

MAN:MACHINE

HAVING SWEATED AWAY HIS HEIGHT, JOE TACKLED THE MINI METRO TYRE

Forking out for a gym membership can be costly. And not just in a financial sense. For all the Globo Gym-esque gadgetry and TV-toting treadmills on offer, today's average 9-5er (hunched, paunchy and better equipped at button pressing than bench pressing) is failing his primal instincts.

Or, at least, that's according to personal trainer Tim Walker, the man behind Warrior Workout, a hardcore outdoor training programme based in the shadow of London's Square Mile: "Whether you're sprinting or lugging large objects around, these are the traits that shaped our hunter-gatherer ancestors into muscular figures, and it's this explosive fitness that has largely been lost with white-collar work."

Aiming to go back to basics, I become the latest desk slave to try Walker's hardcore fitness regime...

THE TRAUMATIC TRACTOR TYRE LIFTS

Following a warm-up, I'm asked to flip a tractor tyre over, in one quick, fluid movement. The trick is to keep your feet as close to the tyre as possible. Harnessing energy in a smaller area will give you the power to elevate upwards with both power and balance. Once the tyre is upright, I use whatever I can to topple it over – shoulder, chest, forehead, nose. Dispiritingly, once I've succeeded, my coach asks me to complete the feat 10 times in a row.

EXTREME CARDIO BY HARNESSSED SPRINTS

Think the tyre lift is tough? Try having a tyre harnessed to your midriff as you attempt to sprint away, which is what I'm asked to do when I'm taken to another tyre, albeit regular size this time, and harnessed

to it. The key to these 20-metre bursts, I'm told, is not to focus on the load you're lugging but rather the initial burst ahead.

Aside from giving you more all-round shape, Walker believes these weight-loaded runs are more advantageous in that they don't pose the same risks as lengthy cardio sessions: "The average marathon runner suffers the same aorta trauma as a heart-attack victim would, whereas this sprinting is good for your internal system, and better yet, it doesn't take hours at a time; just a lunch break."

SHOULDER-BOOST SLEDGEHAMMERS

No doubt aware I'm now as quick of tyres as an embittered RAC repairman, Walker hands me a sledgehammer and walks me back to the rubber tractor ring. The aim is to bring the hammer head over one shoulder, sliding one hand down the handle as the hammer head drops and, as it bounces off the tyre, catch the head, then throw it back over my shoulder and repeat.

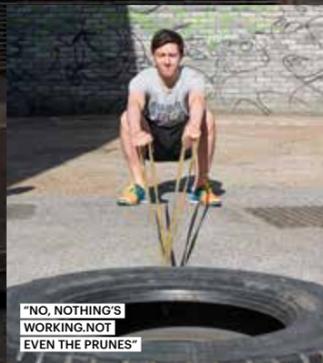
"I once chopped wood for a pittance while working on a farm," says Walker, "so I know this movement is as good as any for working your shoulders and arms – even your chest."

ARM-INFLATING ROPE CHIN-UPS

"The average man can't do any more chin-ups than a 10-year-old can," says Walker, who views this exercise as a benchmark of physical prowess, and so he has fixed a pair of bulky ropes to the underside of an outside staircase. As I attempt to pull myself up, I realise that I had forgotten just how tough the process is, especially with the ropes in either hand forcing you to put an equal amount of power into both arms.



"DON'T! I'M TICKLISH!"



"NO, NOTHING'S WORKING. NOT EVEN THE PRUNES"

"THIS SHAPED OUR HUNTER-GATHERER ANCESTORS INTO MUSCULAR FIGURES"

"Great," says Walker after I complete one lift, "now we can try one that isn't empty." As crushing a sentence as I'm ever likely to hear. The small amount of liquid inside the next container makes it a great deal harder to lift, but for good reason: dealing with balance forces good posture, a recurring theme in the programme. "Most city workers possess terrible posture," says Walker. "They're cramped-up, causing them to look down a lot. People are happier when they have their head held high." Mindful I'm one wrong step from having two broken feet, I choose to smile, saving my nod of agreement until the keg is safely on the ground.

I immediately have a newfound respect for playground dwellers.

POWERLIFTING FOR MASOCHISTS

The toughest task of them all, however, is weightlifting using a beer barrel. The idea is to lift the keg from the floor and on to my paunch for five seconds. I then have to heave it above my head and hold for a further five seconds. Nothing short of heroic, I tell myself.

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PHOTOGRAPHS: SEBASTIEN DEHESDIN



Gyms are for wimps, according to the man behind the Warrior Workout. Joe Ellison gets his hands dirty

Fight your spare tyre