

Kostya Tszyu Interview

Kostya Tszyu is the former undisputed World Super Lightweight Boxing Champion and at his peak was regarded as one of the world's greatest boxers. He spoke to Rick Ravensdale of Australian Kettlebells 28th February 2004 about kettlebells...

When did you start using kettlebell's?

My first memory of using kettlebells was when I was about 12 years old. I started using the 1 pood (16kg). At that time all I could only lift them up, that's it. There weren't many exercises I could do. However I do remember we had lots of competitions back then. Things like, lifting two of them together. I only weighed about 30 kilogram at 12 years of age and I could lift them above my head 5 times. Whereas right now I could lift one around 50 times. I used them in training to prepare myself for fights.

How long have you used them for?

I'm 35 years old this year and I came out to Australia when I was 22 years old and I used them all the time I was in Russia.

What exercises do you perform with the kettlebell's?

My preference is with the 16 kg kettlebell, because you can do lots of exercises with them. I do things like clean and jerks, presses and swinging type motions and with them. There are also a number of great exercises for the legs Back in Russia many people used them for exercise, and I could do most of the exercises people did.

What are the major benefits of using kettlebell's?

There are a couple of benefits. First of all, for power and strength, and secondly for speed as well. They are different to normal weights because of the shape of them, and that's the beauty of them.

What are the most notable changes to your body composition since using kettlebells?

I've become stronger, no question about it. Not only more physically strong but mentally strong. Knowing that you can do something other people can't makes you mentally stronger. I notice it mainly in the upper body; my shoulders, back, arms and stomach have got a lot stronger.

Do you mainly use them for high repetition endurance work, or lower repetition absolute strength work?

One of the exercises I do for strength endurance work is; I pick up the 16kg kettlebell and just walk around with it doing a whole range of different exercises for about a hour, not dropping it once.

I suppose for your boxing the strength endurance is the most important factor rather than the absolute strength.

A combination of everything really. But you need to be very fit to fight 12 rounds. Towards the end of a 12 round fight your going to be getting fatigued, whether your fit or not fit. Doing exercises like the one I said earlier reminds me that I can do it.

How much transfer to your boxing have you found the kettlebell's to have, especially in your strikes?

I not going to say all my power comes from using kettlebells, but they certainly do help with that. When you start doing a whole variety of exercises with them you can feel the benefits of using them. When training its important you don't get bored with exercising, and when using kettlebells you'll never get bored because there is such a big range of exercises.

What's the breakdown of your training in terms of time spent on strength training, sparring, technical boxing, aerobic fitness, etc.

It's all done in stages. In the preparation stage I do about 40% on strength training and endurance training and the rest of the time spent on boxing. You have to get fit before you get right into the boxing or otherwise you won't be ready.



For the aerobic work, I run everyday and also do a combination of basketball, football and other games. Of that 40%, I'd spend about 30% of that time on weights and 70% on cardio work. I believe that the best way to be fit you have to cover all aspects of fitness preparation.

Do you know of any other boxers who use kettlebell's in their training? If not, do you think they should be a part of all professional and amateur boxing training regimes?

In Russia, everyone uses them, but not here. Only because they have never been introduced to this part of the world. That's why I have them in my gym, so all my boys will use them when they are preparing for their fights. We will start with my boys, and they will see the benefits straight away. As far as whether other boxers should use them, its up to the trainer. They all would benefit from them.

Do you think other athletes in other sports should be using kettlebell's as part of their conditioning work?

No question, it would be very beneficial for any sports person. For example wrestlers and people competing in athletics used them a lot. Rugby players and footballers should be using them. There are just so many exercises you can do with them and many of them are specific to many sports. In Russia, I'm sure all people in all types of sports would be using them.

What about the average guy who's trying to get in shape? Do you think kettlebell's would be a suitable means to train with?

I think anybody can used them, but the 16 kg might be too heavy for someone who is very unfit, so a half a pood (8kg) would be a good weight to start with.

What do you think separates you from other boxers which makes you a world champion boxer?

I feel that it's my ability to train hard; harder than any other people around. My determination to achieve my goals and my will to never stop, till I achieve them. You have to learn to never give up with anything you do and this is what separates me from the others.

Have you decided when are you going to fight Sharmba Mitchell?

We can't make a decision at the moment. It depends on how the recovery goes, but it will be probably later in the year.

I would like to know what you think in regards to Sharmba Mitchell fighting Lovemore Ndou in the eliminator bout to see who you fight next, and do you think Ndou has a chance of beating Mitchell?

Of course everybody has got a chance of beating anybody. Depending on how hard Sharmba trains after my cancellation and if Lovemore is going to be ready not. I'm sure it will be a good fight.

All the best with your recovery from your shoulder injury and good luck for your upcoming fights. Thanks for your time.

