

Strongman training for improved body composition and overall strength, Part 2

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We have touched base with the basics in part 1, so now is the time to put everything all together. Here is a quick reference guide to choose from to apply strongman style workouts. You can pick and choose exercises that can target the desired results or just specific parts or sport specific goals.

Exercises/goals	Posterior chain	Pressing power	Scapular chain	speed	strength	rehab	Injury free	Beginner	Intermediary	advanced
Atlas stones	X		X		X					X
Sled	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Prowler	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yoke	X	X	X		X				X	X
Tire flip	X		X	X	X					X
Farmer's walk	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
Circus bell	X	X	X							X
Log	X	X	X		X				X	X
Heavy carry (kegs, bags, etc)	X		X					X	X	X
Sandbag	X	X	X					X	X	X
Rope pulls	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Slam balls	X		X	X	X			X	X	X

Now let's get down to it. Strength and ability are in the eye of the beholder so choose wisely. Let's review a few basic rules for strongman finishers.

1. Even though the goal is fat loss, heavy sets with low reps and shorter rest intervals will do the job. As long as technique is somewhat safe, go for it. Technique will always be "less than perfect" with unconventional lifts but still aim for quality over quantity, especially under fatigue.
2. Stick with prowlers, sleds, sandbags and anything not too taxing for the nervous system such as the big lifts like heavy tires, stones, and yokes. Keep in mind that you just worked out, so your nervous system is not as fresh.
3. If you still choose to do it, use the heaviest and more complex lift at the beginning, such as tire flips or logs. You could do it at the end, which inevitably makes it tougher, but you are looking for problems. The goal is fat burn, not a new hole in the log or a herniated disk.
4. You can drop in some type of Olympic lifts and bodyweight exercises for added pleasure and increased time of work.
5. Training the energy systems is best if done on a day devoted to them or on leg day.
6. You can go for sets. Example:
 A1- Log press x 6, no rest
 A2- Heavy sand bag over the shoulder toss x 6, rest 120 seconds, 4-5 sets.
7. Go for time. Ex: A1 A2 A3, as many sets as possible in 10 minutes.
8. Go for war. Ex: Finish as fast as possible, Ex.: prowler for distance (1000 feet), 100 deadlifts with 50% bodyweight.
9. Limited rest method. Every week, keep the same finisher, but cut 20 seconds on the rest periods.
10. Upper/Lower for time method. Pick one exercise that targets the upper body and one for lower, go at it for 20 minutes. Ex.: Standing log presses and prowler, (sub max Ex.: +-70%), rest 45 seconds between or rest as needed for 20 minutes.

Finisher #1

- A1 Sled backward pulls heavy 60 feet
 - A2 Supine sled pulls 60 feet
 - A3 Log clean and press x 6
- Rest for 90 seconds, repeat for 4-5 sets

Set up the sled with straps on one side and a 50 feet rope on the other. Pull the sled walking backwards until the 50 feet rope is straight and ready to go. Go lie down on your back at the end of the rope and start pulling the sled back to starting position. Once done, get up and go for 6 reps on the log clean and press. This finisher could be done twice a week after a leg workout preferably.

Finisher #2

- A1 Slam ball x 8-10 (as heavy as possible) 15 sec rest
 - A2 Farmers walk for distance, 15 sec rest
 - A3 Prowler sprint starts 90 sec. rest
- 4 sets

Take a slam ball as heavy as you can handle (I have up to 70kg) for 8 reps. Atlas stones could be great replacement but you can't really lift them overhead and slam them down. Follow with DB hang snatch which you do 4 reps with each arm. Keep in mind that one side is always less coordinated and strong than the other so be advised. For the farmers walk set up a distance or if space is limited, go for a time of work of 30 seconds.

The same goes for the Prowler, forget about the weight but aim to move the prowler as fast as possible for short sprints and aim for 30 seconds of total time of work (Ex.: 2-3 x 50 feet)

Now let's move on to the full strongman workouts, the key lies in the set up, like the gym and the equipment. Having some type of track or outdoor space is a plus but you can manage even in the smallest places with a little imagination.

Use the heavier and more challenging pieces at the beginning when your nervous system is fresh and ready for the beating.

Here are a few workout samples:

Workout #1

A1 Farmers walk 100 feet rest 30 seconds

A2 Log hang clean and press x4-6

Rest 90 seconds

5 sets

B1 Tire flips x4-6 no rest

B2 Prowler face pulls x10 no rest

B3 Push back as fast as possible no rest

B4 Battle rope 50 slams

Rest 90 seconds

4 sets

Workout #2

A1 Heavy prowler 50 feet

A2 One arm farmers walk 100 feet (50 feet each side)

A3 Heavy ball slams

A4 Heavy prowler pulls (50 feet back walk)

120 seconds rest

5 sets

Workout #3

For time

A

20 minutes non stop (rest as needed), as many rounds as possible

Yolk 50 feet

Slam ball (50lbs +) 10 times

Yolk 50 feet

Sledge hammer tire hits x10 each arm

B

15 minutes non stop (rest as needed), as many rounds as possible

Prowler push (high handles)
Barbell thrusters x5
Prowler push (low handles)
Barbell deadlifts x5

C

10 minutes finisher non stop (rest as needed), as many rounds as possible

Hook up a 50 foot rope to a car/truck (or prowler/sled)

A1 Sitting rope pulls

A2 Car pushes

Sit down with your feet anchored against something for added leverage. Pull the car and before it runs you over, push it back to the starting line. Go at it for 10 minutes. Enjoy the weak grip for a week or so...

For these workouts, record how many sets you have done in the 20 minutes and try to beat your score the next time around.

Instead of heavy slam balls, you can use atlas stones, or heavy sand bags. Instead of prowlers, use your car. These workouts have hundreds of possible permutations.

Few words of caution

Even though D.O.M.S. are practically non-existent with strongman workouts, your joints might not agree with you for a few days if you went all out, so 2-3 days before another type of strongman is recommended.

I know most of these equipment and set up aren't available easily, but this is where great gyms differentiate themselves with diversity in their equipment. I get many people who come from very far just to do strongman style workouts. If you are willing to put in the effort, you'll be willing to go the distance.

Most of the coaches who keep coming to the continuing education seminars with the Strength Sensei have access to some of these specialized equipments and the knowledge to run you through these workouts and tailor them to your needs.