



HEALTH

Circuit Training for Scuba Diving

By Gretchen M. Ashton May 16, 2016

Circuit training is a great way to gradually improve your fitness level in preparation for dive season.

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Circuit training, which targets strength building and muscular endurance, prepares the body for a wide variety of physical activities using both small and large muscles. Circuit training is an excellent complement to your diving — work out on non-diving days, 24 hours before or after diving — because it's a moderate workout that, when performed correctly, maintains and gradually improves your fitness level while avoiding injury and overexertion. The sequenced, fast-paced method helps divers stick with an exercise program because it saves time, holds interest and improves fitness level quickly when performed several times each week with consistency. Along with improving physical strength and endurance, circuit training requires divers to learn individual exercises; combine multiple muscle groups; link the exercises into a series; utilize a wide variety of equipment and body-weight movements; and change the exercises, sets, reps and rests every six weeks. Beginners should plan to learn about 12 exercises. Train at a rhythmic pace and shoot for between 12 and 20 repetitions per set for each exercise. Once you can complete three series, or circuits, in 60 minutes or less, it's time to gradually increase the resistance.

Circuit Training for Scuba Diving

How is circuit training specifically helpful for diving? The neuromuscular system, made up of the brain, spinal cord and muscle fibers, gives us the ability to think or plan and then perform a movement or series of skills. Circuit training is an excellent way to enhance these automatic responses, which we need for diving.

Learning to dive requires us to master a variety of specific skills and then link these skills spontaneously and successfully — being able to perform one skill well does not mean a diver will be good at other skills related to the sport. Diving performance is also affected by the complexity and possibilities of each skill and the patterns of combining skills. In other words, practice makes perfect — but only if the skill is practiced correctly. Further, practicing specific skills in a pool or other body of water is not the same as spontaneously performing the skills on a dynamic dive. The broader the variety and number of skills a diver masters, theoretically, the better diver they become. Circuit training also requires mastery of a set of skills, performed in sequence, allowing divers to train the body with the goal of improved automatic responses associated with diving.

Proper Circuit Training

The biggest down side to circuit training is that it's not necessarily a year-round training program, and many divers stay in the same routine for too long. The body adapts quickly, so the routine must be changed up to include periods of foundational strength training during the off-season. For diving, it's also best to alternate circuit training with cardio workouts, which focus solely on training the heart and lungs. Injuries can occur when circuit training if the exercises are performed incorrectly or too quickly because of light resistance. Divers should also become familiar with any equipment they use, as well as the proper adjustments on seats and pads for their height. Remember to take short — if any — breaks. Usually the time required to move from one exercise to the next is enough of a breather. Crowded fitness centers can make timely circuits difficult to complete, so if a modular machine is being used, try the cable station for the next exercise. Sometimes the sequence can change based on equipment availability — just keep moving. Remember to warm up with 10 minutes of aerobic exercise. Be flexible, plan ahead and have fun.



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Gretchen brings her passion for diving and fitness together as the founder of ScubaFit® the only fitness for diving certification which is also approved by both diving and fitness agencies. She is an advanced diver, NBFEE and ISSA Elite Personal Trainer, Specialist in Fitness Therapy and Nutrition, an AAU World Champion Hall-of-Fame athlete, and a mentor for Water Women, Inc. She shares her message with divers by visiting dive clubs, presenting at scuba shows, as a radio guest, as the publisher of FitDiver® Magazine, and with FitDiver® mobile apps. She widely published with more than 125 articles for diving publications and blogs. For more information or to contact Gretchen, visit www.scubafit.com.

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