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# COACHING



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*For coaches, by coaches for three decades*

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## CLINIC

# Coaching To Empower!

by

**Robert E. Rubinstein**

**Y**ou coach a basketball team of teenage girls. Jean keeps missing those vital - and free point - foul shots. She needs some help to improve. How you decide to help her can determine if she'll improve significantly and if she'll keep improving, not only with her foul shots, but in any type of sport she plays - and other things in life she undertakes. A big responsibility! - but that's what coaching's really all about: helping a young athlete to understand what he or she must do to improve - and guiding that person in accomplishing the task. Another words: a coach empowers the young athlete to want to achieve success.

As a coach, I would want to instill in an athlete a love for the sport and the personal satisfaction gained through

participation, a strong desire to improve his/her play, and a positive attitude to want to succeed.

When you begin to coach someone, try to establish a basic openness and foundation of understanding with the athlete. For example, you both might recognize and discuss that coaching and being coached involves certain risk factors. At times, you may not agree with one another, or not understand what the other person wants or needs. The athlete may not be able to accomplish all that the coach thinks should be accomplished. You should both agree that all this could happen and, if it does, that's okay.

As a coach should assume from the outset that the ath-

lete will succeed, will improve and grow. If not, then why would someone spend the time, effort, personal interaction coaching an athlete? If the athlete improves, the coach would, hopefully, respond positively, reinforcing what was done well.

If someone is not succeeding, then there's something in the way. The focus should be on what the problem or block is that's in the way, not on the person: "This seems to be a problem. What steps can we take to solve it, or reduce it so you can continue to improve? Establish that you understand, that you're an ally and want to help the person overcome the obstacle and reach his/her goal.

# Strength Training Q&A

## #7

by  
**Matt Brzycki**  
Princeton University

**I**hear a lot about periodization. Isn't it the most effective way of gaining strength?

In recent years, there's been a lot of discussion about periodization or "cycling". Essentially, periodization is a theoretical training schedule popularized by weightlifters to peak for their competition. The idea is to change or "cycle" the number of sets, reps and workload of the exercises performed in the weight room. For example, in Week #1 you might do 3 sets of 10 reps in each exercise with 75 percent of your 1-RM; in week #2 you might do 4 sets of 8 reps with 80 percent of your 1-RM and so on until you are performing a 1-RM.

Periodization has been adopted as a means of scheduling the strength training of athletes in sports other than competitive weightlifting. However, the concept of periodization is based upon the fact that highly competitive weightlifters peak for only several meets a year. What good is that for an ath-

lete who might have to peak two or three times a week for several months? Indeed, what competitions do you peak for? Aren't they all important? Imagine an athlete saying, "Sorry about my performance tonight, coach, but I'm not scheduled to peak for 10 more days."

The question you must ask yourself is, "Am I training to become a better athlete or a better weightlifter?" Trying to implement periodization is not only confusing but also unnecessary. There's more efficient and far less complicated ways of addressing your strength training needs.

*What exactly are steroids and are they really that dangerous?*

Anabolic-androgenic steroids are synthetic derivatives of the male sex hormone testosterone. Its "anabolic" or growth-promoting effects include increased skeletal mass, nitrogen retention and protein synthesis. Steroids also have "androgenic" or masculinizing effects such as increased libido.

Are they dangerous? You better believe it. In fact, University of Toledo Strength Coach Ken Mannie says, "The list of adverse effects (from steroid use) reads like a *Stephen King* horror story." Here's a partial list of the dangerous side effects that are documented in the medical literature:

For starters, there are mental side effects which may include psychiatric disorders, severe depression, manic depression, paranoia, grandiose delusions, visual and auditory hallucinations, irritability, a feeling of invincibility, extreme mood swings that can be borderline psychotic and an abnormally high level of unpredictable hostility and aggression (called 'roid rage.)

There are also numerous physical/physiological side effects which may consist of insomnia, increased cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, cancerous tumors, cardiovascular and kidney dysfunction, acne (usually on the back), a loss of scalp hair, rectal bleeding, unprovoked nosebleeds

and a predisposition to tendon and ligament injuries. (Apparently, connective tissue does not respond to steroids to the same degree that muscle tissue does. This creates a situation in which the connective tissue cannot keep up with the demands from using heavier weights. It's like putting an engine from a Mack truck into a Volkswagen!)

Using steroids also increases the possibility of liver cancer, blood pooling in the liver and jaundice (which gives eyes and skin a yellowish tint). If you inject steroids into your body, you'll find that punctures, bruise marks, scar tissue and a callused butt are the least of your worries. Users also risk blood poisoning and the spread of communicable diseases -- including AIDS -- from contaminated needles as well as neural dysfunction due to improperly placed needles. Adolescents who use steroids may experience a pre-mature fusing of their epiphyseal growth plates that may stunt their growth.

There's also several gender-specific side effects as well. When a man starts to introduce extra testosterone into his body, then his body will reduce its own production in order to maintain a stable internal environment. If too much "foreign" testosterone is added, his body will no longer produce its own supply and the result is a feminizing effect. This chemical balancing results in testicular atrophy (the "family jewels" shrivel), a high-pitched voice and enlarged, female-like

breasts. If this bit of hormonal irony isn't enough, males can also expect fluid retention (which gives the face and skin a bloated, puffy look), prostate enlargement, a decrease libido. Females may experience irreversible physical changes, including an enlargement of the clitoris, reduced breast size, uterine atrophy, a deepening of the voice, cessation of menstruation and increased facial and body hair. Women who use steroids also increase their risk of getting breast cancer and of bearing children with birth defects.

Most importantly of all, deaths have been directly -- and legally -- attributed to steroid use.

It should also be noted that anabolic steroids are categorized as Class II drugs, which makes their use restricted in the same manner as barbiturates. Current legislation has penalties that includes a maximum \$1,000 fine and a maximum one year sentence for possession as well as a \$250,000 fine and up to 5 years in prison for distribution. It also gives federal drug enforcement officials the authority to seize assets and money earned through drug trafficking.

If you play around with steroids you're gambling with your physical and mental well-being . . . perhaps permanently. It's in your best interests to steer clear of this or any other "performance-enhancing" drug.

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## About the Author

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Matt Brzycki has been the Strength Coach and Health Fitness Coordinator at Princeton University since August 1990. Coach Brzycki has authored more than 90 articles on strength and fitness and a book, A Practical Approach to Strength Training, which is in its second edition. He has also coauthored the book Conditioning for Basketball with Shaun Brown, Strength Coach for the University of Kentucky basketball team.

