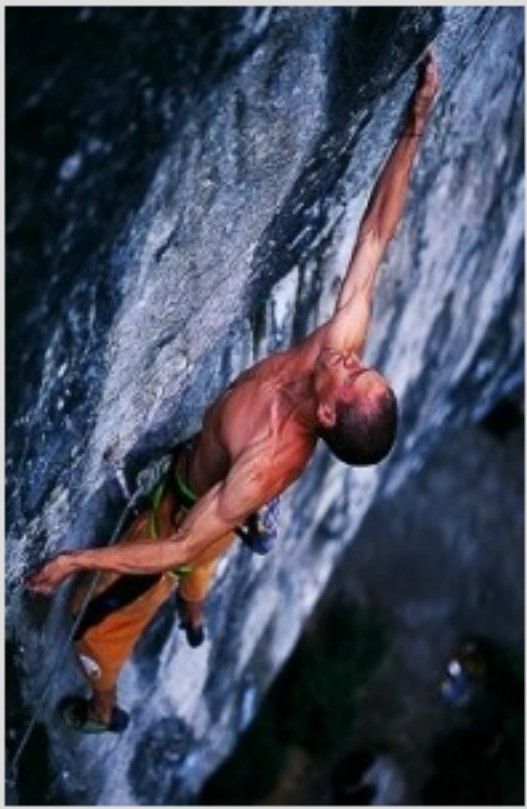


Steve McClure on Training Power Endurance

CLIMBING TECHNIQUES, INTERVIEWS | PAUL FEARN | JANUARY 20, 2012 12:09 PM | EDIT

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Steve McClure on a power endurance route at Raven Tor. Photo copyright Steve McClure

As part of our training series this week we are going to focus on power endurance. Often overlooked by many climbers, training power endurance, is critical to getting you up most UK sport routes where the hard sections are usually no more than 10 to 30 moves.

Steve McClure needs little introduction to most climbers. Having climbed the UK hardest sport route, Overshadow at Malham Cove 9a+, and onsighted upto 8b+ he can certainly be considered to have excellent power endurance! Steve recently kindly spared me some of his time to do an interview on the training techniques he and others use to enable them to get up some of the hardest power endurance routes in the world.

What techniques do you recommend for training Power Endurance?

As a first stage I would suggest the 'getting really pumped' method. The key is monitoring the time period. It needs to be about 90 seconds to 120 seconds, from start to failure. The movement needs to be either the same, or on a circuit with absolutely no change in difficulty. This is the problem with circuits, as often it ends up being too easy and then too hard with a fast build-up of fatigue and failure due to being 'powered out' rather than pumped. The campus method has worked very well for me and many others. This must be done with feet on, or it will be too hard and you'll be bouldering! Feet can be on specific footholds or a chair or whatever. Aim for 3 – 4 reps of this, each taking around 90 – 120 seconds. Rest 5 – 7 minutes in between. The movement should be similar to normal campusing, but with feet on, like rung 1 – rung 4, rung 6 match, then back down again (worth putting in rung 2 on way down to cut out the crux move (dropping 4-1) and so you lead with a different hand each movement)

What happens if you don't have access to a campus board?

It is possible on the fingerboard, you can do actual hangs with feet off, 7 seconds hang, 5 seconds off. However, it may be better to have assistance from feet on a chair or similar allowing you to use smaller hand holds and stay on the board with both hands on for about 5 seconds, then one off for 3, both back on again for 5, the other hand off for 3 etc. This is more applicable to climbing where you stay 'on the rock' rather than stepping down, and the hold size will be more appropriate.

What do you do during the rest part of the interval?

You can throw in some body tension exercises.

How do you help improve your recovery on the rock? Do you do try resting on large holds during the rest period, of the interval, and then going again?

On the board it's useful to switch to a better hold (if available) and shake out to aid recovery just like on a real route. Typically stop the movement before failure at around 4/5 tired, and shake for 30 seconds (15 each arm) before going back in. Alternatively come off completely at 4/5 tired and rest on the ground for 15 seconds before getting back on. Rest properly between each set though, where a set may include a few rest periods of 15 seconds on the ground or on a hold. Each 'Set' must be quality, starting the work feeling reasonably fresh. Just as if you were trying a route.

Do you vary the grip you are using on the campus or is it done open handed?

On the board I always use open handed, (though this tends to be a half crimp for the middle finger when all 4 pads are on a rung). Crimping repeatedly is prone to injury, especially when going for it really pumped.

How many times a week should you do this training during a power endurance cycle?

This must be done twice a week as a minimum, but 3 times maximum. It can be done after climbing, and in fact is a very good top up, as its relatively low impact and not too power orientated. It can also be done in its own right, though it's an easy session really, and just doing this 3 times per week will give you more PE but less of everything else.

How should you fit it into your training week?

You can either fit it in after a climbing session or you can do a PE session the day after, to make your climbing volume go up slightly.

How long should you train using this approach?

Aim for a 4-5 week block, backing off if you start to feel too tired. If you make 5 weeks at this intensity you should feel the gains. Take a week off PE completely, then resume for another 4 or so weeks. Then you should be firing! PE will be great! Drop off this exercise to once a week at maximum, to maintain this PE level.

Do you use any other techniques for developing the PE required for the test pieces you are well known for?

Circuits are probably the best overall, but hard to make, and use in busy walls. Bouldering continually below your limit is great, drop off a problem and then within a few seconds (maybe 10) get back on. This can be done for around 5 problems. Make sure the level is correct to avoid failure too early.

Our thanks go to Steve McClure for taking the time to complete this interview. We wish him all the best for his climbing during 2012.

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Written by Paul Fearn

Paul first started climbing way back in 1989. Since then he's managed to climb E6 trad and 8a+ sport routes. Paul will be sharing his expertise to help you to become a better climber. Check out Paul's blog on training for rock climbing.

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