



DROP AND CATCH ME 20!

Whether you've just booked a Coral Sea charter or want to be ready for your next big-fish hook-up, get fishing fit with *Modern's* sportfisher training program

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THE BEER-SWILLING drongo clasping a handline while sprawled on a beach with a terry towelling hat shading his face but not his gorilla-like gut is a contrast to the reality of modern angling techniques. Sportfishing is a fast-paced energetic game that requires strength and stamina. The fitter you are, the more fish you catch. It's just a shame fitness requires training...

Training for fishing might sound like a total wank, but serious anglers know that being fishing fit is necessary if you want quick fights to catch more during short bite times; if you want to avoid being sharked; if you need to repeatedly cast long distances; if you're jigging deep water with heavy

metal lures; if you like hiking into hard-to-get-to secret spots; and if you want to be able to fish all day, or sometimes even all week.

Training means regularly working the muscles you use when fishing. Or, it could mean preparing your guns for a kind of war they've never experienced when you book that fishing holiday of a lifetime. *Modern Fishing* regularly covers sportfishing destinations that can cost \$5000-\$10,000 per angler per week and if you think the price hurts, imagine your arms being too wrecked to fish after only the first day. It happens.

The best way to be fishing fit is to fish as often as possible. Wouldn't that be nice? But for those whose life continually gets in the way of fishing and for those who

PRO TIPS

TRAINING TIPS

- Drink plenty of water, especially if you are doing anything that makes you sweat.
- If anything hurts, stop. Aching is normal. Uncomfortable is normal. Pain is a sign something is wrong.
- If you get dizzy or feel nauseous, stop. That's your body telling you it has had enough.
- If you're still sore from the last workout, take it very easy on the affected muscle, keep the weights light and go slow. If you're still sore after the first couple of exercises, call it a day.
- Warming up beforehand and stretching afterwards help to reduce injuries. Try a fast walk, shadow boxing or any other light exercise for five minutes before starting your workout.
- If you have any existing medical conditions, speak to a professional to get the all-clear before you start bulking up.



There's nowhere to hide on a packed charter boat, expect to cop heaps from your mates if you can't hack the hurt!

When you're fit and ready for action, get your mates and head to Terrigal for awesome kingfish jigging with Haven Charters' Scott Thorrington aboard the *Freedom*. Ph: 0419 440 869. www.kingfishjigging.com

Jigging for kings is hard work. We were hoping to put Mac onto a 10kg-plus monster to test his mettle, but the solid 6kg fish still drew the sweat beads.



Grip strength will pay off in the twentieth minute of your battle with that dream 20kg kingfish.



regularly suffer from Mother Nature's cruellest of pranks—bad weather on your day off—*Modern Fishing* decided it was time to put together a sportfishing training regime. We're not promising you'll become so ripped you'll need a spatula to get all the chicks off you. We just want to offer a starting point for all sportfishers—even the under-fished, noodle-armed, pack-a-day, whiting-give-me-cramps angler—to prepare for the local kingfish, samsons and tuna, or the bluewater bullies encountered when you book a week's charter with the likes of Nomad or Ocean Blue.

The project

To develop a sportfishing training program, *Modern Fishing* needed to find a big-fish virgin with the credentials to offer useful advice. We needed a physical trainer to volunteer to be hurt by a kingfish—a suitable and accessible adversary—and then come up with a plan written by sore muscles.

Enter Mac Redinbaugh. On paper, Mac's a bad-ass physical trainer: he kickboxes; he does power lifting for fun; he trains clients of varying strengths, from pregnant women

to steroid-skulling iron pumpers; and his Sydney-based business makes a point of approaching exercise with fun in mind. He's a nicer bloke in real life than he sounds on paper, which is a bonus, because I didn't want to risk getting round-house-kicked Chuck Norris-style for laughing at a psycho gym junkie losing a fight to a kingfish...

The test

Modern Fishing's Al McGlashan and I—both of whom would lose a kickboxing match, power lifting contest and a 100m sprint to Mac—loaded Al's boat *Strikezone* and took Mac to Terrigal, on the NSW Central Coast. There we jigged for kingfish all day to subject Mac to the usual punishment involved in a day's jigging. We landed more than a dozen kings. We had hoped to hook Mac onto a 20kg kingy to make him cry but the best we could find was a tough-but-manageable 6kg rocket. It was enough to give Mac an idea of what muscles need buffing if you want to beat big fish. Here's the program he came up with:

Sportfisher training program

There are a handful of simple things that can make a difference to your days on the water. Being fitter and stronger and able to haul a hard-fighting fish on board before a shark gets it or to quickly out-muscle a barra heading for sunken timber means you are likely to head home with more than stories to share. Fitness really comes into play towards the end of a fishing trip. Three days of popping and jigging—even if you don't catch a thing—can leave you shattered and unable to hold a rod, let alone land a monster. Planning and training can make the difference between being keen and excited to the last cast, or exhausted and just going through the motions.

If you are planning a big fishing trip and want to be in the best physical shape for it, start training now. Most of the adaptations we are trying to create below are endurance-based, and it takes longer to make a big difference in your endurance than it does in your strength.

Get out on to the water whenever you can before your trip. The more specific training you can do the more competent you are and the easier it becomes. You can also find out what your weakest link is and focus on that.

Grip

Grip strength is the most important thing to train—at least, that's where I found myself struggling the most. If you can't hold on to the rod, you can't do anything with it. It's important to work on grip strength daily, especially the exercises listed below as 'basic'. Aim to do one or the other twice a day, once in the morning and once at night.

Hand crunches: Open your hands and splay your fingers as wide as they can go and then quickly clench a tight fist. Start with 50 repetitions, one hand then the other, switching right hand to left with no rest in between until each hand has done it three times. Add five repetitions to each set every day until you reach 100 reps per set.

Ball squeeze: Not as painful or wrong as it sounds. Buy a squash ball and squeeze it in



All the exercises listed here can be done with ordinary household items. If you don't have weights, just use anything heavy, like locked tool or tackle boxes.

Get into the curls not only for fighting the fish, but so you've also got some power left in the guns to lift the big catch for a photo.



your fist for one full second then relax for a heartbeat. Then two full seconds and relax. Work your way up to 10 seconds and then back down to one. Example: eight, rest, nine, rest, 10 rest, nine, rest.

For more difficulty you can use a larger ball. Alternatively, buy a grip strength machine for a few dollars in a sporting goods store.

Rotations: You need a hammer with a heavy head or a heavy wooden broom. Grab your broom with your right hand and stick your arm out to shoulder height with your thumb facing up and two-thirds of the broom above your hand. Imagine a clock face with your hand as the middle and the broom facing the 12. Rotate anticlockwise slowly and under control until the broom reaches 'nine', then hold for a second. Rotate clockwise until the broom reaches 'three'. Your hand should be palm-upward at this point. Rotate back, counter clockwise, until you get to the 'six' then slowly roll it back to the '12'. That's one rep. Aim for three to six on each hand. You can adjust the difficulty by altering your grip. The more weight further away from your hand towards the '12' when you start, the harder it is. Repeat for the left hand.

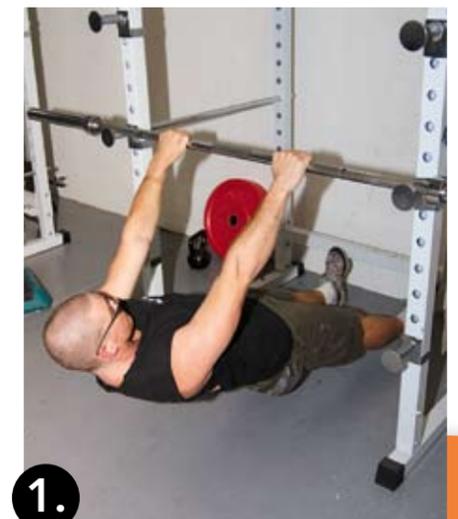
Zombie twists: Take a broom handle minus the brushes or a section of dowel and hold it at shoulder height with your arms held out straight in front, like a bad actor in a zombie movie. Now, roll the rod in your grip like

you were wringing out a towel or throttling a motorcycle. Keep your arms as straight as you can and roll it as fast as you can for 30 seconds. Increasing by 10 seconds every day until you can do a minute.

Lifts: Drill a hole through the piece of dowel you were using in the exercise above: wide enough for a 2m length of thin rope. Feed the rope through the hole and tie it off. Attach the other end to something heavy—an old weight plate is best but anything, including a locked tackle box, will do. (Start light.) Using the same zombie motion as above, roll the dowel, wrapping the rope around it. Initially you will be dragging the weight over the ground but eventually it will rise to the height of the rod. Keep you arms at shoulder height and reverse the direction of your twists, lowering the weight back to the ground. If you can do this three times without swearing and turning red in the face, it's too light!

Hangs: Find a stable chin-up bar, kiddies play set or an exposed beam high enough off the floor so your feet can't, or only barely, touch the ground. (Not so high you break your legs coming down either...) Grab on with both hands and hold on for as long as you can. Use two hands, don't reattach your grip and keep an eye on the clock. Three to five reps.

Campus board crunches: You can get campus boards from rock climbing and adventure stores. These fiendish devices have all manner of nooks and crannies instead of a smooth bar for gripping and using one



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The incline pull-up is another exercise you can set up with items found around the house: a strong piece of dowel secured between two objects of equal height will work fine. Use common sense when setting up for any exercise and keep your safety in mind at all times.

correctly can give freakish levels of grip strength. If you find yourself sticking one of these into your garage at home, you are officially a gym junkie waiting to happen. Drag yourself into your local weights room and make some friends. For the normal people of the world, a chin-up bar is more than enough.

Back and bicep

Once you have something in your hands, it is the muscles of your back and arms that are actually responsible for pulling it in. Your back does all the lifting and carrying stuff, meaning that after your legs, your back is your strongest section. Back muscles are also responsible for posture and spinal support, so strengthening your back goes a long way towards keeping you mobile and moving well. And chicks dig muscles...

Basic biceps: You will need something heavy you can hold in one hand. A dumbbell is best but you can use anything that's heavy to lift. I have trained folks using nothing more complex than sacks filled with sand. Feel free to get creative.

Bicep curl: You know this one. It is the exercise everyone mimes when they talk about exercise. Grab something heavy, let your arm hang down straight by your side. Pull it up to your shoulder without swinging your hips or moving your elbow from its position. Repeat. Each rep should take four seconds. 8–12 reps.

Better bicep curl: Take a little less weight. Pull as if you are doing a normal curl but



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stop one-third of the way through. Your arm should be at 45 degrees from your body. Hold the weight there for seven seconds then do seven quick curls. Pull the weight to half-way, hold for seven seconds. Finally, pull two-thirds of the way so your fist is facing up at 45 degrees, hold for seven and do seven final curls. This is horrible, but mimics the way your arms have to work when fighting the big ones!

Row: If you have access to a gym with machines, anything that says 'row' is your friend: incline row, seated row, cable row. Lots of different names, lots of different machines, but ultimately it's all about pulling something toward you. The most fishing-specific is probably a wide grip seated row, but any is fine. If you don't have access to a gym, we'll get creative.

Incline pull-up: Grab a secured bar at waist height and with your palms facing your feet lie back at about a 45 degree angle so you hang under the bar, like a chin-up but with your feet on the ground. Then, focusing on the muscles between your shoulder blades, pull your chest up towards the bar. Don't worry if you can't get there or if your strength fades quickly, this is a tough exercise. Make it easier by bringing your feet closer to the bar and standing more upright. Make it harder by moving your feet further away and lying more horizontally.

Chin-ups: Grab a secured bar or something over your head and pull your chest up towards it. Start off by jumping off the ground if that helps. Focus on pulling your elbows towards the ground beneath you and the bar onto your chest. Sticking your chin up in the air and your neck out like a Christmas turkey is not helpful or necessary.

Chest

We have prescribed a lot of back, so some



'The plank' won't give you a tanned, hair-free, washboard six-pack—that's achieved with a calorie count, skin cancer risk and some hot wax—but your abs will grow stronger.

chest work is in order. This is important if you're going poppering or for casting heavy lures a long way. You should try to balance your workouts so you aren't working one movement more than the other.

Push-ups: You know how these work. Hands a little wider than shoulder-width apart, body straight and arms bent to 90 degrees. Then just exhale and push your arms out straight keeping your body rigid.

Harder push-ups: Do your push-ups with your feet elevated higher than your shoulders, like on top of a chair or the couch. This forces your shoulders and upper pecs to do more of the work. Three to five sets, working up towards 20 per set.

Core

Sit-ups will not make your belly smaller! That is a lie daytime TV ads use to sell Ab Flex 9000s. They will make your stomach muscles stronger, but losing weight is a calorie-in-vs-calorie-out thing. There are 1001 ab exercises, but a simple approach is best.

The plank: Lying down on your stomach, lift yourself onto your elbows and your toes and hold that position for as long as possible. Keep your body horizontal from your shoulder through your hips to your ankles. Don't let your hips rise up. If you feel your lower back, your hips are probably lower than they should be. Keep your belly button in and your abs tight. Aim for three rounds of 40–60 seconds.

Reverse plank: Sit with your legs straight out in front and your arms by your side with your palms pressed firmly into the ground and your fingers spread wide. Push your hips upwards and squeeze the muscles of your butt and lower back to hold yourself as straight as possible. Aim for three rounds of 40–60 seconds.

That's plenty of stuff to start with, but there are a few final details. When on the water, drink plenty of water. If you are having a few beers, go one-for-one. Okay, maybe two for one, but you will dehydrate really quickly and it drains you massively.

Take little breaks, even early-on when you feel fresh. Have a minute or so off after every couple of casts and shake the tension out of your hands. You recover much faster if you don't overdo it first.

Take food, preferably something with protein in it. You can buy protein bars at the supermarket for a couple of dollars each. They are energy dense and will keep you going for ages.

Avoid the liquid 'energy' in tubes. It is sugar and salt in gelatin, which is great for running marathons but massive overkill for everything else.

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To strengthen your chest so you can pelt poppers to the horizon, try increasing the difficulty of your push ups by elevating your feet during the exercise. You don't need a weights bench, the couch is fine—but take your shoes off or your missus might growl at you!