

THE CABBAGETOWN YOUTH CENTRE THE CABBAGETOWN BOXING CLUB NEWSLETTER



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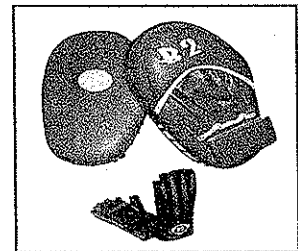
In the ongoing SPORTS EQUIPMENT series this issue deals with Focus Pads. They have over the last fifteen years become a primary tool for general skills developments, such as punching in combination with eye-hand coordination improvement over a short period of time. It is, however, important that both coaches and athletes understand their function and proper application to achieve optimum training results.

FOCUS PADS

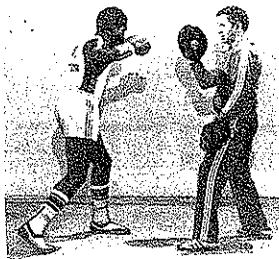
Peter E. Wylie

Focus pads are mitts that fit on the hands of the coach and come in many styles, but generally they are oval shaped with a flat surface, and arced with a target marker in the center of the pad. Lately manufacturers have come out with pads that have a concave mitt section that I find is of a better design than the traditional mitts offered in the past. These are more expensive - but are worth it.

Personally I do not use either, and prefer a pair of old boxing gloves. This allows me to throw punches at my boxers and reduce the chances of cuts or abrasions occurring resulting from accidental contact with the edges of the traditional type pads.



The term 'pads' focus pads, target pads, punch mitts as you can see has many as variations to describe them as there are methods and styles in using them. In over half a century of observing coaches, boxers and myself practicing the sport of boxing, have seen some of the best and worst use of focus pads. Observing pads training in the hands of an experienced, fluid moving coach is like watching a fine dance couple working in unison together producing a rhythmic practice of technical boxing skills as close as to actual sparring or competition.



In the past ten or fifteen years the pads have become, in my opinion, one of the most valuable and thought after practices in boxing gyms around the world. With an experienced trainer working the pads workouts can vary from an extremely exhaustive hard workout to an extensive lesson in both basic and complex technical skills. The advantage to both the trainer and the boxer is the ability to constantly correct and improve on skills at all levels. The pads build on timing, accuracy and general skills developments, such as punching in combination on balance with eye hand coordination improvement over a short period of time.

Reflexes of the athlete are directly affected, and short of actual sparring, pad work can often replace sparring, especially close to an event when sparring may not be suitable.

In preparation of the beginner boxer, pad work becomes paramountly important and allows the coach to monitor the development of an athlete on an on-going basis. The coach can set sensibly paced goals of punch and defensive tactics for the athlete, and with the advantage of one on one work analysis, moving the boxer along according to his or her natural abilities.

Many boxers of all levels seek pad work daily from coaches, and often are upset or disappointed when they do not have the opportunity of working the pads with the coach. However, pad work is not necessary

every day the boxer attends the gym, especially in the general preparation phase or the conditioning phase of training. In these phases pads can be used once a week for developing endurance or alternatively working on strength. As the athlete moves on to the sports-specific technical phase pads become more important and should be used on a much more regular basis. In the final phase of preparing for competition, pads are essential and short periods for working with them should be set aside every time the boxer is in the gym during this period. Pad work is accordingly shortened as actual competition approaches. The coach should limit technical pad work to a maximum of thirty minutes per session. In cases of pad work very close to competition, fifteen minutes may suffice. Coaches should remember that boxers will not as a rule retain technical work that is too complex and lengthy in duration. When instructing on technical skills, one type of punch i.e.; jabs and their variations, and concentration on those, should be chosen. It is most important, to develop appropriate defensive skills for every offensive tactic that is being taught. Pads training should be performed early in the workout when athletes are most alert and able to maintain speed and to retain technical skills work.

The following are examples of pad work that coaches should apply in the individual training phases:

General preparation phase

The coach holds the pad or pads head level and allows the boxer to throw straight punches non stop as the coach moves around side to side, forward and backwards. The variation will be controlled by the coach both in duration of the rounds, number of rounds, and the intensity of the punches. A variation on this practice can be holding only one pad up as high as or higher than the boxers head level, and as he or she punches continuously at this pad, the coach can throw with the other pad straight and hook punches making the boxer react defensively, still maintaining his/her continued non stop punching. Switching from one pad hand to the other every thirty seconds is a good idea.

Technical, sports-specific phase

One type of punch and its variations should be practiced per workout. It is important that athletes practice on the pads at a slow pace, especially at the outset. They must throw punches slowly and react to punches thrown at them slowly, allowing themselves and the coach the opportunity to analyze the athlete's performance. Once content with the delivery of the punch or the defensive action, speed can be of speed can be gradually increased, finally concluding at competition speed.

Competition phase

The coach working with a novice boxer, shows one pad at a time indicating a particular type of punch, and calls out same so as to allow the boxer time to throw the punch correctly. The gamut of all punch types can be completed during the round following this practice. The coach can then continue with the same practice but during this round the coach will show only the pad position, but will not call out the type of punch, allowing the boxer to observe the position of the pad and its placement and decide what punch should be thrown. This practice can be used for combination punches; counterpunching by the coach can be added after each punch is delivered to add even more complexity and varied activity for the boxer. The coach should endeavour not to start off with complex rounds but try to start off with simple activities at a slow to medium speed, and then move to varied complex combinations with accordingly increased speed.

Caution for coaches:

When using pads it is advisable to start a novice boxer with just hand wraps on the hands, so as to allow the coach to observe the boxers hand positions before, during and after delivery of punches. Gloves should then follow after a few lessons. Prior to working on the pads, boxers should be cautioned about the power they are delivering with their blows. I have often observed coaches being injured by both novice and experienced boxers who either deliver pushing type or mis-directed powerful punches. Boxers should be shown and explained the dangers of throwing these type of punches which could cause hyper - extension injuries both to them and the coaches. This is especially true in the case in younger athletes. It should also follow that the athlete should know that the technical aspect of pads outweighs the power factor. When working with pads and developing the skills aspects, it is not necessary for a boxer to punch with powerful punches, unless the coach is prepared along with the boxer to work at this level.