

TEXAS COACH

October 2009



Region 1
Don DeLozier

2009-10



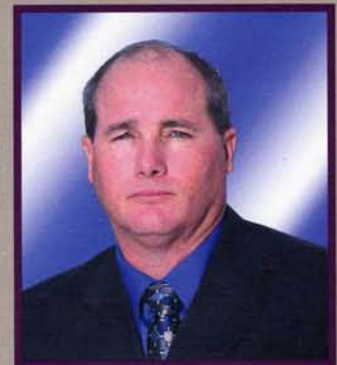
Region 2
Russell Lucas

REGIONAL



Region 3
Brian Brazil

LEADERSHIP



Region 4
Frank Johnson



Region 5
Chris Massey



Region 6
Jerry Blankenship



Region 7
Roland Gonzalez



Region 8
George Herrmann

8 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR STRENGTH PROGRAM

Matt Brzycki

A wide variety of strength programs can be effective. The fact of the matter is that any program in which athletes are encouraged to work hard (overload their muscles) and make an effort to progress will be successful at increasing strength.

SENSIBLE SUGGESTIONS

Regardless of the strength program that you employ, there are probably some ways in which it can be improved. Let's take a look at eight suggestions that can have a positive impact on your strength program.

1. Make strength training mandatory.

Participation in a strength program shouldn't be optional. It's important for all of the athletes on the team to partake in the strength program. Anything less than total participation should be viewed as unsatisfactory.

Words to the wise: If you have rules, then you must enforce rules. And this means that you must have consequences for breaking rules. Having a rule that workouts are mandatory makes absolutely no sense without having a penalty for missing a scheduled workout. Remember, a rule without teeth will be ineffective.

Along these lines, allowing some athletes to get a free pass when they skip workouts shouldn't be permitted. Few things destroy team chemistry faster than having different rules for different players.

2. Focus on all of your athletes.

Isn't it nice to have a blue chip athlete or two on your roster who has the college recruiters drooling? When certain players garner all or most of your attention, however, it can be

problematic on and off the field.

It's really easy to concentrate on the players who perform well in the athletic arena. But everyone on your roster is equally important. The athlete who rides the pines and only gets in the game during the waning minutes of a blowout has just as much right to your attention in the weight room as the superstar who helped produce the blowout.

Favoritism – whether real or perceived – is detrimental to a team. When some athletes get treated better than others, it creates a sense of unfairness and causes feelings of neglect and envy. And you don't need the drama.

To level the playing field, so to speak, don't give preferential treatment to athletes in the weight room simply because their names and photographs often appear in the sports section of the local newspaper. Everyone who works hard deserves a generous helping of your feedback, encouragement and praise.

3. Hold your athletes accountable.

Coaches should have a means of tracking what their athletes do in the weight room. An excellent tool for this is a workout card. In particular, athletes should record the resistance and repetitions that they attain in each exercise.

But the accountability of your athletes doesn't end there. Strength coaches must also check the cards to see that their athletes are completing the workouts as assigned and progressing over time in the resistance that they use and the repetitions that they do.

You can even take this a step farther by telling your athletes the resistance that they should use in a subsequent

workout based on their performance in a recent workout. Software that enables you to produce computer-generated workouts can often perform this task. But if you don't have access to the high-tech stuff, you can do it the old-fashioned way by writing down the information on their cards for their next workout.

While on the subject, be on the lookout for athletes who "pencil in" their workout without actually doing much or any of it. From time to time, pick up cards at random during workouts and make sure that your athletes haven't recorded their repetitions before they've completed their exercises.

4. Have your athletes perform comprehensive workouts.

Many athletes typically train the muscles that they can see in a mirror. For the most part, this means training the muscles that influence the anterior (front) portion of their body while neglecting the muscles that influence the posterior (back) portion of their body. In effect, they train the "showy" muscles such as the chest and biceps. This has become known as a "beach workout."

In response to the challenge "make a muscle," who rips open their shirt collar and flexes their neck; who pulls out their shirttail and shows off their lower back? Yet, the muscles that act on the neck and lower back are extremely important, particularly in sports like football and wrestling.

By not doing a comprehensive workout, problems can surface at some point down the road. For one thing, emphasizing one muscle without giving its counterpart equal – or nearly equal – attention can create an imbalance between the two muscles.

Take the muscles of the upper leg, for instance. Most athletes will train their quadriceps but do little or nothing for their hamstrings, thereby producing a muscle imbalance. It has long been suspected that an injury can occur when the quadriceps are much stronger than the hamstrings.

Another good example is the shoulder complex. Given their druthers, most athletes will train their anterior shoulder but do little or nothing for their posterior shoulder. It's reasonable to think that an injury can occur when the anterior deltoid is much stronger than the posterior deltoid.

5. Require your athletes to do strength training during the season.

Your athletes can make significant gains in strength during the off-season. A big step in the wrong direction is taken, though, when strength training is terminated as soon as the season rolls around.

Remember, the most important part of the year for athletes is when they're in season. Think about it: This is when your athletes need to maximize their potential, right? So why should they discontinue their strength training during such a critical time?

Unless your athletes stick with their strength training during the season, all of the improvements that they made during the off-season will quickly disappear. Just how long it takes a muscle to begin losing strength is subject to some debate. It must certainly vary from one individual to the next. One thing's for sure, however: It's only a matter of time before it happens.

And don't go into the season with the goal to maintain strength. Yes, strength gains are difficult to accomplish during the season as a result of the added demands that are placed on the body from practices and competitions. Nonetheless, your athletes should still endeavor to improve their strength.

Because of the increased physical stresses during the season, the workout frequency and the total number of exercises/sets in the workouts should be reduced to enable your athletes to get more recovery. Keep in mind,

too, that your athletes shouldn't do any strength training within about 48 hours of a competition. So if they play on Saturday, their last workout in the weight room should come no later than Thursday.

6. Incorporate variety.

Keeping your athletes excited about strength training can definitely be a challenge. This is especially true of your veteran athletes who have been strength training for a while.

A great way to prevent workouts from becoming the "same old, same old" is to incorporate variety. This can be achieved by manipulating certain aspects of the strength program, and not just the set/rep scheme.

You can have your athletes do an entirely different workout during each of their weekly sessions such as Workout A on Monday, Workout B on Wednesday and Workout C on Friday. You can also vary workouts on a weekly or monthly basis. Or, parts of a workout can be changed as needed to sustain their interest and enthusiasm.

The process of varying workouts doesn't have to be complex. Workouts can be varied by simply changing the type of equipment that your athletes use to perform their exercises. In addition, workouts can be varied by rearranging the order in which your athletes do exercises for a particular body part.

Another option is to use a theme workout every now and then. An example of this is having your athletes do all of the exercises in their workout with the same type of equipment (such as a Dumbbell Workout, Bodyweight Workout or Sandbag Workout).

If you think about it, there are almost an infinite number of workouts that can be devised. The only limits, really, are the amount of equipment that's available and your imagination.

7. Provide an adequate level of supervision.

Being a strength coach is much more than writing workouts on a dry-erase board or handing out computer-generated workouts and expecting the athletes to "get it done" on their

own. Your strength program can be outstanding in many respects but if you're not in the trenches supervising your athletes when they're in the weight room, then the program won't be as successful as possible.

Anecdote #1: When I was a strength coach "back in the day," the head basketball coach at a high school in Pennsylvania asked me to come out and speak to his team about strength training. Once at the school, we went to the weight room. The first thing that I noticed was a guy in a tank top sitting down in a chair with his head buried in a magazine. Meanwhile, a handful of athletes were in the room lifting weights. The basketball coach took me over to meet the guy who was reading. He lowered the magazine, rose from the chair, extended his hand and introduced himself as the school's strength coach.

Anecdote #2: Another time, I visited a weight room and literally walked around for at least five minutes in search of the strength coach. (It was a fairly large weight room that was crammed with equipment.) There were a dozen athletes or more in the room lifting weights. I finally saw the strength coach sitting in a chair just outside his office reading a magazine.

On both of these occasions, the strength coach was in the weight room but paid little or no attention to what was happening. How much "coaching" did they do? None whatsoever. How effective was their strength program? Not nearly as much as it could've been.

As a strength coach, your most important legal responsibility is to provide an adequate level of supervision. Needless to say, strength coaches cannot supervise their athletes while they're reading a magazine or sitting behind a desk or watching TV or surfing the Internet or working out.

Can you imagine a football coach who wrote some plays on a chalkboard and then sat in the bleachers reading a book while his athletes practiced the plays? Or a field hockey coach who gave her team a list of drills and then went to her office to check her e-

mail while her athletes practiced the drills? Obviously, these circumstances wouldn't be acceptable. So why is it acceptable for a strength coach to distribute workouts to athletes and then leave them to their own devices?

And what would happen if an athlete got hurt in the weight room and it was found that the main factor in the injury was a lack of supervision? Well, let's just say that the lawyers for the plaintiff would be licking their chops in anticipation of a rather large sum of money that would be awarded to their client.

Bottom line: If your athletes are lifting in the weight room then you should be supervising in the weight room.

8. Refrain from adopting the strength programs of other schools just because of their success.

A big mistake that's frequently made is to implement – or try to implement – the program of whatever team happens to be successful at the moment. Unfortunately, this version of jumping on the bandwagon occurs all the time.

It goes something like this: A strength coach adopts the strength program of Big-Time U when that school wins the national championship. Then the following year, the strength coach switches allegiance and adopts the strength program of East Powerhouse State when that school wins the national championship.


Point to ponder: Just because you incorporate the strength program that's used by a successful school doesn't mean that your school will experience the same degree of success.

THE LAST REP

At the end of the school year, examine your program and see where it needs tweaking to be more effective. You can have an outstanding strength program but there's always room for improvement.

Matt Brzycki has authored, co-authored or edited 17 books on strength and fitness including four that

are devoted to wrestling. His latest book is Youth Fitness: An Action Plan for Shaping America's Kids.



**SIT BACK.
RELAX.**

WHILE YOU'RE CULTIVATING CHAMPIONS,
we have you covered.

With 60 years in the personal auto insurance industry, our knowledge and experience allows us to cover Texas' safest drivers. **START SAVING MONEY** today WITH WORTH Casualty!

Worth
Casualty Company

PO Box 66, Fort Worth, Texas, 76101-0066
www.worthcasualty.com