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Opening Extract from...

The Para Fitness and Training Guide

Written by Major Sam McGrath

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EDITOR'S NOTE

CONVERSION TABLE

The following data will help in comparing the imperial and metric measurements:

- 1 mile = 1.6km
- 1 yard = 0.9m
- 1ft = 0.3m
- 1in. = 2.54cm/25.4mm
- 1 ton (US) = 0.9 tonnes
- 1lb = 0.45kg
- 1 gal = 4.5 liters

DISCLAIMER

If you are in any doubt whatsoever, you are strongly advised to consult your physician before undertaking any of the activities described in this book. Failure to do so may result in serious injury. The Publisher and the Author will not accept any liability.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 11

PART 1: READY FOR ANYTHING 15

- The PARAS – Train Hard, Fight Easy: An introduction to the Parachute Regiment 16
- Paratrooper Training: The PARAS selection course 19
- Fit to Fight, Fit for Life: How fitness brings success on the battlefield and in everyday life 26
- Para Inspiration: Corporal Bryan Budd, VC – ‘strength of mind, strength of cause’ 30

PART 2: PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS 33

- Physical Preparation: The foundations of a new exercise regime 35
- Planning the Attack: Understanding fitness and how it is developed 41
- Fighting Injury: How to avoid common exercise injuries 49
- Food is Fuel: The right diet for your goals 54
- Kit and Equipment: Essential and more advanced equipment 57
- Para Inspiration: The Bruneval Raid – overcoming fear and anxiety through goal setting 62

PART 3: PREPARING FOR WAR 65

- Change – The Aim of Your Programme: How lifestyle change can be accomplished 68
- Mission Planning: How to create a winning exercise programme 71
- Motivation: Understanding and maintaining your motivation to exercise 74
- Para Inspiration: The Merville Battery Raid – achieving the impossible through daring and determination 79

PART 4: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES 81

- Warming up: Preparation for exercise 83
- Stretching: Exercises for each area of the body 86
- Cooling down: How to optimise your recovery 93
- Para Inspiration: The 2 PARA Falklands Voyage – training with limited resources 94

PART 5: THE P COMPANY SPARTAN PROGRAMME (NO FRILLS) 97

- Running: From basic to advanced techniques for training 100

- Circuit Training: From basic to advanced circuit training 104
- Tips, Hints and Explanations for all Exercise Programmes: The cheat sheet 126
- Programmes: Three eight-week training programmes:
 - ‘Recruit’ – from basic to intermediate level 129
 - ‘Soldier’ – from intermediate to soldier standard 131
 - ‘Paratrooper’ – from soldier standard to PARA fitness 133
- The Five-Minute Test: An airborne fitness assessment 135
- Para Inspiration: Deployment in Afghanistan – fitness as escapism and stress relief 137

PART 6: THE P COMPANY EMPEROR PROGRAMME (WITH FRILLS) 139

- The Gym: Selecting and getting the most from a gym 142
- Personal Trainers: What to look for in a personal trainer 144
- Rowing: For strength, speed and endurance 145
- Cycling: For a cheap mobile workout 147
- Swimming: For low impact on joints 149
- Other Activities: Hill walking, sports and leisure activities 150
- Weights: exercises and advice on weight training 151
- Programmes: Three eight-week training programmes:
 - ‘Recruit’ – from basic to intermediate level 158
 - ‘Soldier’ – from intermediate to soldier standard 160
 - ‘Paratrooper’ – from soldier standard to PARA fitness 162
- Performance Standards: Measuring your progress 164

PART 7: ASPIRATIONAL CHALLENGES 165

- Marathons: How to conquer half- and full marathons 167
- Tough Guy™: Annual nine-mile assault course event 171
- Bergen Challenges: How to tackle backpack marches 173
- The PARAS’ 10: The P Company selection march 177
- The Fan Dance: Infamous 25km special forces TAB test 179
- The Bob Graham Round – A Quantum Leap! Climbing the height of Everest over 72 miles in 24 hours 182

Appendices, Tables and Exercise Sheets 185



'WHAT MANNER OF MEN ARE THESE THAT WEAR THE MAROON BERET?'

'They are firstly all volunteers and are toughened by physical training. As a result they have infectious optimism and that offensive eagerness which comes from physical well-being. They have jumped from the air and by doing so have conquered fear.'

Their duty lies in the van of the battle. They are proud of their honour and have never failed at any task. They have the highest standards in all things whether it be skill in battle or smartness in the execution of all peacetime duties. They are, in fact, men apart – every man an emperor.

Of all the factors which make for success in battle, the spirit of the warrior is the most decisive. That spirit will be found in full measure in the men who wear the maroon beret.'

Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery of Alamein

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to my guide to how to become PARA fit. Whether your goal is to row the Atlantic, lose weight for health reasons or something in-between, this book has everything you need. It details a tried and tested fitness recipe that will not only help you improve your health and fitness, but also your confidence and motivation. Twelve years ago I joined the British Parachute Regiment, more commonly known as the 'PARAS', because I wanted to serve with the best and achieve my potential. Today my aim is to give you the tools to achieve your potential too.

Fitness and the PARAS have been my passions for most of my life. While at school my one goal was to win my maroon beret, and that aim remained my focus throughout my teenage years. I accomplished it on my first attempt, shortly after my 19th birthday. And as the Officer Commanding P (Pegasus) Company, my job was to ensure that the next generation of paratroopers lived up to the exacting standards of the PARAS. For two years, the responsibility for training and selecting all British Army paratroopers sat on my shoulders. The privilege of training and fighting alongside thousands of PARAS has given me a unique insight into what it is that makes our regiment special. Our soldiers are undoubtedly the building blocks, but I believe the glue that binds us together is the confidence and motivation which comes from acquiring supreme physical fitness.

The PARAS are a team that succeeds because of our mental and physical toughness and our commitment to one another. Since our creation in 1942, we have







From top: P Company staff, the ten mile-march and the Trainasium. The Trainasium includes such simple tests as bending to touch your toes – but at the highest point of a 55ft structure.

Trainasium event. Candidates must score a total of 45 points to pass. Points are awarded in accordance with the P Company Charter, a document that ensures the consistency of the tests and the validity of the selection. Each event is designed to assess a candidate's physical fitness, mental robustness and determination. A candidate who fails to display the appropriate level of self-discipline and motivation throughout Test Week will fail the course. Test Week starts on a Wednesday morning and finishes the following Tuesday. The tests are as follows:

TEN-MILE MARCH (WEDNESDAY MORNING)

The ten-mile march is conducted as a squad, over undulating terrain, with each candidate carrying a Bergen (backpack) weighing 35lbs (plus water) and a rifle. The march must be completed in less than one hour and 50 minutes. TA candidates have two hours. This event was the inspiration behind the PARAS' 10 endurance race (www.paras10.com) which I revived in 2008 and features in Part 7.

TRAINASIUM (WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON)

The Trainasium is a superb 'Aerial Confidence Course' which is unique to P Company. It is used to assess and train candidates for military parachuting, specifically by testing their ability to overcome fear and carry out simple activities and instructions at heights up to 55ft.



LOG RACE (THURSDAY MORNING)

During the Log Race teams of eight, carrying a 132lb log, must complete a harrowing 1.9-mile course as quickly as possible – typically within 15 minutes. This event stains each candidate's soul; to this day it remains the hardest physical challenge I have ever encountered.

STEEPLECHASE (THURSDAY AFTERNOON)

This individual race over a demanding 1.8-mile, cross-country course, includes a number of 'water obstacles' and an assault course. Candidates must complete the event in under 19 minutes to score ten points.



The Log Race – with a log the size of a telegraph pole over difficult, hilly terrain.

Steeplechasing through water and over obstacles.

