

STRENGTH TRAINING *(Beginning a Program)*BY **STEVE PISELLI, MPT/STS**COURTESY OF **PENNTTRACKXC.COM****PAIN RELIEF and PHYSICAL THERAPY**

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SEVEN STEPS FOR EFFECTIVE STRENGTH TRAINING:

Every athlete has unique needs, strengths and weaknesses to various components of their sport. By moving through each of the following 7 steps, you will have a format to follow that ensures each strength training session will be built on a solid foundation and maximize success.

Step 1: Identify Medical Concerns and Seek Medical Clearance

Establish your goals, and then consider participating in a test (typically performed by a Strength and Conditioning Personal Trainer) to define a starting point and establish a base line for future comparison. Additionally, get clearance from your physician before starting.

Step 2: Balanced Physical Programming

Physical programming for the majority of the population includes cardio-respiratory conditioning, muscular strength and endurance conditioning and flexibility training. All of these components of fitness must be addressed correctly to ensure a balanced approach to improve your racing performance.

Step 3: Cardio-Respiratory Conditioning

The conditioning you do is based upon what the coach sets up for practice including off-season, pre season, season and the championship phase. Depending on the season (off, pre, competitive and championship) your strength workouts should change to allow you to peak and rest for important competitions.

Step 4: Muscular Strength and Endurance Conditioning

Proper strength training can boost metabolism, help decrease fat mass, improve sport performance, increase self-esteem, and increase speed. Proper strength training is one of the most neglected components of sports training in high school athletes. The key is working with a certified strength and conditioning professional. A sound strength-training program will change many times during the season. To get the best results the following training variables will change during the season: exercise technique, the number of exercises, sets, rest between sets, reps, amount of weight lifted and sessions per week.

Step 5: Flexibility Training

Flexibility is most simply defined as range of motion available to a joint. The development of flexibility requires challenging range of motion in a manner that does not produce pain. A good stretch is one that lasts 15-20 seconds and is repeated 3-5 times producing a "mild" stretch sensation. See the article on flexibility for additional information.

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Step 6: Success and Adherence

Four factors ensure exercise adherence:

- **Time** – keep most workouts around 60-90 minutes, 3x/wk.
- **Variety** – change the program when appropriate.
- **Intrinsic motivation** – know why you want to exercise.
- **Goals** – Is the program effective and providing the stimulus to achieve your goals.

Step 7: Choose a Certified Strength Professional.

Developing a strength-training program is scientific. It takes sound knowledge in scientific strength training principles to develop an effective program. Unfortunately, many well-intentioned individuals do not have the knowledge to design a strength program that is effective and safe. In some cases, injuries have occurred because the athlete is training improperly. See our related article to help you select a strength training coach.

Send questions and comments to: PaulR@PainRelief-PT.com

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