

Holistic Freediving

Book I

Theory and Training Programs for Maximum Performance

By Eric Fattah, 2012

This manual is ideally accompanied by personalized e-coaching. Contact Eric Fattah directly for more information (www.ericfattah.com)

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How to Use This Book

This book contains two major components:

- Theory and methodology behind the training system
- Actual training programs themselves

I recommend that you read through the theory and methodology, to understand better **why** you are training the way you are training. This will also help you fine tune your own program.

Actual training programs begin later on in the book.

When training for freediving, it is absolutely essential that you keep a detailed training journal. With no journal, you will probably not improve. The suggested format of your training journal is described in chapter X: Your Training Journal.

Once you have read through this entire book, you can begin training based on the guidelines given. There are a few major warnings about starting your training program:

- ALWAYS have a competent partner when doing breath-holding exercises in the water
- Consult a doctor if you have any problematic physical condition (high or low blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, etc.)
- Do NOT perform any exercise in this book if you are pregnant

Once you have used the training system described in this book for at least several weeks, you can chart your results with your training journal. You should notice constant and significant improvement. If you are not noticing improvement, you may not be doing the program correctly, or there could be some other unknown factor. In that case you can sign up for a personalized consultation, where I will personally analyze your training journal, answer your questions, and suggest changes or improvements to your program. For more details on personalized consultations, please visit my website:

www.ericfattah.com

Also realize that this book is only the first in a series of books. This book covers primarily intermediate to advanced training programs. It does NOT cover:

- Technique discussions
- Gear optimization
- Specialized methods
- Blood building
- Advanced diet
- Optimizing enjoyment of diving

The above topics are discussed in more detail in other e-books. Please visit my website to order them.

Chapter 1: Training Methodology

In this section, I explain the theory behind the training system.

Specificity of Training

Generally speaking, the more specific the training, the better the results will be. A runner gets better results by actually running, than by just going to the gym. The best training for static apnea is to do static apnea. The best training for constant weight is to do constant weight. One must never forget this simple fact. Cross-training is generally defined as doing something other than your sport, in order to improve in it. Someone training for static apnea might do some running. The running is considered cross-training. Cross-training is almost never as effective as training the actual sport.

The degree to which cross-training is included in a program depends entirely on the circumstances of the athlete. If the athlete does not have access to a pool or to deep water, then cross-training activities must be added to the training program. A training program based mostly on cross-training can still be effective, but it is not as effective as training the actual sport.

Tom Sietas, a former world record holder in static apnea, would do one maximum static apnea per day, in the pool, six days per week, with no other training. This allowed him to set a world record of 10'12". William Trubridge trains in deep water for 6 months of the year, doing 5-6 maximum deep no-fins dives per week, with nothing else except yoga stretching. This allowed him to dive 101m in constant weight without fins, which is 15m more than the second deepest diver, Will Winram (86m).

A friend of mine, Rene Potvin, was a recreational spearfisherman in Quebec. With a good long breathe-up, he could do a spearfishing dive for 1'30". He had dove for many years. One summer he decided to move to Rhode Island, where he tried to do 'commercial' spearfishing. There, on Rhode Island, he spearfished for 5-8 hours a day, 6 days per week, for 4 months. At the end, his dives had doubled, to 3 minutes per dive instead of 1'30". And that was 3'00"+ on every dive (no packing, no contractions), one dive after another, all day long. That is an absolutely astonishing improvement in 4 months.

Some types of cross-training are very similar, but not identical, to the actual sport. For example, if the desire is to do a very deep dive in constant weight, then spearfishing for 5 hours a day is not the same as doing one deep constant weight dive. But it is still similar. Spearfishing could be called cross-training, but it is a very similar type of training. A good example is Davide Carrera, who spearfishes for a living, and lives on a sailboat. He spearfishes for 5-7 hours a day (30-50m), 5-6 days per week. In 2009 he attended the Vertical Blue competition, where he dove 99m in constant weight, with no packing, using a regular mask, and this dive was not even close to his limit. He was just enjoying himself. This shows how repeated dives to 20-40m can still produce enormous capacity to do 'one-max' type of dives.

In my own case, I rarely spearfish, but I often do recreational dives in the 20-50m range. Similarly, my best performances have come when I am diving 3-4 days per week.

Many people are not able to train in the ocean or pool every day. For that reason I have developed elaborate cross training programs which are still remarkably effective. But keep in mind; cross training programs are never as effective as specific training.

Recovery and Improvement

Imagine someone who goes to the gym and does the bench-press exercise. He manages to lift 220lbs (100kg) for 7 repetitions. He then goes home. Two days later he comes back to the gym, and he does the same exercise. Again he manages 7 repetitions of 220lbs (100kg). Is this a good training program? No.

If training is working properly, you will improve every time. If doing bench press, then the number of repetitions you are able to do should increase each time you go to the gym. If you do NOT improve at your exercise, then one of three things must be happening:

EITHER

A - You did not recover properly between training sessions

OR

B - The training was not intense enough to cause your body to adapt

OR

C - You did improve, but the margin of improvement was too small to measure

In the case of the example above (bench-press), the most likely explanation is that the athlete did not recover between exercises. With strength training it usually takes at least 3 days (72h) to recover. In this example the athlete went back to the gym after only 2 days (48h)—not enough time for him to recover. Perhaps he should have taken 4 days, 5 days, or even a week before doing the same exercise again.

In sports training, overtraining is often the biggest problem. Athletes are so eager to improve, they train and train, and they end up training too much. The result of overtraining is:

A - No improvement, or very small improvement after huge effort

OR

B - Performance actually decreases, and the athlete gets sick or ill

OR

C - Athlete actually suffers injury, sometimes permanent damage to the body

So, when doing any training program, it is extremely important to keep a detailed journal of all exercises performed. With a detailed journal, you can keep track of your progress, and see if you are improving. If you are not improving, then something is wrong and must be ***immediately*** corrected.