing the number of rounds is negotiated when the fight is set up. However, it's clearer in the amateur game with 4 x 2 minute round fights (changed from 3 x 3 minute rounds).

**Boxing – the physiology**

Boxing requires both anaerobic (literally meaning without oxygen) and aerobic (literally meaning with oxygen) energy. The demands on these systems vary depending on the number of rounds, For example, a professional heavy weight boxer where bouts are scheduled over 12x 3-minute rounds would rely on a different spread of the systems compared to an amateur who fights over 4 x 2-minute rounds. The professional fighter would need greater aerobic conditioning than the amateur due to the increased length of the fight – not withstanding a ‘KO’ or stoppage of course! However, both would need good aerobic conditioning to enable them to recover during the short breaks between rounds.

In addition, all boxers need explosive power in their arms, torso and, last but not least, their legs. Legs are the key element and form the foundation of the fighter in all senses – they provide the power to punch, the speed to ‘bob and weave’ and to get in position to score winning punches and the stamina to remain standing. As you’ll see in the ‘what it takes to be a boxer’ section, boxers train like rugby players, sprinters, distance runners and martial artists.

**Sports science...**

Research into the physiological demands of amateur boxing has highlighted the need for great anaerobic energy system development as noted. This high-octane energy releasing system relies on stored energy sources in the body, such as creatine phosphate to fuel it and has very little reliance on oxygen as a fuel source. However, the aerobic energy system is still important especially for longer fights as noted. For this more steady longer lasting energy system oxygen provides the fuel. But as Burbidge points out pounding the pavement mile after mile is not as much a requirement of the boxer as you might have thought.

Lactate is a body chemical that is involved in energy production. Basically the higher its level the more intense the exercise/activity is and the greater the anaerobic component. Research discovered that amateur 4 x 2 minute round fights produced peak lactate levels of 14-15mmol/litre with average heart rate maxing out at 192 beats per minute. These are very high physiological outputs, much higher than those produced by tennis players and footballers.

**Ian’s Burbidge’s specific**

**How to perform:**

**Advanced trainers:** perform all exercise reps as indicated, moving straight from one exercise to the next. At the end of the circuit take 2 minutes’ recovery. Do 2-6 circuits. Each circuit should take approx: 2min 30seconds

**New to this form of exercise trainers:** should take 30 seconds’ recovery between each exercise and 2 minutes between each circuit. Do 1 or 2 circuits Time to complete each circuit approx: 7 minutes (because of increased recovery).



**Press up combo**

hands on step, feet on step, and flat -10 of each, straight after each other

**Develops:** upper and lower chest strength, endurance and power.

**Technique tips:** Keep a straight line through your body, whilst lifting and lowering



**Dyna Band Rows**

**Develops:** shoulders and upper back strength and core stability

**Technique tips:** keep chest up and ‘fix’ core to counteract the pull of the band, particularly on the movement of the hands away from the body **Do:** 12



**Squat Thrusts**

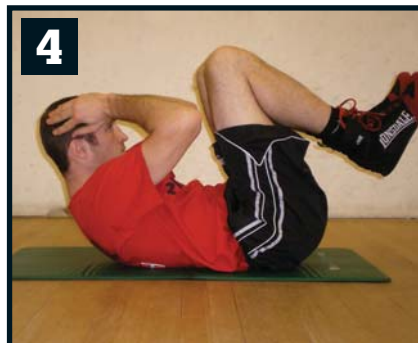
**Develops:** all body power and agility. Targets the core and hip flexors (muscles at the tops of the thighs) and shoulders in particular

**Technique tips:** drive the legs back explosively, but with control to achieve a straight line through the body and immediately pull the legs back to the start position **Do:** 12

**Knee to chest crunches**

**Develops:** core strength

**Technique tips:** don’t lift your trunk more than 15-20cm from the ground and control the movement on the way down to really engage the abdominals **Do:** 12

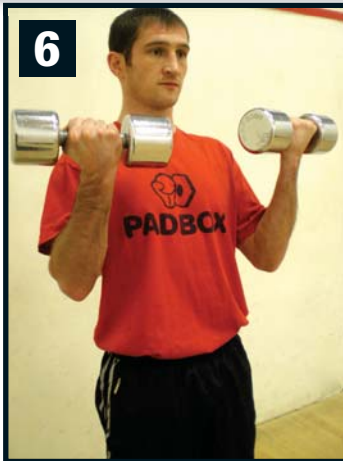


**Diamond press-ups**

**Develops:** chest, but shoulder and triceps strength and power in particular

**Technique tips:** Place hands under shoulders with fingers touching to make a diamond. Lower your body in a straight line to the floor and push back up powerfully **Do:** 15

# boxing fitness circuit



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## Biceps curls

**Develops:** biceps strength and endurance – highly relevant to keeping the 'guard' up

**Technique tips:** control the movement on the way down **Do:** 12



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## Squat jump and throw 3kg medicine ball

**Develops:** all body power and endurance, reinforces the need to use the legs when punching

**Technique tips:** perform dynamically but smoothly, initiating the power from your legs and releasing it through your arms. Land, light on your forefeet and assume a ready stance in order to catch the ball (thrown back by trainer) to repeat **Do:** 12



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## Bike sit-up

**Develops:** core strength and dynamic all body power

**Technique tips:** bring opposite shoulder and knee together as you crunch, extend limbs away from you with control. Perform with speed **Do:** 12



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## Dumbbell punches

**Develops:** shoulder power (obviously specific to punching) and 'bracing' core strength

**Technique tips:** throw your punches dynamically and rhythmically, but with control and with your body braced. Be ready to make some adjusting steps/body movements to counteract the fact that you will not be contacting the punching movement **Do:** for 1 minute



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## Side plank with rotation

**Develops:** core and shoulder strength

**Technique tips:** control the side plank by engaging your core to counteract the rotational pull that lifting and lowering your arm above and under your body will cause **Do:** 8 each side

## Speed

A boxer also needs quick hands and feet. The greatest Muhammad Ali claimed he could be in bed before it went dark after he flicked the light switch!

## Hand speed

Burbedge believes that pad work is the best way to develop hand speed. The 'pads' enable the trainer to be in the ring holding pads and moving the fighter around as he throws various combinations. The trainer explained the benefits, "It's very difficult to do this when sparring because you are constantly looking for openings and you're not thinking directly about improving hand speed (and) on a bag it's amazing the amount of times you will throw the same combination, you get into a habit ....but because you're working with someone on the pads that alters the dynamics."

## Leg speed

When it comes to leg speed and power for boxing Burbedge is a firm believer in speed and agility training methods, using speed ladders, cones and low hurdles. Skipping does play a role, but - a bit like the runs its actual relevance to fighting – is perhaps a little overstated. Skipping can make for faster foot work but Burbedge believes that his specifically designed speed and agility practices are far more effective. These drills are introduced in the month prior to the fight, when the boxer's legs are strong.

## Ring craft - sparring

Despite all the above conditioning elements there is no better way of getting fight ready than through sparring. Not only will this improve reactions and provide a way to plan the fight against an opponent but it will also get the boxer in shape to take blows. Burbedge explained, "It sounds quite odd but the body becomes conditioned to being hit. You find that over the first couple of days of sparring that you get a few lumps and bumps, especially if you get caught but after a while your body hardens up." For Daws, like most other boxers, sparring takes place after the run as the second session of the day.

## Ian Burbedge contact details:

Ian has created a one on one, non-contact pad based boxing workout called Padbox. He runs courses for personal trainers and others interested in becoming qualified trainers. He can be contacted on: Tel: **07930 376 995** E-mail: **info@padbox.co.uk** Web: **www.padbox.co.uk**