

Dragon Gym
Mixed Martial Arts
Program

Student Manual

Stand-Up Fighting
and Conditioning

by
Brian Petty, RKC

Welcome to the Dragon Gym MMA program!

I am providing this manual as part of your registration. I wrote it with only one purpose in mind: *to enable you to make the most progress you are humanly capable of* while you are training in this program.

This manual is about Force+Mind. I want you to make the absolute most of every minute you spend training. My goal is to give you all the information you need to become the best fighter you can be in the shortest period of time. Most importantly, it is about how to best take advantage of the time you have with instructors and training partners. Most of the conditioning is directed towards being performed on your own—preparing to take advantage of class time.

I stress that this is an evolving program and so the Dragon Gym staff welcomes your comments and suggestions. And while treating your instructors with due respect, understand that we are professionally *and* personally concerned about your success—we will always meet a motivated student halfway.

Brian Petty, RKC
Instructor, Dragon Gym MMA program

What does MMA mean?

What is meant by *No Holds Barred* (NHB) and *Mixed Martial Arts* (MMA)?

No Holds Barred (**NHB**) refers to 'any fight that occurs between two or more people in an unregulated setting'. The name probably comes from catch wrestling in which all techniques were allowed, thus *no holds* were *barred* from use in the match. In practice this means self-defense or 'street fighting' and has no rules or referee, at least while the fight is occurring. All true fighting arts as well as newer systems such as JKD and Krav Maga have been designed to address unrestricted NHB situations.

Mixed Martial Arts (**MMA**) generally refers to training or competition in a developing *sport*. MMA is a relatively new term used to describe combat sports which variously blend elements of striking and grappling with fewer restrictions than historically legal. MMA-style training is probably the safest form of physical preparation for a real-life NHB attack. A simple principle of MMA training is to allow the most options while preserving safety. Certain eye and joint attacks, for example, are prohibited in practice.

MMA as a sport is evolving. The various fight leagues (Pride, K1, UFC, IFL, etc.) can be thought of as testing grounds for various combative techniques and styles. Conditioning methods will also continually undergo natural selection. It has rapidly become obvious that Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is the world's most advanced ground fighting style. Striking has been influenced by western boxing and Muay Thai kickboxing especially. The RKC™ system of kettlebell training is revolutionizing conditioning for all athletes.

The **Dragon Gym MMA Class** is held in a *dojang*, a training hall for the traditional Korean martial arts. Please show proper respect for the Dragon Gym and its' members by removing your shoes, bowing before entering and leaving the training area, and refraining from loud or profane language.

The safety of all participants is our chief concern. Do not hesitate at any point to **stop** if you perceive it to be unsafe to continue. Observe all warnings and take all precautions to ensure your own safety and that of your training partners. Please bring appropriate protective gear based on the amount of contact you are willing to participate in. At a minimum, please bring and wear a mouthpiece as needed.

Class will focus on developing combative skills, primarily striking and techniques that blend grappling and striking such as stand-up clinch fighting.

How the Dragon Gym program is set up

The Basic MMA Program includes three classes per week in **stand-up striking**:

MMA Stand-Up Tuesday and Thursday at 6PM, and Saturday from 1-3PM.

The basic MMA program ALSO includes one grappling class per week, **no-gi Jiu-Jitsu**:

Thursday 730PM-830PM

This is a total of five hours per week of instruction. The cost is \$130 per month.

The Advanced MMA Program includes six classes per week **stand-up striking**:

MMA Stand-Up Tuesday and Thursday at 6PM, and Saturday from 1-3PM.

Old School Boxing Conditioning Monday – Wednesday – Friday 5PM-6PM

Plus *ALL* Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu classes:

Monday – Wednesday – Friday 7AM

Tuesday and Thursday Noon

Every weeknight

Saturday 11AM

This offers you almost 20 potential training hours per week. The cost for this program is only \$180 per month until June 30th or maximum class size is reached*; the separate memberships would cost \$345.

*we reserve the right to close the class and withdraw this offer once we reach maximum class size.

Cautions, Precautions, Warning Order

*So you want to be a
fighter?*

Basic Warning Order: Physical Preparation for Full-Contact Fighting

'Training is the *psychological* and *physiological* conditioning of an individual preparing for intense neural and muscular reaction....improper training will result in injuries...training, then, is concerned with the prevention of injuries...'

– Tao of Jeet Kune Do, Bruce Lee (p.27)

Basic MMA Warning Order

Minimum Technique and Conditioning Requirements

Attention prospective and current members of MMA class!

The following will be considered your warning:

- Until you are able to comfortably perform everything all of the techniques, combinations, and conditioning drills listed in good form, do not even consider stand-up free sparring.
- You will be *required* to demonstrate understanding, proficiency, and adequate conditioning before you are safely able to spar. An instructor must certify that you have met the requirements **before** sparring.
- No free stand-up sparring without the APPROVAL and SUPERVISION of the proper instructors.
- NO superpowers during sparring. Secret moves are permissible with instructor approval.
- All training will be conducted with equal time on both right and left leads. No one gets to be selective. Don't let me hear you say that you are "orthodox" or "southpaw" and want to fight the same side always forward. MMA competition and real no-holds-barred street fights DO NOT permit this luxury.
- Class time will be used primarily for instruction and drill. Class time is for teaching, learning, and experience – spend the time conditioning on your own to *prepare for class*.

Read and understand the above. Excuses will not be accepted, including ignorance.

Techniques

Perform basic footwork drills flawlessly, with and without attack/defense:

1. Straight entry and retreat (Step in – step out)
2. Box Step with and without kettlebells
3. Circle Step both directions

Demonstrate the following strikes in the air, against a partner, against the appropriate pads or mitts, and against the heavy bag:

1. Jab
2. Lead Straight
3. Cross (Rear Straight)
4. Lateral Elbow
5. Orthodox Hook
6. Upward Elbow
7. Orthodox Uppercut
8. Straight Knee (Thrusting forward)
9. Oblique/Scoop Kick
10. Round Knee (patterned after Thai Round Kick)
11. Thai/Round Kick (delivered with the shin)
12. Front Kick/Foot Jab

Perform the following combinations against all targets (pads, bag, and opponent) consistently and smoothly:

1. Lead Straight – Cross
2. Jab/Step – Jab/Step – Cross
3. Lead – Uppercut
4. Lead – Hook
5. Lead – Cross – Uppercut
6. Lead – Cross Hook

7. Foot Jab – Rear Leg Thai/Round Kick
8. Lead Straight – Cross – Rear Knee (end in opposite lead)
9. Lead Straight – Cross – Rear Leg Thai/Round Kick
10. Rear Leg Oblique Kick – Lead Straight – Cross
11. Front Leg Thai Kick – Rear Leg Thai Kick

Conditioning

Why address conditioning? (All-encompassing, not just endurance) – better term is athlete preparation. You should be very specific about the demands you will likely face and prepare yourself in every way for them. All aspects of conditioning have *some* relevance. All types of physical training that improve strength, endurance, range of motion, agility, and so on can be somewhat useful to a fighter. Fitness generally decreases injuries, improves the quality of training, and augments technique. From the point of view of this program, the first and most important thing is that you reach a fitness level that enables you to train steadily for an hour of striking. Keep in mind that this is far **less** taxing than an equivalent amount of time grappling.

Anyone new to stand-up fighting generally has one or more of the following weaknesses that need to be addressed:

- Feet, ankles, and calves – lack stability and strength/power-endurance for footwork
- Wrists – inability to stabilize in position for bare-knuckle strike
- Shoulder stabilization and/or mobility – especially difficulty locking the shoulder blade in place while punching
- Hamstrings – strength and ROM issues along with low back pain

All of these will be addressed by the most basic exercises: plank, two hand swing, jump rope, and footwork drills.

Whenever possible you should work on the following items with the goal of making them apparently effortless and technically perfect. That is, work on them every day until you are the best in the world, and then every other day at that point.

1. Two Hand Kettlebell Swing

Goal is five sets of 20 with appropriate weight bell (16kg – 24kg – 32kg)

2. Plank

Goal is three sets of 30 seconds standard, 1 set of 30 sec each arm. These five sets take only 2 and ½ minutes of stability work, creating full-body tension.

3. Jump rope and footwork drills

Five two minute rounds – :60 sec pattern on the footwork diagram, :60 sec rope jumping fast pace; rest 30 seconds in between – use a timer!

4. Technique Drills

Pick one technique or combination; repeat it in mirror watching carefully for one minute, then one minute on bag, then in mirror again. Try to teach yourself the movements. Always more mirror work than bag work!

What will be expected of you:

I expect conscious competence.

Before you can claim to be able to use a technique, I expect you to be able to perform it in the air, against a bag, and against a person. I expect that you will be able to explain to me the order you should move in and show me what is supposed to be happening at a slow speed, including telling me what part of you is impacting what part of your opponent and what damage you expect to be able to inflict. To understand you must be able to demonstrate and explain, out loud, in words, what you are doing.

Principles behind this style of stand-up training and fighting

Basic Principles:

- Conservative – Think conservative everything all the time. Bare-knuckle, any single mistake can have devastating consequences. In standard boxing most trainers and the use of gloves *promote* risk-taking; this system is designed to minimize exposure.
- Principle-based – There are similar concepts and body mechanics throughout; there is no “higher level” except mastery of basics.
- Designed for bare-knuckle first – this style can always be used in the ring but is primarily meant for use without protection. Training and fighting are different without equipment or rules, and even with the limited versions of MMA.
- Technique is primary. Mastery of technique is the only way to confidently succeed. Conditioning and strength are ways of being able to continue to use good technique, not ways around it.
- Distance control is crucial. The mark of a successful MMA fighter is not only the ability to *fight* at all ranges but to *manipulate* range to his advantage.
- All power comes from the ground. Everything depends on footwork. This is the main tool of distancing in stand-up fighting, but more importantly it is a common vulnerability: good footwork means everywhere and all the time, in all environments, and that doesn’t deteriorate when you are fatigued or injured. Footwork training may be boring but it is *essential*.
- Hip and leg drive are the source of all meaningful power
- Techniques are physically and psychologically aggressive
- Conditioning and body hardening are heavily emphasized

‘Training is the psychological and physiological conditioning of an individual preparing for intense neural and muscular reaction...improper training will result in injuries...training, then, is concerned with the prevention of injuries...’ (Tao of JKD, Bruce Lee, p.27)

Skill Training Checklist

Continually check the following:

Hands UP in a defensive “ready” position, near the head, arms vertical and tight to body protecting the ribs.

Stable base. Both feet should be on the ground, legs bent at all times but not flat-footed. Shuffle on the balls of your feet, keeping your back heel slightly elevated.

Do not stand square to your opponent, even a heavy bag; this offers too many potential targets to your adversary. You should be at about a 45 degree angle with your lead hand and foot closer to your target.

Stay loose: being precise is not the same as being tense or moving like a robot. Pure muscular strength is not much help; learn to conserve your energy and “throw” punches rather than pushing them. Loose means not fighting against your self – this is different than being floppy or overly relaxed, but it recognizes that muscle tension is only useful at the moment of impact.

Be precise: know where you are punching and strive for accuracy. Look where you are punching – especially when using a jab or cross, look down your arm as if it were a gun sight. Do not hit just anywhere – pick a target, look at it, and adjust your punches accordingly. Keep your head in line with your body, chin tucked.

Learn to focus when fatigued: this is the time you should concentrate on form the most, and not allow yourself to become sloppy. There is no excuse for carelessness. If you continue to repeat techniques carelessly you are practicing and ingraining mistakes.

Train yourself to use both sides equally. Anything you do with one hand forward, practice with the other side an equal amount of time or repetitions.

Careful drill – means repetitively performing the techniques in front of a mirror or coach, always attempting to produce a motion or position closer to the ideal. Careful drill is a time to ‘automate checklists’ so that once nerves kick in you will be accustomed to performing that skill set without conscious thought. Careful drill means that going through the motions is not enough – you must be trying to do better every time.

The most basic workout format:

1. 20xKB Two Hand **Swing**
2. 20xTire **Rotation**
3. **Plank** – 30 seconds static hold or 10 reps floating plank
4. 20xAlternating Straight **Punch** from neutral
(Use two hand shove if you have no damn idea what you are doing or your body is not at all accustomed to shock – show on bag and person)

Do *nothing but this* for conditioning until you are comfortable and beginning to display proficiency, meaning:

1. You are able to perform all 20 swings with an appropriate weight 'bell in perfect form displaying a solid understanding of explosive leg extension and safe lifting technique.
2. You are able to perform all 20 tire rotations showing that you are driving motion from the ball of your foot to transfer force through your body, and that you are able to align and lock your hips and shoulders, distinguishing between twisting and rotating; also able to stabilize appropriate weight tire with good posture, shoulders fixed, arms tight to body, adequate grip
3. Plank is flawless to the observer; body can be held motionless and rock hard for 30 seconds immediately after hard effort without visible distress. 'Tough Love' is appropriate here if you have a training partner.
4. All punches are visually similar (ideally identical), sequence always begins from foot driving into ground, tension only appears at appropriate times, striking surface consistently and correctly meets a variety of targets with no damage to hand.

How to modify this workout:

Two Hand Swing: a heavier 'bell can be used. Two Hand Swings should remain in every training program. Can be changed sometimes to other speed lifts, particularly the snatch.

Standard Tire Rotations can be switched to over- or under-8s, a kind of vertical figure 8 pattern that involves rotating the hips as well as changing level so that one side of the body drives under or over. Other rotational exercises include:

Wood Chops can be performed with rubber tubing.

The Full-Contact Twist allows for the greatest resistance.

The next phase after plank itself is to change the number of bases you balance on:

1. Static plank (optionally on balance board)
2. Single Arm Plank
3. Floating Plank
4. T-Rotation
5. Superman

Any combination of punches can be thrown after the first three drills to complete each set. So the base workout looks like this:

1. 20xKB Two Hand **Swing**
2. 20xTire **Rotation**
3. **Plank** – 30 seconds static hold or 10 reps floating plank
4. 20xAlternating Straight **Punch** from neutral

Now let's assume that you satisfy the criteria for each of these four parts. You feel comfortable performing two hand swings with an appropriate 'bell, you are rotating by driving your weight from the ball of your foot keeping your torso locked to your hips, you can hold a static plank easily for 30 seconds, and all of your punches look and feel consistent and powerful. Your next steps might be:

1. 10xLeft Single Hand Swing or High Pull
 2. 10xTire Rotation
 3. 30 seconds Single Arm Plank, left
 4. 10xJab to heavy bag in left lead
- Repeat on the right (other lead)
Repeat both sides with *lead straight* instead of jab
Repeat all four rounds *in the mirror* instead of on heavy bag

As you learn more techniques you can incorporate them:

1. 5xSnatch each arm
2. 10xFull-Contact Twist
3. 10xT-Rotation
4. 10xLead – Cross to mirror, then repeat on heavy bag