

# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

## Dumbbells from the Plank

### How to Energize Your Push-up Training, Part II

Michael Rutherford

Now that you have had thirty days since last month's dumbbell article to work on your plank position, push-up and row, and vertical to horizontal movements, it's time to add other plank variations to the mix. I consider these to be more advanced, as they intensify the requirement to maintain a tight plank position with no sagging or piking. This article and its demo videos assume mastery of the plank variations from Part I of the "Dumbbells from the Plank" series in [CrossFit Journal issue 56](#).

#### Roving variations

Roving dumbbell planks add a dynamic component to the plank position. From the plank position with dumbbells we rove or travel laterally. One can travel forward and backward, but my experience with the move indicates that the plank position generally becomes compromised when trying to move forward and backward on a dorsiflexed foot.

Roving dumbbell planks begin, as the name implies, in a plank position with the hands on dumbbells. From here, step out to the left side with the left hand and then the left foot. For a moment you are in a suspended spread eagle position, until you step in the same direction with the right hand and then the right foot, returning to you to the plank position you began in. You can travel in this sequence for an assigned number of steps or to a target and then return, now leading with the right side and following with the left, to insure balanced conditioning. I like to use cones as a finish line or target, as I think it is subconsciously more rewarding to have a visual target

than simply a number of steps to complete, and it allows for individual variation in step size.

Moves that require stabilization on one arm and one leg place a unique and desirable demand on the athlete. The number-one flaw typically exhibited during early attempts at the move is piking the plank (hinging at the hip and sticking the butt up in the air). Preventing this requires a outside eye and lots of feedback. If you are wiggling to become more comfortable, you are likely out of position.

Once you get roving, here are some ways to add intensity:

- Roving plank with a push-up
- Roving plank with a bodybuilder
- Roving plank with a burpee

These can be done throughout the movement or once the athlete reaches the target or finish. I encourage constantly varying the approach and programming.

#### Roving with the core wheel

Roving forward and backward can be accomplished while maintaining good positioning by adding a core wheel. The core wheel creates a third dimension of stabilization requirement due to the instability of the wheel.

Again we can assign a certain number of reps or use a target. As in the lateral roving versions, we can add a push-up. These push-ups can be standard or include a staggered hand position. Because we have the core

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## Dumbbells from the Plank (continued...)

wheel on our feet we can also perform a shoulder press variation with the dumbbell acting as handles and the torso nearly vertical over them.

- Roving plank on a core wheel
- Roving push-up on a core wheel with staggered hands
- Roving push-up on a core wheel with shoulder press

### “Stupid Rut trick”

Finally, I propose one last version, but only for the most advanced of athletes. In this version you travel forward using the core wheel but also drag a sled behind you. My athletes have labeled this one a “stupid Rut trick” and threaten me with a trip to the Letterman show to demo it.

I have added this as a finisher for those guys who think the workout of the day left them a little unsatisfied and thrive on competition. Successful grapplers are attracted to this challenge. It’s best performed on rubber tile, but you can do it on any surface. Start with small doses of this one, and be reasonable about the weight. The impact can sneak up on you afterward. And be forewarned: your lower abdominals will feel like they have been separated from the distal insertion if you are overly zealous. Also, if you use this version on concrete your mitts will remind you of the insanity later that evening.



## Online Videos

Roving Plank



Roving Push-up



Roving Bodybuilder



Roving Burpee



Roving Plank Core Wheel



Roving Core Wheel Staggered Push-up



Roving Core Wheel Shoulder Press



Roving Push-ups Core Wheel Sled



Michael Rutherford (a.k.a. Coach Rut) is the owner of [CrossFit Kansas City/Boot Camp Fitness](#). He has over a quarter-century of fitness coaching experience with athletes of all ages. He has also worked in hospital wellness environments and rehabilitation clinics. Coach Rut holds academic degrees in biology, physical education, and exercise physiology and sports biomechanics. He is a USAW-certified Club Coach and is a CrossFit level 3 trainer. He is also the current national Masters Champion in weightlifting at 94 kg. You can learn more dumbbell exercises from his DVDs [Dumbbell Moves Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#).