

Interview with Fat Loss Expert

Craig Ballantyne



***Franz Snideman:** Craig, could you please explain to people how you got involved in the fitness industry as well as your training background?*

Craig Ballantyne: I spent 6 years in Hamilton, near Toronto where I now live, at McMaster University, ultimately getting my Master's Degree in Exercise Physiology, as well as becoming a Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist. That's where I spent most of my time with athletes, working with Rugby players, a few hockey players, and some basketball and soccer players. Lots of fun training for those sports. I started training way back at age 16. York Universal set in the basement, traded that in and started free weights after a few months. Read all the muscle magazines. Learned the basics of neuromuscular physiology at University, and really figured things out in the Master's Degree. I take a big picture approach to training now.

***FS:** You are known in the fitness industry as one of the top fat loss experts. What prompted you to focus on fat loss in your career?*

CB: I used my research background and experience training athletes to come up with my Turbulence Training for Fat Loss program, taking a much different approach to fat loss compared to the ineffective slow-cardio, low-intensity programs that are still popular. It saves people time. It gets results. It makes people feel good. I hate to see people on the verge of tears because they are struggling with their weight and exercising hours and hours per week, all because they got suckered into the low intensity workout promises. Most of the time this does not work. Lifting soup cans and parking your car at the end of the parking lot does not work. So I decided to show people a better way.

***FS:** Craig, you have come out with some very popular and effective fat loss programs. Could you please explain to our audience your philosophy on fat loss and why you have had success with your clients?*

CB: Get a lot of high-intensity work done in a short amount of time. We start with a bodyweight warmup because it is a better use of time than walking on a treadmill. Then we do hard strength training using non-competing supersets of multi-muscle movements. No secrets there. We finish with intervals. Beginner or advanced, anyone can do intervals. Its just a period of harder exercise followed by easier exercise. If you are a beginner, its means a slightly faster walk. You don't have to run for your life - just do what is appropriate.

And that's the workout. We get done in 45 minutes. Lots of "marathoners" (people used to long workouts) freak out about the duration. The intensity always kicks their butt though. You can use any resistance training tool for the strength work. Bodyweight, kettlebells, barbells, dumbbells. Most of my workouts are built for the typical home gym - dumbbells and a bench. But you can use everything. For intervals, sprinting is most effective, but not always appropriate. Most cardio machines in any gym do a good job. We also use bodyweight circuits.

FS: Why the name Turbulence Training for your program?

CB: It comes from the "airplane in turbulence" analogy. When an airplane flies through Turbulence, it must burn energy to work harder to stay on the correct flight path (I think, I'm not actually a pilot). Our body responds the same way to intense training. Intervals and hard strength training put "turbulence" on the muscles. It knocks you out of your comfort zone. It knocks your body out of homeostasis - and your body has to burn energy to get back to normal. It has to burn fat and calories to replenish the high octane fuel used in your workout and repair the structural damage to the tissues.

There might also be some hormonal benefits from high-intensity exercise that contributes to the increased post-workout energy burning. All in all, the key is to look beyond the calories burned IN the training session, and look at the total calories burned each day as a result of an increased metabolism from harder workouts.

FS: We all hear so many conflicting reports and ideas on what works for fat loss. In your experience do you find that supplements play a large role in helping people lose fat?

CB: No.

FS: What are the top mistakes you see personal trainers make with their clients regarding fat loss nutrition?

CB: Tough question.

FS: What are the top mistakes personal trainers make in designing exercise programs for fat loss?

CB: Easy question.

FS: Is there a difference in fat loss nutrition between the average person wanting to lose body fat and a competitive athlete?

CB: The average person will need to be more diligent...as a hard training athlete can "get away" with more slip-ups simply due to the volume of training. I'll be honest, I've really only worked with athletes under 25. As long as I can keep them from drinking too much beer, its not hard to keep them lean. Mind you with Rugby players, that is not easy. Some of the stories they tell me...

FS: What are the top 4 to 5 life style principles you would recommend to the person who is severely overweight or even obese?

CB:

1) Find an activity you like to do, and start doing it. NOTE: Start slow, and with a small volume of activity, otherwise you'll end up with overuse injuries pretty quick. That's one of the "dark sides of cardio" I talk about, that derails so many people early in their weight loss program.

2) Make a small nutrition change everyday. Consistent small changes can lead to big time weight loss in overweight/obese beginners. If you take someone that eats junk all the time, and slip in one good meal per, they can lose a lot of weight in the first week. Keep on making small changes everyday, and the weight will slip right off. It's important for beginners to know that nutrition is where they will get the majority of their early results.

3) Change your mindset. The mental component of fat loss is huge. I just read a detailed account of "Jared the subway guy" and his weight loss story. He basically just made up his mind that he was going to lose the weight by eating at Subway and walking more. And remember, this guy was 425lbs when he started. But that's all he did. Mentally, he changed his mindset from "a guy who eats what he wants and doesn't do any exercise" to "a guy that is going to lose the weight by eating low-fat subs and walking a little bit".

The obese person must change their mental image and believe in themselves. Without this, it won't be long till they are back at square 1.

4) Educate themselves. The more you know about the basics, the easier it will be for you to avoid temptations, high-calorie surprises, etc. You will know what to buy if you need to grab a snack at a convenience store (the answer is raw almonds and an apple, by the way), and you'll know what to do if you can't get to your regular gym or any gym at all (since you will know alternative exercises). The key is to not get so much knowledge that you become an internet pseudo-expert that suffers from paralysis by analysis.

5) Get a dog. Walk it a lot.

FS: *You write for many prestigious publications including Men's Health. What are some of the trends you see happening in the future in the fitness industry?*

CB: I hope people are starting to get back to basics. I think as more fitness experts start understanding "marketing" that we'll see more programs designed for smaller niches, which is good for both the expert and the end user. So instead of just being told to do the same program a young fitness model describes in a magazine, a 35-year old mother of two with only a kettlebell will have better options available to her via the Internet. I think "extreme" training is becoming more popular, and this mirrors the rise in extreme everything in society (from extreme wealth to extreme sports).

The "300 workout" really gave the extreme training scene a boost, as have extreme sports and the popularity of MMA. This can be good and bad, but on the positive side its great to see people pushing their limits (when they have a professional coach on hand to know what is right for them). The world is pretty soft these days and can use a few more people that train hard.

On the negative side, people that try and do the 300 workout everyday because they don't read the article or understand the point of the workout are going to suffer from this trend.

FS: *Can you give us an example of what a fat loss exercise program would look like?*

CB: Bodyweight circuit warmup: Prisoner squats, some type of pushup, some total body ab exercise, and a bodyweight hamstring exercise -maybe stability ball eg curls. Strength training supersets, using non-competing exercises (that don't fatigue the same muscle groups)

Superset 1 (8 reps per set)
Barbell Squat
Pullup

Superset 2 (8 reps per set)
DB Split Squat
DB Chest press

Superset 3 (15+ reps per set)
Kettlebell or Dumbbell Swing
Decline Close-Grip Pushup

Intervals

FS: Craig, how can our audience get in contact with you and where can they find your fat loss products?

CB: They can ask me training questions on the message board at www.TTMembers.com and get the workout of the month there, or get started with my big fat loss package (that will keep them busy for a very long time) at www.TurbulenceTraining.com

FS: Thank you for the awesome interview Craig. I know our audience will find the information very useful and informative.