

## Taking It to the Next Level

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Athlete development at the high school and college levels differs in many aspects. However, the common challenge with both age groups is how to get these athletes ready for the next level.

### Three major components to prepare athletes for the next level include:

#### Push the athletes beyond the norm

The aspect of working hard is relative because it all depends upon what the athletes normally do. The bottom line is this: if athletes are normally pushed physically and mentally beyond the norm, they will have no problem overcoming adversity during competition.

#### Be organized

Do not just set up cones and weights. Think about these questions:

- ✓ What workouts are being done when?
- ✓ What body parts are worked on what days?
- ✓ When and how much should the athletes run?

All of these fall under the aspects of periodization. Taking the time as a coach to plan out the days, weeks and months is the most important part of the job. This is called “pushing the buttons” and, more importantly, knowing when to push the buttons. Push the athletes hard, but be aware of when to give them rest. A 12-week example of this type of periodization is found in Fig. 1 showing starting easier and getting harder over the course of 12 weeks. After each and every week to give the athletes the best chance to reach their genetic potential.

#### Begin with the base of the athlete

If the athletes don't have a great base, then the organization will be for nothing! The base is referred to as the core, the trunk or the mid-section of the body, approximately from the mid-thigh area to the mid-torso. It is the most important part of any young athlete and concentrating on this area sooner makes the rest of the strength training much easier.

The lower back, abdominal region, upper hamstrings and hip flexors are the nuts and bolts of any athlete. These areas can be trained in many ways, including the following examples:

- ✓ Squat – a necessary part of any strength program and involves all of the base areas.
- ✓ Glute Ham Raises and Reverse Hypers are very important.
- ✓ Do not just do crunches for abs. Do hanging leg raises, medicine ball drills, bridging drills, and weighted roman chair crunches.

If a young athlete can work out hard, follow an organized program and get a stronger core, then they will jump to the next level of competition. Athletes trust their coaches. Thus, the coaches need to help and allow athletes to reach their potential!

Figure 1

