

Workout Sessions

By Mike Bellotti

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The reasoning for cycling workouts within each phase is to allow for recovery and regeneration. Although changes in phases and cycles of training promote development, we must abide by certain rules of consistent training. The following are the restoration credos we adhere to with our football athletes.

Rule 1: Warm Up

Players should perform a complete warm-up to begin a workout, maintain core warmth throughout, and adequately cool down after completing the workout. A general warm-up breaks a sweat and mobilizes the entire body. Core warming to strengthen and enhance mobility in the trunk (abs, low back, hips, and upper back) follows.

Players perform a specific warming by doing modified, low-stress versions of the pulling, squatting, pushing, running, jumping, and throwing activities. By using this approach, players work proper mechanics before placing any load on the system. If proper posture, balance, stability, and flexibility are not apparent in this portion of the workout, players must make adjustments before loading. Athletes must show that they can pull, squat, push, flex, extend, and rotate through a proper range of motion without limitations. Athletes will maintain warmth throughout the core of the body by following certain workout guidelines:

- The warm-up is followed by speed and dynamic work such as explosive movements (clean, snatch, jumping, and so on).
- The strength work occurs next (heavy multiple-joint movements such as squat, lunge, jerk, towing, sandpit, and so on).
- Isolated work such as lying or seated movements (bench, pulleys, and so on) follows multiple-joint work.
- The workout should end with mobility work that uses full, fluid body movements (jump rope, direction drills, partner stretching, and so on).

Rule 2: Plan Intense Workouts

For athletes to be able to observe rule 1, workouts must be short, concise, intense, and coordinated. We suggest a one-hour comprehensive menu. Athletes must move efficiently through the workout. Each workout is coordinated so that each athlete and his partner or group can complete the work with appropriate rest but without wasting time.

Athletes don't need workouts that last two hours or more. Long workouts generally include excessive rest, trips to the water fountain, idle conversation, and subsequent core cooling, thereby increasing the chance for breakdowns if intense work is attempted. Common sense dictates that it is more difficult to keep the core warm and maintain workout intensity for extended periods.

Rule 3: Plan Variety

We maintain variety in exercise mode and stimulus as a way of cycling workout stress and maintaining work intensity. Variety in exercise mode allows athletes to attack all workouts with vigor, intensity, and renewed enthusiasm.

When we plan a light workout or easy week, however, we do not want the athletes to confuse this with a low effort. We like to have high-intensity efforts, while at the same time cycling the stress of the work in a high, low, and moderate fashion (these also are adjustable). Downloading the workload from heavy to light can simply be a matter of adjusting the type or style of exercise within the methods we have planned.

For example, every weight-room workout will have a pulling, squatting, and pushing movement in the developmental portion, just as every conditioning workout will have a jump, bound, hop, and stride or sprint portion. By changing the type of squat, jump, or sprint drills, we can alter the stress it will have on the body and subsequent recovery.

Changing the number of major joints employed in a movement, moving the barbell on the shoulders from behind the neck to the front, moving off both legs rather than one, and forcing athletes to be accountable for proper mechanics can unload or load the stress of the workout and the time of recovery from it. Yet every workout requires that athletes have the proper attitude and work ethic. Athletic advancement ceases if athletes do not exhibit the correct mental and physical approach.