



## Band Together

This partner-assisted cardio workout also builds spring-loaded strength.

BY MATT FITZGERALD

REMEMBER HOW YOU USED TO PARTNER UP for gym-class activities back in school? Fun, right? So don't exercise all alone now — if you go about it right, a partner-assisted session can be a better workout.

Just ask Robert Dos Remedios, CSCS, director of speed, strength and conditioning at College of the Canyons in Southern California, and author of *Cardio Strength Training: Torch Fat, Build Muscle and Get Stronger Faster* (Rodale, 2009).

A workout like this lets you do exercises that would be nearly impossible to do alone. Plus, in Dos Remedios's version, one partner is always resting while the other works. This allows the resting partner to encourage the working partner, and the built-in 1:1 work-rest ratio lends itself to the sort of high-intensity interval workout that yields the best fat-burning and fitness-building results.

Dos Remedios favors what he calls "cardio-strength" workouts, which roll metabolic and muscular benefits into a single, time-efficient session.

The following partner-assisted cardio-strength workout is one that Dos Remedios adapts for clients ranging from elite athletes to fitness-minded grandmothers.

To do it, you'll need a partner who's at a similar fitness level and a couple of resistance bands. The workout can be done with resistance bands with handles at either end, but Dos Remedios recommends heavy-duty single-loop bands such as FlexBands.

Practice each of the four individual exercises that make up the workout

before attempting it at full pace. This will give you an opportunity to learn how to perform the movements correctly, how to work cooperatively with your partner (it's a bit like dancing), how much resistance is needed and how quickly each person fatigues.

Once you get the hang of these moves, you'll find you can easily combine them into a sweat-inducing, all-encompassing workout for two. →



### About the Bands

If you're using single-loop FlexBands like those pictured above, link two bands together as illustrated on page 24. If you're using resistance bands with handles, the resting partner will wrap either one band or two (for greater resistance) around the active partner's hips, standing behind her and holding a handle in each hand with light tension on the band(s).

# The Workout

## Plan Your Rounds

In each of the following workouts, the active and passive partners switch roles as soon as the active partner completes each round.

The active partner will perform the following exercises consecutively: **squat jumps, bear crawls, broad jumps and resisted sprints.**

Together, these four exercises make up one round.

Before you begin exercising, choose from one of these four suggested formats, based on your fitness level and experience with the exercises. Note: Proper execution of each exercise is crucial. If fatigue causes your form to suffer, move on to the next exercise.

**Beginner:** Three rounds. In each round, each partner performs 10 squat jumps, three 5-yard bear crawls, five broad jumps and a 20-yard sprint, resting as long as necessary after each exercise to feel ready for the next one.

**Intermediate:** Three rounds.

**Round 1:** Each partner performs 10 squat jumps, three 5-yard bear crawls, five broad jumps and a 20-yard sprint without rest.

**Round 2:** Eight squat jumps, two 5-yard bear crawls, four broad jumps and a 20-yard sprint without rest.

**Round 3:** Five squat jumps, one 5-yard bear crawl, three broad jumps and a 20-yard sprint without rest.

**Advanced:** Same as intermediate, except each partner performs 10 squat jumps, three 5-yard bear crawls, five broad jumps and a 20-yard sprint in all three rounds.

**Elite:** Same as advanced, except both partners complete as many rounds as possible in 15 minutes.

## Warm Up

Begin with a five-minute warm-up. Dos Remedios suggests a combination of light aerobic activity (jogging, jumping rope) to warm the muscles and mobility exercises (walking lunges, leg swings) to improve range of motion.

## Band Setup

1. Place the two bands on the floor with a slight overlap.



2. Wrap the overlapping segment of the top band under the overlapping segment of the bottom band.



3. Pull the overlapping segment of the top band back toward you through its larger center.



4. Pull until a knot forms and the bands form a figure-eight pattern.



## 3

### BROAD JUMPS



**a:** After completing your last bear crawl, stand up and get into a quarter-squat position.



## 4

### RESISTED SPRINTS

**a:** After completing your last broad jump, sprint away from your partner for approximately 20 yards. Avoid breaking your form around the band — keep your shoulders back and don't bend at the waist.

The resting partner should walk or run behind you at a slightly slower speed to resist your sprint without halting it altogether (or falling and being dragged along behind you!).



## 1

### SQUAT JUMPS



**a:** With your feet slightly farther than shoulder-width apart, toes pointed slightly outward, lower your-foot into a deep squat.



## 2

### BEAR CRAWLS



**a:** After your last squat jump, get on all fours, hips just barely higher than your shoulders. Crawl forward on

your hands and feet, making sure to place half of your load on your hands, half on your feet. Pull against the resistance until you've gone 5 yards.





**b:** Leap upward as high as you can. Instead of landing on your heels, as you would if you were jumping forward, land on the balls of your feet, which will prevent the resistance band from pulling you off balance.



**c:** Lower yourself immediately into another squat and jump again. Be sure that the resistance is appropriate to your fitness level. (The rest-

ing partner can move closer to the active partner to reduce resistance or farther away to increase resistance.)



**b:** Bear crawl backward until you reach your starting point, maintaining the same form you had when you were moving forward. Repeat.

Don't let your hips pop up — instead, keep your knees close to the floor and maintain a natural arch in your back. Keep looking forward.



## Tips for Partner Workouts

- The active partner should stand inside one band with the band at hip height. The resting partner should stand behind the active partner inside the other band, with that band against his lower back.
- The two partners should stand far enough apart so there is light tension in the bands.
- Feel free to tell your partner to ease off the resistance on the band if you're struggling to hold your form.
- Have the resting partner count the active partner's reps to keep both partners on the same page (plus, it's one less thing for the active partner to think about!).
- Gradually increase the challenge level of the workout as you gain fitness by increasing resistance, adding reps, adding rounds or doing more exercises.

**b:** Spring forward, landing on both feet at the same time. Land with a slight forward lean to counteract band pull.



**c:** Return to the starting point by taking three very small backward hops and then repeat the exercise.



**Matt Fitzgerald** is a running and triathlon expert who has authored and coauthored several books, including *Maximum Strength (Da Capo, 2008)* with Eric Cressey.



For a great partner-assisted stretching cool-down — with video — see the online version of this article.