

The following article is based information that I have collected from years of training, I have always been inspired by old school athletes like Ben Moon and Jerry Moffat. Some of the info is gleaned from "school room" articles and conversations with other boulderers that use a campus board as a training tool.

The campus board is AMAZING for specific strength and power training. It is simple in concept but highly effective in use. For those who have already acquired a relatively solid foundation of strength through climbing, it is the next step up. Your campus board will enable you to develop the following vital components of climbing performance.

Your campus board will enable you to develop the following vital components of climbing performance.

Finger strength

Explosive upper body strength (the ability to pull and lock holds out)

Contact strength (the ability to latch a hold at speed)

Neuromuscular control and timing

Short term anaerobic endurance

One of the many benefits of the campus board is that like the fingerboard it is very easy to make an accurate assessment of the gains you are making. Although there is a basic technique element for each exercise, unlike bouldering, this technique will be the same every time and once learnt must simply be replicated each time you practise a particular exercise. Follow the guidelines above on warming up and building a training program.

The Exercises

Whether you train on large or small rungs will depend on how strong you are and the level of intensity you are aiming for. Obviously as far as finger strength is concerned the smaller the hold you can train on the better. If you have weak fingers, get dead hanging! There is no reason why you couldn't start a session by working on your fingers, then move to the campus board to work on ladders on bigger holds.

There are a considerable number of exercises you can practise on the campus board but the most basic and climbing specific exercise is the ladder. This involves climbing the board footless, using alternate rungs, and it is the exercise I recommend you spend most time practising.

You will soon see that there are a great many ways of laddering your way up a campus board all of which have varying levels of intensity (difficulty.) The number of moves you make to cover a set distance will determine this level. The greater number of moves the lower the intensity, the fewer moves, the higher the intensity. The easiest is to use and match hands on every rung which would mean using 9 rungs and making 16 moves, and one of the most difficult is to use just 3 rungs and make 2 moves. The type of laddering you will do will depend on what you are training for. If

your goal is maximum strength, keep it high intensity, if it is more endurance-oriented, lower the intensity.

Another exercise that you might want to incorporate into a strength-training routine and one that is particularly effective at improving your pull and lock strength is the forced one-arm pull up. This exercise concentrates on the initial pulling movement we come across in climbing all the time. It is very similar to the one arm pull up only better since the campus board insures that your body keeps face on to the board, and in the position that you have to climb in. Start by dynoing up and latching onto the highest rung you can reach, then make the initial pull into the locked off position, then lower yourself down again keeping both hands on the rungs. Try and do this two or three times before stepping off then repeat on the other arm. Try 3 or 4 sets on each arm. Rest as indicated below.

Double dynos and negative double dynos between rungs are excellent exercises for improving your coordination but are highly stressful. As you will see from the sample training sessions below I do not do a lot of them. As with most exercises but particularly these, try and concentrate on keeping good form and being in control and whatever it is you are doing be careful!

Here are a couple of sample workouts that I practise. The numbers I use refer to which rungs I am using. You will have to adapt these to suit yourself.

Strength workout

1-5-8 is my absolute maximum to date and I have only done it on one arm. To do it on both arms on a regular basis is my on going goal. To do this, I would train on 1-5-7 and 1-4-6 most of the time, only every now and again trying 1-5-8. This is how my session would go:

As indicated warm up well. Stretch and do some easy moves and if possible some easy bouldering. The warm up will probably take about 20 minutes. When warming up concentrate on doing things well and building up the intensity of what you are doing gradually. A good warm up will make you stronger and set you up for a good session. Take your time.

1 – 5 – 7 leading with right hand (RH)
1 – 5 – 7 leading with left hand (LH)

These are two sets. Number of moves (repetitions) per set is 3. I would do 10 sets which is a total of 30 moves. Although this might not sound like a lot of moves, remember that they are all close to my limit. Next, I would do sets of 2-5-8. Although this is quite a bit easier than 1-5-7NM,, it shares the same finish and thus enables me to continue working on that part, concentrating particularly on my form. Again I would do 10 sets of each which is another 30 moves. To finish I would do a few

negative double dynos from 3 to 1 and back to 3. This constitutes a set. During this sequence of moves I would concentrate on speed, trying to spend as little time as possible on the rungs. I would do 5 sets of this which would mean 10 moves. For all these exercises I would rest anywhere between 30 and 90 sec between each set and about 5 minutes between exercises depending on how strong I was feeling. Give yourself plenty of rest and if you need more then take it. From the above we can see that I have completed 70 high intensity moves in only 30 minutes. When you get stronger, it is often worthwhile, instead of increasing the quantity or intensity of your workout, to decrease the rest you allow yourself between sets etc. Don't let your body get used to the same thing all the time.

Anaerobic Endurance

As I have already indicated, to move the emphasis away from pure strength you need to lower the intensity and thus increase the volume of moves and the time spent on your arms. Obviously there are two ways you can do this. Make shorter moves or increase the size of the holds. You might well want to do both!

set 1 lead with RH 1 – 3 – 5 – 7 – 9 – 7 – 5 – 3 – 1 10 moves
set 2 lead with LH 1 – 3 – 5 – 7 – 9 – 7 – 5 – 3 – 1 10 moves
set 3 lead with RH 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1 18 moves
set 4 lead with LH 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 8 – 7 – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1 18 moves

Rest periods between sets will be longer than when performing maximum strength exercises. Take at least 5 minutes. When you do sets of low intensity ladders, as I have already indicated, do not go to failure.

Matthew Tait