

Master Fitness Course

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In an effort to insure the physical fitness of its soldiers over the next decade, the Army did considerable research in developing its present physical fitness program. (See also "Physical Fitness Program," by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Hoffman, *INFANTRY*, September-October 1986, pages 16-19.)

An important part of that overall program is the Master Fitness Trainer (MFT) Course, which is designed to educate and train instructors to help commanders plan and implement constructive fitness programs for their units.

In the four-week course (conducted at the Soldier Physical Fitness School at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana), a trainer receives 169 hours of instruction, including a fitness overview and studies in assessment, program development, exercise physiology, nutrition, lifetime benefits, and physical training.

The nutrition phase, for example, deals with basic nutrition, dietary guidelines, nutrition and physical performance, the dining facility, and weight control. The cardiorespiratory training provides new and creative ways to increase a unit's running capability—Indian runs, aerobics, interval training, ability runs, and circuit training. The physical training portion includes classes in flexibility improvement, aquatics, aerobics, ability group runs, road marching, and strength training.

Two areas—strength training and nutrition—can be used as specific examples of the ways in which MFTs

can help commanders plan programs that best suit their units' needs.

One of the key points in strength training is to determine a soldier's one repetition maximum (IRM)—the greatest amount of weight he can lift one time with a certain muscle group.



This must be determined for each muscle group a soldier is going to work on. In using the leg extension machine, for example, a soldier's IRM is the largest amount of weight he can lift one time with his legs, which may be 190 pounds. Once this IRM has been determined, a workout program can be developed for him using a certain percentage of that maximum, depending upon his fitness level. Thus, to perform 8 to 12 repetitions on the leg extension machine, this

soldier, if he is a beginner, should use 60 percent of his IRM (114 pounds); if he is "fit," he should use 70 percent of his IRM (133 pounds); or if "very fit," 80 percent (152 pounds).

If a soldier is looking for muscular *strength* in a particular muscle group, he should work with 75 to 100 percent of his IRM for that group and do 1 to 8 repetitions. For muscular *endurance*, he would work with 50 to 74 percent of his IRM for 12 to 20 repetitions. A good balanced program, however, will generally be from 60 to 80 percent of the IRM for 8 to 12 repetitions. To improve, a soldier has to gradually increase both the weight and the intensity (progression). The IRM should be retested about every four weeks to reflect that improvement. (For information on one battalion's program, see "Strength Training," by Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Hensler, *INFANTRY*, November-December 1987, pages 36-38.)

When it comes to weight control, a dominant theme in the Army for some years, a Master Fitness Trainer can give a commander guidance on it. Soldiers, too, want to know what they should eat and how much of it to achieve a desired result. The usual advice is, of course, to eat a variety of foods, including adequate starch and fiber, to avoid saturated fats and cholesterol, and to limit sugar, sodium, and alcohol. But the MFT can help educate the soldiers on what is involved in following this advice. And he can help decide what an overweight soldier's caloric intake should be on the basis of his current

weight, his age, and his activity level.

To qualify for the Master Fitness Trainer Course, a soldier must be in the rank of staff sergeant through sergeant major for enlisted personnel, second lieutenant through captain for officers; should have a minimum score of 250 on the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT); and if over 40 years of age, must be medically cleared to take the APFT. A minimum GT score of 105 is recommended, because this course is

academically demanding with a failure rate of 10 percent. Additionally, all soldiers should have 18 months retainability and meet the height and weight standards of AR 600-9. It is recommended that students also be non-smokers.

The Army Physical Fitness School has revised the old daily dozen of conditioning drills one, two, and three of the 1970s and has designed programs that increase flexibility, cardiorespira-

tory endurance, muscular strength, and muscular endurance. The Master Fitness Trainer Course is now setting the standards by getting the Army fit for the 1990s.

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SWAP SHOP



The TOW cap was designed some years ago to protect TOW squad members on the M113A1 carrier from artillery and mortar fragmentation. The cap consists of four nylon ballistic blankets weighing about 200 pounds. The other components, the yoke and the base channels, provide the support and frame for ground mounted operations.

During a wargaming session in the 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, Lieutenant Steven Brooks, a platoon leader in Company E (the battalion's TOW II antiarmor company), came up with the idea of using TOW caps to cut down on the time required to put in proper TOW dismounted fighting positions.

Although TOW caps are now obsolete in the Army's inventory, some were found at the Red River Army Depot,

Texarkana, Texas, and the U.S. Army Missile Command gave permission for the release of the TOW caps to Company E for training. Battle drills and load plans for the company's M901A1s were revised to accommodate them.

The soldiers did not like the caps at first, but considered them irreplaceable once they realized the time the caps saved over filling sandbags. And when the camouflage net is dropped in the back, the position blends in with the terrain remarkably well. Company E trained with the TOW caps for five months at Fort Hood before employing them successfully at the National Training Center.

The TOW cap is by no means the "school solution," but it is a useful technique and one that should be kept in mind.



(Submitted by Captain J. Karl Clark, Company E, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry, Fort Hood, Texas.)