

## Get a grip

By Jeff Martone

**A**s a police officer or tactical professional, improving your grip strength will increase your chances of surviving violent confrontations. A strong grip is essential to applying all levels of force, such as when applying joint locks, striking with a baton, retaining your weapon, managing recoil, etc. It is also a requirement for successfully overcoming obstacles and climbing.

More than likely, a person with a strong grip is a strong person. Iowa's strongest man once said, "Normal people are normally weak." Chances are you have a weaker grip if you haven't trained to develop your strength. You should make it a goal to rise above "normal" and develop a powerful grip. The two training methods listed below are simple, safe and effective. Practice them on a regular basis and I promise

(See *Shooter's Push-up* exercise on page 48.)

you that your defensive tactics skills will be enhanced and you will also improve your firearm scores.

I hope that you take the time to give the Kettlebell Bottoms-up Clean and Shooter's Push-up a try. In a short time, you will see your grip strength, defensive tactics skills and firearms proficiency go to another level. So what are you waiting for? Get a grip! «

### About the author

**Jeff Martone** is the founder of Tactical Athlete Training Systems and has provided training in his strength and conditioning concepts to many elite military and law enforcement special operation units. Jeff can be reached at [jeff@tacticalathlete.com](mailto:jeff@tacticalathlete.com).

## Kettlebell Bottoms-up Clean

Total grip strength is dependent on the strength of the forearm muscles and the tendon and ligament power in the hands and fingers. The Kettlebell Bottoms-up Clean is a great exercise for increasing strength and muscular endurance in your grip, wrist and upper body. In addition, the Bottoms-up Clean will effectively increase your anaerobic capacity and strengthen your entire posterior chain.

Proper breathing is important for increasing power and safety. Be sure to inhale through your nose every time you fold at the hips and actively exhale through your teeth as your hips and legs reach full extension.

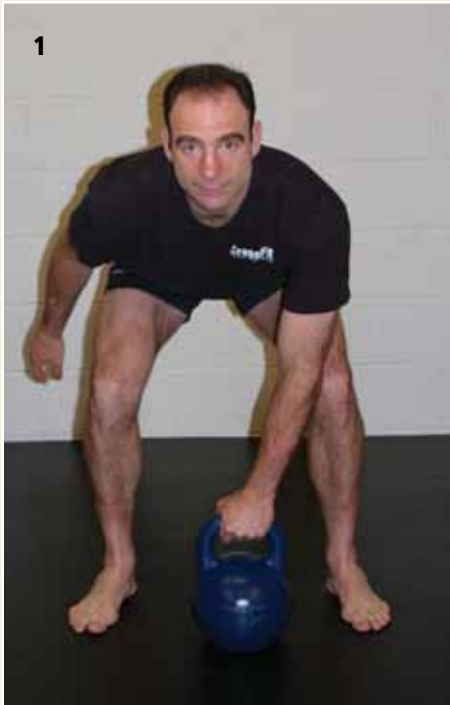
Practicing Bottoms-up Cleans will effectively strengthen your fingers, wrists and forearms, which is crucial in physical combat. Also, there's an old saying in boxing that a bent wrist is a broken wrist. In firearms training, a limp wrist causes malfunctions and a weak grip negatively affects accuracy and follow-up shots.

*Readers,*

*I recently had an opportunity to train with tactical strength and conditioning expert Jeff Martone. I told him that one of my favorite exercises that lends itself to tactical strength and combatives is the Kettlebell Bottoms-up Clean. I have found this exercise to be so beneficial to tactical officers that I asked Jeff if he would be a guest columnist for this issue and share his insight about this invaluable exercise. Not only did Jeff graciously agree to do so, he did one better and wrote a column for you that also covers the Kettlebell Shooters Push-Up exercise. Be sure to let him know your thoughts.*

*George Ryan*

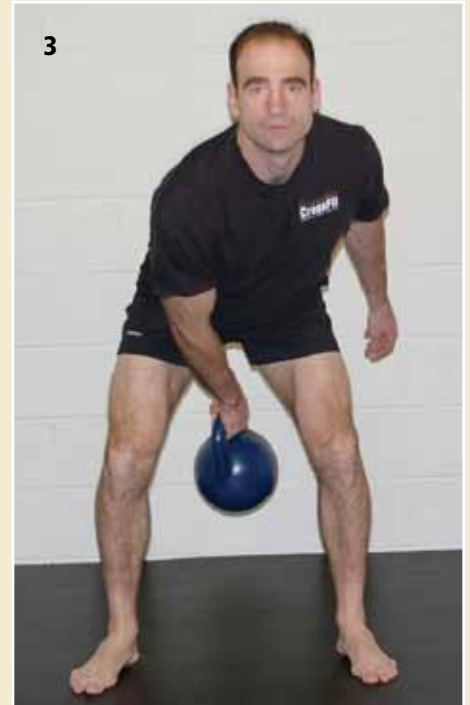
*NTOA Defensive Tactics Section Chair*



1  
Place the kettlebell on the ground, between your feet and slightly in front of your toes.



2  
Assume a good deadlifting position: feet hip and shoulder width apart, chest open, fold at the hip, butt back, weight towards heels, neck remains neutral. Place one hand on the corner of the kettlebell handle nearest your thumb. The non-working hand stays out to the side, away from your body.



3  
While maintaining an open chest and straight back, slightly extend your legs and pull (hike) the kettlebell up and back behind your legs.

Once the kettlebell reaches the end of its arc, explosively extend your knees and hips. Your goal is to create enough power from your hips to project the kettlebell to chest level.



4  
As the kettlebell reaches waist height, contract the muscles of your armpit as you would in order to keep a clipboard from falling out from under your arm. Also, allow your elbow to bend until your forearm is perpendicular to the floor.



5  
It is critical to instantly and simultaneously tighten your entire body, especially your grip, glutes and armpit of the working arm at the moment the kettlebell reaches the "bottom-up" position.

Hold for 1 to 3 seconds, and then slightly push it away, allowing gravity to take the kettlebell back down. Be sure to fold at the hips, quickly moving your butt rearward, and keep an open chest.

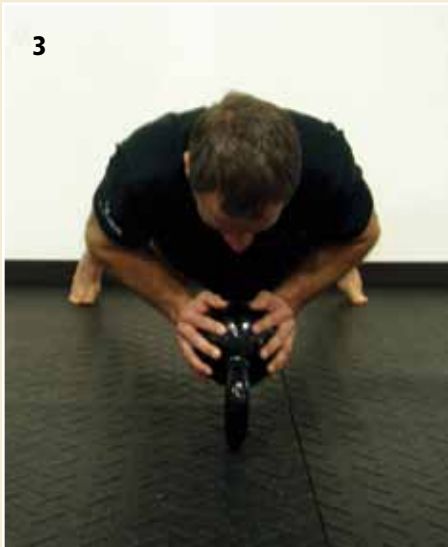
Repeat for five to ten reps, switch hands and then repeat for 3 to 5 sets.

## Shooter's Push-up

The Shooter's Push-up develops crushing strength for defensive tactics applications and isometric tension for recoil management of pistols and long guns.



(Photos 1-2) Place the kettlebell on a non-slick surface (preferably a rubberized floor) with both hands on the sides of the kettlebell. The kettlebell handle should be oriented north to south. Perform a push-up. This is a partial push-up due to the handle touching your sternum. Do this as a warm-up and to get the feel of the exercise.



(Photos 3-4) Once you have mastered the movements in photos 1 and 2, it's time to increase the intensity.

Place the kettlebell upside down with its handle oriented north/south.

Start on your knees. Place your hands on the sides of the kettlebell and perform a push-up. This creates an unstable environment which forces you to recruit more muscles. In addition to pressing in hard on the sides of the kettlebell, be sure to press the kettlebell hard into the floor to keep it from tipping over.

Once you can do a few reps from your knees, it's time to go to your toes. It is helpful to keep your feet spread apart to maintain balance.

It is easier to perform this exercise with bigger kettlebells. As your strength increases, try using smaller kettlebells. The smaller the kettlebell, the harder the exercise is to perform. Hence, it develops more crushing power. This is a high-tension strength exercise, so keep your reps low (3 to 5) and don't go to muscle failure.