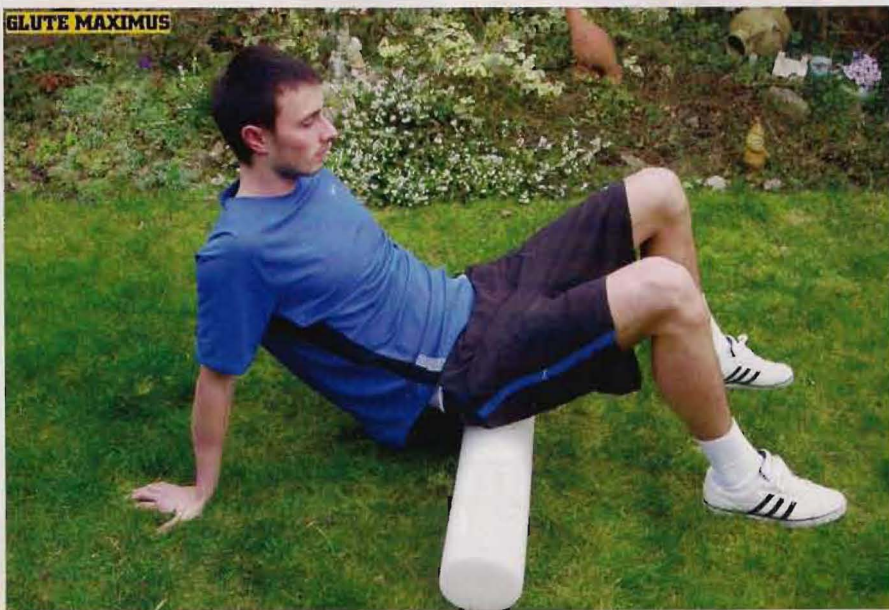


GLUTE MAXIMUS



NO MATTER HOW HARD THEY TRIED, THE ROLLING STONES JUST COULD NOT GET ANY SATISFACTION, SO THE SONG GOES. THANKFULLY, THIS IS NOT THE CASE WHEN IT COMES TO THE USE OF FOAM ROLLING. AS A MATTER OF FACT A GREAT DEAL OF SATISFACTION CAN BE HAD BY REGULAR USE OF THIS CHEAP BUT EFFECTIVE PIECE OF KIT. ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN...

With martial arts, by its very essence, being a contact activity, there will be those inevitable times where you may sustain a soft tissue injury. Even if there is no contact in training, injuries can easily occur as a result of a lack of correct warming up procedures and going into training too fast and hard. Certain forms of exercise such as resistance training are essentially catabolic, meaning they are designed to break down muscle tissue. Now, whether it's from an injury or hard training, more often than not the muscles will develop some degree of adhesion build up, also known as scar tissue, once that muscle tissue has had a chance to repair and rebuild itself.

If untreated, over a long period of time this build up of scar tissue can greatly diminish the contractile ability of the muscle, reducing range of movement, and leaving you sometimes in a great deal of pain. "Isn't

that what stretching is for though?" I hear you counter... It would be logical to assume this but it is not correct because stretching in itself cannot break down these adhesions, it will only improve the length of the muscle stretched. Visualise for a moment, or even better get an elastic band and pull it so you can feel how it stretches. Now, tie a knot in it and pull it again. You will notice you are able to stretch it but the overall flexibility is diminished, not to mention that the knot (adhesion) is still there. The more you tie knots in the elastic band the less it stretches from its original knot free state. There are so many martial artists out there who are chronically injured, and always in pain, who do not have to be.

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Various modalities of therapy are highly effective in treating soft tissue injuries and breaking down adhesions and scar tissue.

One that has been shown to be very effective in this respect is called

HIP FLEXOR



ILIO-TIBIAL BAND



THORACOLUMBAR FASCIA

A.R.T or Active Release Technique.

Deep tissue or sports massages can also have a beneficial effect but there usually exists one barrier to really getting the most out of these treatments. Price! For the vast majority of us, paying anywhere from £40 upwards for a single treatment is most probably an occasional luxury - however, if you feel a need to really have your body pain free and able to move freely again, you will need at least a couple of sessions per week over a period of 6-8 weeks to really notice any significant benefit, even though acute benefits are obviously there to be had. If you can afford it, then find a good therapist and stick with it. If, however your money is tightly accounted for, then for about £15 well spent, foam rolling is the next best option.

Excuse the physiology lesson for a moment, but it is important to have a basic understanding of how foam rolling actually works. I will keep it as simple as possible, honest! There exists within the junction of the muscle / tendon insertions a mechanoreceptor called the Golgi Tendon Organ (GTO) that auto-regulates as it senses excessive tension on muscles - especially in times of higher risk to injuries. It is the same mechanism that works so well if you perform any kind of PNF or isometric stretching exercises. The muscle contraction that precedes the passive stretch in the case of PNF stimulates the GTO, which in turn causes

GET SOME SATISFACTION WITH **ROLLING**
FOAM



relaxation that then aids this passive stretch and allows for greater range of motion. **This muscle tension can be stimulated and manipulated with the use of foam rolling, which in turn causes the GTO to relax the muscle. In other words you can gain much better results with your stretching routine when you combine foam rolling.** Not only that, you get a very good method to break down these adhesions at the same time. That seems like a winner to me!

Using foam rolling is very simple once you have found the optimal positioning for your target muscles. You simply sandwich the foam roller between the muscles worked with the floor and, well...roll! Let me expand just a little. The most effective way to foam roll is to perform it bit-by-bit in sections. As you roll over your muscles you will come across very tender areas that are known as hot spots, or junctions of tension like trigger points. When you find these spots, simply roll over slowly, until eventually that pain subsides - almost as though you are ironing the crease out of your favourite shirt. The more weight you place on the roller by adjusting your body position, the more this will increase the pain as you roll, but make no mistake about it, this will also increase the efficacy of the movement. Also, it has been shown that greater benefits are there to be had when you work from the centre out, so for example let's say you're working on your hamstrings... Begin by rolling them at the top near the glutes in a small section, eventually working down to the insertion at the back of the knee.

Pretty much every major muscle group can be worked - you just need to find your best and most comfortable position to work them. In the early stages you might feel foam rolling is a tough workout itself, not to mention a waste of time... but stick with it. The more pain you feel in areas as you roll, the more you need to roll.

Also, foam rolling is best performed before your stretching, for the reasons I have already mentioned. Even ten minutes daily will have beneficial effect over a few weeks. This is one of those modalities that should be in every martial artist/combat athlete's arsenal of rehab and recovery methods, that's if they want to stay in the game for a long time and be ache and pain free while doing it.

A word of warning though before you begin! **Always consult your GP first** because as innocuous as it seems, it has been shown that individuals with a history of either circulatory problems like high blood pressure or diseases of pain such as rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia should not really use foam rollers. Be informed! **Also, when rolling around the neck area, do NOT roll directly over the vertebrae themselves. Always keep to soft tissue areas.** You have been warned! I have

included a number of photos to illustrate some of the areas to be worked, but there are a plethora of images and articles on the web as well as a host of videos that can be seen on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) for a visual representation on many more exercises you can perform.

As far as purchasing foam rollers, do a [Google](https://www.google.com) search. Your results will yield rollers that come in different lengths and thicknesses. All I would say is that you should purchase thicknesses of no less than six inches, as the weight bearing down can often collapse thinner models. Research and experiment until you find the best one for you.

Finally, remember to say this little 'mantra' to yourself "roll, roll, roll the foam gently over me, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, I'm becoming pain free..." Okay, don't, but you get the idea! Feel free to drop me a line at Johnny@reelcombat.com or on [FaceBook](https://www.facebook.com) (Johnny Silmon) if you have any questions, or if you have been already getting results from using this simple bit of kit. I would like to hear from you.

Many thanks to my good friend and client, professional footballer Daniel Blanchett for demonstrating the exercises.

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