

Tabata at Dragon's Spirit

Introduction

Mr. Raukura first introduced the club to tabata, following a weekend at Stripes one-to-one some years ago.

The main club training takes a summer break, but the black belts train over Christmas and January, and it was during this time that something good started.

Back then, tabata, or high intensity interval training (HIIT), wasn't quite as much in the public eye as it is now.

The format is simple. Six different exercises, each performed for twenty seconds, with a ten second break in between. As each exercise is only performed for twenty seconds, the idea is to work as hard as possible for that short time. The exercises are normally cardio, rather than strength based - a high number of reps.

Evolution

Initially, the tabata sessions were run as part of the warmup at the start of the night.

Late arrivals are a continuing issue in the Auckland traffic, and a few missed out on some or all of it.

We also noticed some of the less physical inclined members were arriving late due to "traffic issues".

This prompted a move to randomly putting the tabata at the start or end of the night. It worked well for quite some time, and fitted in with the grading cycles.

Dragon's spirit train all together, and don't split out separate sessions for kids and adults. This gives us quite a large age range, from 6 years all the way through to over fifty and "decline to state". With a training night starting with a hard tabata session, the concentration levels were noticeable lower, especially during the hot summer months.

Eventually then, the tabata took up its still-current place at the end of the night. For 2018, there has been a further adjustment. The tabata remains at the end of the night, but is now run after the official breakup. This allows the parents of the youngest members to take them home, while the remainder still get a good workout that doesn't impinge on the class time.

General Format

The workout is driven using an app on an iPad, called "Seconds Pro"



Seconds Pro Interval Timer (4+)

HIIT, Tabata & Interval Timer
Runloop Ltd

#34 in Health & Fitness
★★★★★ 2.7K Ratings
\$4.99

The app has many different exercise formats, a nice large display, and voice prompts for the activities and rest periods.

The iPad screen is displayed on one of the walls of the gym using Apple TV, connected to a projector. We have heard of other clubs using the same app without the projector, so it's definitely a luxury addition, rather than an essential part of the system.

The workout is configured to have six exercises, each lasting 25 seconds. The standard tabata workout would normally have 20. We started with 20 as well, but after a few months increased to 25. Mr Raukura had ideas of pushing further into 30 seconds or longer, but the overall time constraint meant we stayed at 25.

There is a ten second break between each exercise, so we have:

$((25s \text{ work} + 10s \text{ rest}) * 6 \text{ exercises}) * 4 \text{ rounds} = 14 \text{ minutes of activity.}$

Occasionally, more time is added. This can work well where everyone is used to working for an amount of time, but something like a short plank seems to go on longer than usual.

There is one other key part of the workout – the music.

Music

Music is an essential part of any workout, and this is no different.

It provides a great distraction, the beat keeps pushing the pace when tired, and most importantly, masks the grunts & groans of the hard-working people taking part.

Picking a playlist for a workout is something most people are familiar with these days, but a playlist for a club environment has an additional consideration. No swearing, and no adult themes. Many great songs didn't make the grade due to the odd swear, drug reference, or "adult cuddling".

In fact, these days the iPad tabata playlist is continually updated whenever a new, good, song with a good pace is heard that meets all the criteria.

Themes

As with the music selection, workout variety keeps the workouts interesting, and here are a few themes that are used regularly at Dragon's Spirit. Some are for the whole class, while other can be used as alternate exercises for people who want something a little more.

Partners

This is a very popular choice, with lots of options.

Collaborative. The partners work together, pulling each other up off the ground, providing something to jump over, taking turns moving and holding, etc.

Competitive. The partners try to do more reps, hold for longer, run faster, etc.

Targeted

Instead of the usual all-over body workout, target something specific. This could be an abs/core based workout, legs, chest/shoulders, or something like purely cardio.

TKD skills

Legs techniques! These can be things to improve balance, increase mobility, and give the kind of workout where odd little muscles cramp up, and are sore the next day.

Grouping

The main aim of a normal workout is to target as many parts of the body as possible, so a good place to start is to find one exercise for shoulders, abs, legs, and something fast to push the cardio. Within that, it can be nice to put in something to let people get their breath back before the next harder activity. For example, a sprint shuttle could be followed by a wall-sit hold. It's important to give options for everyone, from the younger, the less fit, through to the fittest people, and on to the older, less mobile members.

It is good practice to look around during the workouts, making note of who is working hard, who is finding it easy, and who is struggling to keep up.

Grouping the exercises can be used to build up and target something more specific. Perhaps a group of three things that will target the legs.

1. Squats for the quads.
2. Push ups, going back into a ground-squat, to increase the workload on the quads.
3. Finish with lunges

Progressive difficulty, either within the round, or getting more challenging over the four rounds.

1. Exercise 1, round one – Hand release push ups
2. Exercise 1, round two – Normal push ups
3. Exercise 1, round three – Triceps push ups
4. Exercise 1, round four – Pop push ups *

*(Pop push ups – instead of just pushing back up, push a little harder to provide a “pop”, and the hands briefly leave the ground. Not as extreme as a full jumping push up, so a good progression).

Some observations from our club:

The younger people like to run. If the training venue is small, even shuttles should be possible. Short back & forth running between two lines. If there is more space, run in larger circles, or even a large run around the outside of the venue. Bear in mind, the exercise only lasts for 25 seconds and a short sprint only needs the length of a basketball court (there & back).

The older, or less mobile members like to have substitute options. Instead of running, a plank hold, squats, or back leg raises.

Exercises

Ok, it's a simple concept and doesn't need a huge explanation.

As with the music choices, a variety of exercise keeps people interested, works different body parts, gives everyone a chance to do their favourite things and suffer through their worst ones.

ABS/CORE

Russian twist

Sit, leaning slightly back. Feet on the floor, keeping the hands out in front, rotate the shoulders side-to-side. The head, arms and shoulders all rotate while the core and legs remain stationary.

Optional upgrades:

Lift feet off the ground, while keeping them stationary.

Hold a weight while twisting. In conjunction with the first upgrade, it becomes more difficult to stop the feet from twisting.

W sits

Sit, leaning slightly back with the feet pulled in. Lean as far back as possible while extending the legs out straight.

Optional upgrade:

Keep the feet off the ground all the way through the move.

While pulling the legs back in, Pull the legs to each side, alternating sides each time.

Crunchy frogs

Similar to the W sit. Start sitting up with feet pulled in. Hug the knees. Extend the legs out straight and extend the arms out sideways, making sure the feet don't touch the ground. Lean slightly back for balance. Finally, pull the legs back in and hug the knees again.

Hollow plank

Lay down, facing up. Lift the legs off the ground, put the arms out straight behind the head while lifting the head & shoulders off the floor. Remain in that position.

The arms should always be out straight and the head & shoulders should always be lifted off the ground.

Options:

Lift only one leg, or pull the legs in so they are still lifted but bent at the knee.

Plank hold

...as per the black belt grading requirements. A good option here is to combine this into two time periods of the tabata, so the plank is held for the first 25 seconds, through the 10 second break, and through the second 25 second time period for a total of 60 seconds.

Plank saw

Similar to the plank hold.

Instead of remaining stationary, gently move forwards and backwards so the arms are alternately ahead and behind the shoulders. The movements don't need to be large.

This is a good exercise for people working towards the four minute plank requirement

Plank reach

Another plank variation.

From the standard plank position, raise one arm directly out in front while trying not to twist the hips. Put that arm back down and raise the other. Keep alternating arms.

Plank walks Starting from a normal plank hold, put one hand down and straighten the arm. Raise the other arm so the body is in a “raised plank” position. Lower one arm at a time back to the normal plank position, with forearms and elbows on the ground.
I.e. Move from the normal plank to raised plank and back.

Note, emphasis should be placed on keeping the hips straight throughout the move, so the core has to work to stabilise.

Raised plank shoulder touch Start in a raised plank position, the “Up” position of a push up. Alternatively touch each shoulder with the opposite hand. As with the plank walk, the hips should remain stationary throughout the movement. There shouldn’t be any sore twisting.

Leg lifts Lay down, facing up. Keep legs straight at all times, and lift them to vertical, and lower back down slowly. Don’t let the feet touch the floor.

Optional upgrade:
Lift the legs to vertical, then circle them outwards while lowering. Keep the legs straight all the way through the movement.

CHEST & SHOULDERS

Hand release push ups Similar to a standard push up, but with a greater range of motion. At the end of the “Down” portion of the push up, briefly lift the hands off the floor, put them back and push back up. These can be done very quickly with a sharp push off the floor.

Pop push ups This can be form either a normal push up, or the hand release. Push harder from the bottom so the hands briefly lift off the ground. They are a low risk version of the clapping push up, that don’t risk crashing the face into the ground.

Optional upgrade. The full clapping push up. This can be great in a group, where people encourage each other to work as hard as they can.

Push up & roll More fun for the younger members. Perform a normal push up, then on the “down” portion, roll to one side then do another push up. Roll back the other way.

CARDIO

Mountain climbers From the starting position of a push up, bring the knees forward one at a time up to the knees, in a sort of running motion.

There are many variations for this.

Fast - don’t touch the forward foot to the ground, so the emphasis is on pulling the knees up as quickly as possible.

Wide – The forward foot touches the ground, on the outside of the hands.

Diagonal – As the knee comes forward, pull it through to the opposite side.

Note – keeping the shoulders above the hands will work the abs more, as the core pulls the legs up, rather than having the feet push off.

Burpees

A classic exercise. From a standing position, drop down and perform a push up. Pull the feet back in and jump back up, clapping the hand behind the head. To standardise the movement, the hands should leave the ground at the bottom of the push up (similar to the hand release push up), and at the top of the jump, the feet should leave the ground.

As with mountain climbers, the imagination is the only limit to the options:

Half burpees – A lot quicker, drop to the “up” portion of a push up and jump back up.

Mountain climber burpees – After the push up, perform four quick mountain climber motions before jumping back up.

Feet in & out. After the push up and while still in the push up position, jump the feet out to the side and back in before jumping up.

Switch kicks

Start standing, raise the right knee.

Push it down and out the back, and drop down into the mountain climber position.

Swap feet so the left foot is back.

Pull the left foot up and stand in the same motion while pulling the knee upwards.

The overall motion should look like a mountain climber, standing in between each swap of the feet. Pulling the knee up quickly should cause a small jump, with both feet leaving the ground.

Kick through

Place hands flat on the floor and kneel down.

Push one leg through to the opposite side of the body, so the hips are on the ground and the side of the foot is on the floor.

Quickly pull the foot back and switch sides, so the other foot goes through to its opposite side.

The overall motion should have the body staying quite close to the floor, with the legs jumping from one side to the other.

Variation – sit through.

This has a similar motion. From a raised plank position (The “up” in a push up), kick one foot through to the opposite side. The body rotates and ends facing up, with both hands on the floor.

Reverse the motion, going back to the raised plank and repeat in the opposite direction.

Shuttles

If there is room for everyone, shuttles are very simple, short sprints between two lines. There can be more than one line, so each shuttle run has several quick there-and-back actions to the different lines.

Sprinting is only one option. Instead of running, try these:

Lunges – Step forward longer, so the back knee drop towards the floor.

The movement would be like an extended walking stance.

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| | Bear crawls – Have the hands & feet on the ground, hips low, knees not touching the floor. Move forward with the hands and feet while keeping low and keeping the knees off the floor. |
| Jumping knee touch | From a standing position, jump while raising one knee. Touch the opposite elbow to the knee. On landing, jump again and swap sides, touch the other knee to its opposing elbow. This can be done with a skip in between, or by jumping straight from one side to the other. |
| Star jumps | There isn't much to explain for this, it's an original classic but can be forgotten. Everyone can do them, so they should have a regular spot in the tabata list. |

LEGS

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| Squats | From a standing position, feet shoulder width apart. Squat down, pushing the hips back. Squat down so the upper legs in horizontal to the floor. Optional upgrade: Pulse squats. Instead of the full up & down motion, stay down and pulse quickly up & down. This is a good choice of move to slightly extend the time, from 25 seconds to perhaps 30 or 35 seconds. |
| Frog squats | Stand with feet quite far apart, squat down, putting elbows to the knees and press palms together. During the motion keeps the elbows on the knees and the hands pressed together all the time. Straighten the legs, push hands down through the legs, slightly behind. |
| Wall sit | Stand with back against the wall, slide down until the upper legs are parallel to the floor. The lower legs should be straight up, forming a ninety degree angle at the knees. The arms shouldn't touch the legs. |

PARTNERS

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| Push up & slap | Face each other in a push up position. Do a push up and at the top, slap hand with the person opposite. Next time slap the opposite hand. |
| Sit up & punch | Lay down and face each other, feet flat on the ground with the knees slightly raised. Lay back and raise back up. At the top of the sit-up, one person holds up their hands while the other person punches each hand. Do another sit-up, and the roles are reversed, so the other person punches. |
| Plank jump | One person remains in the plank position, while the other jumps over their legs. On the next time through, the roles are reversed. |

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| Pull ups | One person stands, the other sits on the floor. The person sitting holds up one hand, and the person standing grabs the hand with their same hand (i.e. right hand to right hand, the left hand to left hand next time). The standing person pulls the sitting person up, and sits down in the same motion so the roles are reversed. The standing-pulling-sitting continues back & forward. |
| Squat punch | Similar to the sit-up and punch. Partners face each other and squat. At the top of the squat, one person holds their hands up and the other person punches. Swap sides on the next down/up movement. |
| Plank reach | As above with the normal plank reach, the partners face each other, an arm's length apart. From the plank position, touch hands while reaching forward. |
| Offset crunch hand touch | Lay down offset from each other, with the feet facing inwards. The hands for each person should be just out of reach. I.e. The left hand of one person should be just out of reach of the left hand of the other person. Both people crunch up and touch hands. Next time swap sides, so the right hands touch during the crunch. |
| Shuttle race | A normal shuttle, but the partners race each other. This can be sprinting, lunging, bear crawling, or any other movements done as a race. |

Partner work

For the partner exercises, the tabata session can be made into a race, with each person trying to move faster or perform more reps than their partner.

Hand release push ups and sit ups are always part of partner race tabata sessions at Dragon's spirit.

Instead of racing, the moves can be combined.

One person performs squats or frog squats while the other lunges to the other side of the hall & back. The roles can be reversed then or swapped the next time round.

Updates and exercise demonstrations

The tabata exercises are always evolving, new things are being added all the time.

To see the latest moves, or to get a demonstration of any of the above moves, please come along and visit Dragon's Spirit Taekwon-Do. The tabata sessions are always at the end of the class, and visitors are always welcome.