

Old strength training equipment vs the New

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With all the advances in technology that is taking place in the world around us it is easy to forget that today's old technology, was yesterday's new technology. The market is currently flooded with all kinds of exercise gimmicks and empty promises of massive strength gains and fat loss.

There is however something that I have noticed over the past few years, and that is that the market is "re-engineering" old school strength training equipment and repackaging it as new and improved or new innovations. One of these is the Russian Kettlebell that has made its appearance in numerous fitness magazines and health clubs around the globe. A kettlebell is a Russian type of hand weight that is shaped like a big cannonball with a handle and is made mostly from cast iron and is available in different weights and sizes.

The use of kettlebells date back about 300 years, where they were first used as weights to weigh grain by farmers in Russia. Soon the farmers in neighbouring villages started to compete against each other in their free time by lifting the kettlebells in various ways, and so birthed kettlebell sport which is still practiced today. The kettlebell as a fitness and weight loss tool was first published in the fitness magazine Hercules in 1913! That is almost a hundred years ago, and it is now probably more popular than ever before.

Another piece of equipment most people would have heard of is a barbell or a dumbbell, in 1924 the Milo barbell company published an advert to educate the public as to what a barbell is and why it is useful and the advert looks like a modern day infomercial making promises of superhuman strength in absolutely no time. This goes to show that a lot of the empty promises that we see in our modern day marketing campaigns had its

origin almost a 100 years ago. Today a barbell is one of the most basic things you will find in gyms around the world and together with dumbbells probably more effective as strength training tools than most other expensive machines.

To give you an example, a top of the range Leg extension machine will cost around R80,000.00 and a top of the range barbell set (190kg of weight plates) will put you back R20,000.00

Believe it or not but there are strength training machines that date back further than barbells, the Spalding semi-circle strength developer was a basic machine using weight plates, ropes and pulleys very much like today's strength training machines and was made by Spalding in 1890. So if you thought that old school equipment was only free weights and bodyweight exercises think again, the manufacturing and use of a huge variety of strength training equipment goes back more than a century.

The way I see it, old school training equipment is the kind that is basic in design and relatively cheap like a bar to do pull ups on or cross bars to do dips and push ups, free weight equipment like kettlebells, dumbbells, barbells, and chains. This equipment will usually entail that you use the body as a weight or lever or use an implement like a kettlebell and lift it with a specific technique to challenge the musculoskeletal system to adapt and become stronger, fitter or faster.

When one is looking at gaining strength, power, speed, and / or endurance that will help you get the biggest improvements in sporting performance, free weight and body weight exercises will be my first choice over machines because it usually allows you to move in a way similar to the sport and in the bodies natural movement patterns.



Another benefit of using the old school exercise equipment is that because your body is not stabilised too much by a fixed machine, your body will be forced to use more muscles during a movement and in turn this will cause you to burn more calories per unit of time spent training, compared to training with a machine.

Don't get me wrong I am not saying that all of the latest high tech machines you will find in your local gym or health club are not effective. It comes down to asking yourself "What is my outcome with this exercise?" So if my outcome is to lessen the strain on my spinal cord and skeletal structure, I might choose a machine exercise in stead of a barbell exercise because the machine takes the load of the structure as compared to using a free weight.

In conclusion, old school equipment has been tried and tested over many many years and is a very good tool to have at your disposal within your exercise tool box and cannot be discarded as an option to colour your training regime with some old school flair 🌈

Resources

www.oldtimstrongman.com and <http://ezinearticles.com/?History-of-the-Kettlebell&id=1850860> History of the kettlebell. By Mike Bromley