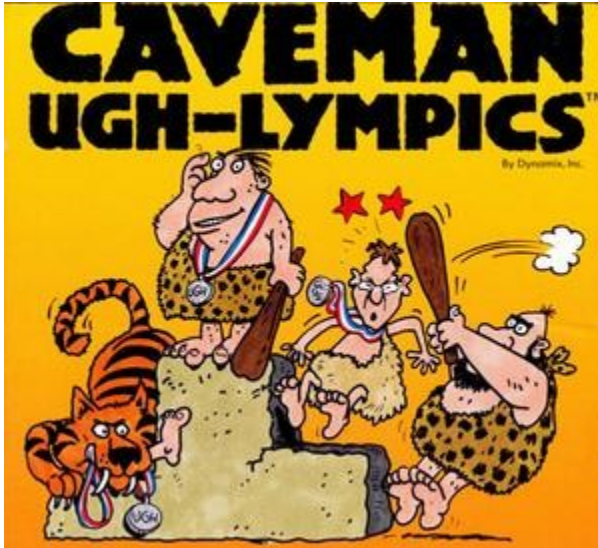


Functional Fitness and Days of the Caveman

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Functional fitness is the new buzz word for this new millennium. It may be a new buzzword, but functional fitness has been in existence since the days of the cave man. For example, let's go back in time to the year 20B.C. Dinner time is fast approaching and the caveman must find food for his cave wife and cave kids. He picks up his heavy club and proceeds to track down some unsuspecting prehistoric animal. Not long into his journey he finds a small 10 foot animal, he swings his club and strikes the beast down. To bring it back to his cave he must carry dinner on his back between

his shoulders. He swings the animal up and carries dinner home. This was the beginning of the term "carry out".

Upon arriving at the cave, he deposits dinner in front of the cave wife, who proceeds to remove the outer wrapping and aliquot portions for dinner. The cave kids are happily playing with the bones, swinging and jumping around. In every part of this story there is an element of functional strength. The cave man did not go to the cave gym to develop the strength, balance and stability to prepare him for his dinner task. But he had the strength he needed to swing the club with force, and lift the animal over his head while maintaining his balance and keeping his spine stabilized. The cave wife needed the strength to section off the poor creature into edible parts and the kids were simply engaging in their fitness program before dinner. Where is the functional fitness you ask?

First let's look at Mr. Caveman, and ways he may have trained for this event. Bodyweight exercise's are very functional and require no equipment, so I am going to start Caveman's exercise plan using only bodyweight as a form of resistance. Squats would be the best choice for him, because this exercise involves level changes and strengthens the muscles of the leg and gluteus, commonly called your butt. He needs to practice going from standing to a squat position (level change), and he is developing the ability to manage his weight. He might have even added in a rock to hold onto while squatting to add further challenge to his exercise. For upper body strength and the development of strength for stabilization in the trunk, Caveman does push-ups. Initially he performs them on the ground, and then he progresses to different variations by placing his hands at different angles. Maybe for kicks, one of his cave kids leans on his shoulders

and he has to perform a push-up against the weight of his child, who probably is huge due to his father's great hunting ability! To develop the rotational and core strength needed to swing a club, cave guy goes out and starts chopping some prehistoric wood. My guess is that cave wife also chops wood, so this is something they get to do together. Lastly the cave man practices some Olympic lifts such as the Clean and Jerk or the Snatch. These movements involve hoisting a weight from the ground to either shoulder height or overhead.

What about cave lady, what is her exercises program. I'll bet she does a lot of cardio running away from cave guy, and monitoring her cave kids! As for her strength development, she spends her day pushing rocks out of the yard and pulling giant weeds from her vegetation garden. This helps give her the pushing and pulling strength she needs to remove the fur from the deceased dinner. For power development, she practices push-ups with a clap in between off the cave wall. Lastly to keep her core tight and her tush toned she performs some simple Prehistoric Pilates mat work.

So as you can see all of the exercises that cave people performed are still done today. In our world, we do not believe that we need functional strength. The confusion has become that strength training in our gyms, involves a lot of sitting. You sit on a machine for the majority of your exercises. Well, I guess that does prepare us for sitting on the couch lifting a weighted remote and at our desks pushing heavy pens. But wouldn't you rather be exercising to prepare yourself for playing with your kids and improving your golf game? That's what functional fitness is, it's about exercise for life's activities. Back in the year 20B.C, it was survival of the fittest, and you know what, it's still the same game! Get back into the game of life, discover what functional fitness can do for you..

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