



ANVAIR Case Study

Minimal Apple Watch timer for strength training

You focus. We function.

David Kangas

Product concept, interaction design, development

Product Snapshot

ANVAIR is a minimal Apple Watch training timer designed to keep strength athletes on schedule between sets without interrupting the flow of training.

Platform: Apple Watch

Role: Product concept, interaction design, development

Status: Available on the Apple App Store

The product focuses on a single job. Every design decision was measured against a single principle: You focus. We function. Managing rest intervals during strength training without pulling the athlete out of the workout.



Ready



Rest



Completion Signal

Origin

Returning to strength training after my heart transplant exposed an unexpected problem.

I needed precise rest intervals to support hypertrophy training, but every solution I tried asked me to stop training and manage an app.

I wasn't looking for another fitness platform.

I was looking for a better timer.

ANVAIR began as an attempt to solve that single problem.

Every feature, every interaction, and every design decision that followed can be traced back to that original objective.

Product Narrative

Strength training follows a simple rhythm. Effort, recovery, effort again.

Between sets, attention is scattered. Athletes catch their breath, watch the gym around them, or check their phones. Rest timing is easy to lose track of, and missing the right window can disrupt the intensity and flow of a workout.

Most tools that attempt to solve this problem live inside complex fitness tracking apps. They require constant attention or interaction, which pulls the athlete out of the moment.

ANVAIR was designed as a focused tool that quietly manages rest timing so athletes can stay mentally present in their workout. Rather than adding another complicated training system, the product reduces the problem to its simplest form. A timer that communicates clearly and stays out of the way. That idea became the guiding philosophy for the entire project. You focus. We function.

Problem

Rest timing is critical for maintaining consistent training intensity, but most solutions introduce friction.

Common issues include:

Timers buried inside complex workout trackers

Interfaces that require visual attention

Interactions that interrupt the rhythm of training

The result is a tool that competes with the workout instead of supporting it.

Insight

- Between sets, attention is fragmented.
- Athletes are rarely staring at their watch. They are breathing, scanning the room, or mentally preparing for the next effort.
- The timer must work without requiring visual focus.
- This insight drove the design of ANVAIR.

Product Philosophy

You focus. We function.

One job done well

ANVAIR exists for a single purpose. Getting the athlete to their next set on time.

Eyes free interaction

The timer communicates through clear haptic signals, so the user does not need to watch the screen.

Zero cognitive overhead

The interface must be predictable and immediate. Interaction should take seconds, not attention.

Respect the rhythm of training

The product should support the cadence of strength training, not interrupt it.

Solution

ANVAIR is a minimal watchOS timer built around a small set of interaction states.

The athlete sets a rest duration using the Digital Crown and starts the timer with a tap. The watch then handles the rest cycle automatically.

Subtle haptic signals prepare the user for the next set, culminating in a clear completion alert.

The product then immediately returns to the ready state so the next set can begin without additional setup.

Testing and Iteration

Because ANVAIR is designed for use during active training sessions, the product was tested directly in real workouts rather than simulated environments.

Early versions of the timer were used during strength training sessions to observe how the interaction model held up when attention was limited and physical movement was involved.

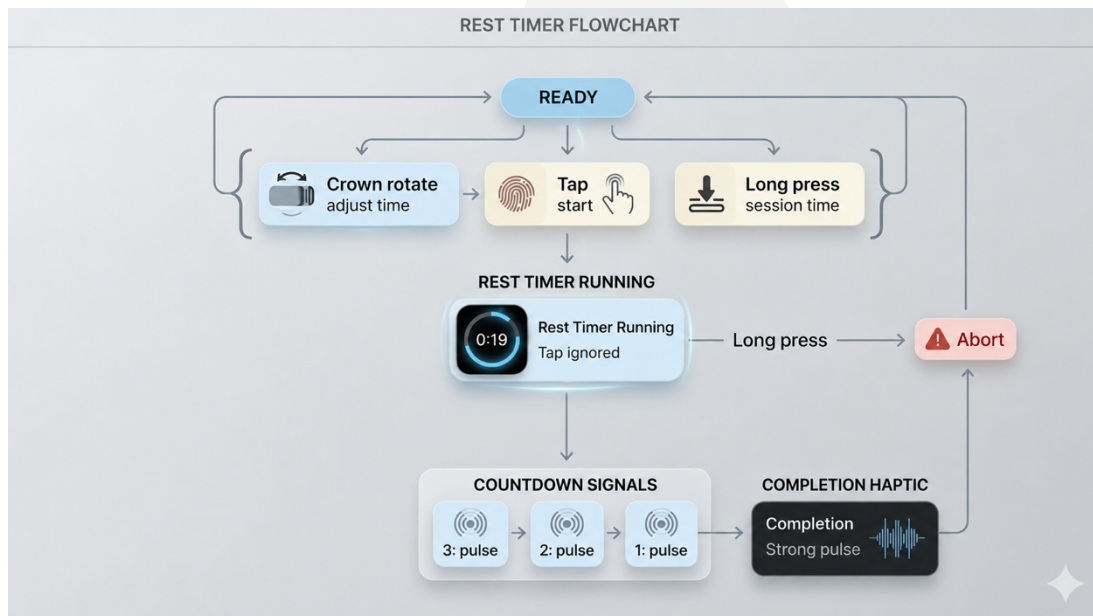
These tests revealed several important behaviors:

- Accidental taps occur frequently during workouts
- Users rarely look directly at the watch during rest periods
- Clear haptic signals are more effective than visual countdowns

These observations reinforced several key design decisions. Interaction during the rest state was intentionally restricted, and the countdown sequence was designed around tactile signals rather than visual or audio cues.

Interaction System

The product is structured around a small number of states.



The system intentionally separates configuration from execution. All optional interactions occur in the Ready state, while the rest timer limits interaction to prevent accidental input during physical activity.

Key Design Decisions

Minimal interface states

Reducing the number of states lowers cognitive load during workouts.

Strong haptic communication

The watch should communicate timing through touch, not constant visual checking.

Immediate reset behavior

The timer returns to ready automatically, so the next set begins without friction.

Restricted interaction during rest

Tap gestures are ignored during the rest cycle to prevent accidental cancellation. Aborting the timer requires a deliberate long press.

ANVAIR intentionally limits the number of interaction states, so the timer remains predictable during workouts when user attention is limited. Every interaction was evaluated against one simple question:

Does this help the athlete focus, or does it demand attention?

If it demanded attention, it didn't belong in ANVAIR.

What I Intentionally Did Not Build

Many training apps include extensive tracking and analytics features.

ANVAIR intentionally avoids:

Workout logging

Set tracking

Performance analytics

Every feature has a cost.

In ANVAIR, that cost is attention.

If a feature pulled the athlete away from the workout, it wasn't added.

You focus. We function.

Product Development

ANVAIR was designed and built as a solo project. The process included:

- Interaction design and prototyping
- watchOS implementation
- haptic pattern design
- real world testing during training sessions

What I Learned Building ANVAIR

Designing a simple product is often harder than building a complex one.

Every additional feature introduces cognitive overhead. The process reinforced the value of designing around a clear job and resisting the temptation to expand scope.

The most important decisions in this product were not about adding functionality but about removing friction.

Evolution to Version 1.0

Build 2 — Embracing the Apple Workout Ecosystem

The original timer solved the rest-interval problem, but testing revealed a deeper platform constraint.

Apple Watch does not reliably deliver the strongest haptic feedback when an app is operating outside an active workout session. Early attempts to preserve both a standalone timer and a workout-assisted mode created unnecessary complexity and inconsistent behavior.

That dual-mode approach was ultimately rejected.

For Version 1.0, ANVAIR fully embraced the Apple workout ecosystem. Starting ANVAIR begins a General Strength Training workout, allowing the app to remain active and deliver its haptic timing cues reliably throughout the session.

This decision also gave athletes the benefits they already expect from Apple Fitness:

- Workout duration recorded in Apple Health
- Estimated active calories

- Heart-rate data collected during training
- Contribution toward Activity ring completion
- A completed General Strength Training workout saved with the rest of the athlete's fitness history

Rather than asking the athlete to manage a separate timer alongside a workout, ANVAIR became part of the workout itself.

The result was a simpler and more dependable product:

Start ANVAIR. Start training. Let the watch handle the rest.

What the Failed Approach Taught Me

The dual-mode system was an elegant idea in theory. It attempted to preserve a standalone timer while adapting when another workout was already active.

In practice, it introduced ambiguity, additional state management, and behavior that could not be made dependable enough for the product.

Removing that architecture reinforced one of the central lessons of ANVAIR:

A simpler product is not always the one with fewer capabilities. Sometimes it is the one that makes a clear commitment.

Designing Around Friction

One lesson became increasingly clear during development.

Every new feature introduced another decision.

Another screen.

Another opportunity for distraction.

Features were evaluated less by what they added than by whether they increased cognitive load.

That philosophy ultimately shaped more of the application than any individual feature.

Shipping the Product

After months of iteration, testing, and refinement, ANVAIR was released on the Apple App Store.

The finished application remained remarkably close to the original design goal.

One job.

One interaction.

One purpose.

You focus. We function.

Future Direction

ANVAIR began as a single-purpose rest timer, but the underlying design philosophy extends beyond strength training.

As the platform matures, additional products may emerge under the ANVAIR name. Each is designed to solve one specific problem while remaining focused, predictable, and free from unnecessary complexity.

Concepts currently being explored include:

ANVAIR: Pulse

A recovery timer that uses heart rate rather than elapsed time to determine when an athlete is ready for the next set.

ANVAIR: Coach

A dedicated tool for trainers and coaches that allows workout management without recording activity in the coach's own Apple Health data.

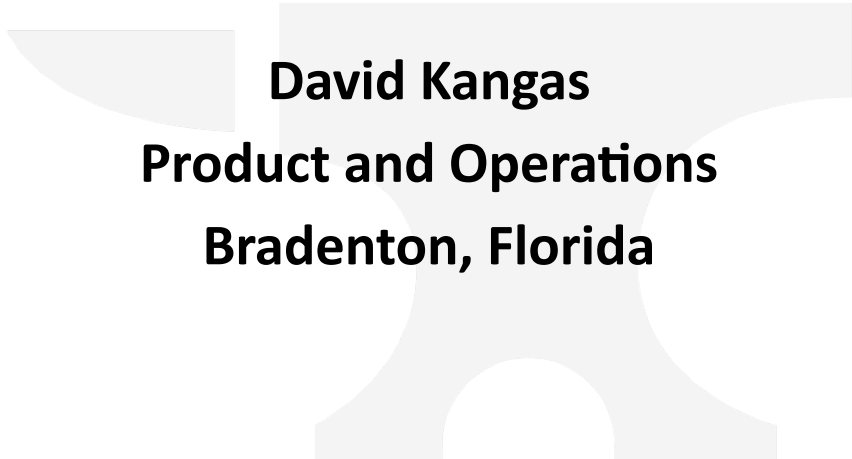
ANVAIR: Pose

Designed for yoga and mobility training, Pose guides users through timed holds while recording an Apple Fitness workout in the background.

Beyond Apple Watch, future expansion to Garmin and other wearable platforms is also being evaluated as the wearable ecosystem continues to evolve.

Whatever form future products take, they will be guided by the same principle that shaped the original application:

You focus. We function.



David Kangas

Product and Operations

Bradenton, Florida