

Pre-SOF Training

Part 2 - "Indoc"

Robert Ord

The primary objective of this *CrossFit Journal* series of articles on pre-SOF (Special Operations Forces) training is to provide every CrossFit affiliate a model for running high-quality, well-rounded training for individuals committed to SOF-level fitness, not only in the U.S. and Canada but around the globe. Last month's article introduced U.S. Tactical's program for developing pipeline-ready candidates for USSOCOM (United States Special Operations Command) by fusing CrossFit principles with specific SOF-related mental and physical training elements. U.S. Tactical's training program is divided into two main blocks, "Selection" and "Preparation." In this issue, we'll take an in-depth look at the first phase of Selection, known as "Indoctrination."

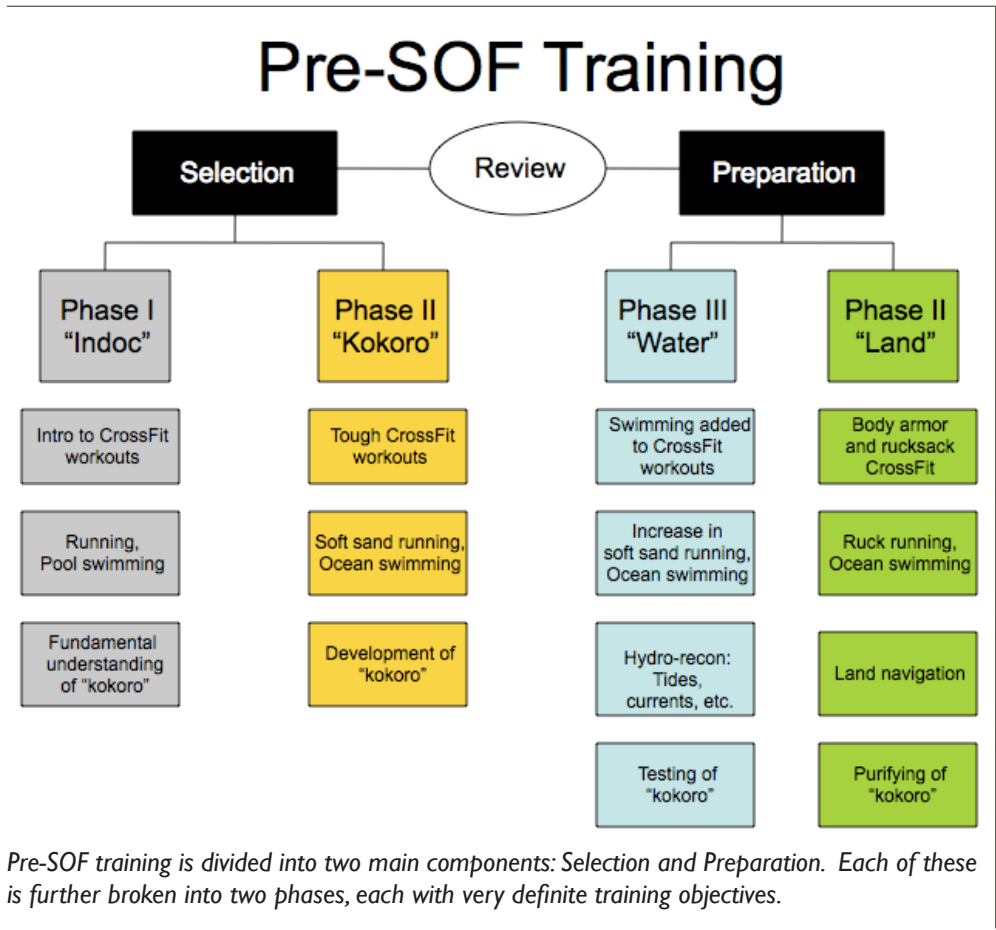
Selection: Laying the foundation

After experimenting with a number of different models, we found that the best overall scenario for providing specialized pre-SOF training while also running a busy CrossFit program was to schedule the training for a single two-hour block, once a week. At U.S. Tactical CrossFit, we use Friday afternoons from 2:00 to 4:00 pm to allow high school and college students with regular schedules to participate.

Additional training outside of the single pre-SOF session each week is a requirement; therefore each candidate is asked to keep a personal training log. We recommend that at least two of the entries each week, other than the Pre-SOF training itself, be WODs (workouts of the day) from NavySEALs.com. As training progresses, we identify particular areas where special attention needs to be focused for each individual. For example, if one candidate is a cross-country runner but cannot deadlift his own bodyweight, workouts involving running will be curtailed to allow for development of more strength and power. On the other hand, if a person cannot finish a three-mile conditioning run with the rest of the group, additional workouts will focus on building an aerobic base via high intensity met-con workouts that often involve running. The bottom line on additional training is that it should represent the basic fundamentals of CrossFit—"constantly varied functional movement, performed at high intensity"—with a strategic training objective of targeting areas of weakness identified in our pre-SOF training sessions.

It is important to note that at the beginning of Selection, no assumptions are made about the physical state of a candidate. Some begin the training having already prepared their bodies for some time by running, swimming, doing calisthenics, and lifting weights, while others have rarely participated in any type of real physical training. Obviously, while it is in the best interest of an individual to have a base of fitness before beginning, the objective of the first phase of Selection is to provide mental and physical training to the level necessary to move on to the second, more demanding phase, Assessment.

What is assumed, and expected, of each candidate is that they are there because they want to be, as evidenced by their attitude, motivation, and willingness to work as a team. Like the elite military special operations training pipelines, pre-SOF training is completely voluntary. As every CrossFit trainer knows, there are some individuals who say one thing about their commitment and openness to learning, while their overall demeanor shouts something else entirely. A common form of this is the "on my own program" trainee, who is already doing what he is certain is the "best" thing and is reluctant to listen and unwilling to change. As CrossFit trainers, we all have to deal with this at one point or another, but in pre-SOF



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training, never. Simply stated, if you come here out of shape but willing to work hard, I can deal with that. If you come here as a “know it all” or with a crappy attitude, no matter how fit you are, you will leave before you get started.

Programming for the Indoc phase

The following schedule details the training sessions that make up the Indoctrination phase. Remember that Pre-SOF group training occurs once a week for two hours, and that additional CrossFit

training is a requirement of the candidates. When planning a training session, we always include five essential components (not necessarily in this order):

1. Pre-training brief
2. Conditioning run or swim and stretch
3. CrossFit workout
4. Development of kokoro, or “the warrior within”
5. Post-training debrief and assignments

Session I

Agenda		Instructor Remarks	
Brief	Welcome / Health questionnaires and waiver	Must be filled out prior to training. Parent signature required for minors.	20 minutes
	Phase training schedule	The “Agenda” section only	
	What is expected: “The three A’s”	Attitude, Aptitude, Adaptability	
Conditioning	Easy 1-mile run and stretch	Warm up	40 minutes
	3-mile group run at moderate pace	Stay together; led by Instructor.	
CrossFit	“Angie”: 100 pull-ups 100 push-ups 100 sit-ups 100 squats	Demonstrate proper form and explain rules of the workout. Allow 30 minutes for completion.	40 minutes
Kokoro	Brass ring vision: “The goal”	Goal focus (see below)	15 minutes
Debrief	Running and “Angie” scores	Importance of proficiency in both	5 minutes
	Assignment: PT log	Log all training done outside	

The three A’s

The three A’s—attitude, aptitude, and adaptability—represent the personal characteristics of successful leaders and teams. Attitude is an open mindset, demonstrated by someone who is here to learn, and here to lead. Aptitude is ability, skill, or talent. Everyone brings something to the table; make sure it is your best. Adaptability is being able to perform and respond to a variety of demands, and it includes behaviors such as stepping up and volunteering to fill a gap or help a buddy. Doing what is required often goes beyond doing what is asked.

Brass ring vision: The goal

The first step to cultivating the deep, indomitable spirit required to overcome any obstacle is to actively develop a clear picture or scene in your mind that embodies your success. This not only helps motivate you to maintain the discipline to complete your training each day, but it also helps inspire you to push yourself all the way to your limits. Think of this as a “brass ring vision” that represents everything you are reaching for. It should be the first thing you think of when you wake up and the last thing you think of when you go to sleep. It might be “graduation day” vision or a montage of “operational scenes,” or picturing yourself completing a challenging task or mission—whatever drives you viscerally.

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Session 2

Agenda		Instructor Remarks	
Brief	PT logs	Review PT logs	10 minutes
	Description and duties of Team Leader (TL)	Pick a TL	
	Recall information	All contact info goes to TL	
CrossFit	1-mile run led by TL	Warm-up run	allow 10 minutes
	“Cindy”: Complete max rounds in 20 minutes: 5 pull-ups 10 push-ups 15 squats	Moderate to high intensity	30 minutes
Conditioning	Conditioning run	2-mile group run	60 minutes
	100 sit-ups 100 flutter kicks Conditioning run	Done in alternating sets of 25	
		2-mile group run	
Kokoro	Brass ring vision: “The stabilizer”	(See below)	15 minutes
Debrief	Individual performance	Hold no punches	5 minutes
	Assignment: “Why are you here?”	Written assignment	

Brass ring vision: The stabilizer

Just as the “goal” of the brass ring vision serves to motivate and inspire, it is also a stabilizer when you’re off balance. One of the primary objectives of SOF training is to mentally and physically

stress individuals to the point of exhaustion, where weaknesses and insecurities are exposed. Mentally grabbing the brass ring at times like these helps trainees to regain balance by centering their resolve on what is important in the long run.

Session 3

Agenda		Instructor Remarks	
Brief	PT logs	Review PT logs	20 minutes
	Turn in assignment “Why are you here?”	Collect	
	Medal of Honor citation to Lt. Michael Murphy	Read by TL. Discuss “Murph” mindset.	
CrossFit	“Murph”: Run 1 mile 100 Pull ups 200 Push ups 300 squats Run 1 mile	Break down sets down as needed—e.g. 10 sets of 10 pull-ups, 20 push-ups, 30 squats.	45 minutes
Conditioning	25 knees to elbows 50 flutter kicks 75 sit-ups 100 leg levers	All to be done at least once through	30 minutes
Kokoro	Brass ring vision: “Building your vision”	(See below)	20 minutes
Debrief	Individual performance	Hold no punches	5 minutes
	Assignment: Memorize SEAL code	Provide handout	

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Session 3 (continued...)

Brass ring vision: Building your vision

By this point there should be a number of “visions” that a candidate has developed. Building on them by consciously concentrating on

every detail, starting with the five senses—sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste—and then the emotional impact, brings the vision to life so that, in the mind, failure is not an option because success is already a reality.

Session 4

Agenda		Instructor Remarks	
Brief	PT logs	Review PT logs	20 minutes
	Recite SEAL code	Each candidate recites from lean & rest (i.e., push-up) position	
CrossFit	“Fran”: 21, 15, 9 reps of each: Thrusters Pull-ups	Scaling of weight is allowed if necessary but not recommended	20 minutes
Conditioning	6-mile conditioning run	Individual effort	60 minutes
Kokoro	Brass ring vision: Believing your vision	(See below)	10 minutes
Debrief	Individual performance	Hold no punches	10 minutes
	Expectations of next phase, “Assessment”	Provide agenda for Assessment phase	

Brass ring vision: Believing your vision

Believing in your vision and its achievement is equivalent to and

leads to believing in yourself. If the steps from the preceding weeks were followed, candidates will have developed confidence in “the reality” that that they have created.

Conclusion

One of our primary objectives up to this point has been to gradually prepare candidates physically for the intensity to come, so that (among other things) there are no visits from [Uncle Rhabdo](#). So far there have been no pass or fail scenarios, and the focus has been on teaching technique and answering questions. We have required candidates to push themselves hard enough to elicit a positive response, while ensuring that the stimulus for is metered and appropriate for the individuals. By the time candidates have reached the end of the fourth week, they have been doing some form of CrossFit at least three times a week, they have worked with other like-minded individuals with similar goals, and they have been taught the first steps of developing “kokoro” by understanding the principles of creating and controlling their “brass ring vision.”

The next step in their pre-SOF training is the Assessment phase. This is where the rubber meets the road. Candidates will have some tough requirements to meet, or be sent back to the beginning.

Robert Ord is the Director of Training at the U.S. Tactical CrossFit Training Center in Encinitas, California, where he oversees all CrossFit training at the center as well as the online training and mentoring provided by [NavySEALs.com](#). Initially trained by the Navy as a corpsman and deep sea diver, Rob chose the path of Special Operations by volunteering for duty with SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One, where he worked as a diving medical technician in numerous platoons and other capacities. He worked as a consultant and contractor with the Navy in its efforts to find and effectively prepare future SEALs, Special Warfare combat crewmen, explosive ordnance disposal technicians, and Navy divers before devoting his full time to the U.S. Tactical CrossFit Training Center.

