

KETTLEBELLS

By David Drake

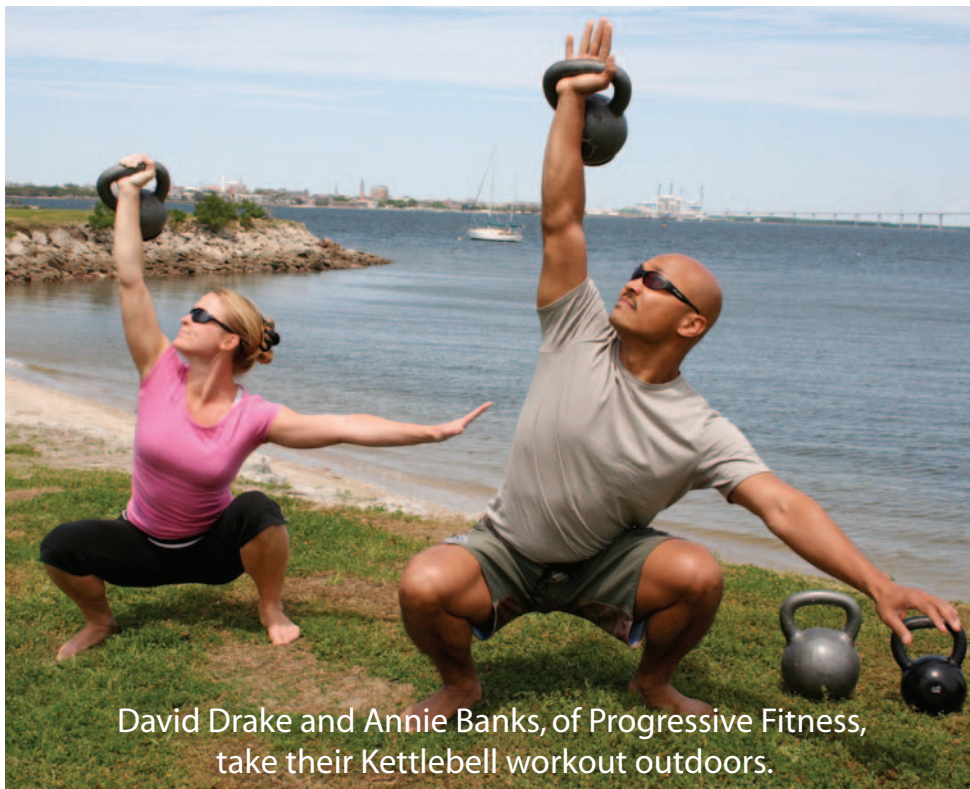
Since their re-introduction to American soil in 2000, Russian Kettlebells have exploded onto the scene as the ultimate form of functional fitness! The girya, or kettlebell, was first recorded in a Russian dictionary in 1704 (Cherkikh, 1994). It is a cast iron weight that resembles a cannonball with a handle. The initial popularity of kettlebells in ancient Russian society fell to farmers, militia, and other laypersons. These strongmen became known as gireviks, and were highly respected for their ruggedness and honorability. The Russian magazine Hercules stated in 1913, “not a single sport develops our muscular strength and bodies as well as kettlebell athletics.”

Why are kettlebells becoming so popular? Modern conveniences have taken us away from being as physically strong as our ancestors. As a result, there has been a natural progression towards developing stronger, more functional bodies to handle the stressors of daily living. This new fitness movement is changing the way we spend our time in the gym. Kettlebells are the perfect tool to meet the growing need for quick results that last.

True functional training can be defined as multi-planar, multi-directional, total-body movement that challenges one’s ability to maintain center of gravity regardless of position and external loading. Functional exercises improve the neuromuscular system for better flexibility, coordination, speed, endurance and strength. Properly designed and implemented kettlebell programs will easily fulfill the criteria for functional exercise and take your physicality to new levels!

Ancient Tool Finds Modern Application





David Drake and Annie Banks, of Progressive Fitness, take their Kettlebell workout outdoors.

demand on the nervous system, most people can get an optimal workout in as little as 20-30 minutes!

KETTLEBELLS ARE EXCELLENT FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN! Kettlebells are available in all weights. Women are especially suited, both metabolically and hormonally, for the high repetition workloads associated with intense KB sessions. Kettlebells can also help children fight the early onset of obesity when applied in a sensible way!

With consistent training and integrity of movement, the weekend golfer, the yoga enthusiast, and the avid runner will quickly find themselves breaking past all personal body composition goals and performance records!!

Certain precautions should be taken when training with kettlebells. First time users should have good baseline fitness, a properly functioning core, and be free of injury. In addition, KB sessions in your living room could become hazardous to furniture and pets when the fatigue sets in!!! It is strongly recommended that you seek professional guidance from a certified RKC (Russian Kettlebell Challenge) instructor or qualified functional exercise specialist before you embark on the road to Kettlebell greatness. Another good resource is www.dragondoor.com and books or dvd's by Pavel Tsatsouline.

Kettlebell training offers the best of both anaerobic and aerobic fitness. In other words, you can gain strength and improve the cardiovascular system while stimulating the metabolic system and improving total body strength. A scientific study done on two groups of college students in Russia in the early 1980's used a battery of specific PT tests, such as, grip strength, pull-ups, stand-

ing broad jump, a 100m sprint, and a 1K run. The control group trained specifically for each test, while the other group trained only with kettlebells. The KB group, despite the lack of practice on the tested skills, scored better on every test! It would be challenging to find any single mode of exercise that would carryover to as many different physical abilities!

What can kettlebells do for the average fitness enthusiast that can't be gained by traditional barbells, dumbbells, machines and cardio equipment?

KETTLEBELLS WILL LEAD TO GREATER FAT LOSS! The use of both prime movers and stabilizers will turn your metabolic engine into a calorie-guzzling HEMI! This effect can last for several hours post training! Most cardiovascular exercises actually make the body too efficient, thus reducing energy expenditure during and after the session. A fuel efficient hybrid engine may be good for the planet, but it won't do much for your waistline!

KETTLEBELLS ARE TIME EFFICIENT AND CAN BE USED ANYWHERE! Kettlebells are relative inexpensive and virtually indestructible, making them great for indoor and outdoor training. Due to the complex nature of movements and extensive



David is co-owner of Progressive Fitness in West Ashley. Kettlebell classes as well as individual instruction are currently being offered. Also training out of Progressive Fitness is Charleston's only RKC certified instructor, Scott Dawson. Both of them can be contacted at (843)225-6622, or www.progressivefitnesscharleston.com.