

**BRETT STEWART**

# **ULTIMATE OBSTACLE RACE TRAINING**

**CRUSH THE WORLD'S TOUGHEST COURSES**

- ☠ **Spartan Race**
- ☠ **Tough Mudder**
- ☠ **Warrior Dash**
- Savage Race**
- and many more*

**SAMPLE**

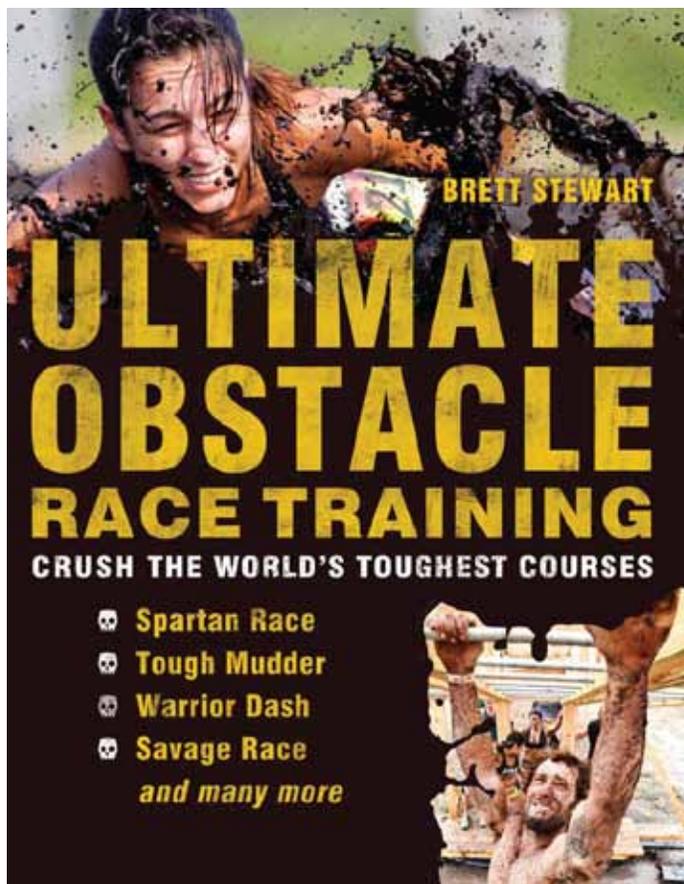
# OBSTACLE RACE TRAINING

GET TOUGH ENOUGH TO CRUSH  
THE WORLD'S MOST BAD-ASS COURSES

BRETT STEWART



Ulysses Press



*This book is dedicated to my big brother Chad. Surviving your wedgies, noogies, and “blindside QB hits” instilled the desire in me to repeatedly get back up, dust off, and ask for more. Thank you for the “torture”—I loved every second of it!*

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Howdy all, this is Brett and I want to welcome you all to this little sample of ***Ultimate Obstacle Race Training***. While the sample is less than 1/3 of the total book, I hope you find that it provides a good feel for the type of information and training it provides. In this PDF, I decided to show a few of the up & coming races like Hero Rush, Savage Race, Cahoots Duo Challenge as well as some of my favorite adventures like Bounce Boot Camp and Flagstaff Extreme. The complete book contains over 20 events, adventures and training grounds and at least one that has NEVER BEEN SEEN BY THE PUBLIC! When the book hits the shelves of Barnes & Noble mid-November and all the pre-orders get delivered (it's available now, see below) this brand-new & exciting race will be revealed! As one of the testers and consultants on course design, it's *\*really\** amazing!

I DRINK THE KOOL-AID

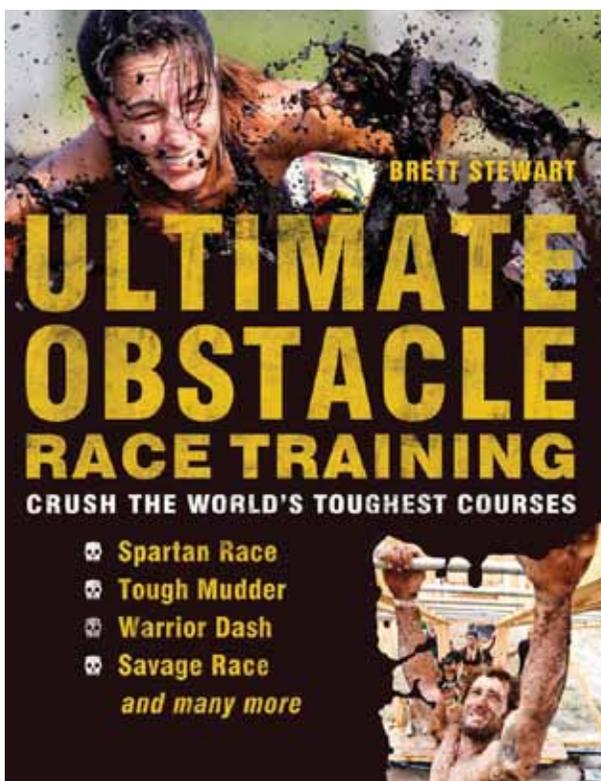
Joe & Andy (Death Race)  
approved sandbag usage

Flagstaff Extreme Hat



This book took over 12 months of research, interviews, hands-on race planning & setup, testing multiple different training protocols and exercises and quite a few obstacle races & mud runs. I truly hope you like the behind-the-scenes info, exercises and training programs, please feel free to contact me on facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ObstacleRaceTrainingBook>

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*Available NOW for pre-order:*

<http://www.7weekstofitness.com/product/ultimate-obstacle-race-training/>

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A black and white photograph of a man crawling through mud. He is wearing a tank top and has a determined, slightly pained expression on his face. He is pushing himself forward with his arms, and mud is splashing around him. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

**| PART 1:  
OVERVIEW**

covered. The knowledge and training you'll get from this book will make you a smarter, stronger, and faster obstacle racer—you just need to provide the sweat and effort and commit to do the work to crush the world's most bad-ass courses!

## How Did I Get Here?

During the research and “testing” for this book, I surely earned my diploma in mud racing by sucking it up, slathering on some sunscreen, and spending countless hours building the obstacle courses that thousands of you love to hate. I braved the Arizona sun with searing triple-digit temperatures to construct a foot-grabbing tire pit from hell alongside the founders of Lozilu Women's Mud Runs. I hung off a forklift to build a webbed monster of a cargo net with Devon and the team at Cahoots Duo Challenge. Spartan Race Gladiator Arena? Been there and swung the pugil sticks to prove it.

I was the guy inside the wrecked cars at Tough Mudder shooting photos while hundreds of you maniacs were clamoring over my head. That guy sticking his camera in your face at the cargo crawl or high-low line at Warrior Dash could've been me angling to preserve every bit of your passion, pain, and perseverance in photos.

You see, I'm an obstacle racer, too, and happily racing right alongside of you while getting the inspiration to write a book for you. Heck, it's a book *about you*. Enjoy what this book has in store for you. You may learn something, read one of your quotes, or see your muddy mug in one of our photos.



# About This Book

*Obstacle Race Training* delves into the world of obstacle races and mud runs by providing in-depth reporting not only from adventures and challenges of all types but also from dedicated training facilities for athletes of all ages and levels. This is what you'll find in this book.

*Part 1* describes the raucous, exciting, and challenging chaos of obstacle races and mud runs and covers the origins and history of these events. It also goes on to answer a very simple question: Why the hell would you do an obstacle race? The answers may surprise you! That big question is followed by a series of FAQs that we picked up during events and from race organizers and then wraps up with a complete Gear Guide to make sure you have the right stuff for race day.

For *Part 2*, I spent the better part of a year researching over 20 different races, interviewing the founders or race directors for each event, and even participating in as many events as my schedule would allow. Heck, on more than one occasion I actually worked with the event directors in setting up the obstacles pre-race! The behind-the-scenes look into the world of ob/mud adventures doesn't stop there—I dove into each of the events covered in this book to provide the inside scoop on each race's history, course methodology, and factors that make each one unique, exciting, and challenging.

*Obstacle Race Training* casts its net wide to capture all the categories in modern obstacle racing, including kids' events, women-only mud runs, timed events, challenges, themed events, zombies, and some events that are so ballistically extreme that only the best-of-the-best athletes even have the opportunity to be invited... and only an infinitesimally small percentage of them will survive to finish.

Now that you know what you're in for, you're ready for the training. In *Part 3*, I provide "Prepare to Dominate All Obstacles," the game plan to dominate any event and obstacle and strengthen your body by introducing you to the specific functional training you'll need to overcome any barriers between you and the finish line/beer garden. After providing step-by-step instruction, tips, and tricks to demolish any obstacle, I provide specific Strength, Dexterity, and Speed & Endurance exercises that are the foundation for the two-week Prep Program, the three-week Domination-Level Alpha Program, and the five-week CRUSH IT Program. I also give you the scoop on two very unique training facilities that prepare you for the challenges you may face during your obstacle race and

mud run adventures. Once your body is ready, use the provided tips on how to prepare and test your gear about a week before your event and what to do on the morning of race day.

The *Appendix* features detailed descriptions and photos of all the stretches and additional exercises you'll need to perform the workouts.



An enthusiastic participant showing a car who's boss at Tough Mudder.

adventure races mixed with huge man-made jungle gyms and natural impediments along with tons of goopy mud. Let's take a look at just a smattering of the types of challenges you'll face on these courses:

- Being submerged in an ice bath
- Hauling sand bags
- Lifting and dragging heavy rocks on a rope
- Traversing balance beams
- Climbing cargo nets
- Crawling under barbed wire
- Jumping over fire
- Braving electric shocks
- Jumping over, diving under, or crawling through barriers
- Scaling walls
- Scurrying up or swinging from ropes
- Throwing spears
- Leaping over or climbing hay bales (some may even be on fire)
- Running through or climbing over tires (lots and lots of tires)
- Scrambling over slippery walls covered in liquid soap
- Sloshing through streams, lakes, ponds, bogs, brooks, or even ditches or shipping containers filled with water
- Crawling through metric tons of mud
- Chopping wood
- Pulling yourself over wrecked cars



Teammates taking the leap into a Cahoots duo Challenge mud pit.

By my count, that's about 25 great reasons to start looking to sign up for a hybrid obstacle race and mud run right now! Starting on page 32 in "Obstacle Races, Mud Runs, and Extreme Challenges," I list 25 more exciting and difficult obstacles and highlight over a dozen of the biggest, baddest, and most exhilarating events in the world. (*Learn more about Spartan Race on page 34, Tough Mudder on page 39, Savage Race on page 37, Warrior Dash on page 36, and Rugged Maniac on page 38.*)

"A quality obstacle course should never let you get into a comfort zone; it should keep you on your toes and continually present new challenges, both mental and physical. If you can hold yourself together during an obstacle race, you can hold yourself together in life."

—Michael Sandercock, founder, [Obstacleracers.com](http://Obstacleracers.com)

Heads were burning in the unique conditions of sunny warmth and ice-covered water. Thus you experienced the sensation of severe instant headache as your hot blood rushed to your head and exploded as you ducked into the underwater pool and tunnel. One brave contestant said he now knew what hell was like and would be a good boy for the rest of his life!

—Tough Guy Jelly Leg News, 1997

U.S. Marine. The amazing scenery belies the torturous challenges awaiting all new recruits when they set foot on these hallowed grounds, where thousands of Marines have been forged over the last 70 years. Created to challenge cadets, Camp Pendleton's gates are opened a few times a year for civilians to test their mettle on the demanding course as well as other challenges, ranging from 5Ks to half marathons. At the end of the day, the dog tag-shaped finisher's medals on their chest will not be the same as those brave soldiers who earned their stripes as Marines, but the feeling of victory and accomplishment is second to none—at least, once you wipe the mud from your face and get a celebratory beer in your hand.

## **TOUGH GUY—FROM THE MIND OF A MOUSE**

Over the last 25 years, one obstacle race has pioneered many of the obstacles, barriers, and dastardly pitfalls that are re-created in obstacle races and mud runs all over the globe. Most events will give a tip of their cap to Billy Wilson (a.k.a. Mr. Mouse) as being the godfather of the sport and the impetus for creating their own challenging courses in an attempt to share some of the Tough Guy spirit and glory all over the world. Tough Guy was the origin of obstacle racing, the first organized event of its type, where civilians could challenge themselves on military-style courses. It has earned a special

place in history—and in this book—as being a big reason why this sport even exists today.

Tough Guy events are as brutal as its race director is colorful. The events held in summer are extremely difficult, and the winter version is downright ridiculous when the temperatures plummet and the water crossings turn to ice. In 2010, over 600 competitors were treated for hypothermia and thousands others finished the event with bumps, bruises, and scratches to go along with their immense sense of accomplishment on having finished a true original and what some call the toughest challenge in the world of adventure sports.

Devon Anderson, founder of Cahoots Duo Challenge, relates his first encounter with Tough Guy: "A mysterious hush falls over the crowd; competitors abruptly end their conversations, forget about their pre-race jitters, and look around to see what is going on. Walking up the crest of 'Trample Hill' to the right of the throngs of would-be racers is a shadowy figure seemingly plucked from a WWII battlefield, an elderly yet sturdy gentleman who has donned a kilt and military uniform with a huge white bushy mustache flapping against a wrinkled and determined face illuminated as the rising sun burns off the morning fog. Mumbled tales are whispered from racer to racer as to whether he is mortal or merely an apparition that has been haunting these grounds for eons. 'I heard he's over a hundred years old' mixes with 'He runs this course every morning for the fun of it' as the awestruck competitors blink and rub their eyes in an attempt to get a clearer view of this mesmerizing superhero perched above them, surveying each one of the huddled hopefuls below. As slowly and deliberately as a general might, he raises his arm in an apparent move to wave his soldiers off to battle. He pauses briefly,

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Q:** Can I really do a mud run?

**A:** Um, yeah. In the immortal words of Patches O'Houlihan, "If you can dodge a wrench, you can dodge a ball." Let's expand on that sound logic a bit: "If you can run, walk, or even crawl from the start to the finish, you can complete a mud run."

Basically, if you can walk approximately 3 miles in muddy clothes, you can complete your first mud run. It may not be pretty, but that first taste of victory is usually all it takes to turn your average couch potato into an addicted mud runner. That's why this sport is ballooning to epic proportions, with new events being added worldwide nearly every day.

“Jumping, crawling, and climbing are all things we’re naturally born to do....We’re wired to do them, but we don’t anymore; we just type.”

—Joe DeSena, founder, Death Race

between. Check out the “Gear Guide” on page 26.

**Q:** How “in shape” should I be?

**A:** Aside from extreme invite-only events, all obstacle races and mud runs are suitable for most athletes of any size, shape, and ability. Of course, you’re required to sign a waiver that states you’re healthy enough to participate and have been checked out and cleared by a medical professional before attempting any event. At any race you’ll see a diverse cross-section of fitness levels and body types. If you have the willpower to finish, there’s a spot for you at nearly every starting line.

**Q:** What is the easiest type of event?

**A:** “Easy” is a relative term, but the majority of mud runs are less demanding than obstacle races and feature far fewer (if any) barriers other than mud, terrain, and more mud. That being said, every single course will feature terrain or challenges that are unique and will test your mental and physical toughness...or at least your ability to laugh at yourself!

**Q:** So what’s the toughest course out there?

**A:** All of them. Every single course is a challenge and, based on your particular strengths, even the shortest course may be particularly demanding based on the obstacles laid out by the race organizers. Toughness is also relative to the individual racer: If you

struggle with running, the longer distances may prove to be extremely daunting; if you have weak upper-body strength, events that require a lot of hanging, swinging, or rope climbing could be your undoing. A well-rounded course will have plenty of barriers standing between you and an “easy” run. Every single course is so dramatically different that there’s no effective way that I know of to rank them against each other in terms of toughness. With the sport of obstacle racing constantly evolving, new obstacles are created daily and added to the repertoire of talented (and somewhat masochistic) race directors. Joe DeSena of Spartan Race (which features courses in a multitude of lengths) confided in me that the shorter the overall course distance is, the harder they make each of the obstacles!

If you’re looking for an answer about which events are the most difficult, that’s a little easier to define. Any event that requires you to qualify to compete is generally too difficult for the average weekend warrior. These “invite-only” events include (but are not limited to):

**Death Race**—A 24- to 70-hour endurance event composed of mud runs, obstacle racing, trail racing, physical challenges, and mental challenges where 90% of the entrants will not finish. Based on “life lesson” themes, each year the event is diabolically designed to break each competitor mentally and physically.

**World’s Toughest Mudder**—An extreme mud run open to the top finishers of Tough Mudder events all over the world. To win, an athlete has to complete the most loops of the Tough Mudder course in 24 hours. After that, all other entrants are given four additional hours to complete an equal number of laps to be considered finishers.

# Gear Guide

If there's mud or water on the course, cotton is the enemy. Whether it's in your shirt, shoes, shorts socks, or underwear, cotton will absorb the wetness (and muck) and you'll be left with that oh-so-satisfying feeling of wearing an adult diaper. Take a tip from triathletes when you're getting dressed: Synthetic fibers in body-hugging designs make the fastest and most efficient outfits. By that same token, the Borat-style man-sling costume is not necessarily that bad of an idea...but I digress.

Loose-fitting clothes can get snagged on obstacles, grabbed accidentally (or not) by other racers, and even obscure your view. Chafing, blisters, and a couple hours of discomfort could be unwelcome additions to your race if you choose the wrong gear or a wickedly uncomfortable costume.

three. Cargo shorts or pants with pockets are a relatively bad idea—anything that can fill with mud *will* fill with mud. Basketball shorts, even if they're made of synthetic materials, are usually a bad idea as they can be heavy, long, and have pockets. Medium-length running shorts are a good choice; they dry quickly, are light, and most likely won't be down around your ankles when you're scooting under barbed wire. If the weather's cooler, warm-up nylon pants are great, as their slick surface will give you a little advantage when you're on your belly writhing in the mud. They'll also keep your knees from turning into hamburger from contact with the dirt.

**Gloves:** Usually the most hotly debated question the morning of an event or on blogs and Facebook is whether you should wear gloves or not. The answer is simple: Wear them for obstacles that are nasty on your hands (pulling/climbing ropes, carrying rough objects like cinder blocks, logs, or anything that requires a good grip) and take them off and shove them in a pocket or down the back of your pants when you don't need them. Make sure the gloves fit your hands very well and have plenty of grip; avoid leather or anything that can get slick or hold water. Fingerless workout gloves are commonly found on the course because they get wet and slick and actually make it harder to grip smooth surfaces like monkey bars. Gardening gloves that look like someone dipped a basic pair of fabric gloves into molten rubber work really well and are relatively cheap; check out our gear guide on [www.mudrunguide.com/](http://www.mudrunguide.com/) gear for reviews and suggestions.

**Knee/Elbow Pads or Neoprene Sleeves:** Protecting your knees, elbows, and hands is a very good idea. Most events will have at least a half-dozen obstacles specifically designed to have you crawling on those tender areas and it's

a good idea to protect them if you'd like to finish the race with all your skin. Leave the rollerblade hardshell pads at home and opt for thin knee or elbow pads or simple neoprene sleeves. I prefer the latter to cover my knees and elbows as they provide enough cushioning when I run into an obstacle and enough protection to crawl through mud, tubes, and anything else the course has to throw at me while still allowing me the full range of motion to run.

**Costumes:** An entire book could be written just on the dos and don'ts of costumes and the perilous outcomes of really bad comical attire decisions. Yes, costumes are funny and proclaim your independent (usually cross-dressing) spirit, and there's a one-in-five thousand or so chance that you'll win a \$50 gift card to Chili's for dressing like Dorothy with Toto in a basket stapled onto your back.

"Do as I say, not as I do" Part II: Yes, I've been seen with fairy wings and a tutu at Mad Mud Run. No, I didn't win a prize (dammit!) and the chafing from the wings and halo-in-the-eyes wasn't worth it. Yeah, I included the photo—that's me on the left side of the photo.

Whatever you wear to the race is what you'll be dealing with the entire event, whether that's running, crawling, climbing, bending, or even sometimes swimming. If you flaunt the KISS rules, then you've got to deal with it. Anything that can fall apart will fall apart. Anything that can chafe will chafe. Anything that looks cool at





# Obstacle Races, Mud Runs, & Extreme Challenges

Here's my favorite definition of obstacle races and mud runs from Carrie Adams of Rad Racing: "Obstacle racing mixes road racing, trail running, and cross-country running with a variety of obstacles throughout the course to test endurance, strength, speed, and dexterity...There's something so empowering about the not knowing what's next in a race like this, about just surviving the next step, overcoming the next obstacle. Your breath, your lungs, your heart beating in your chest...when you're on the course, it's not just living—it's being *alive*. There's a huge difference, and you'll only realize it if you're willing to push yourself to your limits."



Barbed wire is the least of your worries at the Death Race.

Running from zombies, swinging across monkey bars, jumping rope, diving into water from high platforms, cruising down zip lines, crossing parallel bars, avoiding gladiators smacking you with pugil sticks, being shot at with paintball guns, getting pelted with water balloons or sprayed with hoses, bombing down slip and slides or muddy hills into swamps, crawling through muddy tubes, scampering over horizontal climbing walls, balance beams, evading sharks (just checking to see if you were paying attention), carrying sandbags, climbing rope ladders, crawling up muddy slopes, running through mazes and dirty, dusty, and hilly

trails, swimming through icy water, rope-climbing over walls—these are just a few combinations of jumping, crawling, dodging, and sprinting that await you on some of the most creative courses and terrain imaginable.

Back on page 14, we posted about 25 challenging, dirty, and exciting obstacles that are waiting for you on race day at some—or all—of the mud runs and obstacle races listed on the following pages. Here's an additional bunch to whet your appetite a bit more.

# Obstacle Races: Are You Tough Enough?

Varying in length from 5 kilometers to 12 miles, the obstacle races in this section are much more demanding than any “fun mud run.” Dozens of dastardly obstacles wait around every corner of the course to stall, challenge, and frustrate even the fittest and most adept racer. Natural barriers of fire, ice, and mud, along with nasty terrain, are augmented by man-made structures designed to test the mettle of every single athlete who dreams of finish-line glory. Make no mistake about it, these are some of the most bad-ass courses on the planet.

## Savage Race

**“The most bad-ass mud and obstacle race events,” nationwide locations**

**Launched:** 2011

**Events:** 2 in 2012, 7+ in 2013

**Kids’ Events:** None

**Minimum Age:** 14

**Course Distance:** 4–6 miles

**Obstacles:** An average of 23 giant, rugged obstacles that vary by location but may include evil monkey bars, a jump over rows of fire, a low mud crawl under barbed wire, and an ice bath

**Terrain:** Varies by location, but plan on 4–6 miles of the gnarliest terrain available

**Signature Obstacle:** Mach 7 Water Slide, which can be as tall as 45 feet—participants have reached speeds of up to 25 miles per hour

**Hardest Obstacle:** Lumberjack Lane, where participants must lug heavy objects like logs and sandbags around a long muddy loop; bad-asses are encouraged to grab two if they can

**Gear:** Athletic clothes or costumes (there’s a “Most Savage Costume” contest), socks, shoes, and a kick-ass attitude

Savage Race was founded “to create an experience unlike any other, an event that would have you questioning your sanity, an event that would absolutely kick your ass.” The organizers call their participants Savages because they believe you have to find your inner barbarian to power through the race’s intense four to six miles. Savage Race prides itself on having the biggest obstacles and featuring the most per mile—a true Savage challenge. It also rewards participants at the end of each race with frosty beer, sizzling barbecue, and music at the “Outrageous Savage After Party.”



Savage Race’s mission is to provide endurance enthusiasts with something even bigger than the race itself. It wants participants to push themselves until they think they can run no farther, climb no higher, and go no faster. Being a Savage means pushing yourself to the ultimate limit, and the high you’ll feel after completing a Savage Race is something that you’ll never forget.

“Most people I know come to a point in their lives where they need to prove something, either to themselves or someone else. Whether it’s proof of dedication, physical, or mental strength, there’s nothing quite like persevering through a challenge that once seemed impossible. I think that has been the driving force behind our success, and the growth of endurance sports as a whole.”

—Sam Abbitt, founder and event manager,  
Savage Race

# Partners/Buddies: It Takes Two

“Dude! WTF did you talk me into? See that barbed wire? That’s REAL barbed wire! Look over there, that’s fire—as in logs are ACTUALLY ON FIRE! What the hell is that contraption over there? Oh man, this is \*bleep\*-ing nuts...This. Looks. Awesome. Let’s GO!”

These are the three stages of acceptance when participating in partner-based events:

1. Openly questioning your choice in friends.
2. Wondering why the hell you signed up for this crazy thing and what sadistic individual thought up this course.
3. Acceptance, giddiness, and eventually muddiness. And more giddiness.

## Cahoots Duo Challenge

**Two-person teamwork-required mud run and obstacle race, nationwide locations**

**Launched:** 2011

**Events:** 3 in 2012, 13 planned for 2013

**Course Distance:** 3–4 miles

**Kids' Events:** None (as of publication)

**Minimum Age:** 14 with parent as a partner, otherwise 18

**Obstacles:** No advance intel given on obstacles (and no course map on their website); each team will have to determine the best way to conquer an obstacle when they get to it

**Terrain:** Varies from location to location, but absolutely features some elevation change to accommodate zip lines

**Signature Obstacle:** Back to Back

**Hardest Obstacle:** Lean on Me (partners using each other to balance on suspended cables)

**Gear:** Clothes that will allow you to move unencumbered over, under, and through obstacles and that you don't mind getting really nasty; costumes are encouraged

“[At Tough Guy] I remember climbing out of the water following the Death Plunge and making the comment to my buddy Joe that I didn't feel cold anymore. He noticed my lips were completely blue, my eyes were sallow, and I was shaking like crazy. He calmly stuttered through his own frozen lips, ‘Th-th-that’s b-because you’re d-d-dying.’”

—Devon Anderson, founder,  
Cahoots Duo Challenge

The obstacles you'll encounter on a Cahoots Duo Challenge course are specifically designed for you and your partner to overcome together and they get progressively more challenging as you proceed along the course. Some will be purely physical, others will have a cerebral element to them but, throughout it all, you'll have to rely on one another's strength, stamina, and grit to get through. To date, there are over two dozen obstacles that are entirely impassable without another person's assistance. Some of them even require another team to lend a few hands. There'll be zip lines, too. The best part? Each obstacle will be a surprise and you'll have no idea what to expect until you show up on race day.

In addition to the unique physical challenges, you'll encounter a handful of forks in the road, where correct passage depends on your ability to answer a question or solve a riddle. One answer leads you right, one answer leads you left. You won't know for sure whether you made the right decision or not until you've committed to a trail. If you made the wrong choice, it'll become readily apparent before too long. You'll add extra mileage to your run and more obstacles that you'd probably prefer to avoid. Consequently, each wrong turn you take has a negative impact on your “score.”

Everything at Cahoots is designed to enhance the overall experience between



# Theme-Based Events: Play Your Part in an Adventure

When I was 12 years old I wanted to be a firefighter. Well, maybe I wanted to be a cowboy or an astronaut...hell, it was three decades ago. Despite my fading memories of youth, the allure of dressing up in a costume and playing a role in an adventure still sounds pretty good to this middle-aged guy. How about you?

I won't be blasting off in an *Apollo* spacecraft anytime soon (although Sir Richard Branson may have something to say about that) but I can sign up for a theme-based event and be transformed into a hero rushing into a burning building to save a damsel in distress, the protagonist struggling to escape a crumbling town as the apocalypse rains destruction all over the planet, or the leading man in a B movie being chased by flesh-eating undead. If I'm feeling rather randy, I can even slip beneath the squirmy skin of a zombie and join their war against the living in a quest for brains. Who says you can't act like a kid and play make-believe?

## Hero Rush

**Firefighter-themed obstacle race and experience, nationwide locations**

**Launched:** 2011

**Events:** 11 in 2012, 22+ in 2013

**Kids' Events:** *Mini Heroes Firefighter Adventure Course, ages 4–6; Junior Heroes Firefighter Adventure Course, ages 7–13*

**Minimum Age:** 14

**Course Distance:** 5K

**Obstacles:** 20+

**Terrain:** *Varies based on location, but centered around the “Inferno Midway” with obstacles and barriers of all shapes and sizes that firefighters routinely have to navigate*

**Signature Obstacle:** *Towering Inferno*

**Hardest Obstacle:** *Basement Entrapped*

**Gear:** *Comfortable clothing that you don't mind getting dirty, wet, and potentially soot-stained, as well as clothing that inspires you (if you're fire/EMS, wear your department shirt; if you're military, wear your unit shirt; etc.); solid running shoes or other sturdy, appropriate footwear*

Hero Rush is all about experiencing the life of a firefighter. You'll run an intense 5K+ race with multiple fire-related obstacles: climb ladders and slide down poles, crawl through windows and break down doors, scramble through HAZMAT slime and locate trapped victims. But be careful—you might get the fire hoses turned on you! Every obstacle simulates a real scenario a firefighter might face. For example, “Towering Inferno” is modeled after actions taken in a high-rise building fire, where the water from floors above will rain down on those working below as they try to climb higher and fight the fire; from the platform at the top, racers plunge down a 20-foot waterslide to a small pool below. “Basement Entrapped” simulates what happens when a staircase collapses and a firefighter is trapped with no way out. To complete this obstacle, participants climb to a 20-foot platform by way of a knotted fire hose; from the top, they must navigate a rope bridge made of fire hoses, one to balance on as they walk and two above to hold onto.

With nearly 30 combined years as firefighters, Dave Iannone and Christopher Hebert conceived this wicked firefighter-themed obstacle race. Hero Rush brings the theme full circle by partnering with fire-service charities that benefit from race fees and donations, inviting local fire departments to come out and participate with the community, and creating an atmosphere that invites everyone to celebrate the hero within.



# Events for the Kids

Remember when you were a kid? A old tire on a rope was good for a few hours of fun, and if you were from my neighborhood you soon learned how to dive through or do backflips off of it. Building ramps to jump off with our bikes was the first thing we did after coming home from school and we kept piling cinder blocks (or the youngest neighbors) to jump over until Mom turned the porch light on. We weren't nuts—that's what being a kid in the 1970s was like. Today, eh...not so much.

For as much as we've advanced in the last 40 years in technology, it seems we've lost touch with the fun and excitement that comes with being a kid and attempting some off-the-wall stuff that would never fly today (like "ghost riding" your bike down a hill or any attempt to defy gravity using bungee cords). I distinctly remember an entire summer spent wallowing in mud puddles, chasing lizards around the swamp, and running from some deranged lunatic with a caddle prod. Then again, that may have been one of the times my parents forgot me at the zoo.

Luckily, there's a solution to the "play dates" and hand sanitizer that whippersnappers today have grown up with. A bunch of events feature a kid's version and, let's face it—where there's mud, you'll usually find a kid. Here's an interesting dichotomy: Most competitors run a whole race while dreading the mud pit at the end, while to most kids that bog of murkiness is like their own little nirvana.

Want to know if an event is kid-friendly? Our site [www.mudrunguide.com](http://www.mudrunguide.com) lists whether each race has an event just for the little ones or not. If it does and you're competing in the adult version, remember to pack some extra towels and dry clothes for your kids; they may have to wait around after finishing their race for you to

compete. As far as kid's gear goes, it's a good recommendation to make sure their outfit covers elbows and knees if you'd like to prevent a few extra boo-boos. A sure-fire tip to save you a few hours at bath time is to use some form of earplug that will keep mud out; many a racer has dislodged a wad of mud days after an event with a cotton swab. Check out the "Gear Guide" on page 26 for more tips on adult gear; you just may get some good ideas for the kids, too.

Here is just a sample of events for kids, as well as a nationwide "boot camp" built on the obstacle race template. In no way is this an all-inclusive list as events change daily.

## Bounce Boot Camp

**Outdoor inflatable obstacle course & fitness training for kids 5–14, nationwide franchises**

**Launched:** 2011

**Events:** Weekly kids' fitness classes

**Course Distance:** Varies by class, 1-hour duration

**Obstacles:** Cones, balls, agility ladders, hurdles, battle ropes, etc.

**Signature Obstacle:** General Jumper

**Hardest Obstacle:** Battle Ropes

**Gear:** Athletic clothes; socks or bare feet on the inflatables



# Extreme: Only the Strongest Will Survive

You're not worthy. Well, unless you're the best of the best at obstacle racing, you're not worthy of toeing the line at these events...yet. Can you get there? Absolutely. The invitation is wide open to those who are willing to put in the hard work and practice, train, and race their ass off to get to the top of this sport. These events are invite-only or only the toughest SOB's need apply. Tough Guy may be the easiest of the list to get into as they feature two yearly events (a double-length version in the summer and a brutally cold event in the winter) and don't have a qualifying system like Spartan Ultra Beast and Toughest Mudder do—you just need to be nuts enough to sign up.

## Death Race

**Invite-only extremely demanding obstacle race with mental and physical challenges, Pittsfield, VT**

**Founded:** 2004

**Events:** 1

**Qualifying:** *Extreme mental fortitude, online registration at [www.youmaydie.com](http://www.youmaydie.com)*

**Course Distance:** *Varies in mileage and time; finish is when co-founders Andy and Joe decide the race is over*

**Obstacles:** *Mental and physical*

**Terrain:** *Hilly, rugged Vermont mountain trails with water crossings; extremely difficult*

**Signature Obstacle:** *Mental torture, "Death Race Mindf\*ck" (as they like to call it)*

**Hardest Obstacle:** *Surviving to finish the race*

**Gear:** *Events last longer than 24 hours, so layers that allow you to move freely are most likely a good idea, as is well-fitting footwear that can handle trails replete with rocks, mud, and water crossings to minimize blisters*

Death Race is different than any other event; it emulates life. While every other event is designed for you to finish, with aid stations, directions, volunteers giving you a pat on the back and cheering you on, this one is completely designed to break people physically and mentally. Death Race doesn't tell you when the race is going to start, when it'll end, how long it'll be, what to wear, bring, eat—it's designed to be just like life. There are no set answers and you have no idea what you're doing until you get there.





**PART 3:  
TRAINING**

# Prepare to Dominate All Obstacles

Back on pages 14 and 32 I listed about 50 different nasty little surprises that are waiting for everyone in some form or fashion on nearly every course. With the boundless creativity (some call it masochistic tendencies) of race directors and course builders at these events, newer, harder, and more complicated barriers are erected each time a race comes to town. You'll never be prepared for every last one, but the list in this section covers a lot of the basic ones that you'll see so you can be prepared for those.

The first time you'll see most obstacles is on the course, unless you've built an eight-foot wall in your backyard or spent an afternoon at the local skate park trying to climb up the half pipe—but you absolutely should do both if you can (instructions for creating your own wall for less than \$200 can be found on our website).

Your house, yard, and neighborhood (especially playgrounds) are full of stuff to practice obstacle training. Who says they're for kids only? As long as the stuff will hold your weight,<sup>3</sup> there's no reason you can't climb, swing, or crawl under and over any of it to prepare your body for the stuff you'll see on race day. Actually, I'm counting on it! Consider this your permission to act like a kid. Who cares if the neighbors gawk—you're developing your inner bad-ass!

I've broken down each of the most common obstacles you'll find on race day into three categories and developed specific workouts for each based on the types of movements, strength, or ability you'll need to conquer:

The **Strength Workout** is all about pushing, pulling, and lifting stuff. Flipping tractor tires, carrying sandbags, and dragging blocks of concrete with a rope all fall into this category.

The **Dexterity Workout** is dedicated to getting your body over, under, and through obstacles on the course. Walls, cargo nets, and ropes all challenge your technique even more than brute strength. This workout will help you plan your attack.

The **Speed & Endurance Workout** will help you develop the speed and endurance to torch the course between obstacles. On race day you'll run through water, mud, and fire, up and down hilly trails, and across terrain of all types. This workout will help you get through them all more quickly than you ever thought possible.



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<sup>3</sup> Seriously, make sure anything you're planning to climb on or swing from will support at least twice your bodyweight before you do anything that'll destroy property or hurt yourself or any combination of both. It's on you to test out and make sure first. Don't put yourself or others in danger. The point is to get stronger, build your confidence, and have fun—not break, tear, or rupture anything.

# Strength Workout:

## *Moving Stuff*

The good news about the “Moving Stuff” category is that you can train and practice these moves with nearly an exact replica of the items you’ll be dealing with out on the course. The bad news is it’s going to be a tough-as-hell workout on your whole body. You’ll be moving around heavy and awkward objects in order to develop the strength, technique, and confidence you need to tackle these nefarious little bastards come race day.

be extremely careful you don't drop it on your head (or toes).

Stand with your feet about hip-width apart and raise the weight over your head. Extend your arms straight overhead with your elbows just slightly bent and not locked. Engage your core as if you were about to be hit in the stomach with a tennis ball; try not to arch your back.

Keeping your back tall and straight, walk for the targeted amount of time or steps. Then lower the weight to chest height, squat down, and place it on the ground between your feet.

### OBSTACLE TO DOMINATE

## Tractor Tire Flip



Why on earth would anyone in their right mind decide that flipping tractor tires was a good idea? Well, mostly because they look really intimidating, provide a sizeable challenge, and all in all are actually kind of fun to flip. Who would've thought that those old tractor tires that

farmers couldn't wait to get rid of from behind their barns would become such a sought-after item thanks to obstacle races? This maneuver will require a nice deep squat for you to place your hands properly, a strong drive from your legs, core, and upper body to get it moving, and an explosive burst to get the tire past vertical and flipped over.

Finding a used tractor tire may be simple or difficult depending on where you live. If you can track one down that's medium-sized from a tire store, they might actually be happy to give it away (you're saving them the recycling costs) and all you'll need to do is pick it up and get it home. This isn't necessarily an easy task, though. These tires weigh 400 to 600 pounds and will require at least a few helpers to load and unload them from a pickup truck bed. When you're searching through the tire pile, pick one that you can flip over based on the exercise description below. It makes no sense to drag home a monster and end up hurting yourself. You can always go back and pick up a heavier one later, and the tire shop workers will most likely be impressed with your tenacity!

### MASTERING THE OBSTACLE

## Tractor Tire Flip

Getting a tire is the best way to prepare you for the real obstacle, but it may be too difficult for beginners. If you're new to this type of exercise, start with Squat & Toss and Band Squat & Press first and work your way up to the big tire.

Place your feet wider than your shoulders with your toes pointed outward a bit and up against or under the edge of the tire; you want to be as close as possible to the edge of the tire to minimize the reach forward and accompanying stress on your lower back. Place your hands

# **Dexterity Workout:** *Moving Your Body Over, Under, Across, & Through Obstacles*

Every obstacle that requires you to haul your ass over, under, or through it will undoubtedly require upper-body strength, coordination, and momentum employed in conjunction to get you to the other side. The great news is you can usually use a little bit more of one to make up for what you may be lacking in another.

For example, the more momentum you can employ by running up and jumping when climbing a wall, the less upper-body exertion you'll have to dole out to get up and over it. Using the right technique while climbing a rope will also help to make up for a weak grip or arm strength while still allowing you to ring the bell at the top. So the lesson for this section is to use the exercises to develop your ability and choose when to use technique, momentum, or brute force on race day.

## OBSTACLE TO DOMINATE

## Walls of All Shapes & Sizes

Without much hesitation, I'll confidently say that you'll encounter some of the walls in this section on race day. In most cases you'll have several to overcome! Every wall requires you to work hard get to the other side. Keeping you on one side is pretty much its entire job description. We'll cover them from easiest to hardest and give you the low-down on how to tackle walls in general and some specific tips for particular ones.

## MASTERING THE OBSTACLE

### Vertical Walls



The fastest, easiest way to get over a wall is to jump straight up and grasp the top of the wall with both hands, pull down with your arms, and raise your waist up to the top of the wall, place your belly on the wall, and spin 180 degrees to swing your legs over to the other side and continue to hold the wall as you lower yourself on the back side. Now, while that sounds simple,

it requires some practice to make the movement fluid.

Placing your forearms on the face of the wall as you grip the top and raise yourself up will provide some stability. As you raise your body and bring your hands to your chest, you can place your forearms on top of the wall to give you a chance to readjust your hands or even extend one arm at a time.

Can't jump up and reach the top of the wall? Not able to pull your waist up to the top? No worry—you can use the entire obstacle to get you over the top. Many walls have a “safety step” to give you a boost so you can reach the top, and nearly every wall has braces or supports along the sides on an angle that you can grab on to. You can even grab the side of the wall itself. Is it “cheating” to use these? NO! These things are called obstacles or a reason; it's up to you to figure out how to get over them and it's smart to use all the methods that are available to you!



Before you attack the wall, walk up and scope out the hand/foot positions you plan on using. Approach the wall with some momentum—not a sprint, but enough speed

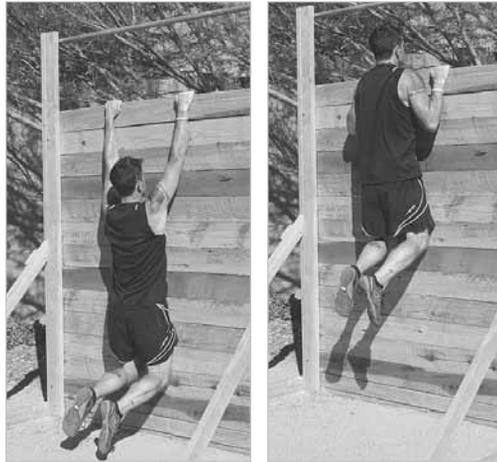
Start directly in front of the wall and take 3 to 5 large steps backward, depending on how much momentum you want to put into the jump. Bound forward and jump 2 to 3 feet away from the wall, reach up, and grab the top edge with both hands. Using your momentum, pull your hands down toward your hips and extend your arms to raise your waist up to the top of the wall.

While you're up there, bend your elbows and lower your chest back down to the top of the wall before straightening your arms and pressing your waist back up to the top—it's a great way to strengthen your triceps and forearms. Repeat 3 to 5 times if you can.

Now, if you've created a wall of your own, you're lucky enough to get to practice the technique on "Mastering the Obstacle: Vertical Walls" (page 83) anytime you'd like! My favorite workout is setting a timer on my smartphone for 1:00 and counting how many times I can repeatedly get over the wall before it runs out. Take 3 steps back from the wall to start, then run, jump, climb, and descend—repeat as many times as you can. For a killer upper-body workout, take away the 3 steps and start with just a squat jump to grab the top of the wall each time.

**TIP:** If you need a little boost, jump up slightly at the start of the move.

## DOOR PULL-UP



These are a great way to get some training almost anywhere and help develop the strength and skills to get over walls of all heights. I've done these in hotels everywhere I've traveled that don't have a gym, and even at some that do.

The first step is to find a door that's sturdy enough to hold at least double your weight; you'll be putting a lot of stress on it. Solid-core doors with strong hinges are a must; hollow-core doors can crack and crumble. Also make sure that the top edge isn't sharp or slippery.

Open the door in such a way to give yourself ample space to perform the exercise, and wedge a doorstop under it to keep it in place. The last thing you want to do is have the door close on your fingers!

Standing directly in front of the door, reach up and place your hands on top of the door with your forearms flat on the front of it. Using your forearms on the door as a lever, breathe out and engage the large muscles of your upper back and arms, bend your elbows, and pull your chest up to the top of the door. Inhale as you slowly lower your feet back to the ground.

nets but will prove invaluable in areas where you have to crawl under something (let's say barbed wire) and want to do it more quickly and less painfully than using an army crawl on your hands and knees. A side roll is a great alternative to crawling face-down in the dirt if you have enough room to turn sideways.

Start off in the top position of a push-up: hands and toes on the floor, body flat, and arms and legs extended. Initiate the move by moving your right hand across your body, using gravity to fall and roll down your right elbow and shoulder while simultaneously using your core strength and a little push-off with your left toe to twist your body and start the roll.

## OBSTACLE TO DOMINATE

### Rope Climb



You probably hated climbing ropes in gym class back in school (I know I did!). Well, there's probably a very good reason for that: Your gym teacher was most likely teaching you the most difficult way to climb, which relied heavily on pure upper-body strength.

Also, most people think that you climb a rope by pulling up with your arms and hands. That's completely wrong—your legs and core do (or should do) most of the climbing and your hands help to keep you in place while you raise

your legs up. Essentially, you're hanging by your arms as you squat and move your feet up the rope before standing up, extending your arms, and reaching up as high as you can on the rope.

There's one exception to the above rule: If you have tremendous upper-body strength and can climb all the way to the top by just using your hands and allowing your legs to hang free, congratulations for being able to perform the fastest method for climbing a rope! You probably don't need the following info unless you're looking for a way to save some of your upper-body power for the rest of the race; arm only is fast but incredibly taxing on the arms, hands, core, and back.

For the rest of us, here are three different ways to get you up that rope. The only difference is the way you use your feet to brake or pinch the rope in order to allow you to stand up and reposition your hands higher on the rope.

## MASTERING THE OBSTACLE

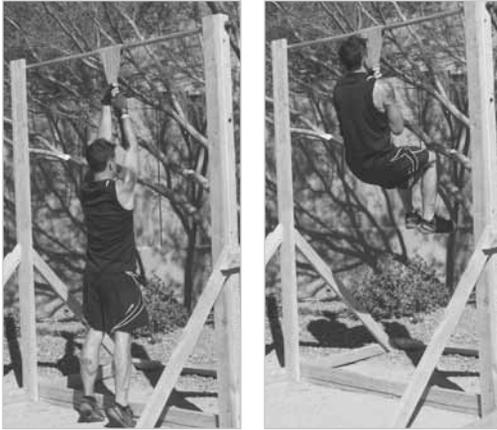
### Rope Climb

No matter what foot position you're using, you'll be reaching up hand over hand one at a time and grasping the rope firmly. The closer you can pull your feet up toward your hands with each squat, the more vertical distance you'll cover with each movement.

**Initial hand placement:** Jump and extend your arms to reach and grasp the rope as high as you can with both hands, one above the other. Steady yourself on the rope while you prepare to get your feet into the position of your choice.

**Foot Placement—Pinch Method:** This is the best method for climbing a rope with knots; you'll pinch your feet together above the knot and "stand" on it while you reach up and

## TOWEL PULL-UP



Before starting this exercise, loop a towel around a fixed overhead object like a pull-up bar. The thicker the towel is, the more difficult it'll be to grip, providing an enhanced workout for your hands and forearms. Grip the towel like a baseball bat, with both hands opposite each other.

From a hanging start, exhale and use your back and upper-body muscles to pull your hands down toward your sternum.

Pause at the top, then inhale while you lower yourself in a slow, controlled manner. Switch hands and repeat.

## HANGING LEG RAISE



Grab an overhead bar with your preferred grip (underhand, overhand, or mixed) and hang from the bar with your arms fully extended but elbows not locked. For this exercise, count 3 seconds up, hold 1 to 3 seconds, and then count 3 seconds down.

Contracting your abdominal muscles, slowly bring your knees up toward your chest while keeping your torso as close to vertical as possible. Don't lean back during the movement or swing between reps. Slowly lower and extend your legs and hold a pike position for 3–5 seconds with each rep.

Lower your legs in a slow and controlled manner. That's 1 rep.



**Variation:** If you don't have a bar, you can use a sturdy door or equivalent. Place your back against the door, reach up, and grasp the top of the door with a supinated overhand grip.

## OBSTACLE TO DOMINATE

### Mud Pits & Muddy Slopes

In some events, this is the whole reason you signed up: to get muddy! In others, it's just that extra little bit of misery to deal with between other more sinister-looking man-made contraptions. It's exactly because of this that

# Speed & Endurance Workout: *Explosive Speed, Power, & Endurance to Torch the Course*

They're called "mud runs" for a reason, right? I've yet to see an event with escalators or conveyer belts to transport you from one obstacle to the next, so prepare to do some running or jogging when you sign up for a mud run or obstacle race. In fact, all of these events measure their courses in distance—from 5K to as much as 26.2 miles—and you'll need to cover all that ground as quickly as you can before tackling each and every obstacle standing in your way. This workout is designed to develop your speed through progressively more difficult sprint intervals, increase your endurance with tempo and medium-paced runs, and build your overall strength with a total-core regimen and running-specific drills.

## OBSTACLE TO DOMINATE

## Off-Road Running



Trail running is much more challenging than a simple jog on the road—every footfall will result in uneven terrain with rocks or ruts while the elevation can change significantly from one stride to the next. Your hips, ankles, and core get more work than they ever would on a sidewalk, and every supporting muscle you never considered is forced to carry some of the load to keep you on your feet while sprinting across the undulating landscape.

The concept of pacing flies out the window and you're forced to monitor your power output by perceived exertion. This ain't your average trot in the park and needs to be treated as a completely different form of running altogether. Trail running isn't necessarily about putting in mileage—it's about putting in hard work.

## MASTERING THE OBSTACLE

## Off-Road Running

The first step (pun intended) is to find suitable terrain to train. It can be an off-road jogging path, a fire road, or even a jagged mountain trail.

Try to find the same type of conditions that you'll face on race day to prepare properly.

Once you've picked your spot, make sure you take it easy on your first run. On harder trails, expect to run as much as 50% slower than your normal on-road pace. If you're used to running an 8-minute mile, be prepared to run at 12 minutes per mile.

There's a technical aspect to trail running: You'll take smaller, quicker strides than you would on the road and are forced pay attention to where your feet land and what they're landing on. It's extremely easy to roll an ankle on the side of a rock or trip over a root and land on your face when on the trail. If you've ever tripped on a sidewalk, then be doubly careful when trail running. Look at the trail 6 to 12 feet in front of you; don't stare at your feet.

Keep your arms away from your body to maintain your balance on rough terrain. On loose dirt or gravel, the lower your arms and hands are, the lower your center of gravity will be. Practice using light, quick steps when traversing rocky or uneven terrain; move your feet quickly across the difficult stuff to keep your balance.

Stay under control when descending a hill. The more momentum you have, the harder you hit the ground if you get out of control! Once you're at a comfortable speed, harness that momentum to get up and over the terrain in front of you.

Although they'll tire quickly at first, your ankles, knees, and back will become stronger the more time you spend off-road. Couple your trail running with some of the drills in the Speed & Endurance Workout and you'll also become a faster and more efficient runner, too.

Your brains are safe, but your pride isn't. In *Run For Your Lives*, if the zombies pursuing you on the course rip all three of your flags off your belt, you effectively "lose" and are zombie meat. I'm sure you didn't sign up, prepare, and show up on race day to walk away a loser, right? Well, it's time you break out some long-forgotten skills from old playground games like dodge ball, flag football, or tag that you played as a kid.

### MASTERING THE OBSTACLE

## Running from Zombies

Lateral movements combined with balance and flexibility are the best way to dodge, duck, dip, dive, and...er, dodge a zombie on the course. The "20/20" Drill below will have you performing plyometric moves in forward, backward, and side-to-side planes to strengthen your legs and hips while also helping you build your speed and endurance.

### SPECIFIC RUNNING EXERCISES

#### 20/20 DRILL

Speed, strength, flexibility, and endurance—these all add up to enhanced athletic performance and the ability to torch any course you set foot on. The 20/20 Drill will combine eight moves at high intensity to develop your skills and help get you in the best shape of your life.

The set-up is simple: Find a flat(ish) field at least 20 yards long and place some cones or markers at each end. Perform each of the following movements back to back with little or no rest in between. Run 20 yards out, turn around, and run 20 yards back—simple. The hard part is finding your rhythm and pushing

yourself to keep the intensity up for of each of these 8 movements.

#### HIGH KNEES



Run forward using a normal-length stride. Bend the knee of your elevated leg 90 degrees and raise it until it's level with your waist. Push forward from the ball of your grounded foot, switch legs, and repeat. Pump your arms to generate leg drive and speed.

*When you've completed 20 yards of High Knees, turn around and perform Butt Kicks back to the starting position.*

#### BUTT KICKS



Run forward by taking very small steps and raising the heel of your back leg up toward your buttocks. Push forward from the ball of your grounded foot, progressing 12 to 18 inches per stride.

# Getting Your Body Ready to Compete

If this is the first time you're hearing the term "functional cross-training," welcome to the world of calisthenics. Yes, your middle-school gym teacher wasn't nuts when she told you that true strength did require weights. Pushing and pulling your own weight is all you need to build total-body fitness and the strength to conquer any sport and truly build an impressive physique. Bulging muscles are great for show and wonderful for lifting heavy weights, but functional cross-training, or FXT, puts every muscle in your body under tension through a wide range of motion.

From the dozens of muscles that are used just to get you out of bed in the morning to that little leap/stretch maneuver to stick your hand in front of the elevator sensor to keep the doors from closing, multi-plane, full-range-of-motion exercises prepare you for real life. Try pulling and clicking your seat belt without activating your core and upper-body muscles. You can't. FXT is and always will be part of your life. Now you know it.

How do you incorporate functional cross-training into your workouts? It's very simple: Put down the weights (well, some of them) and use the most amazing functional workout machine ever invented—your body. Lucky for you, it's always conveniently located wherever you are. The Strength, Dexterity, and Speed & Endurance workouts are all functional cross-training and, simply put, you can do them nearly anywhere, anytime. Go ahead, you have my permission to knock out a set of push-ups and squats at your desk and a few chin-ups on the monkey bars at the park. I'm proud to be the impetus for the occasional strange glance you may get and happy to be the brunt of your excuse: "Brett told me to!"

## Crush the Most Bad-Ass Courses

Hopefully by now your competitive fires are stoked and you want to get out and tackle any one of the adventures outlined in the book. So, where do you start? Back in "Before You Sign Up" (page 20), we covered the necessity of preparing your body for the challenges you'll encounter at any obstacle race or mud run. Each race will present its own series of barriers and roadblocks for you to conquer, and we've designed a training plan to get you in race shape. First-timers should follow the 2-week Prep Program (page 116) and begin to build up the strength, agility, and endurance it takes to tackle the 3-week regimen of Domination Level Alpha. The advanced 5-week CRUSH IT Program is exactly what you'd expect: a full-body exercise program to kick your ass into gear for competing on the highest level—from dominating your age group to getting some hardware on the podium.

**TIP:** If you feel you're able to complete a 5K-distance event then go ahead. The programs and obstacle descriptions will make even more sense after you've already been out on the course and faced some of them yourself!

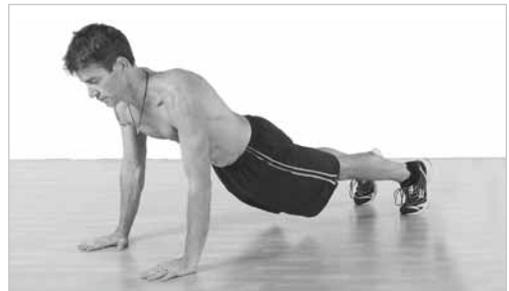
Ready? Let's get started!

## Initial Test: Check Your Level of Awesomeness

This will be a timed test. Any watch or timer will do. Seconds aren't important—yet. You can perform this test outside or using a treadmill; you'll be covering up to 3 total miles, so plan your route accordingly. Start the initial test with a 3- to 5-minute warm-up using some of the moves on page 142.

### INITIAL TEST EXERCISES

#### PUSH-UP



Place your hands on the ground approximately shoulder-width apart, making sure your fingers point straight ahead and your arms are straight but your elbows aren't locked. Step your feet back until your body forms a straight line from head to feet. Your feet should be about 6 inches apart with the weight in the balls of your feet.

## Prep Program

Welcome to the starting blocks. You're in the race from the couch to your first event and we're going to get you there faster than you ever thought possible. Congratulations on taking the first step toward a healthier future and get ready for some real excitement, some sore muscles, and the opportunity to transform your body!

Jogging and walking is going to become a big part of your regimen. As I covered on page 102, they're called mud runs for a reason. These events are based around locomotion of the human variety—you need to haul yourself from one obstacle to the next as fast as you can. Of course, "fast" is a relative term and the goal here is to help you find your optimum pace. Whether it takes three weeks or 6 months, if you stick with the program you'll continue to make progress and get that much closer to your goals of race-day domination.

This 2-week program is progressive and relative to your athletic ability; you set your own pace and ratchet up the intensity at your own speed. At the end of week two, you'll perform the Initial Test all over again and record your time—40:00 or less on the timer and you're absolutely ready for Domination Level Alpha; above that time you can repeat this program as often as you need to get ready for the DLA challenge. Even if you don't break 40 minutes after two, three, or four 2-week sessions of the Prep Program, you can decide when you're ready to move on to Domination Level Alpha.

Perform this program three times a week with at least one rest day in between. Jog at a pace that's comfortable and your heart rate and breathing is slightly elevated. Slow down if you're fatigued; stop altogether if you feel dizzy, lightheaded, or short of breath. Only resume if

your breathing has returned to normal and call it a day and rest as long as you need to in order to feel OK enough to hit the showers. Don't stress out; this is like batting practice—even professional ballplayers will foul off the easy pitches quite a bit and rarely hit a home run on the first swing.

Start each training session with a three- to 5-minute warm-up, choosing some moves from the descriptions starting on page 142, and end the workout with at least 5 minutes of stretching.

## TESTING YOUR PROGRESS

Retake the *Initial Test* (page 113) and record your time. As I mentioned earlier, 40:00 or less is optimal, but the most important aspect is for you to be delivering your best and to ensure you're ready for the challenges of Domination Level Alpha. If you're confident in your performance on the test and have completed the Prep Program a couple of times, make the call if it's time for you to move on to DLA or repeat the Prep Program following the Progression below.

## REPEATING THE PREP PROGRAM—PROGRESSION

When starting the Prep Program over after taking the Week 2 Test, take at least one full day of rest and begin at Day 1 again. This time you'll be adding :10 to the duration of every walk and jog segment and 1 to 2 reps of the functional cross-training exercises. Each time you repeat the Prep Program, add this additional time and exercise reps.

## Prep Program *week 2*

**Note:** Rest and recovery are vital to the success of the program and should be included as prescribed on the schedule.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
rest	:45 Jog	rest	:45 Jog	rest	1:00 Jog	retake Initial Test (p. 113)
	:45 Walk		:30 Walk		1:00 Walk	
	:45 Jog		:45 Jog		:45 Jog	
	:45 Walk		:30 Walk		:45 Walk	
	:45 Jog		:45 Jog		1:00 Jog	
	:45 Walk		:30 Walk		:30 Walk	
	14 Wood Chops (p. 137)		10 Squats (p. 114)		16 Wood Chops (p. 137)	
	7 Lunges each side (p. 140)		8 Push-Ups (p. 113)		14 Hip Raises (p. 134)	
	10 Supermans (p. 136)		12 Bird Dogs (p. 136)		8 Push-ups (p. 113)	
	12 Hip Raisese (p. 134)		12 Mason Twists (p. 138)		10 Lunges each side (p. 140)	
	:45 Jog		1:00 Jog		:45 Jog	
	:45 Walk		1:00 rest		:30 Walk	
	:45 Jog		1:00 Jog		1:00 Jog	
	:45 Walk		1:00 rest		:30 Walk	
:45 Jog	--	1:00 Jog				
:45 Walk	--	1:00 Walk				

## Domination Level Alpha: 3-Week Race-Day-Ready Program

Looking for a beginner level? Not here. I chose to call it “Domination Level Alpha”; you deserved an audacious title to match your amazing new goals. This program is designed for those who are relatively new to fitness or coming back from taking some time off from athletic activities.

Whether this is your first or fifth mud run, if you’re able to complete the initial test in 35 to 40 minutes, this is the right place to start.

Domination Level Alpha will get you ready for an event that’s about 24 days away. Your body needs the extra few days for rest and recovery before you tackle the course. Before you jump right in, you need to familiarize yourself with the functional cross-training exercises: pushing, pulling, and lifting for the Strength Workout and an over, under, across, and through routine for the Dexterity Workout. Starting on Day 3, we add some additional running to the mix.

Domination Level Alpha is performed three times per week with at least one day of rest between workouts. This is a wraparound-style program, so you’ll be alternating workouts and rest days for the entire three weeks.

### PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The results you’ll get from the Strength and Dexterity workouts are directly proportional to the intensity you put into them—you choose the weight, speed, and tenacity for each rep based on your ability and your goals. You’re the one putting the weight into the bucket or choosing which rock or log to use.

*For example:* “50-Yard Sandbag Carry” can be performed as:

- Walking 50 yards with one, two, or even three sandbags
- Jogging or sprinting 50 yards with a sandbag
- Progressing 50 yards out, 50 yards back
- Lifting and pressing the sandbag with each step
- Lunges, crawling, etc.

It’s up to you how you execute—get it?

Perform each exercise in the set with little to no rest in between. Beginners, please rest and hydrate as needed. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, stop exercising immediately. Seek medical help if condition persists after resting or you feel any sharp pains or blurriness of vision.

Start each training session with a 3- to 5-minute warm-up, and end the workout with at least 5 minutes of stretching (starting on page 142).

### TESTING YOUR PROGRESS

How was your time? Have you improved significantly since you took that same test three weeks ago? If you followed the program and put the hard work and effort in, I’m extremely confident that you have. If not, it’s probably a good idea for you to work through the Domination Level Alpha program again, this time with a higher level of intensity. No one said it was going to be easy, so keep it up and you’ll see a marked improvement! Don’t worry, the 5-week CRUSH IT Program will be ready whenever you are.

## Domination Level Alpha Program *week 3*

**Note:** Rest and recovery are vital to the success of the program and should be included as prescribed on the schedule.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	
Sets 1 and 2 from Strength Workout (p. 81)	rest	Strength Workout (p. 81)	rest	Dexterity Workout (p. 101)	rest	retake the Initial Test (timed)	
2:00 rest		2:00 rest		2:00 rest		5 Push-Ups (p. 113)	
Sets 1 and 2 from Dexterity Workout (p. 101)		1-mile easy warm-up jog		1-mile moderate run		1-mile easy jog	5 Squats (p. 114)
		1-mile moderate run		1-mile moderate run		2-mile easy jog	1-mile run
		1-mile easy jog		1-mile easy jog		1-mile easy jog	rest as needed, repeat twice (3 rounds total)

## The CRUSH IT Program

Well, hello there, Speedy! Welcome to your own personal little guide to dominate each obstacle, smoke other competitors, and crush the most bad-ass courses on the planet. If you picked up this book to get faster and stronger, you've made it to the section that you've been dreaming of. The 5-Week CRUSH IT Program is designed to make you cry for mercy and then beg for more. Buckle up, here we go!

Before you get started, you need to familiarize yourself with the functional cross-training exercises I described in "Prepare to Dominate All Obstacles" (page 69). I've developed three different workouts to get you ready for race day: Strength Workout—Pushing, Pulling & Lifting Stuff; Dexterity Workout—Over, Under, Across & Through Stuff; Speed & Endurance Workout—Torch the Course.

The CRUSH IT Program is performed every other day, sometimes two workouts in one day. No one ever said it'd be easy. It'll challenge you and make you stronger and faster and increase your endurance. I'm guessing you'll enjoy it a little bit, too. Below is an example of a wrap-around workout schedule starting on a Monday.

Monday: Workout

Tuesday: Rest

Wednesday: Workout

Thursday: Rest

Friday: Workout

Saturday: Rest

Sunday: Workout

Monday: Rest

## PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The results you'll get from the workouts are directly proportional to the intensity you put into them—you choose the weight, speed, and tenacity for each rep based on your ability and goals. You're the one putting the weight into the bucket, choosing which rock or log to use, and deciding how hard you're going to sprint. If you feel the workout is too easy, you're not pushing hard enough or need a heavier object.

*For example:* "50-Yard Sandbag Carry" can be performed as:

- Walking 50 yards with one, two, or even three sandbags
- Jogging or sprinting 50 yards with a sandbag
- Progressing 50 yards out, 50 yards back
- Lifting and pressing the sandbag with each step
- Lunges, crawling, etc.

It's up to you how you execute—get it?

Perform each exercise in the set with little to no rest in between. If you're new to strenuous workouts, are you sure you're in the right place? Always remember to rest and hydrate as needed. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, stop exercising immediately. Seek medical help if condition persists after resting or you feel any sharp pains or blurriness of vision.

Start each training session with a 3- to 5-minute warm-up, and end the workout with at least 5 minutes of stretching (starting on page 142).

Completing the CRUSH IT Program once doesn't necessarily mean you're as strong, fast, and dexterous as you can possibly be. Use this program between events and raise the intensity, reps, or weights as needed to get the results you want!

## The CRUSH IT Program *week 1*

**Note:** Rest and recovery are vital to the success of the program and should be included as prescribed on the schedule.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Strength Workout (p. 81)	rest	Dexterity Workout (p. 101)	rest	Speed & Endurance Workout (p. 108)	rest	Strength Workout (p. 81)
2:00 rest		2:00 rest				2:00 rest
3-mile jog		1-mile weighted backpack walk (p. 140)				1-mile moderate run
						10 Burpees (p. 139)
						repeat run & Burpees twice (3 total rounds)

## The CRUSH IT Program *week 2*

**Note:** Rest and recovery are vital to the success of the program and should be included as prescribed on the schedule.

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
rest	<i>Morning:</i> Strength Workout (p. 81)	rest	Speed & Endurance Workout (p. 108)	rest	Dexterity Workout (p. 101)	rest
			2:00 rest		2:00 rest	
	<i>Evening:</i> Dexterity Workout (p. 101)		50 Burpees (rest as needed) (p. 139)		20 Squats (p. 114)	
					50 Burpees (rest as needed) (p. 139)	

# Training Grounds

Prior to your first obstacle race, when did you have the opportunity to scale an 8-foot wall? Jump over and under obstacles that were made to get your nose down in the dirt? Was the last time you saw a climbing rope in middle school? How about climbing a cargo net while suspended by a harness 50 feet in the air?

Well, now you can head to dedicated training and adventure facilities and practice some of the techniques that you've learned in this book and also notch some incredible once-in-a-lifetime thrills!

## Flagstaff Extreme

**Tree-top Obstacle Course, Flagstaff, Arizona**

**Launched:** 2012

**Course Distance:** *Kid's course and 4 adult courses of varying distances*

**Obstacles:** *72 elements to navigate, 6 zip lines*

**Terrain:** *20–60' off the ground, suspended in trees*

**Signature Obstacle:** *Tarzan ropes, where Flagstaff Extremers have to hang on, just like Tarzan, and swing from one tree to the next to continue with the course; Tarzan calls are encouraged*

**Hardest Obstacle:** *All elements of the Black Course*

**Gear/Clothing:** *Course is at over 7,000 feet in elevation—wear temperature-appropriate clothing; safety harnesses are provided, fingerless gloves are recommended. Do not wear open-toed shoes, flipflops, slip-on shoes, loose baggy clothing, or shirts wrapped around the waist; long hair must be tied back and eyeglasses must be secured. No jewelry (especially necklaces or loose bracelets that could get caught in equipment) is recommended.*

**Special Considerations:** *Make sure you're hydrated, nourished, and acclimated to the elevation; individuals will fatigue faster at 7,000 feet than at sea level.*

No mud, no gladiators, no used tires to run through or barbed wire to crawl under—Flagstaff Extreme is a treetop adventure course that contains a series of exciting physical challenges suspended in trees at various heights. The park consists of 72 aerial challenges including cable bridges, Tarzan ropes, zip lines, swings, ladders, and other elements divided into four color-coded courses for juniors, adults, and kids. Safety is

always first: participants of all ages are secured to a lifeline and wear a harness so that they can experience new thrills and test personal limits in a controlled environment.

Each course will challenge you mentally as it's up to you to figure out and navigate each obstacle. Making decisions 60 feet up in the air is a lot harder than you may think! As for the physical challenge, each course gets progressively more difficult in terms of the complexity and challenge of surprises that face each adventurer. While the courses can be completed by most individuals, tackling each successive course is a lot of work that will test your core, legs, and arms.

Flagstaff Extreme is a full-body, functional workout at its best, and ropes, climbing walls, swings, cargo nets, and even a suspended skateboard are all part of the course.



# Getting Ready to Race

OK, you've completed all the physical training to get your body ready to crush any course and learned the proper techniques to conquer any obstacles. You've steeled your mind to vanquish any fear or trepidation, leaving no lingering doubts that you can reach your goals on race day. With less than a week before the big day, what else do you have to do? Prepare and test your gear!

In the "Gear Guide" on page 26, we covered shoes, clothes, gloves, and any miscellaneous stuff (like earplugs and gaiters) that you may wear on race day. A week before your race, pick out exactly what you plan on wearing. If you're missing anything or have anything new that you want to buy, get it now. Don't wait until the night before the race to go shopping, and absolutely don't break in new shoes during a race (or be prepared for a visit from the blister fairy)!

A grayscale photograph of a person in athletic wear crawling through a rocky obstacle course. The person is wearing a white cap and is positioned in the middle ground, leaning forward on their hands and knees. The course is composed of large, light-colored rocks and is bordered by wooden posts connected by white tape. The background shows a dense forest of trees and foliage. The overall scene is dimly lit, giving it a somber and challenging atmosphere.

**| PART 4:  
APPENDIX**

# Prep Program Exercises

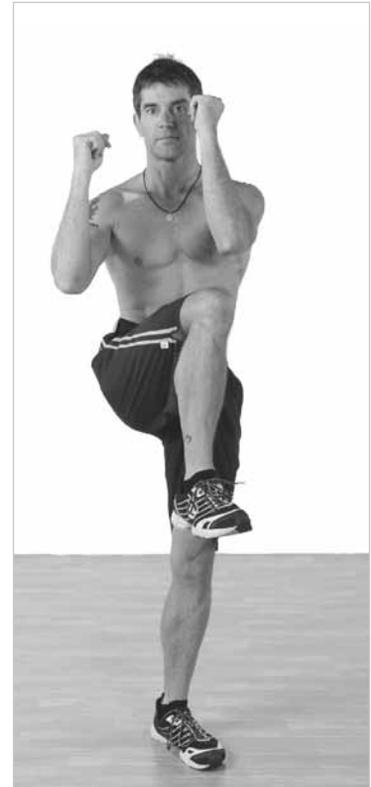
## Marching Twist



**1** Stand tall with your feet shoulder-width apart. Bring your arms in front of you and bend your elbows 90 degrees.

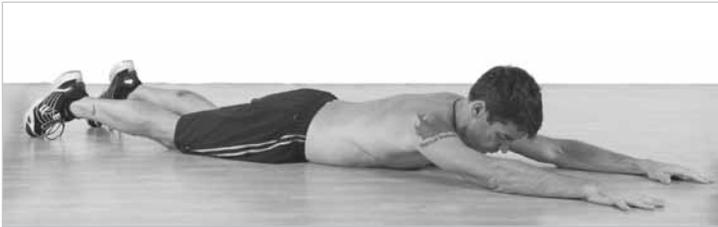


**2** Twist your torso to the right and raise your left knee to your right elbow.



**3** Repeat with your right knee and left elbow. A little hop with the bottom foot helps you keep your momentum going from leg to leg.

## Superman



**1** Lying face down on your stomach, extend your arms directly out in front of you and your legs behind you. Keep your knees straight as if you were flying.

**2** In a slow and controlled manner, contract your erector spinae and raise your arms and legs about 6 to 8 inches off the floor. Hold for 5 seconds.

Lower slowly back to starting position.

## Bird Dog



**1** Get on your hands and knees with your legs bent 90 degrees, knees under your hips, toes on the floor, and your hands on the floor directly below your shoulders. Keep your head and spine neutral; do not let your head lift or sag. Contract your abdominal muscles to prevent your back from sagging; keep your back flat from shoulders to butt for the entire exercise.

**2** In one slow and controlled motion, simultaneously raise your right leg and left arm until they're on the same flat plane as your back. Your leg should be parallel to the ground, not raised above your hip; your arm should extend directly out from your shoulder and your biceps should be level with your ear. Hold this position for 3 to 5 seconds and then slowly lower your arm and leg back to starting position.



That's 1 rep. Switch sides and repeat.

## Jumping Muscle-Up



This is an advanced version of the Jumping Pull-Up (page 78). Pulling your chin up to a bar, door, or top of a wall is good, but getting your chest up that high is even better. This move takes a lot of strength and coordination to pull off, but don't get discouraged. Once you learn to explode upward and harness all your momentum to make the transition from pulling with your arms to pushing upward, you'll only get better. Keep trying; this is an important skill to master for scaling walls easily.

Performing a jumping muscle-up starts out just like the jumping pull-up: Stand below the bar, arms raised, hands open, bent at the waist, and knees slightly bent in a squat position. Forcefully jump straight up and grab the bar using every bit of momentum to pull your waist up to the bar. This will require an initial pull-up movement where you pull your body up using the large muscles of your upper back until the bar is just below your shoulders. When the bar reaches mid-chest, flare your elbows out on each side of your body and press your hands downward on the bar, extending your elbows to bring your waist up to the bar. Leaning your upper body slightly over the bar will help you extend your elbows and reach the top position of a jumping muscle-up.

Tip: Make sure your momentum is going straight up by standing about 6 inches back from directly under the bar; any swing forward with your legs below the bar will make it exponentially more difficult on your upper body to get you up over the top!



# Warm-Ups & Stretches

Since you'll be pushing, pressing, and twisting your body during the workouts, it's very important to warm up before you stretch. Stretching prior to warming up can cause more damage than good to muscles, ligaments, and joints. When your muscles are cold, they're far less pliable and you don't receive any benefit from stretching prior to warming up. In this section are some dynamic warm-ups that'll get your heart rate up, loosen tight muscles, and prepare you for your workout.

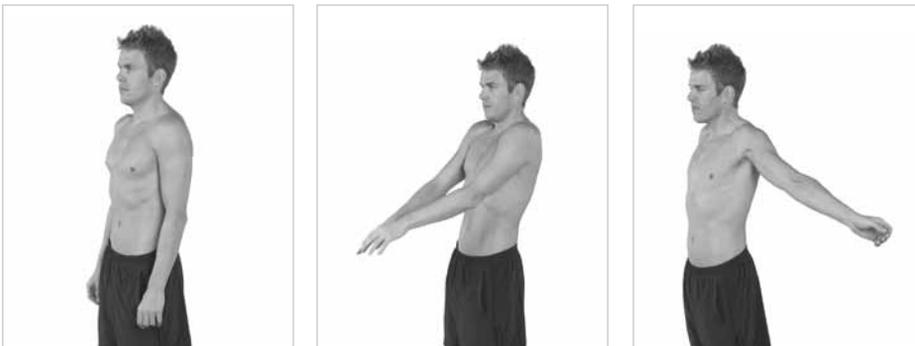
After your workout, stretching will help you reduce soreness from the workout, increase range of motion and flexibility within a joint or muscle, and prepare your body for any future workouts. Stretching immediately post-exercise while your muscles are still warm allows your muscles to return to their full range of motion (which gives you more flexibility gains) and reduces the chance of injury or fatigue in the hours or days after an intense workout.

It's important to remember that even when you're warm and loose, you should never "bounce" during stretching. Keep your movements slow and controlled. The stretches in this section should be performed

in order to optimize your recovery. Remember to exhale as you perform every deep stretch and rest 30 seconds in between each stretch.

## Warm-Ups

### Arm Circle



**1** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.

**2–3** Move both arms in a complete circle forward 5 times and then backward 5 times.

### Lumber Jack

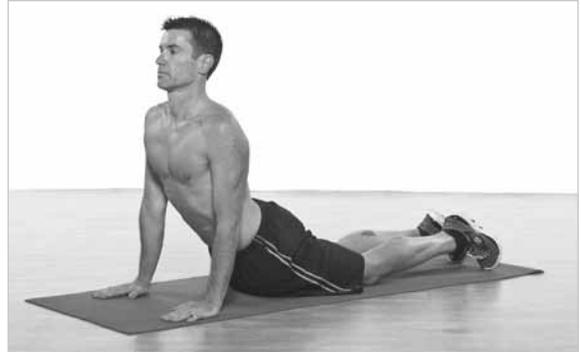


**1** Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and extend your hands overhead with elbows locked, fingers interlocked, and palms up.

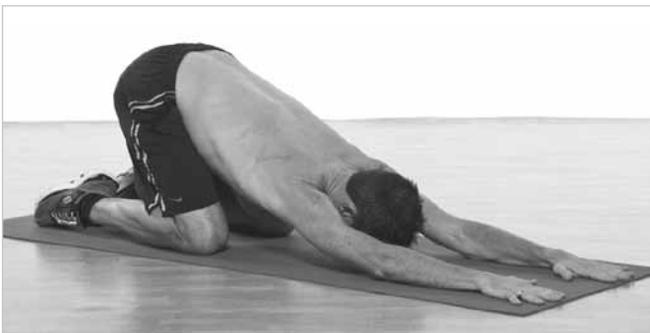
**2** Bend forward at the waist and try to put your hands on the ground (like you're chopping wood). Raise up and repeat.

## Cobra

Lying on your stomach, place your hands directly under your shoulders with your fingers facing forward and straighten your legs and point your toes. Exhale and engage your core while lifting your chest off the floor and pushing your hips gently into the floor. Your arms help guide you through the movement, and your elbows should remain slightly bent at the top of the extension and your hips should remain in contact with the mat. Hold the up position for 15 to 30 seconds and then gently roll your upper body back to the floor. Hold for 30 seconds.



## Child's Pose



From a kneeling position, sit your buttocks back on your calves then lean forward and place your lower torso on your thighs. Extend your arms directly out in front of you, parallel to each other, and lower your chest toward the floor. Reach your arms as far forward as you can and rest your forearms and hands flat on the floor. Hold for 30 seconds.

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# About the Author

**Brett Stewart** is an endurance athlete and personal trainer residing in Phoenix, Arizona. An adrenaline junkie, Brett is an Ironman triathlete, ultramarathoner, and rabid obstacle racer. A proud father, husband, son, and brother, Brett has written numerous fitness books including *7 Weeks to a Triathlon*, *7 Weeks to Getting Ripped*, and *Ultimate Jump Rope Workouts*. He can be found online at [www.7weekstofitness.com](http://www.7weekstofitness.com).

