



Crossfire Octagon

Functional Training *Revisited*

The evolution of the hottest trend in strength training

When you think of the gyms of the past, what may come to mind are images of antiquated wall-mounted pulley devices – guys would grasp the handles and do horizontal presses. Those devices could be considered among the first functional trainers. We've come a long way since then.

What you have to consider about those early gyms is that often much of the training revolved around gymnastic exercises. It wasn't uncommon to see a lot of gym members climbing ropes and performing push-ups and countless dumbbell and even medicine ball exercises. Interestingly, one of the pioneers of gym equipment design was

the late Jack LaLanne, who in the '50s was recognized for developing the leg extension and even a prototype of the Smith machine, which was perfected by and named after bodybuilder Rudy Smith.

The next level of machines came in the form of universal jungle gyms, which were popular with schools

because there was no cleanup, as their selectorized weight stacks (also credited to LaLanne) eliminated the problem of misplaced or stolen weights. However, most of the exercises performed on these machines involved levers and didn't demand much stability, so they cannot be considered functional trainers. Later, Arthur Jones came along with his Nautilus machines, which had shell-shaped pulleys that varied the resistance as the exercises were performed. But because virtually all these machines required no stability, they do not exemplify functional training. Further, space was an issue.

Today, interest in resistance training continues to grow, especially at the high school and college levels,



One of the first modern types of functional trainers was the cable crossover machine, which joined two independent single-station pulley machines.

bringing many challenges in designing strength and conditioning facilities so they meet established standards. ASTM International, a nonprofit organization that produces standards for materials, products, systems and

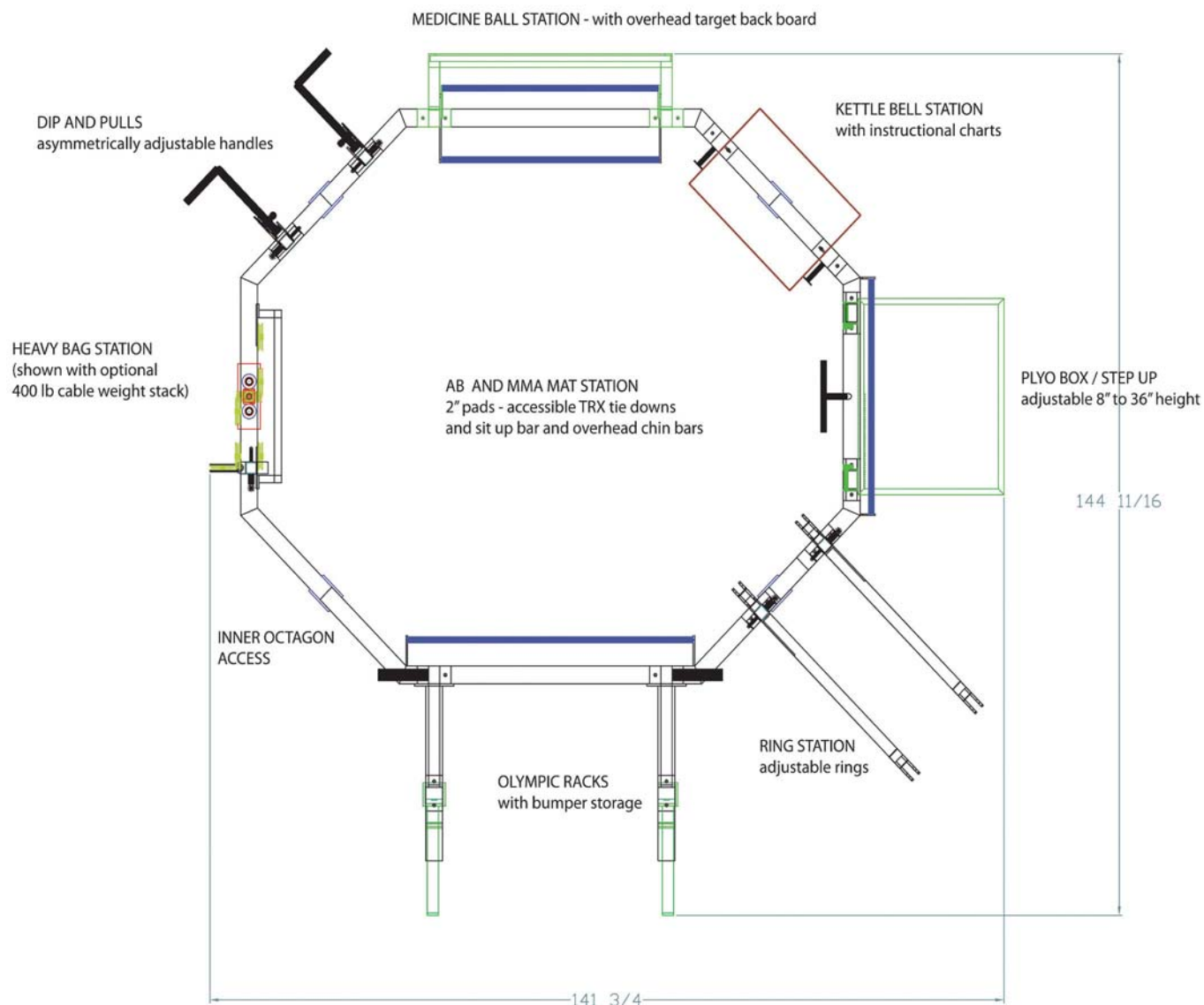
services, publishes the *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*. Besides being the primary authoritative reference material in many lawsuits concerning liability issues in exercise facilities, this is a valuable compendium for anyone planning a weight training facility. However, we don't even have to consult this publication to know that a fundamental problem in most weight training facilities is simply too many people and not enough equipment or space in which to put the equipment.

In most colleges and high schools, the answer to the space problem is creative scheduling. Coaches and administrators of high school sports often find ways to hold weight training classes before school or during school so as not to interfere with the athletes'



With countless exercise possibilities, the BFS 4-Stack Functional Trainer is a space saver, as it is designed to be placed in the corner of a room.





after-school sports training. But it's clear that regardless of the scheduling approach, it's impractical to only have machines that allow the performance of one exercise.

The Functional Training Future

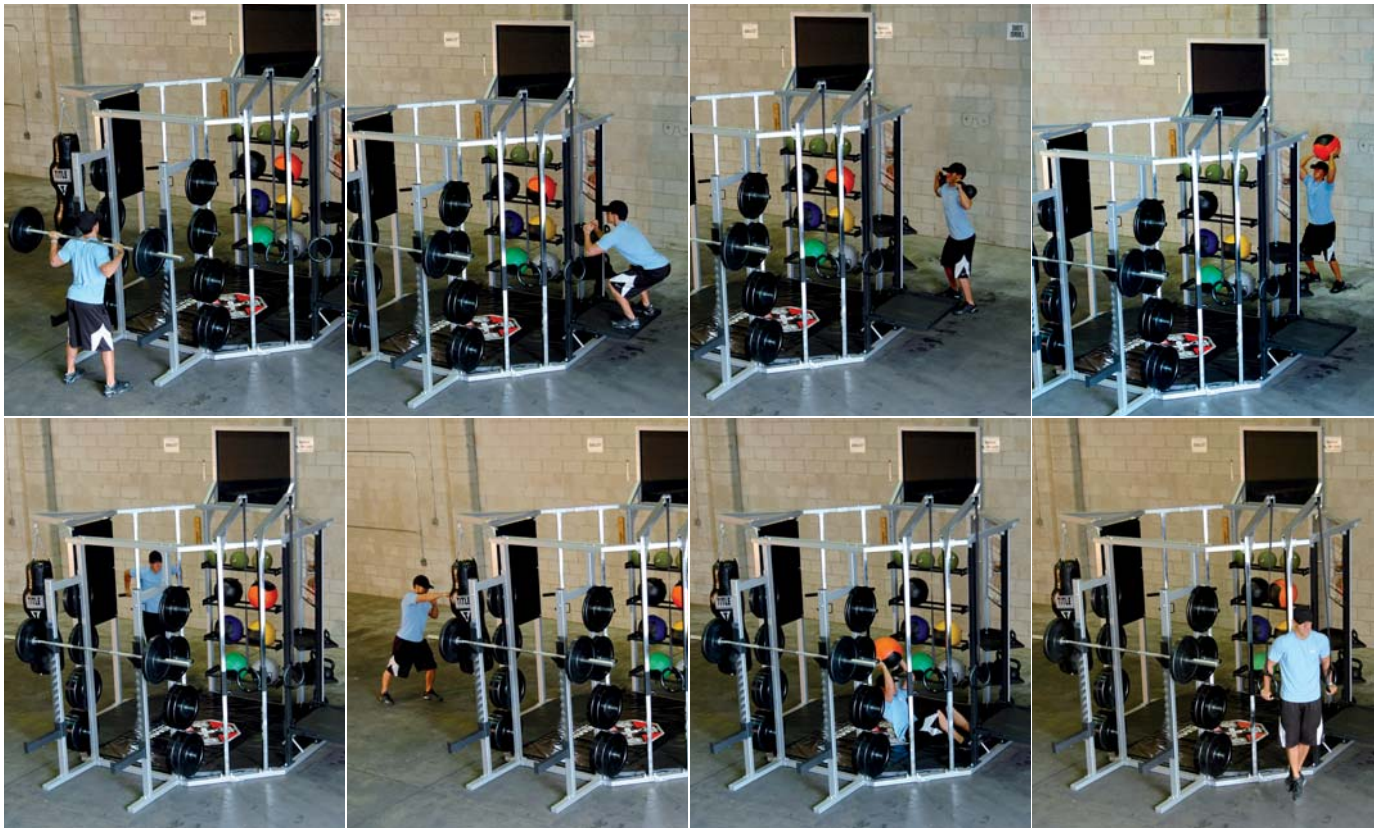
As the demand for a greater variety of exercises began to increase, especially for injury rehabilitation, the functional trainers made a comeback. The first type that hit the gyms was the cable crossover machine, which linked two cable pulley systems together. Weight stacks would get

heavier, more attachments would be added, such as chin-up bars, and the cable pulleys would be adjustable and would rotate. In the early models, the smoothness of operation varied widely among different units and brands, but manufacturers today use essentially the same technology so that there is less variation.

There are many published guidelines for helping coaches design weightrooms and fitness facilities. One issue, however, is what to do with the corners of the weightroom. Weightroom designs often fail to utilize these areas efficiently because

the racks and platforms have a rectangular design. BFS has come up with a solution: the BFS 4-Stack Functional Trainer.

The 4-Stack Functional Trainer is designed to be placed in the corner of a room. It consists of low- and high pulley stations, two adjustable vertical pulleys and a chin-up bar. The two adjustable vertical pulleys, with stabilizer bars, enable the user to perform an endless variety of unilateral and bilateral exercises. Also, the variety of pulley apparatus enables virtually any special functional training exercise to be performed, and stabilizing handles



The next step in functional trainers is the Crossfire Octagon, which has become an extremely popular unit for MMA fighters.

allow for proper positioning during single-limb exercises.

One of the unique aspects of this heavy-duty functional training station is that the high- and low-pulley units are connected with a crossbar to which a chin-up bar (with wide-grip attachment) is connected for chin-ups, pull-ups and hanging leg raise exercises. In the center are two adjustable pulleys. The result is a versatile station that allows the performance of a tremendous variety of exercises in a minimal amount of space.

Another type of functional trainer is the Crossfire Octagon, which was designed by Ron Rhodes, who has more than 21 years of experience in the industry. The Crossfire Octagon combines the following:

- Half Rack Olympic lifting station with bumper
- Plate and barbell holders
- Heavy bag or 100-pound cable column with 18-foot cable
- Adjustable gymnastics ring tower
- Adjustable push-up and pull-up station
- Medicine ball storage rack with medicine ball target
- Kettlebell station with storage rack
- Plyo and step-up station

The frame is constructed primarily of 2" x 3" rectangular 11-gauge steel tubing with 1-inch solid steel chrome guide rods; pulleys, cables and straps are all of the highest-quality materials. The center of the Octagon is covered with a high-quality, 8.5' x 7.5' x 2"-thick mixed martial arts mat for

floor exercise. There are also storage pegs for heavy bag gloves and jump ropes. Says Rhodes, "The number of functional exercises possible with the Crossfire Octagon is limited only by the imagination, and can be randomly shuffled or grouped each today to create a daily Crossfire Octagon challenge. The constantly varying combination of exercises continually forces users to adapt physically and thereby avoid plateauing."

Functional trainers are back, along with many more options than the simple wall-mounted pulley systems used in early gyms. Whether you decide on cable crossover units, the 4-Stack Functional Trainer, or the Crossfire Octagon, there is a perfect functional trainer for you right now. **ERS**

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