

# OPERATION CRAVING COMPETITION

PART 2

Training the Tactical Athlete By Ken and Stephanie Weichert



TRAIN TO WIN IN 60-MINUTES!

[ RECEIVED ]

SGT Ken and Stephanie,

A Soldier at my Guard unit showed me your APFT improvement program, Operation Pushing for Points. I started the program two weeks ago and have seen great results. I am an SMP (Simultaneous Membership Program) ROTC Cadet in Florida. I am captain of the Ranger Challenge team. Our competitions against other colleges include physically demanding events like the obstacle course, a full APFT and a 10-kilometer forced road march with a heavy rucksack. Normally I can run all day, but with the extra weight bearing down on my back I feel like I can't keep up. Do you have a specific program that will help me build a lot of strength and stamina for the next season?

Best Regards,  
Cadet Chad P.,  
Florida Army National Guard

[ SENT ]

Dear Cadet Chad,

We just love to hear success stories from our readers. Keep up the great work! We have a two-part answer to your question. First, the best way to prepare for multiple events is to practice doing exactly what you will endure in the competition. If your day includes an obstacle course, APFT and a 10-kilometer rucksack march, then that is how you train. As your body gets conditioned to the level of stamina, continue to up the training a little.

I once participated in a 20-lap swimming race. Because I had been swimming miles each day alternating between sprints and stamina training, when it came to that race, I was more adequately prepared than the person who wound up getting second place.

Build up slowly on your endurance and then continue adding on to your workout until the events seem easy. For variety, try Craving Competition Part II. This workout will help you build strength, agility and stamina.

Secondly, add core training to your workout calendar. Like Craving Competition Part I, the workout is full-body, focusing on the core. As a reminder, your core is where all movement originates. A strong core is where you will get explosive power and speed. It will also help protect your back while you carry your rucksack.

Stretching and rest are just as critical to your training as your exercise plan. You can over-train. To win this competition, you need to build up slowly to the level of strength and stamina that you desire. Take two non-consecutive days off where you allow your body to recover. Lastly, make sure to stay well hydrated.

Good luck with your competitions next season, and let us know how you and your team do!

**HOOAH!**  
SGT Ken and Stephanie



## WARM-UP PHASE

**Foam Rolling:** Perform 3–6 minutes of foam rolling, or self-myofascial release techniques, in order to improve flexibility and sports performance, and to reduce potential injuries.

**Aerobics:** Perform 5–8 minutes of aerobic exercises, such as running in place, side-straddle hops, jumping jacks or high steps/knees.

**Stretching:** Perform 3–6 minutes of flexibility exercises.

## CORE TARGETING PHASE



SHOULDER BRIDGE

Equipment : Stability ball

**START:** Place your calves on top of a stability ball while your back is on the ground. Lift your rear end off the ground until your lower back and legs form a straight line. Keep your head, arms and shoulder blades on the ground.

**ACTIONS:** While keeping your abdominals tight, slowly roll the ball toward your rear end by contracting your hamstring muscles. Return to the start position and repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth while rolling the ball toward you, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position.

**BASIC:** 10–20 seconds, or 1–10 repetitions.  
*Note:* Basic-level participants may rest their back on the ground between repetitions.  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 21–40 seconds, or 11–20 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 41–60 seconds, or 21–30 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 61–90 seconds, or 31–40 repetitions



ELEVATED PRONE KNEE THRUSTS

Equipment: Bench, platform or Bosu

**START:** Balance your body on your hands and feet with your back and legs forming a straight line. Elevate your legs by positioning your feet on a platform that is 12–24 inches off of the ground. Maintain a neutral spine, feet together or up to 12 inches apart, hands shoulder-width apart, legs and arms straight.

**ACTIONS:** While keeping your abdominal muscles tight and your arms straight, bend your left knee

and move it toward your chest until you reach 90 degrees of knee flexion. Return to the start position. Switch legs and repeat. Continue until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth while you thrust each knee, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position.

**BASIC:** 10–20 seconds  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 21–40 seconds  
**ADVANCED:** 41–60 seconds  
**EXTREME:** 30–60 seconds while performing a push-up after each knee thrust.



TUCK AND PIKE

Equipment: Stability ball

**START:** Begin by balancing your body with your feet or lower shins on the stability ball and your hands on the ground. Tuck your knees in toward your chest.

**ACTIONS:** Lift your rear end upward by straightening your legs and engaging your abdominal muscles. *Advanced to extreme standards note:* Continue elevating your rear end until your back is perpendicular to the ground and aligned with your

arms. Hold for a few seconds. Return to the start position and repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth while elevating your rear end, and inhale through your nose while returning to the start position.

**BASIC:** 10–20 seconds, or 1–2 repetitions (no pike)  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 21–40 seconds, or 3–6 repetitions (no pike)  
**ADVANCED:** 30–45 seconds, or 7–12 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 46–60 seconds, or 13–20 repetitions

PHOTOS: EVAN BAINES; PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM LIVINGSTON; SGT KEN ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF START FITNESS ©



## ELEVATED BACK BEND

Equipment: Stability ball

**START:** Balance your body on your lower abdomen on a stability ball, arms extended and aligned with your back, palms facing down, legs straight and feet 12 inches apart.

**ACTIONS:** Tighten your lower back muscles and pull

back your elbows until you form a slight arch in your lower back. Return to the start position and repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth as you arch your back, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position.

**BASIC:** 10–30 seconds, or 5–10 repetitions  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 31–60 seconds, or 11–25 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 61–90 seconds, or 26–50 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 91–120 seconds, or 51–75 repetitions

## ASSISTED PULL-UPS

Equipment: Pull-up bar that is positioned approximately 3–4 feet from the ground

**START:** Sit underneath the pull-up bar. Grasp the bar with your hands, arms shoulder-width apart, palms facing upward. Tighten your abdominal muscles and elevate your hips until your back and legs form a straight line. Adjust your foot position until your chest is directly under the bar.

**ACTIONS:** While keeping your abdominal muscles tight, pull your body toward the bar by bending both elbows. Return to the start position and repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth as you pull your body upward, and inhale through your nose while you return to the start position.

Female standards:

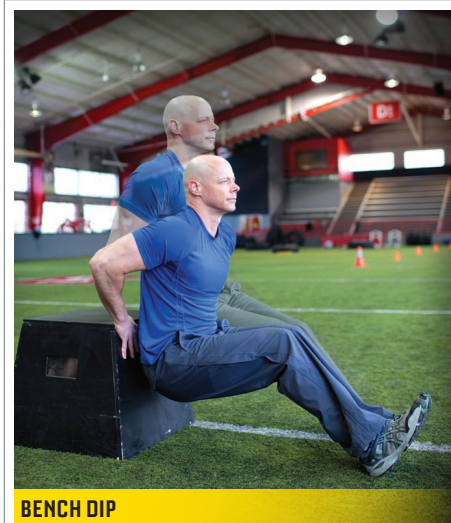
**BASIC:** 5–10 seconds, or 1–3 repetitions  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 11–20 seconds, or 4–8 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 21–40 seconds, or 9–15 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 41–60 seconds, or 16–24 repetitions

Male standards:

**BASIC:** 5–15 seconds, or 1–5 repetitions  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 16–30 seconds, or 6–12 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 31–60 seconds, or 13–25 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 61–90 seconds, or 26–40 repetitions



## TRANSITION PHASE



## BENCH DIP

Equipment: Bench, platform or Bosu

**START:** Sit on the edge of a sturdy flat bench with your hands slightly behind your hips, gripping the bench tightly. With your legs together and knees bent 90 degrees, place your heels on the ground and point your toes in the air. Straighten your elbows and move your hips slightly away from the bench.

**ACTIONS:** Slowly lower your body by bending both elbows 90 degrees. Point your elbows backward while lowering your body. Do not allow your elbows to point in or outward. Return to the start position and repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth as you lower your body, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position.

**BASIC:** 5–10 repetitions (no weight)  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 11–25 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 26–50 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 20–30 repetitions with a medicine ball on your lap



## CRAB CRAWL FORWARD

Equipment: None (Should be performed on soft surfaces)

**START:** Sit on the ground. Bend your legs 90 degrees at the knees, heels down, arms slightly behind you, palms on the ground and fingers pointing forward. Elevate your hips until your rear is 6–12 inches off of the ground.

**ACTIONS:** Walk your body forward, using your arms and legs, until you have reached your goal. Breathe naturally; in through your nose and out through your mouth.

**BASIC:** 30–60 seconds  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 61–90 seconds  
**ADVANCED:** 91–120 seconds  
**EXTREME:** 3 minutes



## PUSH-UP WITH ABDUCTION

Equipment: None

**START:** Balance your body on your hands and feet with your back and legs forming a straight line. Maintain a neutral spine, feet together or up to 12 inches apart, hands shoulder-width apart, legs and arms straight.

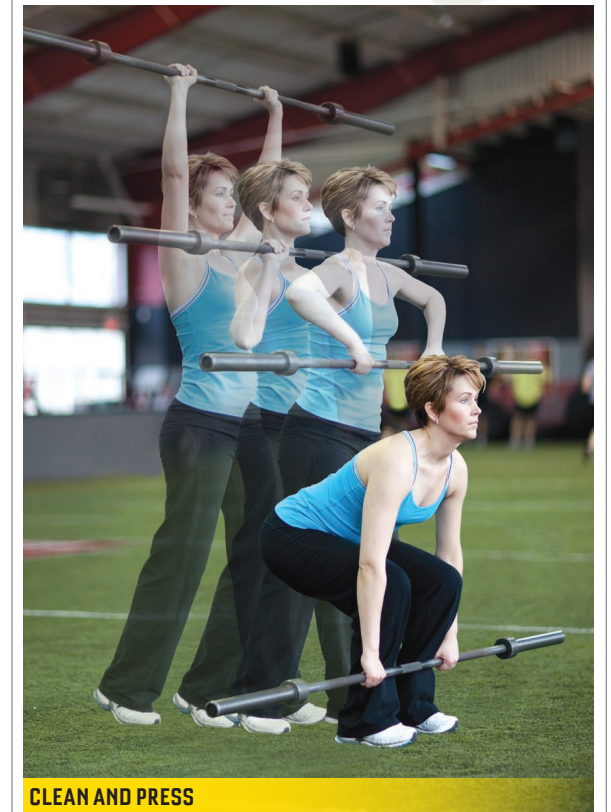
**ACTIONS:** While keeping your abdominal muscles tight, open your legs simultaneously 15–20 inches and promptly return to the start position. Perform a push-up by bending both elbows until the upper parts of your arms become parallel to the ground. Return to the start position and repeat the sequence until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth as you lower your body, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position.

Female standards:

**BASIC:** 1–3 repetitions  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 4–8 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 9–15 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 16–25 repetitions

Male standards:

**BASIC:** 10–20 repetitions  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 21–45 repetitions  
**ADVANCED:** 46–65 repetitions  
**EXTREME:** 66–90 repetitions



## CLEAN AND PRESS

Equipment: Barbell, plates and collars

**START:** Hold a barbell loaded with the desired amount of weight for high repetition. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and keep your shoulder blades retracted.

**ACTIONS:** Lower your body until you reach 90 degrees at the knees, with your hips moving back as if sitting on a chair. Maintain your weight directly over the middle of your feet and heels. Keep your knees aligned with your feet. Grasp the bar with an overhand grip slightly wider than your shoulders. Note: You should not lift any more than you can comfortably repeat with good form. Keep your head forward and back straight. Do not allow your knees to move forward past your toes or allow your back to arch. The bar should line up halfway between your toes and your heels. Place one foot behind you for support (if needed) and keep your abdominal muscles tight. In one explosive movement, draw the barbell up to your hips, then shoulders, dropping your elbows while bringing the weight up. Press the weight over your head. Return the weight to your clavicle and down to the tops of your legs by lifting your elbows and dropping the weight straight down. Return your back foot to a neutral stance. Repeat until your goal is reached. Exhale through your mouth as you press the weight upward, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position.

**BASIC:** 5–10 repetitions (no barbell)  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 8–15 repetitions (no overhead press)  
**ADVANCED:** 10–15 repetitions (full clean and press)  
**EXTREME:** 16–25 repetitions (full clean and press)

## AEROBIC CONDITIONING



### STAIR CLIMBING DRILL

Equipment: Stairs

**START:** Assume a “standing start position” by placing your toes behind the start line with one leg 12–18 inches behind you. Shift your weight on the front leg and bend your lead knee 90 degrees. Bend your trunk forward with your opposite arm in front and slightly elevated.

**ACTIONS:** Sprint up the stairs as fast as you can. Descend carefully. Repeat until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally.

**BASIC:** 1–3 sets of stairs, or 8–24 steps  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 4–8 sets of stairs, or 32–64 steps  
**ADVANCED:** 9–15 sets of stairs, or 72–120 steps  
**EXTREME:** 15–20 consecutive sets of stairs upward, or 120–160 steps



### ADDUCTION AGILITY LADDER DRILL

Equipment: Agility ladder

**START:** Stand behind the first section of the agility ladder.

**ACTIONS:** With explosive movements, hop into the first section of the ladder with both feet. Quickly hop forward to the next section of the ladder, moving your feet to the outside of the ladder. Next, hop forward to the next section, moving your feet to the inside of the ladder. Repeat until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally.

**BASIC:** 20–30 seconds  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 31–60 seconds  
**ADVANCED:** 61–90 seconds  
**EXTREME:** 91–120 seconds



### WEAVE DRILL

Equipment: Safety cones set approximately 3–4 feet apart and aligned in a straight column

**START:** Stand behind a column of cones.

**ACTIONS:** With explosive movements, run forward while weaving in and out of the cones. Repeat until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally.

**BASIC:** 20–30 seconds  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 31–60 seconds  
**ADVANCED:** 61–90 seconds  
**EXTREME:** 91–120 seconds

### INTERVAL RUNNING DRILL (NOT PICTURED)

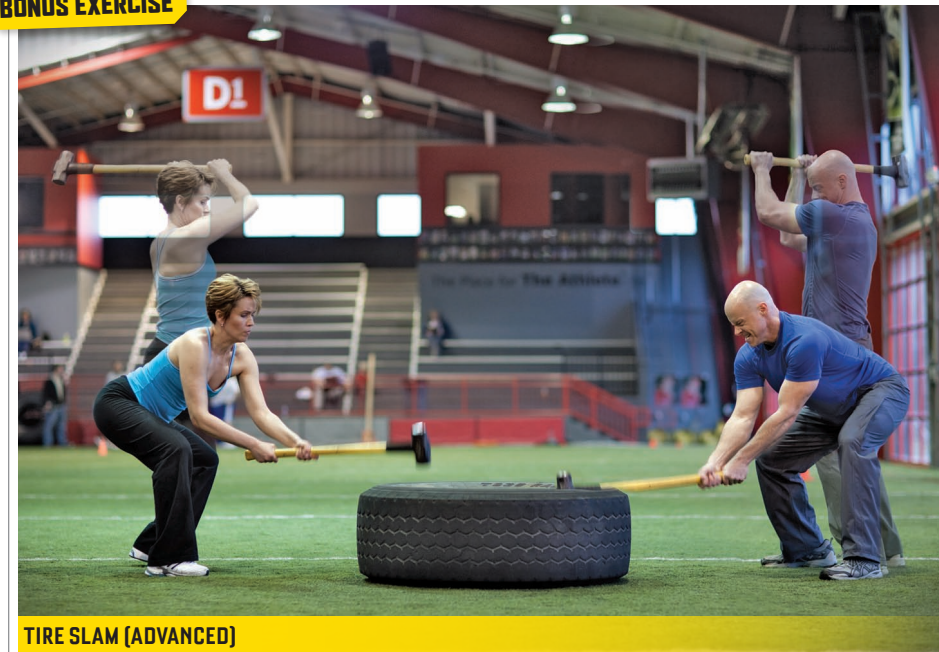
Equipment: None

**START:** Assume a “standing start position” by placing your toes behind the start line with one leg 12–18 inches behind you. Shift your weight on the front leg and bend your lead knee 90 degrees. Bend your trunk forward with opposite arm in front and slightly elevated.

**ACTIONS:** Run at a moderate pace for several feet and sprint for several feet. Repeat until your goal is reached. Breathe naturally.

**BASIC:** 1–2 minutes  
**INTERMEDIATE:** 3–6 minutes  
**ADVANCED:** 7–15 minutes  
**EXTREME:** 16–25 minutes

### BONUS EXERCISE



### TIRE SLAM (ADVANCED)

**START:** Place a large tire 12 inches in front of you and stand with a neutral spine, arms at your sides and feet shoulder-width apart. Grasp the handle of a sledgehammer.

**ACTIONS:** Hammer the side of the tire and return to the start position. Continue until your goal is

reached. Exhale through your mouth as you hammer the side of the tire, and inhale through your nose as you return to the start position. **Warning:** If sharing a tire with another participant, take turns hammering the tire (one person strikes the tire at a time).

**ADVANCED:** 60–90 seconds

## COOL-DOWN PHASE

Perform the warm-up exercises.

## STAMINA STOPWATCH

**Bronze Medal:** 1 full set = approximately 45 minutes  
**Silver Medal:** 2 full sets = approximately 60 minutes  
**Gold Medal:** 3 full sets = approximately 75 minutes  
**Note:** The warm-up and cool-down phases are performed only once.

### Equipment:

1. Foam roller
2. Stability ball
3. Pull-up bar
4. Bench, platform or Bosu
5. Barbell, plates and collars
6. Stairs
7. Safety cones
8. Agility ladder
9. Large tire (if performing the Bonus Exercise)

PHOTOS: EVAN BAINES; PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS: ADAM LIVINGSTON

## 7-DAY SCHEDULE

### MONDAY

•Operation Craving Competition

### TUESDAY

•Running Long Distance 3–6 miles  
•Marching 10 miles with a rucksack [alternate exercise]  
•8-min Abs x 1–2 sets  
**Note:** Download “8-min Abs” on [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness)

### WEDNESDAY

•Operation Craving Competition

### THURSDAY

Rest

### FRIDAY

•Running Interval Training x 2–4 miles  
•8-min Abs x 1–2 sets

### SATURDAY

•Operation Craving Competition  
•Stair climbing drills x 45 minutes [alternate exercise]  
•Marching 10 miles with a rucksack [alternate exercise]

### SUNDAY

Rest

### NUTRITION ADVICE:

1. To lose additional body fat, try reducing your intake of breads and pastas, dairy products and sugar.
2. Check with your physician before making any changes to your diet or exercise plan.
3. Want to read more diet advice? Go to [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness), Get Healthy, and read Operation Diet Dissection.

### REMARKS:

1. Repeat the 7-day schedule x 4 sets to complete the month.
2. Rest periods may be adjusted, as needed. However, be sure to include 1–2 rest days per week for rest and recovery.
3. Perform no fitness training 24–48 hours prior to a competition.

Watch fitness videos and download workouts at [www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness](http://www.NATIONALGUARD.com/fitness) or email [sgtken@GXonline.com](mailto:sgtken@GXonline.com).

**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 shortness of breath.



### KEN AND STEPHANIE WEICHERT

A six-time Soldier of the year and Veteran of both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Desert Storm, Ken Weichert and his wife, Stephanie, a certified personal trainer, founded the START Fitness® program, a San Francisco-based group exercise and hiking business that delivers military-inspired, boot-camp style workouts to Soldiers and civilians. The program now trains and certifies basic, senior and master instructors. Ken is currently a staff sergeant in the Tennessee Army National Guard.