

The Fighter Pullup

By Pavel

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One look at Mike Tyson's back when he punched should make it obvious how important the lats are to a fighter. The lat provides a connection between your arm and the rest of your body at the moment of the punch's impact. If the "armpit muscle" is not activated you cannot put your mass behind the punch and your shoulder is asking for trouble.

The pullup is the logical choice of an exercise to strengthen your lats. If you ask an experienced bodybuilder how to work the latissimus most thoroughly he will tell you to look up, force your chest open, and draw your shoulder blades together on the top of the pullup. This may be okay for bodybuilders, but what does this have to do with fighting? You move in the ring in what gymnasts call "the hollow position" –the scapulae flared and the chest caved in. This is the way you should finish your pullups. Look straight ahead and hunch over the bar. Touch your neck or upper chest to the bar to make sure there is no question that you have completed the rep. Lower yourself under complete

control and pause momentarily with your arms fully straight before going for another rep.



Pavel demonstrates the fighter pullup at a course at the US Marine Corps base in San Diego.

*Photo courtesy
TonyBlauer.com*

Here is a powerful Russian pullup program adaptable to any level of ability.

The 5RM Russian Pullup Program

Day 1	5, 4, 3, 2, 1
Day 2	5, 4, 3, 2, 2
Day 3	5, 4, 3, 3, 2
Day 4	5, 4, 4, 3, 2
Day 5	5, 5, 4, 3, 2
Day 6	off
Day 7	6, 5, 4, 3, 2
Day 8	6, 5, 4, 3, 3
Day 9	6, 5, 4, 4, 3
Day 10	6, 5, 5, 4, 3
Day 11	6, 6, 5, 4, 3
Day 12	off
Day 13	7, 6, 5, 4, 3
Day 14	7, 6, 5, 4, 4
Day 15	7, 6, 5, 5, 4
Day 16	7, 6, 6, 5, 4
Day 17	7, 7, 6, 5, 4
Day 18	off
Day 19	8, 7, 6, 5, 4
Day 20	8, 7, 6, 5, 5
Day 21	8, 7, 6, 6, 5
Day 22	8, 7, 7, 6, 5
Day 23	8, 8, 7, 6, 5
Day 24	off
Day 25	9, 8, 7, 6, 5
Day 26	9, 8, 7, 6, 6
Day 27	9, 8, 7, 7, 6
Day 28	9, 8, 8, 7, 6
Day 29	9, 9, 8, 7, 6
Day 30	off

You start with an all-out set and then cut a rep in each consecutive set for a total of five sets. The next day add a rep to the last set. Then a rep to the set before that, etc. The system is intended to be used for four weeks. In the end of the month take two or three days off and then test yourself. It is not unusual to up the reps 2.5-3 times. In other words, you are likely to end up cranking out 12-15 reps if you started with 5. If you can already do between 6 and 12 reps start the program with the first day your PR shows up. For instance, if your max is 6 pullups start with Day 7; if your max is 8 start with Day 19.

If you run into a snag with this routine, back off a week and build up again. If you hit the wall again switch to another routine.

Here is how the program applies to those who currently max at three pullups. The below is also excellent for anyone whose goal is pure strength rather than reps; just hang a kettlebell or a barbell plate on your waist to bring the reps down to three.

The 3RM Russian Pullup Program

Day 1	3, 2, 1, 1
Day 2	3, 2, 1, 1
Day 3	3, 2, 2, 1
Day 4	3, 3, 2, 1
Day 5	4, 3, 2, 1
Day 6	off
Day 7	4, 3, 2, 1, 1
Day 8	4, 3, 2, 2, 1
Day 9	4, 3, 3, 2, 1
Day 10	4, 4, 3, 2, 1
Day 11	5, 4, 3, 2, 1
Day 12	off

Now you are ready to move up to the 5RM program.

For a fighter capable of 15 pullups the routine would look like this:

The 15RM Russian Pullup Program

Day 1	15RMx12, 10, 8, 6, 4
Day 2	15RMx12, 10, 8, 6, 6
Day 3	15RMx12, 10, 8, 8, 6
Day 4	15RMx12, 10, 10, 8, 6
Day 5	15RMx12, 12, 10, 8, 6
Day 6	off
Day 7	15RMx14, etc.

A stud with a 25-pullup max would do it slightly differently:

The 25RM Russian Pullup Program

Day 1	25RMx20, 16, 12, 8, 4
Day 2	25RMx20, 16, 12, 8, 8
Day 3	25RMx20, 16, 12, 12, 8
Day 4	25RMx20, 16, 16, 12, 8
Day 5	25RMx20, 20, 16, 12, 8
Day 6	off
Day 7	25RMx22, etc.

You can see that the higher the RM, the quicker the reps drop off. The reason is simple. You should have no problem doing four reps a few minutes after 5RMx5. But x24 is not going to happen after an all-out set of 25. The higher the reps, the greater the fatigue. Therefore you need to start more reps down from your rep-max and cut the reps more between sets. Experiment. An extra day of rest here and there is also in order; the recovery from sets of fifteen or twenty is not nearly as quick as from fives and triples.

Yakov Zobnin from Siberia, the Heavyweight World Champion in Kyokushinkai, "the world's strongest karate", stands over 6'6" and tops the scale at 220 pounds. In spite of his basketball height and exhausting full contact training, the karateka maxes out at twenty-five strict pullups. What is your excuse?

Power to you!

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