STRENGTH TRAINING FOR SPEED DEVELOPMENT
By:
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There is no question about it! The stronger you are the faster you will be able to run. It's as simple as that!! Does that mean that the strongest man in the world can be the fastest man in the world? Let's take a closer look at strength training for speed improvement.

Physics tells us that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Transferring this concept to sprinting simply means that the more force we apply to the ground as we put our foot down in a running motion, the more force will be returned to us in the form of energy to propel us down the track or playing field. However, if we loose sight of the fact that we need to develop our sprint technique and overall flexibility, then the strength we gain in the weight room will be for naught. It is therefore important to include these latter aspects into your entire strength training programs. As an athlete, you are always in the weight room as a means to an end. Weight training as an athlete is NOT an end all in itself. Too often, many athletes listen to the local "Gym Rat" and get off the track on their lifting program. This usually has disastrous effects on their season and performance.

Performance enhanced strength training, especially in the off-season, is the initial basis for improved performance in the next season. By getting stronger, we are able to work longer and harder in developing our skills in practice. It can help us to create more power (speed X's time) in each of our sprint / running strokes and therefore increase our speed output. And we can actually improve our flexibility, which is so critical to mastery of technique. In addition, flexibility is an insurance package against sustaining a possible injury.

There are a variety of ways to go about getting stronger as an athlete as you set up your weight-training program. Always refer to two principles though...Specificity of Training and Overload. Both of these will have a direct bearing on your desired outcomes. It is not the purpose of this article to go into a long discourse on strength training. However, it is important to understand that you don't just lift without a plan. Below I will outline a very basic strength-training plan for speed development. It is a foundation. It can be easily modified as to age, strength levels, time available to train, etc.

The ability to recruit all of the muscles that you need to perform a skill is the foundation of what technique is all about. Hence, in sprinting, strength from the top of the head to the tips of the toes is important to develop and be able to use functionally. Therefore, a tremendous amount of work needs to be done on the upper body, the lower body and the mid torso / abs region.

SAMPLE WEIGHT TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR SPEED DEVELOPMENT

Primary lifting days per week: two days / week... Monday & Thursday (after sprint practice)
Auxiliary lifting days per week: one day/week.... Could be Saturday with this schedule

Repetitions Schedule: (Primary lifts)
1st month-10 reps
2nd month-8 reps
3rd month-6 reps
4th month-4 reps ** (Competitive season begins now)

Test Periods: Once per month, normally during the last training session of that month, you should test the strength levels in one or two primary lifts for the number of repetitions you are doing that month. For example, if you are doing 8 reps that month, then you should test the bench press (or one other lift) during the last session for the total amount of weight you can do 8 X's in that lift.

Post weight training Med Ball Dynamics: Approximately once every third training session, the athlete should go through a series of med ball exercises in a dynamic and explosive pattern. My suggestion would be to do these exercises individually, using a wall as your partner.

Lifting Schedule: Monday
Cleans
Bench Press
One Arm Rows
1/2 Squat
Leg Extensions (light weight, for patella tracking purposes only)
Leg Curls
Lat Pull Downs (Chest)
Lunges
Seated Pulls
Back Hyperextensions
Triceps work 3-4 styles
Bicep Curls 2-3 styles
Pull Ups
Abdominal work

Thursday
Cleans
Incline Dumbbell Press
Bear/Super Cat
Bench Steps with dumbbells
Leg Extensions (light weight, for patella tracking purposes only)
Leg Curls
Seated behind the back press
Cable Crossovers
Seated Pulls
Lat Pull Downs (Back)
Bicep work 2-3 styles
Triceps work 3-4 styles
Pull-ups
Abdominal work

Saturday...Auxiliary work day
Rotator Cuff Dumbbell Lifts: thumb up, thumb down, thumb in, thumb out
Rope Curls
Wrist Curls
Calf Raises
Dynamic Flexibility Drills
Pull Up / Abdominal circuit work
Mirror Sprint Drills in between each lift (15-20 seconds each)

Dynamic Weight Training Day
Take two specific muscle group lifts (say lat pull downs and seated rows) and do each
exercise with 10 reps, immediately followed by a dynamic med ball exercise (say chest-
pass) for reps of 10. Do this routine 3 X's each and then take a 3-minute break and
choose another two lifts plus a med ball exercise and do in like manner. Normally you
would end up with 10 different lifts and 5 different med ball exercises here. It's important
to remember that the med ball portion should be fast, explosive & dynamic in nature. Be
sure to maintain correct technique here.

Some final thoughts
Variety in lifting schedules avoids boredom and staleness in an athlete’s development.
Keep a watchful eye on how programs progress and don’t be afraid to make necessary
changes as you see fit. And last but not least, free weights are more conducive to
enhanced athletic performance than are machines. Use machines early on for technical
development among the younger athletes. Graduate to free-weights as soon as technique
in the lifts has been mastered.