

COMPARISON OF PHYSICAL FITNESS OUTCOMES OF YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY RECRUITS FOLLOWING DIFFERENT PHYSICAL TRAINING PROGRAMS DURING BASIC MILITARY TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

Physical training (PT) is an integral part of developing operational fitness. The objective of the study was to compare the physical fitness outcomes of two groups of young South African military recruits completing 12 weeks of Basic Military Training (BMT) who followed different PT programs. A historical control group (NCPG: female n=115, male n=73) that followed a traditional PT program and an experimental group (CPG: female n=85, male n=100) that followed a new cyclic-progressive PT program participated. The standardised PT test was taken at the beginning, the fifth week and the end of the BMT period. The changes in the fitness components evaluated by the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) standardised PT test were compared. Although the new cyclic-progressive PT program elicited more change ($p < 0.05$) in the fitness parameters measured, it only yielded superior performance at the final measurement in the men's push-ups ($p = 0.0001$). This may be attributed to the relatively greater amount of upper body exercises performed by the CPG and by the additional resistance offered by pole PT. The new cyclic-progressive PT program has been mandated for all BMT units across the SANDF.

Key words: Basic military training, Operational fitness, Fitness components, Cyclic-progressive