

The Olympic Workout

By *Stacy Berman*

From cyclists to swimmers, Olympic athletes are among the healthiest and most physically fit people in the world. They spend countless hours training, working out and eating properly in order to become the absolute best at their respective sports.

Although it may remain a pipe dream for most of us to win a gold medal, it is possible to adopt a “do as they do” attitude and incorporate an Olympic-style approach to our own workout routines.

Have you ever noticed the shoulders on a swimmer, the thighs and calves on a cyclist and the biceps on a rower? Though every Olympic athlete has exceptional balance, strength and agility, they develop specific muscle tone based on the unique movements of their sports.

If you're in the market for strong, lean and defined legs, hit the track. If you're looking to build up those back and shoulder muscles, you may consider rowing or volleyball. Here are some fun Olympic sports that will jump-start you to that gold medal body you've always wanted.



Rowing

Rowing is a speed and endurance sport that utilizes just about every muscle in the entire body, but your shoulders and back will take on a majority of the workload. Your thighs, rear end and stomach are largely responsible for a powerful thrusting motion.

Tip: Most gyms have a rowing machine,

which essentially replicates the actual rowing motion as if you were on a pond or lake.

Calories Burned: 534 calories per hour

Volleyball

Strategically hitting a ball back and forth over an 8-foot net with your hands is not only fun, but also works wonders on the shoulders, neck, upper back and leg muscles. Reaching up to hit the ball every few seconds is essentially performing repetitions that ultimately strengthen the shoulders and upper back.

Also, it's common in volleyball for players to crouch down while waiting for the next play. The crouching motion acts as a mini squat and is good for developing tone in the thighs and rear end.

Tip: Try playing three on three. This forces everyone to cover extra ground and move around a lot more. You'll work twice as hard and get twice the benefit.

Calories Burned: 517 calories per hour

Swimming

When it comes to overall fitness, swimming is the most efficient way of building endurance, full-body strength and a solid core. It's a low-impact sport, so the joints and ligaments suffer virtually no stress, therefore allowing the muscles to do their job more effectively.

Freestyle targets the shoulders, stomach, "wings" and legs. The butterfly works the chest, legs and entire back while the breaststroke is great for the arms.

Tip: After you've warmed up with several laps, attach a life jacket to a rope and tie it around your waist. The life jacket will add resistance and you'll get a much better workout.

Calories Burned: 800 calories per hour

Cycling

Cycling is also highly effective at working the entire body while increasing stamina with very little impact on the tendons and ligaments. The thighs, calves, hamstrings and rear end are all actively engaged during peddling while the muscles in the upper body maintain balance.

Tip: If you're used to riding on the street, give mountain biking a shot. You'll be surprised at how much effort it takes just to stay on the trail.

Calories Burned: Up to 1,220 calories per hour

The Olympian dedicates his or her life to building the most efficient, athletic body possible. Toned muscles and incomparable health are simply the result of hard work and intense training.

We too can follow their lead and gain similar results. Watching Olympic athletes push themselves to the limit motivates me to drive myself and my clients to achieve their personal best. We can inspire each other through healthy competition and praise one another when our dreams become a reality.

Stacy Berman is a certified fitness trainer and founder of Stacy's Boot Camp and Man Camp, which specialize in outdoor workouts that produce the same results as a gym.

For more information on Stacy's Boot Camp, including registration details and full schedule, visit www.stacysbootcamp.com.