Off Season Football Training

Part I

The focus of the time immediately after the season is to address injuries ASAP. We want to see what is hurting and not moving well and have these issues addressed ASAP. This often means referring out to a Chiropractor or Therapist that I have a relationship with already.

We still train while addressing injuries, and the more I learn about mobility, the more we incorporate mobility into a warm up.

The foam roller is a biggy with the Football guys because they are quite beat up. Hips are quite tight on most of these guys so they use the foam roller before the workout and often times after on their hips and glutes and their entire back. I’m no expert here, but using the foam roller is better than not at all.

We break down the program into 3 lifting days per week, sometimes 2. This depends on how often they are going to their high school weight room. They are educated on how to organize their workouts at the high school in conjunction with what we’re doing at The Underground.
The basic template is below, all workouts on non-consecutive days:

Day 1: Upper Body:
Day 2: Lower Body
Day 3: Full Body (repetition day)

This template is stolen from Joe DeFranco, and you can read his specific article on this method, which he calls “Westside for Skinny Bastards” or WS4SB. Go to www.DeFrancosTraining.com and you’ll see a part I & II to this template.

The difference with us is our greater implementation of kettlebells and other odd objects. Also, Joe D uses that repetition day only for upper body. This is a day we go by feel. If the athletes are participating in Football camps of their own then it will be repetition day for upper body only, if they feel good, we perform a repetition movement for lower body as well.

The upper body day begins with a heavy push and pull movement. We then follow this with some supplemental lifting with moderate weights and moderate reps in various push / pull planes.

I found that the splitting of upper / lower body helps add muscle as it allows us to perform more volume per movement / muscle area compared to performing full body workouts.

Unlike our wrestlers, these athletes might be facing off against other teams / individuals with up to as much as a 100 lb difference in bodyweight! Adding muscle not only helps their physical performance, but it increases safety and gives them confidence when facing other bigger opponents.
So not only do we want to become stronger and more powerful, but we also want to increase muscle size and this is where bodybuilding set – rep parameters come into play perfectly.

You can also think of a larger muscle like a larger car engine. The larger car engine can get souped up for more horse power. If the muscles are trained correctly, we can make this larger muscle more powerful, stronger, etc.

**Flat DB benching**

**An example of upper body day would look like this (after a warm up):**

1A) thick bar floor press 5 x 3 – 5 reps  
1B) 1 arm DB or KB row 5 x 6 – 8 reps

2A) thick rope recline rows 3 x submax reps (leave 1 – 3 in the tank)  
2B) flat or incline dumbbell presses (palms in) 3 x 6 – 8 reps (leave 1 or 2 in the tank)

3A) barbell or dumbbell curls (with some body momentum) 2 x 6 – 8 reps
3B) tricep work using bands 2 x 12 – 20 reps

4) grip work for 3 – 5 sets

Bent over KB rowing

The **warm up phase** includes ab training, and calisthenics for the entire body as well as some band work for the upper back with face pulls or pull aparts. If we’re outdoors we incorporate various movements such as skipping (forwards and backwards), galloping, carioca, hopping in various directions and jumping rope. Jumping rope keeps their feet active and builds athleticism.

I don’t care how big my athletes are, I want them to be agile, mobile and hostile! Big and slow doesn’t help anyone!

A **warm up** might look like this, for 2 rounds:
1A) foam roller on each hip for 1 minute and the back for 1 minute (3 minutes)
1B) band face pulls x 15 – 20 reps
1C) ab movement x 15 – 20 reps
1D) push ups with hands on stability ball x 15 – 20 reps
1E) various lunge and squat movements for a total of 30 reps

Notice how we use submax reps on many of our movements. This is after the season, the joints are beat up and the body and mind are beat up as well.

The kids might want to go nuts in the weight room but a good 4 – 8 week phase of preparation is a great way to lead into more intense training. This is where the Coach needs to curtail the enthusiasm a tad bit and find ways to redirect their energy into other activities, such as extra mobility work.

Herschel Walker jumping rope, looking like a BEAST!
Here is a sample **lower body day** after a warm up:

1A) Trap DL 5 x 3 – 6 reps  
1B) various abdominal movements 5 x 10 – 15 reps

2A) Lunge variation 3 x 6 – 8 reps ea. (sandbag, KB, DB, barbell)  
2B) 2 hand KB swings 3 x 8 – 10 reps

3A) 45 degree back extension with weight 2 – 3 x 8  12 reps  
3B) various grip movements 2 – 3 x 8 – 12 reps

Our lower body core lift is often a variation of the deadlift, or a variation of the squat: sandbag squats (zercher & / or shoulder) thick bar zercher, kettlebell squat (single or double).

Sometimes the core lower body lift are heavy lunges with dumbbell, kettlebells or a barbell. I feel that lunges are one of the most underappreciated movements one can use for improving strength and increasing muscle in the lower body.

**The repetition day** will look something like this after a thorough warm up:

1) Trap Bar DL 3 x 12 – 15 reps  
2A) Bent over rowing movement 2 – 3 x 12 – 15 reps  
2B) thick bar floor press, bench press or dumbbell bench press 2 – 3 x 12 – 15 reps  
3A) KB swings or KB cleans 2 – 3 x 12 – 15 reps  
3B) tricep movement with bands or dumbbell extensions 2 – 3 x 12 – 20 reps  
3C) thick rope kettlebell curls 2 – 3 x 12 – 20 reps

This day is more painful then the heavier day but great fun. The kids love to get a pump and I found that it helps add size and strength to all the football players.
It simply brings me back to my days as a bodybuilder where we trained for the pump and the burn yet we still got strong and jacked and we still pushed for heavy weights AND high reps.

For the high school guys it’s moderate weight and we do not go all the way to failure on these.

Above, Herschel Walker sprinting and looking JACKED!

As the off season continues we eventually move to outdoor training using sleds, truck pushing, sprinting and more. These methods will be covered in part II of this article so stay tuned at The Underground!

http://UndergroundStrengthCoach.com is the most innovative strength and conditioning web site in the world, jam packed with hundreds of articles, no holds barred audio
interrogations, an Underground video library and an ego free forum!

To view a video of our Football Crew in action go to
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7o73nYPshe8

Above, the Football crew performing KB walking lunges in the backyard.