

WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



Ryan Magin Interviews Virgil Aponte For CriticalBench.com

RM: All right, guys, I just want to welcome everybody to line tonight. This is Ryan Magin with the CriticalBench.com [Weekly Muscle Building Expert Interview Series](http://CriticalBench.com). Tonight we've got the stair exercise guru, and his name is Virgial Aponte and he's been kind enough to join us this evening and tell us a little bit about his program and how he uses stairs to get lean, jacked, strong and get everybody in shape.

So, Virgil, thanks for coming out tonight and welcome to the line. Thank you.

VA: On, yeah, you're very welcome. I'm happy to be here and happy to share and happy just to tell the listeners about an underrated fitness tool.

RM: That definitely is and it's one of the best. I know in my email I wrote about Rocky and that's like my favorite picturing of stairs is when like Rocky is running up the stairs at the end of all his training montages. I love that part.

VA: Yeah, oh, yeah. If anything makes stairs famous, it's Rocky.

RM: He made training famous, I think, for the most part.

VA: That's true.

RM: Well, give us your background. How did you get started...why did you start working out or training in the first place? Where did you begin?

VA: My background in health and fitness started young. I was just a very hyperactive kid. I was into sports. Growing up I played baseball, basketball, football, you know, the three main sports, a lot of tag, a lot of manhunt. I don't know if you know that game. It's like tag, but like long distance tag.

In college, I played intramural sports. I played organized touch football, a lot of three-on-three basketball and organized baseball up until like 15 or 16 years old. So, I was always into sports, and I still play. I'm a high school PE teacher and I still play a lot of three-on-three basketball. I play a lot of wiffle ball and I occasionally play softball and touch football. So, that's in addition to stuff I do working-out wise. So, I've always just been pretty active.

In college, I wanted to become a phys ed teacher. I was working at a health club while I was in college. I sort of was introduced to personal training while I was at the health club and I was like, wow, this is pretty cool. You get paid to help people exercise.

So, out of college I didn't go right into teaching. I actually started personal training and I became passionate about personal training and just learning about it, just devouring new information about health and fitness and stuff like that. So, I was always active and that's where it all stemmed from. I like being active. I like being just involved in stuff like that.

One of the biggest motivations for me when I was younger was I was really skinny and wanted to gain weight. So, I went the bodybuilding route and how to gain muscle and stuff like that. So, that was one of my big passions.

Now, I'm 38 and for me, it's more important just to move around and keep physically active. I don't want to gain weight, my goals have changed. But, I remember when I was young, one of the biggest motivating things was to gain weight and also improve my sports performance.

RM: Awesome. So, you say you're training now more towards to be functionally fit, not so much size and strength?

VA: Right. Right now I don't train for size and strength. I'm usually around 200 pounds and I'm more interested in general fitness and things that are fun, actually. That's why I love to play three-on-three basketball, especially with high school students. Also, we play pickup games with other teachers and stuff like that.

But, it's fun for me. It's not a chore like getting on a treadmill and walking for an hour. You can play two hours of basketball and it feels like you just played 20 minutes.

RM: That's how I see it with my bike racing now days. I can't get off my bike, so I love it.

VA: Right, yeah. You know, for people listening, if you find something that you love to do, then go with it. I know everyone has an opinion on what works, but if there's a motivation behind what you're doing, then that's a very important thing. Some people love swimming, some people love running, some people love playing dodgeball, team dodgeball. If it's something that keeps you active, then go for it. I could imagine how fun BMX racing must be.

RM: Yeah. I took a little bit of time off, and I just got back into it. I train for Strongman and I did a Strongman comp a couple of weeks ago and I got third in that. Now, I'm like, I just want to ride my bike. I'm like an extreme sports kid.

VA: Yeah, it's definitely about having fun, definitely about having fun.

RM: So, where did the stairs come in? I know reading your book, you got injured and you started using stairs when you got injured?

VA: Yeah. Actually, that's where it all started. I mean, I had done some stair training when I was younger. My grandma lived on like the 16th floor, and I would just walk up the stairs sometimes instead of the elevator, and I remember my legs being so pumped-up and I was like, wow, this is cool. This is great for the legs. But, that was it.

And then in college, I had a mentor professor. His name was Stewart Levin. He was really big into stairs, and he was like, "I love stairs because you can't fake it. If you walk them or run them, you're going to work. You can sort of weed-out the weak." I was like, he's right. You can't fake this. But, that was it. That was sort of my small introduction to them.

For me, like I said, I was into bodybuilding and gaining mass and stuff like that, and I injured myself because I was a chronic overtrainer. This is back then, and the next thing you know, I'm benching 300 pounds, I'm deadlifting 400 pounds, all those big weights. I wound up injuring myself, and not because bodybuilding is bad, or strength training is bad, it's because my approach was bad. I overdid it.

After surgery, after my hernia surgery, the doctor recommended, hey, stay out of the gym for three months. I mean, you know, Ryan, that was like, oh, my gosh! Are you kidding me? Torture. So, like a fool, I decided, you know what? Let me go into the school weight room and just try a few things. Just doing some sit-ups, I pulled my

abdominal muscle, right around where I had the hernia scar, and it was a serious pull, the type of pull where if I bent down, it would just cramp-up on me.

So, now I was post-hernia surgery with a scar there and a serious abdominal pull. So, I could do nothing. I really could do nothing. The only thing I could really do was stationary bike, which I cannot stand. I still can't stand it to this day.

I got very depressed, I started gaining some weight. I tried swimming, but it still aggravated my injuries. So, I was like, you know what? I've got to find something. So, it just so happens I was visiting a buddy of mine. He lives in a 20 story building, and you have two elevators, one of them was out, and I'm waiting for the other one. I was like, you know what? Let me just walk up to his apartment, 19th floor.

I get up there I'm like wow! I was winded. The big thing for me was it didn't aggravate what I was going through. So, I was like, you know what? Let me give stair training a try. I can't go to the gym right now. So, I just decided to start walking stairs in my buddy's building. And over the course of a couple of months, I get up to doing 140 flights. I

it's a 20 story building, so I'd walk up to the 20th floor, just walking. I didn't run or anything like that. I'd walk up. And when I got up there I'd take the elevator down. And then I would repeat that. Before you knew it, I got up to 140 flights, seven rounds of 20.

My level of fitness was really high, aerobic fitness. But, during that time I was able to heal and I was able to actually...then I was able to go back to the gym. And now, when I went back to the gym, I was like, you know, I don't know if I should go to the gym, the five times a week like I used to do. So, what I decided to do was go to the gym twice a week, the traditional weight training stuff twice a week, and I was going to keep the stairs twice a week, because I really liked what type of aerobic fitness I had gotten into. So, I was like, you know, I want to keep both. That's what I did.

While I was in there, in the stairs, because I was only walking, and once I started to feel better, I started to come up with other things, running up stairs, power development like hops. And there's a small park by my friend's building, I started going there doing pull-ups, pushups, stuff like that. I started bringing bands with me, I started bringing dumbbells with me. So, it sort of just became this, hey, if I wanted to, I could actually do everything in this area, in the stairs. I could train my entire body.

It was around this time where I know personal trainers from New York, and I asked a friend of mine, Colleen, about stair training, because I was looking for stuff on stair training. There was really not that much stuff, just running and walking them.

So, she was like, “Why don’t you write about it? You’re always talking about it. You’re always talking about this new stair exercise.” And I was like, you know what? And that’s where it was born. I was like, hey, you know what? I’m going to write about this. That’s where it all started.

RM: Then, you kind of took it the next step further after obviously...everybody heard you preaching about it. So, I’m sure you got clients and stuff and people started training with you. Tell us a little bit about what they saw. How did they react? They hire a personal trainer and you just take them to a flight of stairs. What was the kind of reaction that you got there?

VA: You know, it was...the first reaction people get is, wow! This is tough. You know? I train a spectrum of people. Right now most of my clients are, my personal training clients are people that need to lose a little weight, need to lose some fat, older clientele, 40 and older. They just want to get more fit, more healthy and lose weight, usually.

I’ll start them through a body weight sequence. Let’s say we’re in the gym and I’ll say, “Okay, we’re going to come onto the stairs now.” I’ll have them do two or three flights and they’re like, wow! This is tough. So, usually they realize that it’s affective, but it’s hard work. So, they start to see it as another tool that they can use. Whereas, most people don’t do that. It’s usually for aerobic fitness and stuff like that. You throw them on the treadmill or you throw them on a bike. But me, I take them onto the stairs. It’s just something I love to do. And then, we can advance from there.

RM: So, you really got into researching stairs when you got into it. Who did you find? I know reading your website, there’s a lot of people that you found that did it. Did that strike you as odd? Who were some of like the standouts that you’re like, wow! I can’t believe he trains the stairs!

VA: The biggest one I would have to say, because the athletes don’t surprise me. Because, you always hear of athletes doing stadium stairs. The biggest one would have to be like Jennifer Lopez and Madonna. When I read that, I was like wow! If they’re doing it...and J-Lo I read does it with a 20 pounds weighted vest. I talk about that in the book. That’s tough. For her, maybe she weighs 130 or something. I don’t really know. But, for her to strap on a 20 pound vest, that’s a lot of weight even for me, and run up stairs, that’s impressive. And Madonna, I heard, does 50 straight flights at a time. So, I was like wow! That’s definitely really impressive.

The other people like Alex Rodriguez gets up early to do stairs. The biggest one that I’ve found, and I talked about it a lot, was Curtis Martin. And you know Curtis Martin played here for the New York Jets. He was really big. He would actually write in

daily news articles that, “I credit stairs for my conditioning and my longevity in football.” So, that says a lot.

Where Alex Rodriguez, in articles I read, he would just say that he does them. Curtis Martin really went out of his way to say, “Hey, this is big stuff.” And he even, during the off season, he would travel to the Santa Monica Stairs, which is a famous set of stairs in California, to do stairs with his trainer. So, for him to go all the way out there and do that say a lot about how effective they are.

RM: Yeah, definitely. I know the Santa Monica Stairs, those things are crazy. There are YouTube videos of those. I don’t know how many flights there are, but those things look brutal.

VA: It’s supposed to be like around twelve straight flights. So, just imagine walking up twelve flights of stairs where you walk up a flight, you turn back, you walk up to the second, third floor. This is straight up. So, that’s a lot of steps.

RM: One of my buddies here, we did...the firemen actually train at this big building in downtown Tampa. I don’t remember exactly how many flights of stairs it was, but I remember the hardest part was coming down, really. I felt more winded coming down than I did going up.

VA: For me, the coming down part...I start to add flexibility work. I do this exercise called reverse crossover. And basically, you’re coming down the stairs backwards. You’re holding onto the rails for safety, but you come down backwards with a crossover move. And it’s great for your hip flexors. But, I try to add something into it coming down.

But, yeah, I mean, some people like to go down, and some people like to take the elevator down. It depends. When I’m in the high school, we really don’t have access to the elevator unless you need it medically or you’re in a wheelchair or something. So, we have to walk down the stairs. But, in my buddy’s building where I train, and I bring clients there sometimes, I actually...once we get to the 20th floor, we usually take the elevator down and then start back up, just for safety reasons. It’s more for safety than anything.

RM: Got you. So, you also trained the Liberty...the Lady Knicks?

VA: Yes.

RM: How do the girls react on the stairs?

VA: Well, I’ll tell you one thing, they either loved it or hated it. They loved it for the results, but they hated it because it’s hard. I was with the team 2002, we had like a split

group, 13, 14 girls. There were about six or seven that were really hardcore into exercise. Then, the rest of them were not...you really had to push them to get their work done. So, you always remember, even with professional athletes, some of them don't care about working out. They love basketball.

So, that was a big lesson for me. But, what our problem was, was at the time the New York Knicks' training center was just being build. They had a brand new training center, Knicks, Liberty, Rangers. So, we were sort of left out of a training facility. So, our place of training was at Bally's which is up the block from Madison Square Garden. And the problem with Bally's was it was always packed and we were always being bothered by people. Because, they see a professional athlete and they're curious, they want to talk to you and stuff like that. So, that was always a sort of a hassle.

Another big problem was conditioning on the road. So, I was big into stairs and Jeff House, who thought fitness was very important, he said, "Do you have any suggestions?" I said, "Have them do stair work when they're on the road." So, we combined stair training with resistance band training, because as you know, it's real easy to bring resistance bands into the stairs. You can attach them to doors. You can attach them to the rails, and now, you have a super high end type of cardio that you can do, combined with...you want to do pushing, pulling, rotating. You want to do development work with bands and stairs. You've got a perfect recipe for a professional athlete and you don't have to worry about going to a gym or scheduling time to work out. They're in a hotel already, so all they've got to do it hit the stairs.

So, it went over really well with my coach, Jeff, who was behind me. But, it didn't go over with certain girls who skip workouts and they would be fined. Because, if you skip a workout...especially the bench players, because they actually have to do extra work depending on the amount of minutes you play. So, I would have to report if they didn't do their workout and they would get fined.

There was this one girl, Bernadette, from South Africa. She was...first of all, she didn't speak any English. She had a translator and she would just curse me out. And I don't know what the Hell she was saying, but she would curse me out, and she'd make me to the stairs because she hated it. And she had to do extra because she was a bench player and she didn't really get any minutes in the game, unless we were blowing somebody out.

So, it was kind of funny to hear...I would talk to the translator and say, "What is she saying?" She goes, "You don't want to know."

RM: That's funny. Good stuff. So, give us kind of a sample... Actually, before we get into that, when I think of stairs, I think more obviously of running up and down them for your lower body. How do you train the upper body with stairs?

VA: If there's one complaint about stairs, it's how do you do that? The simplest way is to just add body weight exercises. Let's say you walk stairs for a minute and then after that minute, what you do is you stop and you can do pushups. You can do handstand pushups. You could do some type of core work or if you're at a park, if a park is close by, you can do some type of pull-up on the monkey bars. That's usually how I do it.

Another great thing is to bring light weight equipment with you, either resistance bands, because then you can do your pushing, pulling and rotating with the bands. So, that's how we've done it, how I've done it.

I'm also crazy enough...I wouldn't say crazy, but I just love different tools, bringing kettlebells into stairs, bringing dumbbells, if you can, into stairs. Or, bringing a sandbag. I'm also very big into using a weighted vest. So, those things are going to help you if you're going to do upper body work, whether it's body weight exercises or pull-ups. All those tools can help you. So, you're going to have the combination of walking up, running or hopping the stairs, and then you can just add those other things.

RM: I've heard of people doing like bear crawling up and down stairs. I don't know if you practice that at all or recommend it?

VA: Actually, the wrestling team that I work with, they do that. I didn't actually come up with that, but when I met the wrestling team, when I first started working at Grant Street Campus, I was like, oh, I have these great stair exercises. They were like, cool. But then, they showed me some of the stuff that they do. And I was like, wow, they have some great stuff, too.

There's a great video on the Shaolin Monks on YouTube. If you just type in Shaolin Monks stair training. You'll actually see these little Shaolin Monks, ten, twelve years old, and they have to get up this giant stair climb, which takes them 20 minutes. On the way down, you know, how I say I take the elevator down, these little, young Monks actually crawl down the stairs. So, it's a bear crawl down stairs. It takes them 20 minutes to get to the top and they have to then crawl all the way down. So, you can imagine what level of fitness these young boys are in. That's like an unheard of level of fitness.

RM: I mean, you got gravity against you. That's like doing handstand pushups all the way down.

VA: Yeah, and it's just amazing, because it's a whole group of them, and I'm like wow. Like you said, I like to research their stuff and every now and then I'll type in who's doing stairs for training and just see what's going on in the internet. In fact, I'm going to actually put that on my blog soon, because I recently just saw it and I was like,

wow. But, bear crawls are great. I don't do them myself. I do bear crawls on the flat floor. I don't personally do them myself, but they're definitely something you could try.

One of my favorite stair exercises that I call the greatest stair exercise of all is buddy carries. That's basically someone hopping on your back, right over your hips, just like if you're carrying someone, and you just walk up the stairs with them. The key for that is just to make sure you carry someone that's not too heavy. I'm 200 pounds, I carry my wife. She weighs 135 pounds.

What I do with her is I simply carry her to the 20th floor. And what I do is I break it up into sets. So, let's say the first set I can only go six flights. She'll hop off my back and I'll rest for a minute, and then the second set, maybe I'll do four flights. The third set I'll do three flights. I just do that until I get to the 20th floor.

It's just a killer conditioning workout. I'm not even sure what type of fitness you're getting, aerobic, anaerobic, but your legs are... It covers everything, entire body training.

RM: For use. Can you give us, everybody listening, all my people, for one, how do you integrate stairs into a regular gym program. And another, if you could give like a sample stair workout, maybe one from your book, if you don't mind. Probably one of the harder ones, because I know nobody likes to do the easy stuff. Everybody likes to jump to the brutal, hard workouts. That's kind of the fun stuff.

VA: All right, we'll get it rockin'. What was the first thing you wanted? I'm sorry.

RM: For the people that are actually in the gym and maybe they're following a three or four day a week program in the gym. How can they integrate stairs without hindering their performance in the gym?

VA: A lot of people ask that question. That's a great question. What you want to do, if you want to keep...let's say you're doing a traditional gym program. So, stick to the strength training part, and then anything you're doing cardio-wise, treadmill, Stairmaster, spinning, just flip that for the stair training. Stairs are excellent for cardio, even if you just walk them. If you do that, you don't want to overtrain. So, if you're at the gym four days a week, you may not want to add stairs twice a week. Take one day out of the gym and then add stairs, because you also want to think about recovery and not over training.

It's also excellent for interval training. So, whatever you're doing your interval training with, let's say using an exercise bike for interval training or a treadmill, do that on the stairs. So, you'll have your traditional strength training stuff twice a week and then come into the stairs twice a week and simply do interval training.

For those that don't know, interval training is basically sets of very hard work with sets of very little work or rest. So, you can run up the stairs for a minute and rest for anywhere from one to two or three minutes, or when you're ready to do another very hard set.

RM: Awesome. That's hard, too. It sounds a lot easier when you're not doing it.

VA: Yeah. The key is going out there and experimenting. Most of the time, whoever I start with, it's just walking up the stairs to see what we got. And then, if I feel that they're comfortable walking up the stairs, is actually picking up the pace a little bit, not even running, and then seeing what we have, seeing how they feel. And then after that, it's picking up the pace again, so now you're actually running up the stairs. This is just one step. After that, you can graduate to two steps, and some people graduate to three steps. You have certain people, very tall people, can even...actually, not four steps. Four steps is usually too much. So, usually running up the flights of stairs, even three steps, is highly advanced.

RM: Definitely. On to that, let's say somebody wanted to do all stairs, like they just want to...what's a killer whole body workout that you can give them?

VA: Okay. Let's go with one minute intervals. So, what you're going to do is you're going to run up the stairs as hard as you can for...I would say 40 seconds to a minute. Usually by the time you get to a minute your legs are going to feel like they're ready to go. So, once you finish that minute, take a rest. Take a one minute rest. After that one minute rest, you're going to do an upper body exercise, whatever it is. Let's say we start with pushups. Once you finish those pushups, you're going to rest 30 seconds and now you're going to sprint again for 40 seconds to a minute. You keep doing that all the way until you get to, let's say you get to the 20th floor, just repeat that. If you're not dying after that, you're Superman.

Another favorite, which I love, is just good ole buddy carries. Like I said, in my program there's a video on just buddy carries, because it's that effective. Even if you carry something that's like 100 pounds, just walking up the stairs is going to improve your strength, your conditioning, your calorie burn after your workout. You really have to try it to actually see the benefits of it.

The only other way to get that is to probably go, get yourself a very heavy weighted vest...

RM: What brand to you recommend for that? I know those can be kind of pricey.

VA: Yes. I have like every weighted vest out there, because I just like to try the different ones. So, for very heavy weight like firemen type weight, firemen love the X-Vest because you can go up to 84 pounds.

Now, I have an 84 pounds X-Vest and I have not used 84 pounds yet. I would consider myself advanced. So, that's a lot of weight. But, if you can't work with a partner where you're going to do buddy carries, that would be your next best choice, getting a heavy weighted vest.

Or, you can use heavy dumbbells. The only thing with that, it's hard to hold them. When you do a buddy carry, they're on your hips. Their legs are secure over you. It actually works really well. It's a very easy exercise to do. But, you get so much effort out of the person that it's just that valuable.

I've taken wrestlers, and you know wrestlers are in amazing condition, especially high school wrestlers, because they don't get tired. They're just in amazing condition. I've got them to the point where they're just, "No, that's it. No more. No more buddy carries." It's just that effective.

RM: If someone's going to use a weighted vest, I assume they could probably use a weighted backpack or something of that nature. Have you tried that before?

VA: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, weighted anything. A lot of high school kids, they see my weighted vest and some of them are \$100. The X-Vest, I think I paid \$250 for it. I simply tell them you don't need this. It looks cool. They call me 50 Cent. I'm wearing this weighted vest. It looks like a bulletproof vest. But, it is expensive.

So, I tell them, no, you can use a backpack, throw some weights in there. You can use a heavy coat, anything that slows you down and makes you work harder is fine. Remember, the concept of weighted vest training also, even if you add a little bit of weight, it's going to make a difference, even if you add just five pounds, it's going to make a difference.

RM: What about things like ankle weights or anything like that? I've never really been a fan of them. I don't know if you've tried them.

VA: I never really tried ankle weights. I just never felt comfortable doing them. Although, I've gotten that question hundreds of times. Actually, I probably should try it just to do a video on it and talk about it.

But, the key is to try it. Give it a try, see how it feels, see how your body reacts. Just like anything else, if you're going to try it, start off light, err on the side of caution and see how your body responds and then go from there.

One different thing, when it comes to stairs and running, running you're going to get a lot more impact as far as what's going through your joints. So, if you use ankle weights when you run, it's going to be tough on your body. Now, if you're just walking up stairs with ankle weights, you're not going to get jarring impact to your body unless you're actually running up the stairs. So, just think about that. The key is, experimentation, but error on the side of caution and see how your body responds.

The weighted vest thing, it just flows really naturally, it feels right. you don't have aches and pains. I've seen so many people do it from high level wrestlers who are very conditioned to people at my fitness camp who are just general fitness people.

RM: I know they have...I don't know if you're tried it. But, I know Lifeline, they make those bands and stuff, too. They may be a little cheaper for people other than weighted vests.

VA: Absolutely.

RM: Money's tight. I don't know if you've ever experimented with those, too?

VA: I love bands. Bands are awesome because one of the things about weighted vests, kettlebells, dumbbells, they're heavy. But, as a personal trainer, we just like to have these things. But, the average person who travels on the road or wants to do stairs in their apartment, they may not want to carry all that stuff. They may have no interest. But, bands, I mean, first of all, they're very inexpensive. You can get bands for dirt-cheap. They're durable, they're actually pretty durable. I have bands sometimes two or three years. And they can knock you out.

John Hines is actually a guy who uses band training a lot for vertical jump training and fitness. There are some bands he uses where it comes with a belt and you attach the band on your belt and then on your ankle and then you attach another band from your waist to your wrist. So, now when you're walking up the stairs or running up the stairs, you have resistance pulling you all different ways on your body. So, besides going up the stairs and going against gravity, you have these bands. You have to actually improve your strength just to overcome the bands pulling down on you.

So, I mean, for very little price, you can get one of those getups and you're good to go. Now you have something that can actually add resistance to just walking up stairs or running up stairs or hopping. Very economical, very light weight, and very portable.

RM: Yeah, I actually use most of John's stuff because I went to his CNT course. I took his CNT...

VA: Okay. I took his course, too. Actually, I hosted his course in New York.

RM: That was one of the certifications I got where I mean, it meant something to me, so much, because I actually flew to Wisconsin, got the certification and it was like, I mean, it was Hell. It was three days and he beat me up. It was like I was a bigger guy and I come in there and I'm like, oh, you're not going to beat me up with body weight bands. He felt the need to make an example out of me, for sure, which was fun.

I believe the one...there's a portable power jumper. I know that's one of them that...if anybody listening wants to purchase that, it's LifelineUSA.com and it's called the portable power jumper. I'm looking at that on my computer right now. This thing is awesome, too. It's \$49.95. So, that's definitely a good investment for anybody if they're really into taking stairs to the next level.

VA: And they're durable; they last forever. Awesome pieces of equipment.

RM: Give us a rundown on your Ultimate Stair Exercises program. What do people get with it, if you don't mind. Give us a little breakdown of what's included for the price and what kind of results people have seen from using it.

VA: Well, basically what I did is first thing when I first did the stairs, I just put everything down into an ebook, because there is some stuff like jargon, like what's a flight of stairs. What's a step? What do I call a round? When I started, I was going up to the 20th floor, I would call that a round. Some people call it a set. So, that's what I start with in the ebook.

And then, one thing that I wanted to give people is to break the program into different aspects, like aerobic fitness, anaerobic fitness, power development, flexibility. So, this is what you can do on the stairs, and I broke it down into those categories. And then, I also broke it down into a category, what else can be done? What about if you don't have 20 flights? What about one flight of stairs? What about one step? So, I talk about that in the book.

Of course, I also include a frequently asked questions, because people have questions all the time. And then, I also included what else you could do with stairs, what equipment you can add, what about dumbbells, what about bands, what about using a weighted vest. I talk about that. And then, of course, workouts. People like to actually see workouts. So, I included 20 different workouts in the book.

And then, after I did the book, I decided I definitely want to video all this stuff, because some people are visual. Reading it in the book...and then it has pictures and stuff. But, if you actually see it, you're like, "Oh, I can do that. Oh, I get it now." So, I put together all the different videos of the exercises. You can see the videos. Actually, I'm performing the videos, so you actually see how a crossover forward looks or running up the stairs looks, or doing eccentric hops on giant steps. What is that?

So, the videos are online, so if you buy the product, you get the videos online. And actually, if you go to the website now, actually, I put three videos up for everyone for free. So, you can actually see what I do on the stairs. I started with a beginning video and an advanced training technique, that way you sort of get both. Because, some people are beginners and some people are advanced. That's just how it is.

RM: What if someone wants to just do the advanced stuff? I know that's how I am. Even if it's the first time I've done something, I'm like, "I'm an expert."

VA: So, you always want to cater to both types of people. There are other things that I included. There are things that go really great with stair training and that's band training. So, I included an ebook by Dave Schmitz, who's a band training expert. He's a physical therapist and he offered this resistance band training ebook, which is great. It ties-in excellent with stairs. And I also...Josh Henkin gave me his power sandbag workout, which is also great with stair training.

Another thing I love besides stairs is hill sprint training, because they're very similar, running up stairs and running up hills. I interviewed a guy who did a whole program on hill sprints. His name is Tim Kauppinen from Wisconsin. I actually recorded the interview that I did with him and he also sent the actual hill sprint workout that you can check out.

Also, I also included a no-gym-necessary workout guide. And basically, it teaches you, you know, the basic bodyweight exercises you can do. You can do these on the stairs or you can do them anywhere. I also included the videos. Because, people, like one of the big things with stairs is, how do I train my upper body? How do I train my core? Well, if you combine stairs with regular bodyweight exercises, you're going to have everything you need. So, I threw those videos in because I think that's important, that way you can just combine everything. It's a lot of stuff.

RM: You've got a lot of information there. But, reading through, you lay it out, video one, video two, video three. It's all pretty self explanatory. It's really easy to digest. And definitely...it's cool you got into hill sprints, because I know...I live in Florida, we have no hills. I get excited... I bought Herschel Walker's Guide to Basic Training off of Amazon and that's all he did was hill sprints, hill sprints, pushups and pull-ups, and he was doing like 1,000 pushups a day. It was insane. I started doing that program and then I got to the hill sprints. I was like, well, I don't have a hill.

VA: You can use stairs in that case.

RM: Exactly. That's where they come in handy, for sure.

Well, I mean, I know you train a lot of people. What's some standout results that people have gotten, like standout, like this lady lost so and so amount of pounds? Give us some of your like extraordinary success stories there.

VA: The biggest success story is someone actually that I didn't train personally, there was a woman I used to work with over at another high school, she as maybe 200 pounds. Her ideal weight would be, I'd say, the 140's. She was complaining to me, "I don't have time. I just don't have time to exercise. I have two kids; I go to school." I was like, "All right. So, I mean, what about doing stuff at home?" She was like, "No, you know, my kids," blah, blah, blah. I was like all right, talking to her, trying to find out some information on how could I help her, because she wasn't into getting personal training. She just wanted some advice.

And then, I find out she lives in a 25 story building. I was like, oh, that's it. "You never have to buy a treadmill, you never have to buy anything. All I want you to do is one thing: stop taking the elevator." She's like, "Are you crazy?" She lived on like the 6th or 7th floor, something low. I was like, "What you're going to do is you're going to get to the point where you can walk up to the 25th floor and then take the elevator down."

So, she goes and we would just have conversations at school about this. She goes to the stairs, climbs her two flights and she's dying. She was 50, 60 pounds overweight, very sedentary. So, I was like, "Okay, cool. What you do is walk up a flight, two flights, you feel tired, take a break. Try it again. Your goal is to practice using the stairs instead of the elevator. When you get to 25 flights and you can do that, just talk to me and I'll tell you where to go from there." So, it was sort of not personal training in the sense that I was there, but just some consulting.

It took about three months and she got up to the 25th floor. At that point, she lost maybe 10, 15 pounds, not a lot. But, she was actually trying it. I say, "What you really want to do is just forget about the elevator. In doing that, I started to mix in, now what about your diet? What about how you're eating? You're busting your butt, getting better at stairs, over the course of a couple of months you're up to climbing 25 flights. Are you eating better?" She was like, "No. I do this and this." So, she started to make modifications with that.

Another three months pass by, another ten pounds come off. So, now she's down about 20 pounds, and besides just doing the stairs she's like, "You know what? I think I'm going to start walking more." I was like, "Hey, absolutely. Now, you've got the stairs, you could just throw that in. That doesn't take any time." Because remember, I wanted her to just fit it in her day. So, when she goes into her building, instead of just taking the elevator to her apartment, go up the stairs and then go into your apartment. That can just take five or ten minutes for anybody.

So, now she starts walking because she's seeing that hey, a little stair work, a little tightening up on the diet, hey, let me start adding some walking here. Now, she's starting to walk to the train and just adding more walking. The next thing you know, a little bit more weight comes off.

She's down about 25 pounds and she tells me, "You know what? I think I'm going to try the gym." I was like, "Definitely try the gym." So, she signs up for Lucille Roberts. Next thing you know, now she's down 30 pounds. The last I saw her, she was down about 45 pounds.

From her mindset thinking, I don't have time, I have kids, I have school to just seeing some results from stairs. She got to walking, she got to eating better and she even wound up joining a gym. This was someone who was telling me, "I don't have time for anything."

But, she was basically making an excuse before even starting. I just said...little by little, she starting adding fitness in her day and she started seeing some results. When people see results, they start to think, oh man, what can I do to improve these results. That's how it happens.

So, stairs was just something that I knew could help her, because it was right in her building. So, that, more important than anything, was big. Because, it got all the excuse BS out of the way. There's a lot of excuse BS. We're good at making excuses. But, when you make excuses for yourself, you sort of put yourself further away from the solution. If you start to see answers, then excuses stop popping up.

RM: That is true. Did you see anything crazy with a lot of your athletes? Was there like a transformation just from stairs? Where there any guys that just got like signed to the NFL or something because they did stairs? Any standout athletes, kids that just went above and beyond and got scholarships or anything like that?

VA: One athlete I worked with, his name is Dillon, he was drafted by the New York Yankees. I did a lot of stair stuff with him. I wouldn't say that that was the only thing. He throws 97 miles per hour.

But, I remember when I was working with him, he was as student at Grant Street Campus. I worked with him his senior year. I would do a lot of stair stuff with him just because he needed to work on balance and stability, and there were some exercises I knew could help him that were specific to stairs. So, definitely, I know that was important. But, I don't want to put it just on stairs. He is just one of those gifted individuals. Before I met him, he was throwing 96 miles per hour on the junior Olympic team. So, I don't want to say stairs was it for him.

When I worked with the Liberty, it was something that helped us stay in peak physical condition, and something we had to do out of necessity. It was...we got results from it conditioning wise. If we had the New York Knicks training center, would we have used stairs? Probably not as much, because we had a brand new fitness center and we probably would have done stuff in there.

But, I like to look at it, I love stairs and I think they're super viable. But, I also understand it's just a tool. If you bring me to Florida with no buildings and no stairs, then I'm going to find something else. I'm going to find a rock that we could use to get in shape. So, it's just another fitness tool.

But, I will say this, it stands up there with all the other fitness tools, and it's highly underrated. It's almost like the jump rope. I don't see why... A lot of people should be jumping rope. I don't see why they don't. It's another underrated fitness tool.

RM: Well, the mostly underrated stuff is stuff that's actually hard.

VA: It's like the barbell squat. You go to a gym, you don't see enough people doing a barbell squat, because it's hard.

RM: Yep.

VA: In fact, I was telling a student of mine today, his name is Cojo, he wants to do leg press. I said, "No, we don't use the leg press in here." He was like, "Why?" I was like, "Go squat." He was like, "I don't like to squat." I said, "You know why people don't like to squat?" He was like, "Why?" "Because it's hard." I got at his ego and then he went and he started squatting.

Stairs, if you do them properly, if you work hard, they're brutal. They're brutal. I mean, they can have you on the floor. I think that's one reason why people shy away from them. Another thing is, you're indoors. So, people might shy away from it for that reason and that's my biggest gripe against stair training, is the air quality. The air quality inside stairwells is very poor, and that's why I love hill sprints. I'm also an outdoor...I love outdoor training just because you're outdoors, fresh air, sunshine. It just feels different. It's night and day.

But, I also learn a lot in stair training. There are so many things I learn just spirit wise. And I actually have a whole section in my stairs book on what I learned from my spirit when I was doing stair training, because it actually helped me stay in good physical condition when I was going through a tough time recovering from hernia surgery. I basically loved bodybuilding and that was taken away from me. So, stairs allowed me to stay fit, because I became depressed because I couldn't go to the gym. That was very hard for me.

RM: Yep, definitely. Well, that's awesome. Give us your website so that people...if anybody's watching on the webcast, most of you guys are, if you click that link below, you get taken to Virgil's page. On there, you can sign up for three free videos and if you like his product, go ahead and purchase it, give it a try. What's your guarantee on that one, Virgil, if they don't like it?

VA: Absolutely, sixty days. If they don't like it, just send me an email and you get your money back. I guarantee you'll like it, but it's not for everybody. It's not for everybody. If you don't like it, you get your money back. Definitely a viable fitness tool. And at the very least, check out the free videos, because you're going to learn a lot in just those three free videos. And I know some people have problems with the PDF files, the workout programs that I put together for you guys. If you can't open your PDF, just shoot me an email or shoot Ryan an email and we'll get that PDF to you, because I know some people like to read...check out the workouts and read stuff on stairs. They're actually really good PDF. They go into why...some of the signs of why stair training is a viable fitness tool and one of the best fitness tools out there.

RM: And if anybody emailed me today, I got about 50 emails today. So, I'm kind of going through one-by-one and sending my PDF version off to them. But, I got a little backed up on the email today and trying to prepare for this call. So, I haven't forgot about anybody.

So, Virgil, once again, thanks again for your time, dude. It was awesome having you on the call.

VA: Oh, you're welcome, man. Anytime you want to talk stair training or anything...other fitness stuff, I'd be happy to come on. You guys, you're doing a great job, Ryan, with this program of yours, sharing and helping people get healthier and more fit and just sharing ideas on how to do it. You're a valuable resource, my friend.

RM: Thank you man. What I always say, most people don't understand how hard it is to get a lot of you guys on the phone.

VA: I hear you, man, I hear you. But, you do a great job of it, man, and I hope you keep it up, because it's definitely of value. You're providing a valuable service to people that want to get healthy and fit. Even me, I listen to some of the interviews.

RM: I got a lot of them now. I'm working on getting a place to keep them all central. I feel like they're too scattered right now. I need to make them a home. I'm working on that.

But, once again, Virgil, thanks a lot for coming on. If you want to hang on the line for a second, Virgil, don't hang up. Thanks again and that will be all for the night, guys. Talk to you later.

About Virgil Aponte

Official Site: <http://virgilaponte.com/>



Virgil Aponte received his Bachelor and Masters Degree in Physical Education from Brooklyn College and has been an American College of Sports Medicine Certified Health & Fitness Instructor since 1994. Currently he continues to study in the field of exercise science through organizations like the American College of Sports Medicine, the C.H.E.K Institute for Corrective High Performance Exercise Kinesiology, the National Academy of Sports Medicine and the Institute for Human Performance.

His love for sports as a youth led to his passion for the strength and conditioning field. Growing up he played baseball, football & basketball and all its modifications. He still plays 3 on 3 basketball, touch football and his favorite game: WiffleBall!

Virgil has been a personal trainer in New York City for over 15 years and a high school physical educator for over 12 years. During these years he has helped thousands of people from all walks of life reach their strength, fitness and health related goals. Whether it's a 7 year old pee wee leaguer, a high school or college student/athlete, a home-maker, a company CEO, or top flight professional athletes, a plan of action was mapped out and followed towards success.

In 2001 Virgil served as a baseball/conditioning coach with the New York Mets Summer Instructional Baseball Academy in Queens New York. Here Virgil got the opportunity to work along side major league baseball coaches and players like Mookie Wilson, Howard Johnson, Bobby Ojeda and Cookie Rojas teaching baseball skills and concepts to kids ranging from 7 to 15 year olds.

And in 2002 Virgil served as an assistant with the WNBA New York Liberty's strength and conditioning staff. And what a year it was, as the Liberty won the Eastern Conference Finals and played the Los Angeles Sparks in the WNBA finals.

Currently Virgil serves as a physical education teacher at Grand Street Camus High School in Brooklyn New York. He also runs GivStrength Fitness Camp and has authored and/or produced numerous training videos & books including [The NGN Workout Solution](#), [The Ultimate Stair Exercises For Fitness & Weight Loss](#) and [Jump Experts](#) (The Greatest Vertical Jump Training Resource ever Created).

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