

PULL POWER



More people are using sleds to get stronger, faster and leaner.

BY Marco Mastrococco

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WANT TO GET SHREDDED OR DEVELOP RAW ATHLETIC POWER? THERE'S ONE TRAINING METHOD YOU MIGHT HAVE OVERLOOKED.

Once the preserve of MMA fighters, strongmen and rugby players, sled training is now generating some real pulling power in mainstream strength gyms.

It's easy to understand why. When I worked as a performance coach for fighters in the UK, I employed sled work to generate the physiological adaptations that would benefit striking, wrestling and jiu-jitsu drills.

But my experiences and subsequent reading taught me how effective sled training is for everyone.

It's good for muscular endurance, power and strength, running biomechanics, mental resilience and, above all, fat burning. Incredible fat burning!

Sled work is also great for rehab because there is no eccentric phase in the exercise and it makes your glutes and quads rock solid.

It's this versatility that makes sleds so effective. For example, if you are training for metabolic conditioning, you can load enough weight on a sled to utilise primarily your anaerobic energy system—that's a weight heavy enough to recruit plenty of muscle but light enough not to slow you down too much.

But if you're after muscular endurance, you can work with a heavier weight. Either method will help you shred fat, especially when combined with good nutrition.

Sleds can also help improve running form and acceleration. The traditional rule of thumb when using sleds for running work was to use around 10% of body weight but recent research suggests it can exceed this figure providing running style isn't affected.

A study in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* found, "Weighted sled drills target the specific muscles used in sprinting and help to bridge the gap between form, running drills and traditional gym exercises like squats and Olympic lifts."

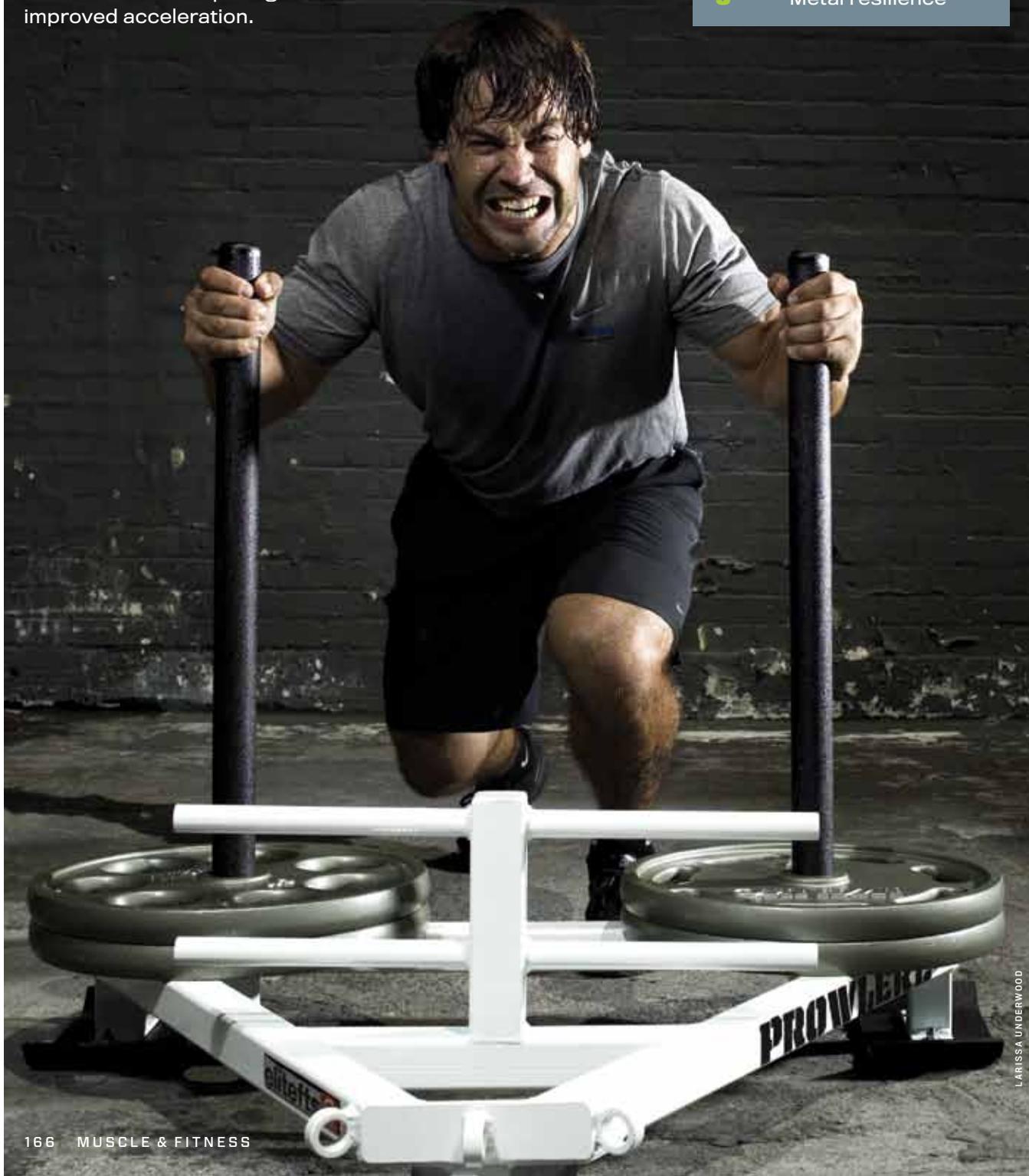
Research in the *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* linked sled pulling to improved acceleration.

So whatever you're training for, sleds have something to offer. They're becoming increasingly common in gyms but if yours doesn't have one you can improvise: a tyre filled with weights and attached to a rope works just as well.

Here's a sample workout to power up your training.

TOP FIVE SLED TRAINING BENEFITS

- 1 Fat burning
- 2 Power and strength
- 3 Muscular endurance
- 4 Running biomechanics and motor pattern
- 5 Metal resilience



LARISSA UNDERWOOD

HIIT SLED WORKOUT

This routine works equally well as a finisher to your routine or a workout in its own right.

WEIGHT

Beginners: 10-25% body weight on the sled

Advanced: 25%+ body weight on the sled

WARM UP

Sled training stresses your joints, ligaments and muscles, so start with some mobility exercises and dynamic stretching. Activate your ankles, calves, hamstrings and glutes to get the blood pumping and fire up the central nervous system. Foam rolling, massage balls, and a general dynamic warm up will do the trick.

- Ankle, hip and shoulder mobility exercises for 10 minutes
- Pushing an unloaded sled for a total of 10 20-metre laps

WORKOUT

Perform two sets of the following circuit back-to-back with maximum effort.

Do two reps of each exercise per set; one rep is 20 m. Repeat three times with 2-3 minutes rest between rounds. Aim to keep your time under the 5-minute mark each round.

■ **Sled Marching** (with harness or TRX) Facing away from the sled, drag the sled as fast as you can. If you use the TRX keep your hands close and behind your back. 2 reps

■ **Sled Pulls** You can do this standing or sitting (if you want to isolate your core more). Facing towards the sled, pull it to you as fast as possible using a rope or TRX. 2 reps

■ **Sled pushing** The lower you grip the sled the more you'll get your quads working. 2 reps
Alternatively, if you haven't got distance markers, you can perform each exercise for time—just try to keep the total around the five-minute mark.

If you're using the routine as a finisher, just perform one round. **M&F**

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is a strength and conditioning coach. He is a former pro fighter (WAKO) with four Italian titles and a bronze at the European Championships. He currently runs international seminars for ring sports and conditioning and is the manager of Centennial Health club in Sydney. He is Head of Performance at www.marcomastrorocco.com



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