

THE OFF-SEASON!

The off-season! That is our season as a strength coach, it is the time of year where we get to mold and sculpt our athletes mentally and physically. Weight training has a way of weeding out the weak of heart. Athletes love to talk about strength, size and performance gains, but this feat is not accomplished without physical and mental discomfort. The mental and physical strain involved in the off-season develops a mental toughness and confidence that I think is as important as the physical strength that is accomplished.



Training Block 1 (3- 5 weeks)

As the competitive season ends and we transition into off-season, the evaluation process and program design begins. The off-season program is designed to meet and improve each individual athlete's strengths and weaknesses.

Athletes are broken into training groups according to physical preparedness and lifting competency.

The **Developmental Group** typically consists of underclassman (1-2 years training experience), which need more attention in the neurological and hypertrophy department. Protocol consists of simple compound movements, traditional periodization percent loading, and high volume supplemental work to improve postural alignment and muscle imbalances. Low impact plyometrics will be reintroduced (line hops, lateral bag hops, box jumps and dot drills), with the emphasis on proper landing techniques.

The **Advanced Group** typically consists of upperclassmen (2-5 years of training experience) that have competent lifting skills and have met set benchmarks. These athletes will use a more advanced training regimen (conjugate periodization). Maximal-Effort and Repetition Effort Methods are adhered to during this block (CNS stimulation, Hypertrophy gains). Supplemental lift volume will be kept moderate to high to correct muscle imbalances accumulated over the competitive season. Box jumps and kip ups are utilized due to a high rate of force development with low impact on the body. This is used to reeducate dynamic motor patterns without the use of a barbell.

Block 1 Overview

Training block 1 is just about 3-5 weeks long, begins after season's end and will end the week of final exams. Regaining joint mobility and muscle flexibility are two important components regardless of the training block. Limited conditioning will take place during this phase. Athletes will train three days a week. Olympic and odd object lifts will not be implemented until training block 2. Once exams are complete, athletes will be given off the remaining month of May.

Training Block 2 (8 weeks)

Entering summer training, the protocol will transition from a predominantly GPP and restoration base, to a more complex training protocol. This will consist of four training sessions a week, using a 4-day a week split (2 upper body and 2 lower body). The first two weeks will allow for the soft tissues of the body and the central nervous system to establish some adaptation to the training volume (work capacity). Minimal rest is used. As this two-week adaptation phase is completed, training sessions will be cut back to three days per week. There will be an emphasis on an intense and competitive training environment using volume and tempo, with minimal rest between sets during supplemental exercises. Athletes again will be broken into three groups based on physical preparedness. Groups are Developmental, Novice and Advanced.

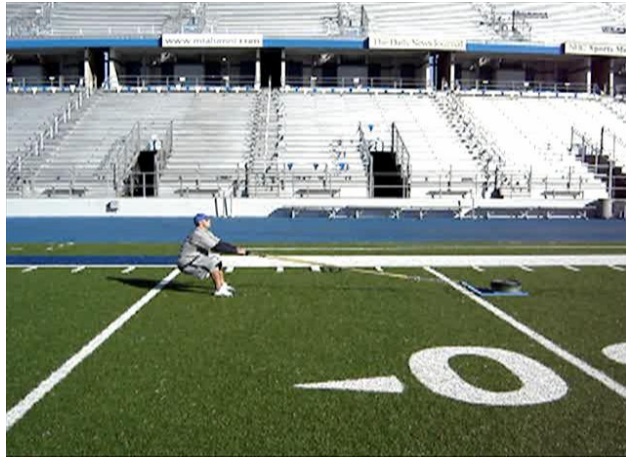
Developmental (0-1 years training experience)

Developmental athletes will report to summer school during week five of the summer training block. Initial protocol will consist of a battery of test to measure hip mobility, hamstring flexibility, core and general strength (Javorek barbell complex). Training Protocol will consist of simple compound movements, basic periodization percent loading, and high volume supplemental work to improve postural alignment and muscle imbalances. Reactive neuromuscular training (single leg unsupported training ex-pistols, high box step downs) to increase hip stabilizers, and single leg supported exercises (split squats, step-ups, etc). Low impact ployometrics will be introduced (line hops, squat jump variations, lateral bag hops, repetitive banana hurdle hops and box jumps) with the emphasis on proper landing techniques. Basic sled drag variations will also be introduced.

Pistol Squat (unsupported single leg)



Novice (1-2 years training experience) These athletes are typically underclassmen that still need an increase in hypertrophy and proprioceptor skills. Protocol consists of compound movements, periodization becomes more advanced using wave and pyramid style percent loading, and high volume supplemental work to improve postural alignment and muscle imbalances. Moderate to advanced upper and lower body ployometrics will be implemented (depth jumps, seated vertical and broad weighted jumps, and a variety of single leg movements). Odd object training and Olympic lifts and numerous squat variations will be implemented in three-week pendulum wave cycles (box, zercher and free squats). Advanced sled dragging variations will also be implemented.



Advanced group (2-5 years of training experience)

Typically consists of upperclassmen who have met a set physical preparedness standard. These athletes will use an advanced training regimen with conjugate periodization. Training protocol will utilize all three methods of strength training. (Max-Effort, Repetition Effort, Dynamic Effort). The Maximal-Effort Method is used to increase motor potential (strength of athlete), Repetition Effort Methods (hypertrophy and increase work capacity), and the Dynamic Effort Method (Rate of force development). All will be adhered to during this block. The conjugate method is great for advanced athletes. Workouts can easily be tailored to each individual's neurological and **somatotype** type. For example, I currently have two forwards – (Forward 1) Mesomorph (high rate of muscle growth, with minimum body fat) and the other (Forward 2) Ectomorph (long thin muscles, with minimal body fat). Let us take the bench press for example. Forward 1 (Mesomorph) has sufficient muscular size so his Max-Effort work on Monday will consist of mostly singles, Friday being a traditional dynamic effort day. Forward 2 (Ectomorph) requires extra hypertrophy attention. Therefore, Monday will consist of Repetition work. Max-Effort work will be moved to Friday, and consist of mostly 3-5 rep max work. At this level, I have found that it takes my athletes longer to recover from repetition work than Max-Effort work, because of this, Repetition days are placed first during the workweek so the athlete has three full recovery days' verses only two. This has worked well and ensured that effort and improvement are obtained on both days. The volume of supplemental lifts will be kept moderate to high to correct muscle imbalances. Advanced upper and lower body ployometrics will be

implemented (depth jumps, seated vertical and broad weighted jumps, high repetitive hurdle jumps and variety of single leg movements). Odd object training, Olympic lifts and numerous squat variations (box, zercher and free squats using accommodating resistance i.e. bands & chains) will be implemented in three-week pendulum wave cycles. Advanced sled dragging variations will also be implemented.



Block 2 Overview

Training protocol will consist of wide variety of supplemental lifts, including wide variety of sled dragging, tire flips and sledgehammer work to improve GPP and lagging muscle groups. Dynamic work will alternate between odd objects (tire flip, keg toss) and Olympic variations (hang cleans, jerks, snatches) and a variety of jumps. Linear speed (sprinting the floor), and multidirectional speed (defensive movements) will be implemented into the training protocol beginning week 3 of block 2. Squats (multiple variations) will be one of our staples through out our off-season training regimen. I know some are skeptical when it comes to squatting basketball athletes but I will cover my thoughts concerning this topic in a later

article. Athletes will be given three weeks off after this training block (end of summer school). Training will resume the second week of school once class and study hall schedules have been finalized.

Training Block 3 (5 weeks)

Training block 3 is an extension of training block 2. Training emphasis will be to build upon adaptations attained during training block 2. All three aspects of running (Speed, agility and conditioning) will intensify, leading into the preseason.

Closing Thoughts

As you design your off-season program, I have two last thoughts. 1st do not be afraid to think out-side the box. Achieving athletic preparedness is not set in stone. Utilize all aspects of training. Olympic lifts, power lifting, strong man, “functional” and body building movements. What I am trying to say is, There is more than one way to skin a cat! Athletes are not competitive weight lifters or body builders and need variety. Even your most dedicated athletes need variety, and most likely do not have the same appreciation for weight training as you. SHOCKER to some of you I know! 2nd preparation and individualization is key. Do not wing training sessions day to day, and just slapping any ole thing on a note card or scratch paper. I have seen this from way to many strength coaches who do not even know the percent and volume range of there training sessions. Not all athletes have the same neurological and physiological demands. This is ridiculous, have a yearly, monthly and daily plan, for your athletes.

*Just a quick side note NCAA mandates that summer training is not mandatory, and is optional for student athletes.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT!

There are only 20 or so Training Weeks for off-season training. Basketball Athletes that attend one session of summer school get only 15 weeks, and there is only a 4-week period from the end of May to August that athletes are under supervised training if they do not attend the first session of summer school.

Athletes only have five months of off-season to prepare. This is why the in-season program is so important! (Later article)

Athletes get a total of 1 – 1.5 months off per year....these 4-7 weeks are spread throughout the year. This rest period is very therapeutic for both the athlete and the coach! Mentally and physically!

**“Contrary to the opinion of many people, leaders are not born.
Leaders are made by effort and hard work.”**

Vince Lombardi

Please, any questions or comments are always appreciated.



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