

7 Elements Every Workout Should Have, According to a High Performance Sports Doc

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BY GREG PRESTO

Ara Suppiah, MD, works with Olympians, golf superstars, and more. His prescription for longevity includes workouts that test your speed, strength, balance... not to mention your will.

Ara Suppiah, MD, doesn't want you to chase peak performance. He wants you to build *resilient* performance.

"I had the privilege of talking to [NBA Hall of Famer] Ray Allen, and I asked him, 'what's the one key thing you need to get into the Hall of Fame?'" says the Orlando-based Suppiah. "He said: 'Availability.'"

To win the game — on the basketball court, or on the links, where Suppiah who has worked with top players as the Head of Medical Services for LIV Golf — you've got to stay in the game. Your ability to show up day after day hinges on avoiding injury.

"You can't have consistent high performance without consistent elite health," he says. "The idea is if you can fully train, absorb the training, and fully recover from that training now... you can train again and recover again and train again. You build a cycle which helps you become a resilient athlete. And resilient athletes are the ones that can sustain high performance for a long time."

Suppiah tests his own performance and resilience each year with one big physical challenge. In 2025, he learned to backflip for the first time at age 55. And this year, he's got a double challenge: Not only is he a brand-new dad for the first time, he's also committed to competing at the Super Age Games as a Founding Athlete.

The Sports Doc's 7 Elements Every Workout Needs

Suppiah's got a secret: He doesn't like to work out.

"People think, 'Oh, you must love the gym!' Some people do. But I don't," he says. "All the training I do is to be a better tennis player."

But he knows it's a must. Focusing on his longevity and resilience, Suppiah says, will keep him on the court, make him a better dad, and help serve athletes and patients for the long haul. So he stays focused on three letters: EMS. "Not emergency medical services. Eat, move, and sleep," he says. "These form the fundamentals of elite health."

From there, he breaks it down a step further.

1. **1 Speed.** Suppiah builds strength through interval work. He often does eight rounds of 400-meter sprints on non-lifting days.
2. **2 Strength.** The doctor trains every other day with weights, often on unstable surfaces like a Bosu ball to engage the nervous system alongside the muscles.
3. **3 Power.** Suppiah develops power through those same **strength sessions**. He uses varied loads and positions, holding weights in his dominant hand one day, overhead in his non-dominant hand the next, to keep the brain working as hard as the body.
4. **4 Endurance.** For Suppiah, this practice is anchored by a slow, steady 2.8-mile run each morning, plus the sprint intervals on cardio days.
5. **5 Agility.** Suppiah does regular agility training, responding to an outside stimulus — a

lighting system attached to a cone that tells him which way to go — not just running a pre-set pattern. (Some argue humans-as-stimuli provide an even better agility training experience.)

6. **6 Willpower.** Woven into the cardio and field-based work, Suppiah argues that mental grit is needed to sustain the other six elements.
7. **7 Proprioception.** As Suppiah explains it, this one is important for anticipating and tracking changes in your environment. He notes that having a visual component also adds a cognitive challenge to your workout: “Bringing in those elements can make your brain work even harder,” he says.

“When your eyes look at any great athlete... if you see a Federer, a Michael Jordan, an Alcaraz, if you see Tiger, Simone Biles, even if it’s a sumo wrestler,” he says. “Your eyes go to them because you are picking up on these seven key elements.”

While he didn’t include it in his list of seven, the doctor notes that balance is the foundation of almost all of his physical routines. Suppiah is actively working on his balance by standing on one foot, and balancing on a piece of PVC pipe he keeps in his office.

And, he trains all seven elements — plus balance — at once by hitting tennis balls.

Putting His Daily Movement to the Test

Suppiah always tackles an annual physical challenge. But a few months ago, when his first child was born, he became extra motivated to join the Super Age Games as a Founding Athlete.

“I want my son to know that at 55 years old, his dad competed in the Games,” he says.

With daily balance sessions, change of direction training with his cones, and the agility and strength he builds on the tennis court, many of the events in the Games

should be in Suppiah's wheelhouse. But he also thinks his love for golf and tennis could hurt him in one of the Games' eight trials.

“As a tennis player, you're told, ‘don't grip the racket very hard.’ As a golfer, you're told, ‘don't have a death grip. Have a light grip,’” he says. “I'm a surgeon by training. So I don't have a tight grip. I train very hard, but my grip strength is not going to be great.”

Even with that limitation, Suppiah is looking at the Games as an opportunity to put his seven elements of movement to work.

“We talk about VO2 Max, grip strength... this is putting those pieces into play in a competitive environment, into using it in real life,” he says. Just like his tennis game, he says, it's a reason to train. “All these parameters give me a reason to do it, because now there's something I need to compete at.”

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