



Improvise, Adapt and Overcome.

By Guy Jones Dip Pt Nlc1

During the last war in Iraq it was reported in the British tabloids that the American troops referred to their British counterparts as the Flintstones. Because where as the Americans only had to ask for a piece of equipment and they got it, the Brits could ask, but would generally be told No and would just have to make do with what they had and mend the stuff they had that didn't work. Consequently our boys looked fairly shabby and low tech compared to our American allies. No change there then! When I joined up in 1984 it was considered normal that a large percentage of your meagre salary would be spent purchasing the necessities that the government wouldn't provide for you, in fact it was a common saying that all you really needed to do the job was '15metres of para cord and some black tape'. So in this spirit the British Infantry-man has evolved to 'improvise, adapt and overcome' the inadequacies of insufficient defence spending. And that is in a nutshell what this article will cover, making do with what you have and still getting a fantastic workout.

I will assume that most of you avoid long endurance runs like the plague. They keep you fit but interfere with strength gains they may be appropriate for combat troops but can be the cause of overuse injuries and are just too boring for words, (unless that's what floats your particular boat). In the spirit of short, abbreviated and extremely efficient training modalities, I bring you the;

The Brecon Shuffle



You will require a Rucksack, the old U.S. Army Alice pack or a surplus British G.S. Bergen will suffice. (The old British Para / S.A.S. Bergens are even more extreme, they hold up to 100kg or 220lbs and will kick your ass if you are not careful). You could even use Army surplus web gear, some articles provide weight such as sand or gravel. You can buy pea gravel or sand from your nearest hardware store or builders merchants and it is quite cheap. I prefer gravel to sand because when you have the inevitable spill it is easier to scoop up and put it back in the bag. But sand moulds itself more easily to your body's contours, especially when used with the web gear, but hey' it's your workout so you decide. Buy some thick plastic bags and weigh out your sand or gravel 10 or 20lb per bag, then tape them shut and they will last you a lifetime. I have several 5lb bags that I have had since the mid 1980's. The fanatics amongst you could even get yourselves a couple of army surplus kit bags and then fill them with sand or gravel, more on that later.

Brecon is a cold, wet and inhospitable area in Wales, which if you were unaware is in the U.K. and is one of the main Training areas for the British army. The Brecon shuffle is the descriptive term for the gait pattern of those who are using that particular training area. Which is generally fatigued, bent at the waist and exhibiting the shuffling gait of an old man. This type of training lends its self best to the outdoors, play parks or a sports field would suit our aims perfectly but a large garden would suffice.

After some gentle joint mobility exercises swiftly followed by a light to moderate warm up, Take your loaded rucksack or web gear, get it on your back and make sure that it is comfortable it needs to be because you will be keeping it on for the duration (15-30mins). Then start to walk or jog around the field, or a pre-determined distance lets say 100 yards. Let your energy levels dictate how hard you work this portion of

the routine. Then come back to the start position and do 3-5 press ups 10+ squats, 5+5 dragon twists or lunges 3-5 'eight count bodybuilders or Burpees. Take a 1-3 minute rest and then do it all over again. Keep doing it until you become reacquainted with your last meal or you complete the work. Warm down, stretch off, Go home, drink your milk and grow stronger.

The Brize Norton Shuffle

Brize Norton for those unacquainted with this charming English village is the main deployment centre for British troops going overseas. The military airfield has become notorious in recent years for the flag draped coffins of service men and women coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Brize Norton shuffle is not dissimilar to the Brecon shuffle but in this instance we are going to utilise those heavy kitbags we talked about earlier. After a light joint mobility session followed by a gentle warm up, it's time to ruck up get that bad boy on your back then using good lifting form pick up both of your heavy kitbags and farmer's walk them to a pre-determined distance, or carry for time (feel the burn in your forearms, wow!). Drop them (it's not as if you will need to be encouraged to do so). And then perform the same body weight workout as the Brecon shuffle. If you have access to kettlebells, beer barrels, clubbells or sledge hammers then you could



include these or change the exercises listed to suit your own temperament or training goals. Try doing one arm swings with an 88lb rucksack on your back, or use the rucksack itself to perform cleans, snatches and presses or deadlifts and bent-over rows. The grip aspect alone is worth the effort. For those sick and twisted individuals who enjoy suffering, you could add a day sack (a smaller rucksack that in a military

setting would contain food, water, ammo your shelter half or bivvi bag and various sundry items to keep you going for 24 – 48 hours without the need for re-supply). I would suggest putting your water and post exercise meal in your day sack, then wear it on your chest with your large rucksack on your back and a heavy kitbag in each hand and away you go!!! I got the idea for this particular misery whilst watching a former Company Sergeant major of mine struggling across the tarmac at Brize with his day sack in front, his rucksack on his back, a kitbag and his laptop in one hand and a kitbag and his brief case in the other. He was puffing and panting and sweating like a mad thing, it serves him right because he was a horrible s.o.b. As I said at the beginning, if you don't need or want the endurance capacity or the lack of strength exhibited by the average runner who clock's many miles of road time each week. But you do want to improve your cardio and lose some unwanted body fat then give these training sessions a go and you're all set for a tiny slice of hell. But I promise it'll turn you into a man my son.

Until next time Brothers and Sisters. Stay strong.

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