



WHAT'S NEW IN WARM-UPS & STRETCHING

Stretching and warm-ups for kickboxing

BY PETER LEWIS

There are a lot of articles on warm-ups and stretching and I expect that most of you are familiar with the basics. I do not want to waste your time so I am going to assume that you already have a routine as part of your training or prefight preparation. I am also going to assume that you know why you should stretch and the basic science behind it.

If this is not the case, do not worry or be shy. Now is the time for some audience participation. With modern technology information transfer is easy and cheap. Just contact via the editor (Jarrah@blitzmag.com.au) and I will email you some articles on stretching from my database.

So what's new? I think a significant addition to warm-ups and stretching at many clubs has been a major change towards including exercises for the back in many routines. There is a lot more awareness about what exercises are bad and classes are including exercises that are healthy for the back. A good example is the McKenzie extension exercise; known in Yoga as the cobra. It is like the push-up position but you keep your belly on the floor and push up with the arms while keeping the back muscles relaxed.

Another good exercise is the lumbar rotation

stretch. Lying on the back with the arms out sideways you roll the hips and legs from one side to the other. An advanced form of this is that you keep the legs straight and reach with the right foot towards the left hand and then reverse sides. Both exercises are good for mild lumbar disc bulges, which of course are very common. The second exercise gives a good hamstring stretch at the same time.

Abdominal strengthening exercises have also improved. The crazy type of exercises such as the bilateral straight leg raise are generally a thing of the past. Most people know how to do a good crunch. Pilates exercises are making their way into kickboxing warm-ups too. You may be doing them without realising these exercises are from Pilates. Examples include resting on your elbows and the balls of the feet with the back straight and holding it. You can then raise one foot and the opposite arm so that you are balancing while holding the arm, leg and back straight.

I am especially aware of looking after the spine at my school where I teach a 'master class' for men in the 50ish age bracket. The class has proven popular with an incredibly

loyal following. I recommend more clubs should offer something like it. It takes a while to build up, but I think it is really important to look after this age group. You have to be very careful about what exercises you do. The 'boys' love their sparring but we go light to the head. We also do a lot of Pilates in this class.

Many people want to know how to do the splits. Here are some facts...

- Most men will never be able to do the true, side splits.
- This is not due to tendon or muscle tightness. It is the shape of our hips.
- You can still kick very high even if you can't do the splits.
- Flexibility is not the key to kicking high. Strength, balance and technique are more important.

I have spent the last few weeks training in Thailand with 'Sifu'. He is neither young nor flexible but can still deliver devastatingly powerful high kicks. But he is a freak.

Nevertheless it is a real advantage if you are flexible and want to do high kicks. There is a small percentage of students who are naturally flexible because they are hypermobile. They are the ones who will be able to do the splits. You can identify them because when you bend their wrist forwards the thumb can bend all the way down to the front of the forearm. These students are nearly double jointed. In most normal men the thumb will only get to about 4–6cm from the forearm. I have discovered that if one of these hypermobile students walks into your club you should really look after them.



Kicking comes easily to them and they can go a long way in the sport and many will become instructors. They can do all the trick kicks and they can kick with 'style'.

What you have to watch out for is that these hypermobile students are easily injured. Their joints are less stable and they frequently twist their ankles and tear the ligaments and the menisci in their knees. They should avoid exercises where they are jumping and landing on one leg. Especially volleyball and playing in the football ruck. Also bad for them is indoor soccer, which involves a lot of twisting and rotating of knees and ankles. This is especially true if your surname is Longinidis. Most people do not know that Stan had more serious injuries from indoor soccer than he did in his whole kickboxing career.

Stretching is usually good in moderation but if you overdo it you can end up with really tight muscles that then have to be rested for several days. This is frustrating and slows your progress.

Class time is precious, so be analytical about the time you allocate to each muscle group in your warm-up. What are the muscles that I treat from tears in kickboxing that may have been prevented by stretching? The answer is mainly hamstrings. I see a few groins or adductors. Also, some hip flexors. You get some calf tears but I do not think that they would usually be prevented by stretching anyway.

The next question is, what muscles should I stretch to improve performance during kickboxing? Probably the most neglected group is the hip flexor. Many people do not realise that tight hip flexors lead to poor hip position and posture during your kick, with the pelvis rotated forward. This not only reduces the height of your kick but also the power.

Other muscles that should be stretched for performance include the hamstrings, groin, waist and lower back. **IK**

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DR PETER LEWIS

Dr Lewis is internationally recognised as a medical authority in the martial arts field. He has also been studying and teaching martial arts for 34 years.

Dr Lewis is best known as a ringside physician. He is often seen on televised shows in many countries. He has worked in 28 cities internationally, 22 of these on World title standard events. He has performed every ringside role, including doctor, referee, judge, rules co-ordinator, timekeeper, commentator, ringside announcer, matchmaker, trainer, cornerman, cutsman and has competed in karate, taekwondo and kung fu. He has had the pleasure and honour of looking after some of the most important fights and fighters in history.

Dr Lewis is also well known as an international lecturer and writer on martial arts medicine. He has consulted at ReCreation Medical Centre for 24 years.

He has also recently established a new clinic at Malvern Martial Arts, which is especially for martial artists. Dr Lewis works with a team including a nurse, physio, chiro, podiatrist, psychologist, exercise physiologist, dietician and masseurs who all have extensive experience in martial arts.

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