**Strength and Conditioning in BJJ**

All the other sports have it, no I’m not talking about cheer leaders, I’m talking about strength and conditioning coaches and specific strength and conditioning programs. But before we can discuss said programs, we have to learn why strength and conditioning is necessary in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.

I’m going to say it right here and now, this probably isn’t the article for practitioners who are looking to use Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu as a fun way of exercise or for self-defense. Though this will undoubtedly help all practitioners, and even if you are doing this great sport as a way to maintain your health and fitness it would not hurt to add strength and conditioning to improve your game. Ultimately this is for those of us who enjoy competing and enjoy winning when we compete. As competitors we have to be strong technically, mentally, and physically. In this post I’m going to give some tips on the latter.

I know what you may be thinking, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is the “gentle art”, and that technique beats strength every time, “give me a lever and I can move the world”. Here’s what I think about that, give Roberto “Cyborg” Abreu a lever and the world is going to be flying through space. Pretty much what I’m saying is, there is a time and a place for using strength in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, and if you have both the technique and the strength nothing can stop you.

So in other sports such as football, wrestling, and such strength and conditioning is focused around fast twitch muscles and explosion; this is especially true in football. Now these muscles are definitely useful and necessary, but in the right circumstances.

Depending on the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu tournament you are training for, and the type of game you use there is a certain kind of training to be implemented. For example, if you prefer to use a submission wrestling type of game plan incorporating takedowns and quick strong movements; you are going to want to use a fast twitch muscle building program.

On the other hand, if you are training for a submission only tournament, or you prefer a long drawn out match in which you wear out your opponent; you may want to work on your slow twitch muscles. These are exercises are more reminiscent of those used by cross country runners or soccer players in which you train your muscles to not exhaust as quickly.

Now our bodies naturally have both fast twitch and slow twitch muscles (it is normally balanced about 50/50). As I said depending on what you are training for you may want to increase the percentages to either the fast twitch or slow twitch muscles. To do so I am including a list of exercises to help increase each:

Fast Twitch:

* Box Jumps
* Jump Squats
* Explosive Pushups
* Medicine Ball Chest Passes
* Hammer and Tire Drills
* Training for 5 to 7 Minute Matches

Slow Twitch:

* Long Runs
* Interval Training
* Pull Ups
* Grip Strength Builders
* Training for 20 Minute Matches

There are also a few muscle groups that are uniquely necessary for the success in our sport. These are muscle groups that are often missed by the stereotypical workout routines, they are the following: Forearms, Neck, Hands, and Hips. These are some great exercises to help build strength in these areas:

* Shrugs
* Head Harness Neck Curls
* Grippers (Crush Grip)
* Mountain Climber Pull Ups
* Belt Pull Ups
* Hammer Curls
* Revers Curls
* Hip Flexers and Hip Stretches.

On top of these exercises which would be considered the strength part of our program, it is important to make sure you maintain a high level of cardio. Since I have bad knees I mostly leave this to hard rolling in class about four days a week, but when I am preparing for a competition I ramp it up some more. I would avoid the treadmill as it is unnatural and can be hard on the knees, but good alternatives are running outside, the elliptical, and biking.

Always remember that along with your strength and conditioning to maintain flexibility. This is even more important when considering that a large portion of the sport and martial art we practice involves flexibility. This also leads me in to nutrition. I am going to be posting an entire article on nutrition for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, but remember to always replenish your bodies’ energies with complex carb and proteins after training. A good reference to this would be to check out the Gracie Diet, as this is great for our bodies, and it is specifically for Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu practitioners. Rener Gracie is a master in the kitchen and shows some great ways to fuel your body healthily.

What do my fellow practitioners think about strength and conditioning for competition? Are you for or against it? Let us know in the comment section and don’t forget to “like” and “share”!

* Josh Leduc

<http://www.summitstc.com/blog/science-series/bid/183897/The-Science-of-Slow-Twitch-Muscle-Training>

<http://www.parilexx.com/2011/5-preseason-plyometrics-exercises-for-fast-twitch-muscle-fibers/>