

Strength Medicine

Staying In The Fight While Injured

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Comrades,

It is a fact of life that during your time in Special Operations you will become injured in some way, shape, or form. Many operators simply press on, too afraid to see the doctor for fear of being taken off Jump or Dive status. Instead they press on. God bless them for such determination, but it doesn't have to be that way! Once again, High Tension Techniques and a sound understanding of the human body come to the rescue.

The reason I found Pavel and high-tension techniques in the first place was because of an injury to my back and hip. Since then I have managed to fix those and then I injured my rotator cuff. I fixed that with Kettlebells and then most recently I have injured my elbow because of an over zealous arm bar. When it rains it pours!

But the point of this article is that even when injured, you can continue to train and you can most certainly fight. The "how" implied by that statement has been answered by Pavel and his fabulous Russian training methods which stem from an unparalleled knowledge of the human body.

On my last deployment I had the opportunity to help a number of operators overcome their injuries. The rest of this article covers their injuries and how to either fix them or train around them. This isn't terribly scientific and fairly generalized so keep in mind that if you are injured, please see a doctor and a physical therapist before striking out on your own. This article is for informational purposes only.

The Rotator Cuff

If you were to ask any group of operators what injuries they currently have, or what body parts are "bad" right now, you would get three answers. Knees, Back, and Shoulders.

In the shoulder, most of the time the injury is to the rotator cuff and typically prevents full range of motion. Most of the time this reduced ROM is in the top of an arm swing. The patient has difficulty raising his arm in front of him, to the side, and to a lesser degree, the rear. They also have a hard time with the bench press. A dead give away is to have the Pt hold his arm in front of him, parallel to the ground and have him rotate his thumb down in the thumbs down sign. Typically, like me, there will be either intense pain or great difficulty in doing this. Another good sign is pain and difficulty sleeping on your stomach with arms folded under your head. If this is the case, let me share with you a few tips that got me back in shape in about two months. These techniques also worked wonders for several other operators who I had up and running in a matter of days and well into recovery by the time I left.

Shoulder Dislocates: Hold a bungee cord in front of you, arms hanging. Lock your elbows and grip the cord with all your might. Now rotate your arms up, overhead, and back behind you. As you reach the top and start to feel that familiar pain, spread your arms wider (stretching the bungee) while staying locked out. Reverse to the start position. Do 3-5 reps 3-5 times through out the day.

Turkish Getups: You'll have to refer to Pavel's works for instructions on this one. Be assured though that it works wonders for the shoulder once you have built up some strength with the Shoulder Dislocates. This exercise alone did wonders for me and the rest of the guys I helped out down range.

Pressing: The military press did a hell of a job in keeping my strength up. I performed it with some variations. First, stand with your feet shoulder width apart. Then cock your hip over so that the racked KB and your arm are perched on your lat. Press from there using high tension techniques like crushing the weight, power breathing, etc... Flexing the lat is essential! You won't be able to do as much weight as before the injury, but that's not the point. You just want to maintain some strength training there, not set a record. In the early stages of recovery when

weight is almost impossible, do this drill with bands or bungees before moving up to small DBs and then KBs. This worked very well on a couple of my SEAL comrades.

Range of Motion Drills: I always tried to increase my range of motion by doing joint mobility drills as seen in Super Joints and by pushing certain planes of movement. I would go only to the point of discomfort and then back off. I did 3-5 reps several times through out the day.

Other Shoulder Issues

While I applaud the guys that seek out help and active rehab, I get very frustrated by the ignorant saps who do nothing but complain yet will not allow you to examine them. Even when they do and you suggest changes in their routines to facilitate proper recovery they ignore you! The classic case is the guy who is so obsessed with Bench Pressing that he will never give it up until he drops the bar on his throat. Well good riddance I say, that's natural selection! On the other hand, I do have to find new ways to motivate these types and heal them. It just so happens that Benching with Kettlebells loads the shoulders much differently and therefore removes the strain on the injured ligaments. The Pt is overjoyed because he can still bench and while he's not doing himself any favors, he's not doing any more damage either.

Another important technique lesson to pass on is keeping the shoulders low in everything you do. The only time you should ever shrug your shoulders up is during shrugs! Folks with a shoulder impingement will find this tip most useful.

Back Problems

Bad backs plague operators and it is for no other reason than the influence of bodybuilding and all the rest of the garbage found in fitness magazines these days. You simply cannot ignore the posterior chain of muscles. If you do, well, lower back pain is your reward. How to you fix the problem? Deadlifts, KB Swings, and KB Snatches!

Most guys seem to shy away from snatches, but teach them proper deadlifts and swings and you have taught a man to fish! Also be sure to properly stretch the hip flexors. Teaching proper pelvic alignment goes along way to help and pts feel so much better after stretching the hip flexors that they do it all the time. It's also a good idea to back all this up with pull-ups and hanging from a bar to decompress the spine. Use contrast breathing and twisting motions to help loosen things up and you will have one happy camper!

Knees

How many times have you heard someone say, "I can't do that, I have bad knees"? If I had a nickel for every time I heard that nonsense! Have these folks show you their squatting technique and suddenly it all becomes clear. Some of these folks' form is so bad I stopped them before they could do a second rep!

The key to restoring the operators full ROM in the knee lies in a multi-faceted approach. To do this you need to consider the pelvic alignment, hips, knees, and ankles.

First, loosen him up by doing a full compliment of joint mobility drills from Super Joints. Assist him on the squats so that the shins are absolutely vertical.

Next, teach him box squats. About mid way through the lesson, stop and teach him how to stretch the hip flexors. Then when he has the hang of it and is getting much deeper ROM, incorporate contrast breathing. Pay attention to the ankle ROM and stretching the calves as well.

Then put it all together with some light weight squats (45-100lbs) and in two days you will have restored the man. Now teach him the right way to squat and send him on his way! Proper biomechanics folks, that's usually all it takes.

Elbows

As I have mentioned, I injured my elbow while grappling. It's a heck of a thing because the elbow is so involved in everything we do. Super Joints keeps it at bay, but its still always there. I am now seeking help from a friend of mine who is a Physical Therapist. In the meantime, Pavel has come to the rescue once again with a great tip. Flex the lat very hard!

For example, the other day I was itching to do a set of one-arm pushups. The combination of weight and the rotational stress (so similar to the mechanism of injury) were too much to bear and I collapsed with an outburst and a lot of four letter words. Pavel's advice echoing in my head, I got back into the start position and tried again. This time I really concentrated on ALL of the high-

tension techniques, and especially flexing the lat. It was like magic! Just as he said, the joint was “unloaded” by this contraction and I knocked out a solid five reps!

This tip works just as well for punching with shoulder and elbow injuries too. Be sure to add it to your arsenal!

In General

Over the last two years I have learned much about the applications of high-tension techniques, from shooting with one arm due to injury to rehabilitating fellow operators, to improving my deadlift. There is no end to the long list of applications. Pavel teaches that if you sustain an injury, especially to a joint, you are in fact capable of carrying on by flexing the muscles around the joint or injury. Doing so is essentially shoring up support around it. This works very well so it will do you well to remember this.

In The End

In the end, I have been shown yet another amazing benefit of Kettlebells and the training techniques surrounding them. This is real health and fitness! Lets see you get this kind of benefit from your treadmill or Ab Roller!

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