

WHAT'S RIGHT – *The Great Philosophical Debate*

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What's the best way to train and athlete? This is a question or debate I have with myself daily. Is it utilizing protocols form the three strength sports; Olympic Lifting, Power Lifting, Bodybuilding? Is it utilizing the theories and principle of High Intensity Training (HIT) or Westside Barbell Training? Or is it a combination of 2 or more of these approaches?

I am one of those coaches who has a hard time bad mouthing a certain program a team may be using different from my own because of this simple fact, I have seen people win championships with each of these methods. So which one is right? Although I feel the way we train our athletes is the best way for us, each type of training can have a beneficial effect on an athlete and yes some may be better than others.

I prefer a holistic approach. I have taken what I feel is the best of all the above mentioned training modes and developed a model that is structured around athletic development. When it comes to the strength sports, my theory poses this question, "Why train a football player or basketball player as a Olympic lifter, power lifter or bodybuilder when they are in fact a football player or basketball player?" If we were to train our athletes as a "strength athlete", Would this be

counterproductive to the overall development of the individual? The goals of the three strength sports are extremely different from one another, not to mention the goals of high school, college and professional team and individual sponsored sports.

Of course, one must realize that these three strength sports play an important role in the development of athletes who participate in team and individual sports where absolute strength, strength endurance, and functional strength are extremely valuable to the athlete's improved performance. A large majority of high school, college, and professional strength and conditioning coaches in America today are using exercises and training methods of these three strength sports to train their athletes.

Although I believe in complex exercises as the major emphasis of our program, I feel that the HIT principle of individual body part training is essential in our auxiliary and prehabilitation work. There is no doubt in my mind that the area of the upper back and shoulder region is an important part of the athlete's body. Implementing a mini HIT circuit for this portion of our program has served its purpose. It works that specific area of the body in a short, brief, intense time period and helps develop specific strength to that region of the body. We also use mini HIT circuits for lower body development also.

The goal of our program was to take the best of all 3 strength sports (exercises and principles), utilize training principles of HIT and Westside Barbell and develop an Athletic Based Training program. Our Athletic Based Training program serves as an aid in improved performance in the specific sport of choice. Each has an important influence in the development of an athlete if used in combination with one another.

I made this hypothesis a while ago. Coaches who wear blinders are not able to find the courage to say that there is another way that can be successful. They cannot face the fact that there are numerous programs that are being utilized for strength enhancement. These coaches need to understand there is too much information and principles that are involved in the development of strength that there is only one correct way to achieve success. They may also be afraid someone may take their job if they are too complimentary to someone else's program.

Now, what makes a program more successful than others? I feel there are three main points that make a program successful. These are more intangible than actual specific program modes but important just the same. One, you as the coach believes in your heart that your program is the best way to achieve athletic success. You have experimented through trial and error, researched, and educated your staff as to why it is the best. Two, you justify your beliefs to

your athletes. This is not the typical “we train this way because I said so” mentality. You explain how each phase of training is going to lead them to becoming a better overall athlete and player than the year before. Third, you accept the fact that each year is a growing process and do not allow yourself to become complacent in your actions. Let us not forget the most important aspect of a successful program, having great athletes with great attitudes.

The development of a yearly plan for strength training has become a crucial aspect in the success of individuals as well as teams. Because of the increased importance of the year round conditioned athlete, a properly planned program has increased the role of the strength and conditioning coach. A team or individual that is functionally stronger and in better condition generally wins the battle. It is imperative that the strength and conditioning coach be aware of the numerous training principles and applications that are available to them. This will allow the coach to create a program that will effect the athlete’s performance in a positive way.

There are many different avenues to take when creating a strength-training program that will improve your athlete’s performance. Which ones are correct, which ones are the most successful, we may never know because many teams have won championships using different methods. The program that is applied to our athletes has taken into consideration all the methods that have been

available for review. We have been fortunate to receive positive feedback from those individuals who have implemented our system with their athletes.

There are several programs that I feel are superb being utilized with today's athletes. Guess what, they are different from my approach but successful none the less. I hope that this article may help bridge the gap between those of us with different views on training.