

Developing a School-Wide Athletic Enhancement Program at the High School Level

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ONE OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS that is consistently voiced by visiting coaches to Ben Davis High School is the lack of a common philosophy among the different sport coaches at their school. A full-time strength coach who works with all sports would help alleviate most of the problems, but most schools do not have that luxury. The model that we have developed has had a positive influence on our athletic programs.

The foundation of our program begins with our advanced weight training class. We feel that this is an opportunity during the school day to run a structured program that does not interfere with practice time or after-school jobs or homework. During the season, it prevents extended practice time and allows for recovery before practice and games. All of our athletes, both boys and girls, are enrolled in the class both semesters every year. The class consists of a 4-day lifting program (2 days upper, 2 days lower), with Wednesday being used for athletic enhancement activities (plyometrics, medicine ball passing, and footwork ladders). Every ath-

lete in every sport is on the same program. The justification for this philosophy includes the following.

1. All sports require a base of strength that includes all major muscle groups.
2. Most "sport-specific" programs utilize similar selection of lifts.
3. Lifts that are done too close to the movements involved in the technical skills of some sports can negatively effect the actual skill.
4. Sport specificity occurs during practice, conditioning, and athletic enhancement workouts.
5. Multiple sport athletes benefit when everyone is on the same page and sending the same message.
6. The structure of the class and utilization of the equipment works best with a unified program.

The organization of the class is 1 of the major keys to its success. All students must be dressed and in the weight room within 3 minutes of the bell. The athletes pick up their workout card and check the board to find

out their starting station and the set/repetition scheme for the week. There are 5 different color cards with each color assigned to the same starting station. Color-coding makes supervision easier and ensures that the program is being followed. (Each week the starting station changes for each group, and every 2 weeks the set/repetition scheme changes.) The entire class goes through 2 minutes of a simulated jump rope followed by push-ups or air squats, depending on which side of the body is assigned for the day. Once the warm-up is completed, a programmable clock is started. The timer counts down from 7 minutes followed by a 10-second horn. The athletes are to complete 3 sets in the 7 minutes and rotate to the next station once the horn sounds. The clock allows for proper time management. (The clock is also used in our summer and after-school supplementary programs.)

The 5 lower-body stations are (a) squat, (b) heel raise, (c) power clean, (d) leg extension, and (e) leg curl. The 5 upper-body stations are (a) bench press, (b) dumbbell

military press, (c) lat pull-down and triceps push-down, (d) bicep curl, and (e) back extensions and abdominal work (incline knee raise, twists, and crunches). Football, soccer, and wrestling athletes will do neck work along with heel raises.

We have been able to convince our administration that there is a need for those students who show an above-average interest and ability in physical education to have a class to meet their needs, just as there are classes such as enriched academic courses, band, and choir for those students who show special abilities in academic areas and the arts. For those schools that are not currently getting the administrative support necessary to schedule the classes during the day, some have gone to period zero (before school) sessions, whereas some have used study hall or extended lunch periods to meet the needs of their athletes.

The athletic enhancement day on Wednesdays allows us to combine the strength work with other components of athleticism. The plyometric jumps are done without boxes or hurdles. We feel that this allows us to account for the different ability levels of our athletes, lessens the likelihood of accidental injuries, and allows for easier set-up and transition when working with large groups. The total number of foot contacts is 30 for the in-place jumps and between 42 and 56 for the repeat jumps. The medicine ball passing

is done with 3 kg medicine balls with a variety of passes done from seated, parallel squat, and standing positions. The footwork ladders are used with a variety of patterns using both forward and lateral movements. Our coaches are encouraged to add another day of these activities to their off-season, preseason, and regular practice schedule, but with even 1 day per week, we have seen consistent improvement in the general athletic skill of our athletes.

Most of our coaches have eliminated static stretching at the start of our conditioning workouts and practice sessions and have added a dynamic warm-up routine. We feel that this not only makes sense in terms of readying the body for activity, but it also starts practice off in a more structured manner. Our dynamic routine consists of high knees, glute kicks, lunge walks, 45° lunge walks, side shuffle, carioca, side lunge, backward run, and backward lunge walks.

We feel that what we have accomplished with our program is an improvement in athletic performance, an improvement in confidence and self-esteem, a reduction in the number of injuries and the recovery time of those that are injured, and a continued improvement throughout the season, rather than the late-season staleness that some teams experience. ▲

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