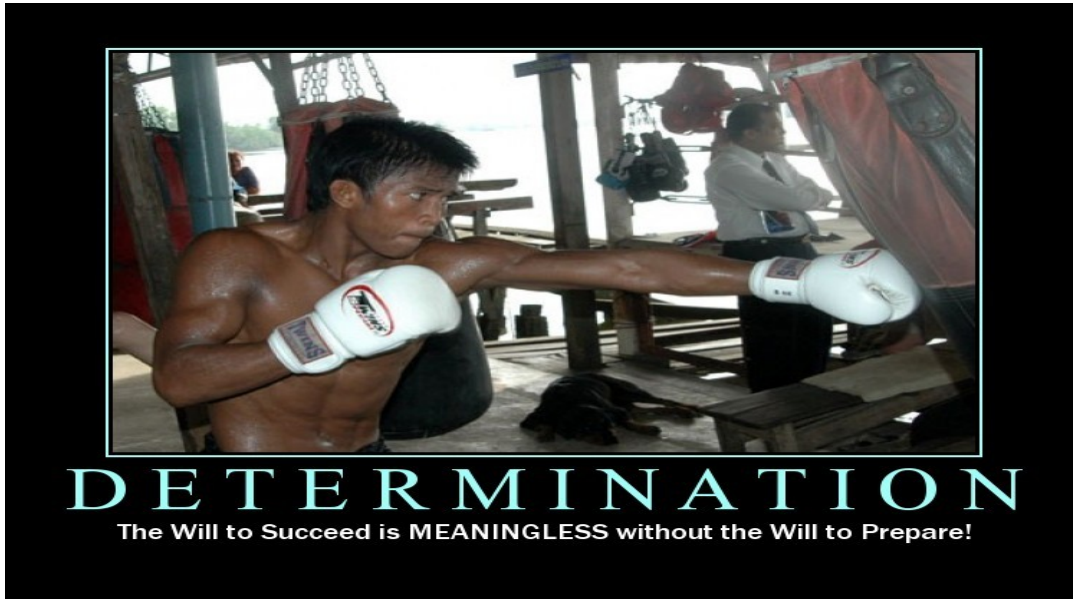


PHYSICAL PREPARATIONS



There's somewhat of a mystique associated with the training in Thailand. People who have never gone instinctively assume that they'll be put through the most physically demanding workouts they'll ever experience. And for most people, that assumption is correct - the training can be pretty intense. Chances are that the training in Thailand is a lot harder than what you're used too (even if you're training frequently) and when you return home, it's tough to match the intensity that you got used too while you were here.

It's quite amazing actually. The workouts that you're struggling to get through now will seem like a joke by the time you get back. But for now, the main focus is getting ready for Thailand - training for your training if you will.

The main thing you want to be focused on before you come is your cardio, especially if you're only coming to Thailand for a few weeks. It takes a while for your body to adapt so if you want to make the most of your time here, then you should spend at least 3 weeks building up your cardio prior to coming.

The best ways to do that are by running and skipping. There's other ways to do it, but you'll be running and skipping for hours on end in Thailand so you might as well prepare yourself. Try to

work up to a point where you're able to skip for about half an hour since that's how long you'll be skipping for in most of the gyms there.

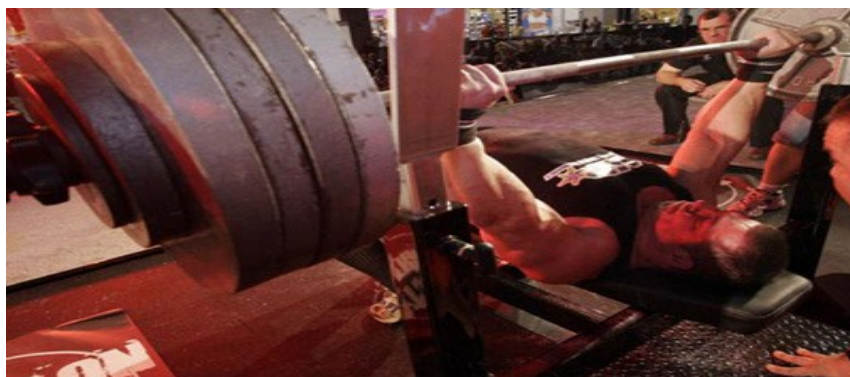
When you're skipping alongside a bunch of Thai fighters, you don't want to be the guy who has to stop every minute to catch your breath and stretch out your cramping calf muscles. And that's not because the Thai's will look down on you for doing so (they won't care, they'll even expect it), but for personal pride, it would be nice to keep up with them. So start skipping now to build up both your cardiovascular endurance as well as the muscular endurance of your calves.

Thai fighters spend a lot of time jogging as well but in most of the touristy camps, the long runs won't be mandatory. From what I've seen in some of the gyms, a lot of people just show up to hit pads, kick the bags a bit and then they head out. Running is definitely encouraged though. If you're going to be training in a Thai style gym, then you may be expected to join the Thai's for their run, which would be anywhere from 3 to 15 kilometres. The morning run is usually the long one while the afternoon run is a little shorter.

Aside from running and skipping - which should be your primary focus - I also recommend that you start performing some Muay Thai specific strengthening exercises. You know, movements that directly mimic the demands of the sport. There's exercises you can do that will increase your clinch strength, increase your punching power, increase the power of your kicks and basically just enhance every aspect of your game. Here are a few ideas..

Exercises To Improve Your Punching Power

Chest Press Exercises



If you want to punch harder, the [barbell bench press exercise](#) is an awesome choice. Power -

which is what we're going for here - is a combination of both strength and speed. The barbell bench press exercise is great for developing raw strength. The goal here is to keep your repetitions low and the resistance high.

Of course, you can perform chest press movements with dumbbells and machines as well. There's one variation - where you press with one dumbbell at a time - that works the core as well. Basically what you do is your position your upper back (only your upper back) on a flat bench, elevate 1 leg and perform a pressing movements with your opposite arm (left leg elevated, right arm pressing). This variation works the chest, shoulders and triceps - all of which are involved when throwing a punch - as well as the bracing strength of the core.

C o r e R o t a t i o n E x e r c i s e s

Developing the rotary strength of the core is key if your goal is to punch harder. The core - which is considered to be your "strength center" - plays a major role when it comes to the power of your punches. If you think about it, when you throw your punches, you turn your body - which is where a lot of the power comes from.

As for actual core rotation exercises, there's all sorts of things you can do. Have a look at these ..

[Olympic Bar Rotation](#)

[Seated Medicine Ball Twist](#)

[Lying Leg Twists](#)

Those are just a few of many. There's actually an eBook available that profiles all sorts of fight-related core exercises using kettle bells, medicine balls, sandbags and even sledge hammers. The book isn't free but it's something to consider if your workout routines are lacking creativity. You can **[view it here.](#)**

R e s i s t a n c e B a n d P u n c h e s

Your exercise selection should always be specific to whatever your goal is so if you're trying to punch hard, then punching against resistance certainly seems like a logical solution. I've seen a lot of people shadowboxing with dumbbells in attempts to increase their punching power but that's ineffective and quite foolish when you think about it.

When you're shadowboxing with dumbbells, you're doing so against a downward resistance. While weighted shadowboxing will help you increase your shoulder endurance, it doesn't actually do much for the power of your punches.

If you want to punch harder - which is clearly the goal here - you need to punch against the resistance. Resistance bands are a great way to accomplish this. To perform the exercise, wrap a resistance band around a pole (a cable station is great for this), grab the handles and ensure that the bands are positioned under your arms. Basically from here, you just start shadowboxing. If you have a training partner, get him/her to hold pads for you and do your pad work using the resistance bands.

Plyometric Push Ups

As mentioned above, power is a combination of strength and speed. You use exercises like the barbell bench press (heavy loads) to build your strength and you use exercises like this one ([**plyometric push ups**](#)) to develop speed.

There's all sorts of different ways to do this and you're really only limited by your own creativity. The most popular method is by performing what's called "clapping push ups". As the name indicates, you just push yourself upwards, clap quickly and get your hands back in position for the next repetition.

Another way to do it is to push yourself upwards and quickly slap your chest. I actually find this one to be a little more difficult as you have to push yourself up higher in order to allow yourself the time to slap your chest and get your hands back into position.

The third - but certainly not final - plyometric push up variation requires a couple steps from the aerobics room. You position each step about 4 feet apart from each other and you get yourself in a push up position in between them.

To perform the exercise, you just push yourself upwards and place each hand atop a step. The higher up the steps are positioned, the more challenging the exercise is to complete. This might be one of those exercises you need a visual of in order to understand what I'm talking about so [click here to see a video](#) of it being performed.

Exercises To Increase Clinch Strength



According to the principal of specificity, the exercises you perform should always be specific to your training goal. Of course, that's all pretty obvious. So, in terms of Muay Thai exercises, you need to choose movements that will carry over to the sport.

In this case, we're looking to improve your strength in the clinch. The best way to determine what exercises to perform is to first analyze the muscles involved in the movement. For the clinch specifically, neck strength is extremely important seeing as how your opponent is trying to violently pull your head down and knee you in the face.

To decrease the chances of that happening, there's a couple exercises you can do. The first - and most important exercise - is rather unorthodox but extremely effective.

Weighted Neck Extensions

There's a few ways you can perform this. Most modern gyms have cable column attachments that you can attach barbells too and wrap around the back of your head. What you're going to do is lower your head down, bring your chin towards your chest, and then extend your head back up against the resistance.

That's the western way - now for the Thai way. The Thai's basically insert a rope through some barbells and tie up the ends. Rather than wrapping the rope around their forehead, they just put

a cloth over the rope and put it between their teeth.

They then proceed to move their head up and down against the resistance. Not only is this effective for strengthening their necks, but it strengthens the jaw as well - which is obviously beneficial for fighters who get punched in the face on a daily basis. You can see Buakaw Por Pramuk performing the exercise at the 1:00 minute mark of [this video](#).

This exercise works and it's something you absolutely have to do. When I first arrived in Thailand, I was a 225 pound bodybuilder type and I foolishly assumed that I would be able to toss people around in the clinch. Not only was I unable to dominate in the clinch, but I was actually getting tossed around by Thai guys who weighed 70 pounds less than me.

Sure, their technique was better, and that was a big part of it but they were literally overpowering me as well. Most of my muscles were strong, but my neck was weak. Like most guys, my efforts in the gym were geared around obtaining big "beach muscles" to impress the girls.

Well, seeing as how girls don't go around lusting after guys' necks, I didn't even think to strengthen it. So for a Thai guy (who has been doing it for years) to yank my head down and toss me around - it really didn't take much effort on his part at all.

Close Grip Chin Ups

The weighted neck extensions are to prevent people from jerking your head down in the clinch and these - the [close grip chin ups](#) - are so you have the strength to do it to your opponent. Close grip chin ups (with your hands facing you) basically mimic the clinch.

Think about it, when you grab hold of the back of your opponent's head - otherwise known as a Muay Thai "plumb" - you're working your biceps, shoulders and your lats (muscles within your back that help pull your arm downwards). Close grip chin ups work all these muscles.

I personally find that it's best to mix up your rep-ranges and even the type of muscle contraction when performing the exercise. You can perform as many "dynamic" repetitions as you can, then as you fatigue, you can perform what's known as an "isometric" contraction.

An isometric contraction is when the muscles are contracting, but the fibers aren't lengthening or shortening. In other words, it's a muscular contraction without movement. You can even occasionally just perform the isometric contractions alone, without the dynamic reps.

For this particular exercise, what you would do is start by holding yourself up with your chin over the bar - hence the term "chin ups". Hold the position for 5..10 seconds - whatever you can do. From there, lower yourself down about 6 inches and continue to hold for another 5 seconds or so. From there, you guessed it, lower yourself down about another 6 inches and hold for as long as you can. You'll notice that the lower you hold yourself, the greater the contraction you'll feel within your biceps.

Rope climbing



It's unlikely that you even have a place where you can do this, but on the off chance that you do, then you should consider yourself lucky and take advantage of it. Rope climbing is a perfect exercise to increase your strength in the clinch. It improves your grip strength as well as the strength within your forearms, biceps, and lats. It also increases your muscle endurance as well. If you can pull yourself up a rope, there's a pretty good chance that you can pull someone's head down and start laying in some knees.

Increase Your Lactate Threshold

Long distance running and skipping are both essential to Muay Thai performance. They increase both your cardiovascular and muscular endurance and the skipping improves your footwork. However, both casual skipping and long distance running are considered to be aerobic exercises. Basically, what that means is that you're able to deliver oxygenated blood to your working muscles as you're exercising.

During high intensity activity, oftentimes you're unable to deliver enough oxygenated blood to your working muscles to meet the demand, at which point, concentrations of lactic acid are increased. Lactic acid is a bi-product of anaerobic metabolism and when concentrations of it get too high, it inhibits muscle contraction.

For example, when you do all out sprints, you can't maintain that pace for long. You'll quickly reach a point where your muscles feel like they're cramping up and they just won't contract anymore. With Muay Thai - whether it be from pad work or heavy sparring - the same sort of thing can happen.

To prevent yourself from fatiguing under these high intensity training conditions, you should definitely be incorporating workouts that mimic the high intensity demands of the sport. Sprints, running hills and circuit training are all good options.

Circuit training is when you perform one exercise after another without a rest interval in between stations. Only once the entire circuit is complete do you get a rest period. Here's a sample circuit that you can try..

Barbell Squats

Perform 15 repetitions

Straight Leg Deadlifts

Perform 15 repetitions

Walking Knees (Muay Thai Style)

Perform 40 repetitions (each leg)

Skipping

Skip for 1 minute straight

Clapping Push Ups into Regular Reps

Do as many as you can

Pull Ups on Assisted Pull Up Machine

Perform as many as you can, then increase the assistance and continue

Remember, you don't take a rest period as you transition from exercise to exercise. Only once you've completed the entire circuit are you able to rest - and you'll only be resting for about a minute before you repeat the circuit again ..and again! You'll want to go through this circuit - or a similar circuit - a total of 3 to 5 times (as to prepare yourself for the high intensity rounds you'll be doing when you get to Thailand).

So, to wrap it up. Your physical preparations for Thailand should consist of..

- Long Distance Running
- Skipping
- High Intensity Sprints (Intervals) on Flat Ground and Hills
- Muay Thai Specific Strengthening Exercises (Emphasizing Core Strength)
- Circuit Training (Multi-Muscle Movements without a Rest Interval)

At most camps in Thailand, there's 12 scheduled training sessions per week, each of which last for between 2-3 hours. If you were to go through every training session, and stay for the entire time, that's 24 – 36 hours of training per week. And if the sheer amount of training wasn't enough, you also have to consider the fact that you'll be doing the workouts in extremely hot weather (some seasons hotter than others).

Of course, you're never obligated to train for 36 hours per week. You'll have the option to pick and choose which training sessions you attend but the better you prepare yourself now (before you arrive), the more you'll get out of the whole experience.