

Debunking The Bruce Lee Weightlifting Myth

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Every Day: Core exercises: sit-up, side bend, leg raise, flag, twist, back bend Stretching: front and side stretch, hurdle, butterfly, and pulley stretches (Lee alternated core exercises and stretches in the same session.) Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: Technical: boxing Endurance: running (4-5 miles), incorporating some sprint work

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday (weight training): Clean and press: 2 sets of 8 – or – 4 sets of 6 Squat: 2 sets of 12 – or – 4 sets of 6 Pullover: 2 sets of 8 Bench press: 2 sets of 6 – or – 4 sets of 5 Good mornings: 2 sets of 8 – or – 4 sets of 6 Curl: 2 sets of 8 – or – 4 sets of 6 Technical: kicking Endurance: cycling and rope skipping You can see that on Lee's weight training days, he only performed 2 sets of 6-12 repetitions each, or 4 sets of 5-6 repetitions. He often performed exercises in supersets. The number of repetitions is consistent with modern recommendations for maximal strength training, such as in Fighter's Mind/Fighter's Body. Lee didn't pack on a lot of bloated muscle mass, but he was extremely defined, which is a tribute to his dedication to his cardio training and especially his diet. And most of his contemporaries agreed that, pound-for-pound, he was one of the strongest athletes they knew. I should note that Lee was a conditioning fanatic. Throughout the day, he supplemented his regimen with additional ab work, forearm training, and stretching. But simply because he trained a lot, it doesn't mean that he trained excessively long sets to achieve his level of conditioning. His personal training records show that he typically performed sets of only 6-8 reps, which allowed him to stack on the weight to optimize his strength gains. To this day, strength athletes continue to follow Lee's same formula, performing sets of between 3-6 reps for maximum power development. References: Little, J. editor. Bruce Lee: The Art of Expressing the Human Body. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1998.