

## Advice on Building Your Team in the Weight Room

By Bob Ladouceur

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The question in all aspects of sports is, How good can you be? How good do you want to be? Is there such a thing as being too strong or too fast? Or too agile? No.

### Training Matters

So you have to assess how far do you want to go in the sport, and how good you want to be in the sport. And that's going to equate on how much time you are going to spend in the sport, mostly in the preparation of the sport. Keeping in mind that perfection is an allusion and you're never going to reach it, still there is no such thing as being too fast or too strong or too agile or too quick. So you have to push yourself to be the strongest you can be, the fastest you can be, the quickest you can be, and do it on the year-round basis.

Put specific opponents or rivalries aside. We're trying to get all our players into a position where, when that when the season does come, they are going to be in a position to achieve success. That's going to come through their training. They're going to have to play kids who are bigger than they are, stronger or at least as strong, and they're going to have to match up to them. So it all depends on how far you want to go in the sport and how dedicated to be.

It's harder to excel in football if you don't put the time in than in baseball or golf or basketball. A natural athlete can really excel in the other sports without putting in a tremendous amount of time. In football, that's difficult to do. In football, people are going to be hitting you and physically handling you. It's a matter of physics. Do you have the strength and power to overcome the opponent?

### Physical Demands

It's a sport that's archaic or barbaric in a way in that you have to physically overpower your opponent, and if you don't do the work, that off-season prep work, it's going to show. You'll pay the price for it. Other sports have year-round programs, but in football it's a must.

That's why we concentrate now on making their goals in lifting. Are they reaching their goals in agility? Their quickness goals? Where are they in terms of how much they weigh? We even go to body fat contact. So we talk about physical condition. Those goals are objective and measurable. They are not emotional goals, or team-oriented goals. They are physical goals that you can measure. That's what motivates them the most. They can say, I went up 15 pounds in my bench and 25 pounds in my squat. Those are gratifying and a huge motivator. It's a set program and one you measure on a monthly basis, and they can see the improvements in their body. Their focus is inward directed on their body image and physical conditioning.

## **Team Motivation**

There is a team dynamic at work because they are all working together and pushing each other. And they are competing against each other in the weight room. That's healthy. They want to see who is the strongest in certain lifts. And they will be playing next to each other in the fall. The fact that they are all together is critical.

A lot of players come to me and say I want to work out at my club or work out with my dad at his club. We discourage that. For one, we know they don't work as hard as with the team, and it won't be as structured that we set up for them. We insist on working as a team, and that's where we start building our team. The team is created through a lot of hard work and working together. You just don't create a team through three weeks before the season starts. You start creating your team in the winter when these guys are in the weight room working together with a common goal.

Kids are smarter than adults give them credit for. They see the workers. They see the players and the guys who really try hard. Usually, the coach's pick more often than not is the players' pick too. They are aware of who is the best player and who deserves to start.

Being a great lifter is no guarantee that you can be a great football player, but it does say a great deal about character. I rarely have had a player who worked in the weight room and on his conditioning and then come out and be totally ineffective. At the very least, they become good competitors who push first-string kids and work their way onto special teams and spell other kids when they get tired. That work ethic in the weight room translates out to the football field.

*About the Author: Bob Ladouceur writes on the secrets to success. He would know. Few teams in the world have won as often as De La Salle High School's football team. The Spartans, perennially rated among the best prep teams in the country, are currently riding a record 100+ game winning streak. Ladouceur, who has been the coach since 1979, has comprised a 125-1 record in the 1990s and an overall mark of 238-14-1. The school of 900 boys is located in Concord, California, east of San Francisco.*