

# The **Back Blaster!** **OPERATION SLIM GYM™**

By SSG Ken Weichert **Part 2 of 2**

**RECEIVED**

SSG Weichert,

Hello. You guys are doing a great job with your articles and your DVDs are great! My wife is doing the Intermediate DVD with me a couple of times a week. She shouts, "HOOAH," along with your crew as if she had been doing it for years.

My question is about some good back exercises that I can do in the gym. Any information is greatly appreciated!

—William J., Texas Army National Guard

William,

Thanks for the compliment! This marks the second year that Stephanie and I have been writing for *GX*. It has been quite flattering to receive so many fantastic emails and letters telling us how our articles and DVD workouts have helped people reach their fitness goals! Tell your wife the START Fitness™ team says, "HOOAH!"

Although back and core workouts are among my favorite, it wasn't always the case. While a senior in high school, I broke my back during a regional final football game and was paralyzed for six weeks. My injury sharply ended my dream of playing college sports. After I regained feeling, I began the arduous process of physical therapy. My sessions included back and core recovery and strength-training exercises. I still employ many of the same exercises today.

Whether you are working your back and core muscles for recovery reasons or simply wanting to improve strength and overall posture, I suggest that you incorporate back and core strength training into your workout schedule two to three times per week.

## Let's get started:

### WARM-UP PHASE

- 1. Running in place, or 50 side-straddle-hops** (jumping jacks) (5 – 10 minutes)
- 2. Rotation Exercises** (2 minutes)
- 3. Stretching** (5 – 7 minutes)  
It is advised that you repeat steps 1–3 prior to step 4 in order to be properly warmed-up.
- 4. High Steps** (2 minutes)  
Jogging in place with your hands at least above your shoulders, while your knees lift as high as your hips.

### BUILD-UP PHASE

- 5. Crunches on the ground, or Stability Ball Crunches**
  - Basic: 1 – 15 repetitions
  - Intermediate: 15 – 30 repetitions
  - Advanced: 30 – 60 repetitions

### 6. Pull-ups

**Start Position:** Place your hands on a pull-up bar, arms shoulder-width apart and palms facing away from your body.

**Action:** Pull your body upward until your nose reaches the bar. Return to the start position and repeat the steps.

› **NOTE:** If you cannot perform a complete pull-up, simply hang on the bar for 45 seconds with your arms fully extended with a very slight bend in each elbow.

- Basic: 1 – 2 repetitions
- Intermediate: 3 – 6 repetitions
- Advanced: 7 – 12 repetitions

### 7. Flutter Kick

- Basic: 10 – 20 seconds
- Intermediate: 21 – 40 seconds
- Advanced: 41 – 60 seconds

› **NOTE:** Remember that the lower your legs are po-

sitioned, the more back muscles that you engage for this exercise. Keep your back flat against the floor with your arms supporting the sides of your body. If you experience discomfort in your lower back, raise your legs higher.

### MUSCLE TARGET PHASE

#### 8. Cable Front Pull-down (Lat Pull-down)

**Start Position:** Sit on the bench with good posture with your thighs under the padded supports. Grasp the cable bar with a wide grip and palms facing away from the body.

**Action:** Pull down cable bar to your upper chest. Keep your elbows pointed toward the ground. As you pull down, squeeze your shoulder blades together. Pull down on a slow four count and exhale as you pull. Inhale and count to two as you return the bar to the start position.





› **NOTE:** You will use the same counting and breathing techniques with all of the pulling exercises in this workout. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth during each exercise.

› **WARNING:** Do not jerk your body, lean backwards, pull the bar behind your head or pull lower than your upper chest during this exercise. Perform the actions slowly.

**Formula with Weights**

- Bulk Up: 3 sets of 4 – 6 repetitions each with heavy resistance
- Maintenance Drill: 3 sets of 8 – 12 repetitions each with medium resistance
- Sculpt Down: 3 sets of 15 – 20 repetitions each with light to moderate resistance

**Formula with Tubing**

- Basic: 1 – 10 repetitions
- Intermediate: 11 – 20 repetitions
- Advanced: 21 – 40 repetitions

**9. Cable or Tubing Seated Row**

**Start Position:** Sit on the bench with your knees slightly bent and grasp the cable attachment.

**Action:** Pull cable attachment to your waist, while straightening lower back. Pull shoulders back and push chest forward during contraction. Exhale as you pull the cable attachment toward your body. Inhale as you return your arms to the extended start position. When your arms extend, keep a very slight bend in your elbow. With a straight back, allow your shoulders and lower back to slightly stretch forward. Repeat.

› **NOTE:** Same formulas apply.

**10. Dumbbell or Tubing Bent Over Row**

**Start Position:** With one knee on the bench, kneel over the side, balancing your body on one arm. Keep your back flat by lifting your head up with your eyes looking forward. Your opposite leg will be slightly bent with your foot on the ground. Grasp the dumbbell.

**Action:** Pull dumbbell upward to the side of your body until your upper arm reaches your rib cage. Pull by squeezing your shoulder blades together. Exhale as you pull. Inhale as you extend your arm to the start position. Remember to keep your back flat and your arm slightly bent at the start position. Repeat. Perform the required amount of repetitions, switch sides and continue with your opposite arm.

› **SUGGESTION:** Use low to moderate weight for this exercise in order to maintain proper form for the entire amount of repetitions required.

› **NOTE:** Same formulas apply.

**11. Hamstring Curl**

**Start Position:** Facing bench, stand between bench and lever pads and fix your desired amount of weight. Lie prone on bench with knees just beyond edge of bench, raise your upper body off the bench while keeping your pelvis down and lower legs under lever pads. Once the backs of your legs are under the pad, lower your upper body to the bench and grasp the handles located directly under the bench.

**Action:** Exhale as you raise lever pads to back of thighs by flexing knees. Inhale as your legs lower the lever pad until knees are just slightly bent. Repeat.

› **WARNING:** Do not allow your knees to touch the pad and do not allow your legs to hyperextend.

› **NOTE:** Same formulas apply. This exercise incorporates your hamstrings.

**12. Modified Reverse Fly with Tubing**

**Start Position:** In a standing position, hold a short piece of tubing (SPRI Ultra-tube™) or a long piece folded in half (SPRI Xertube™) with your arms parallel and fully extended at shoulder level with your palms facing inward.

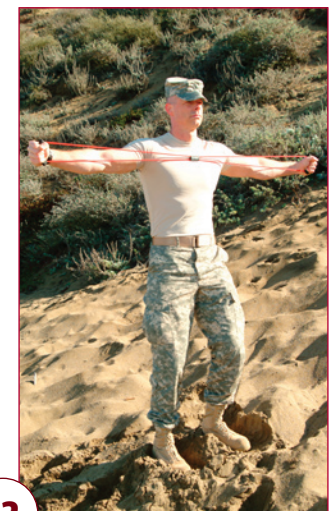
**Action:** Exhale as you pull outward and backwards by squeezing your shoulder blades together until your arms line up with your back and you look like the letter “T.” Inhale as you slowly return to the start position. Repeat.

› **NOTE:** This can be performed with cables by crossing your arms slightly, grasping the single cable attachments and performing the same actions with low weight.

- Basic: 1 – 5 repetitions
- Intermediate: 6 – 15 repetitions
- Advanced: 16 – 30 repetitions



10



12



**13. Modified Plank Single Arm Cable Pull**

› **NOTE:** "This is my favorite exercise in this workout!"

**Start Position:** Balance your body on your forearms and feet (beginners at knees) with your back forming a straight line. Keep your feet together or up to 12 inches apart. Grasp the single cable attachment or tubing handle with your palm facing the ground.

**Action:** Like the "lat pull-down" described earlier, exhale as you pull handle down to your upper chest. Inhale as you slowly return to the start position and repeat.

› **NOTE:** Keep your rear-end and stomach muscles firm for stability during this exercise. Perform the actions slowly. Do not allow your back to sag or sway in the middle. Maintain proper form at all times.

- Basic: 1 – 3 repetitions
- Intermediate: 4 – 8 repetitions
- Advanced: 9 – 15 repetitions

**14. Superman / Superwoman**

- Basic: 5 – 10 repetitions
- Intermediate: 11 – 30 repetitions
- Advanced: 31 – 60 repetitions

**15. Modified Roman Crunches on a Stability Ball**

- Basic: 1 – 6 repetitions
- Intermediate: 7 – 12 repetitions
- Advanced: 13 – 24 repetitions

› **NOTE:** I often add a few exercises for my biceps right after the muscle target phase. Keep in mind that with a few biceps exercises, you will be adding another 20–30 minutes to the total time of your workout.

**SUMMIT PHASE**

**16. Aerobics** (treadmill, or elliptical machines, or running, or cycling) (8-10 minutes)

"HOOAH! Now do it, again!"

- Basic: 1 full set = approximately 25 minutes \*
- Intermediate: 2 full sets = approximately 50 minutes \*
- Advanced: 3 full sets = approximately 75 minutes \*

\*Depending on initial warm-up time, repetitions per set and rest periods

**COOL-DOWN PHASE**

**17.** Rotation Exercises (2 minutes)

**18.** Stretches (5 – 10 minutes) **GX**



14



15



13



**HOOAH!** askthetrainer@startfitness.com  
Let us hear from you.



SSG Ken Weichert, six-time Soldier of the Year and Veteran of both Iraqi Freedom and Desert Storm, began the START Fitness™ program in 1997. Now partnered with his wife Stephanie, Strategic Director of START Fitness™ and a certified personal trainer, the Weicherts are conquering the fitness industry.

For additional information on how to improve your strength and stamina for the APFT, simply go to American Soldier ([www.americansoldier.com/skwo01.html](http://www.americansoldier.com/skwo01.html)), where our DVD set is now on sale. If you want to hear from us directly, email us at [askthetrainer@startfitness.com](mailto:askthetrainer@startfitness.com).

If you're ever in San Francisco, come to our studio, where military and family members are always free. Our new military line of tubing by SPRI Products is now available at [www.startfitness.com](http://www.startfitness.com).



**FOR SPECIFIC APFT (ARMY PHYSICAL FITNESS TEST) PREPARATION EXERCISES:** Please refer to START Fitness™ in GX issues 2.6, 3.1 and 3.2 in [www.GXonline.com](http://www.GXonline.com) past issues.

**UNIFORM REMARK:** SSG Ken Weichert is pictured in the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) without the ACU Shirt in order to show you what muscles are employed during each exercise.

**WARNING:** Always seek the advice and guidance of a qualified health provider with any questions or concerns you may have prior to commencing a fitness program. This article should not be relied on or substituted for professional medical diagnosis or treatment. The exercises presented are for suggestion only. Participate at your own risk. Stop if you feel faint or short of breath.

**SPECIAL REMARKS:** We encourage you to request additional information by emailing us at [askthetrainer@startfitness.com](mailto:askthetrainer@startfitness.com) and to exercise with us while watching our FIT TO FIGHT™ DVD series.

STRATEGIC ARMY TRAINING (START), LLC ASSUMES NO ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S. ARMY OR THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. © 1998 START™. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.