

**Maximum Effort Training for the Front Seven**  
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**For EliteFTS.com**

Following the lead of 3 of the most recent articles posted on [www.elitefts.com](http://www.elitefts.com):

- Max Effort Waves (May 2005) Jim Wendler
- Making Max Effort Easy (April 2005) Jim Wendler
- Davidson College Football (April 2005) Jim Wender

I have compiled our data (I am a numbers junkie when it comes to training information) from our winter and spring programs for our Gold Front Seven Group. Before you start scratching your head, I will define what the Gold Front Seven Group is for you. Better yet, I will give you a brief synopsis of our 3 Step Training Plan. This plan is based on the athlete's abilities in the strength-training program. We look at previous training experience before entering our program. This will help us determine a training age. Athletes are also placed into a specific program based on their overall strength levels and the progress they have made in our program. This will determine how he progresses during his career. Obviously, their abilities on the football field are also taken into consideration. Our program continues to be an evolutionary process. We are always striving to give our athletes a program that can improve general physical fitness attributes and work capacity.

### **3 Step Training Plan**

#### *Step 1 – Intensification Program*

All of our incoming freshmen start in our *Intensification Program* that consists primarily of General Physical Preparedness (GPP) circuits and technical work on the foundation movements of the program.

This program is generally 15 - 24 weeks in duration. Those incoming freshman who begin their training on campus during the summer program will begin a 6-9 week GPP program to improve overall conditioning levels for their first college training camp. A 15-week program that lasts the duration of the fall academic term follows this.

#### General Goals for Developmental Program

- 1 – Increase work capacity
- 2 – Designate improvement areas
- 3 – Teach the strength training movements under our direction
- 4 – Educate the athlete on our methodology and terminology

#### *Step 2 – The Maroon Program*

The *Maroon Program* is a program geared around the modified maximum effort method (1-6 repetitions) and the modified repeated effort method of training.

The dynamic effort method of training is introduced at this time. Regardless of the method being utilized we are also introducing maximum concentric acceleration to all movements.

During this program the foundation movements have little variation. We are trying to continue to perfect each athlete's individual techniques. Our training plan is a hybrid of traditional and concurrent/conjugated sequencing. This program is geared towards all players regardless of position (exception QB's and Specialists). 1st, 2nd and 3rd year players depending on their overall ability generally do this program. Junior College players begin their strength training careers at ASU on the Maroon Program.

General Goals for the Maroon Program

1 – GET STRONG!

2 – Decrease Body Fat/Increase Lean Body Mass

### *Step 3 – The Gold Program*

The *Gold Program* is the last step of an athlete's strength training career at ASU. At this time we separate the athletes into two groups, Outside the Box and Front Seven. The Outside the Box positions are; Quarterbacks Specialists, Wide Outs, Running Backs, Corner Backs, and Safeties. Front Seven Positions are; Offensive Linemen, Tight Ends, Fullbacks, H-Backs, Defensive Tackles, Defensive Ends, and Linebackers.

This Program is designed for those athletes who are entering the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year of our program. Depending on the physical maturity of an athlete we will have 3<sup>rd</sup> year and on occasion 2<sup>nd</sup> year players progress quickly to the gold program.

This separation occurs because in our opinion the athlete is now prepared for the more specialized development of strength needed at this time in his career. This will allow him to continue to improve his overall performance. These grouping are based on the level of contact (physical ness) of the position and the amount overall running that occurs at a position.

We utilize the concurrent/conjugate sequencing system for these athletes and focus on one or two of the major strength-training traits (explosive strength, maximum strength, and strength endurance) and retain the other(s) during a specific training program. The Dynamic Effort method is more pronounced in this program especially with the Outside the Box group.

### Goals of the Gold Program

- 1 – Enhance the Dynamic Effort method and encourage the intent to move explosively
- 2 – Increase Variety of Training/Movements – Keep the upper classmen challenged
- 3 – Continue to improve maximal strength levels and increase lean body mass

By using a 3-step approach we have a built in motivation for our athletes to continue to improve to reach each level. This is especially true for those seeking advancement to the gold group when they are entering their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year in the program and still are considered at the maroon level.

### Maximal Effort Rotations

It is during the Gold Front 7 program that the athlete will be exposed to many foundation movements for maximal strength for total body, lower body, or upper body development. The premise for the article was to give coaches another example of how to rotate maximal effort movements for college aged football players. We have had very good success with this method during the developmental stage and competitive stage of the annual plan.

Our goal for maximal effort rotations besides having the athlete strive for the greatest amount of resistance to be lifted during the session is to keep the athlete challenged each time he steps into the strength complex.

The cycles for both the Lower Body and Upper Body rotations were the same during the winter and spring programs. The cycle was based on a 5 work set progression in an ascending fashion. The repetition scheme for the 3-week cycle was a linear 5/3/1 repetition wave.

<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>WEEK 3</b>
SET 1 – 55% x 5	SET 1 – 62.5% x 3	SET 1 – 70% x 1
SET 2 – 62.5% x 5	SET 2 – 70% x 3	SET 2 – 77.5% x 1
SET 3 – 70% x 5	SET 3 – 77.5% x 3	SET 3 – 85% x 1
SET 4 – 77.5% x 5	SET 4 – 85% x 3	SET 4 – 92.5% x 1
SET 5 – 85% x 5	SET 5 – 92.5% x 3	SET 5 – 101% x 1
SET 6 – Bonus x5	SET 6 – Bonus x 3	SET 6 – Bonus x 1

The bonus set was for those individuals who performed set 5 easily and it was determined by the athlete and coach to exceed the projected goal of the work out. These percentages are guidelines and some athletes are taken off the script when necessary. Regardless of how we determine the load all athletes must progress through the five sets so that the basic data has validity from one athlete to another.

## Lower Body Rotation

To determine the structure of the 15 week plan it was determined that we would have 5 – 3 week stages for our Winter/Spring strength programs. The Barbell Back Squat is our true foundation movement for the lower body so this is where we were going to end the rotation. We then went backwards as to what exercises in order would prepare the athlete to exceed his best back squat. Our rotation went as follows:

- |                  |                    |                               |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| □ <b>Stage 1</b> | <b>weeks 1-3</b>   | <b>Front Squat</b>            |
| □ <b>Stage 2</b> | <b>weeks 4-6</b>   | <b>Safety Bar Box Squat</b>   |
| □ <b>Stage 3</b> | <b>weeks 7-9</b>   | <b>Cambered Bar Box Squat</b> |
| □ <b>Stage 4</b> | <b>weeks 10-12</b> | <b>Buffalo Bar Box Squat</b>  |
| □ <b>Stage 5</b> | <b>weeks 13-15</b> | <b>Barbell Back Squat</b>     |

### Data Collection of Lower Body Rotation

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| □ Stage 1 – <b>Front Squat</b>                            |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Back Squat Max                            | <b>76.7%</b>          |
| ○ Range   | <b>60.2% - 91.1%</b>  |
| □ Stage 2 – <b>Safety Bar Box Squat to Parallel Box</b>   |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Back Squat Max                            | <b>83.4%</b>          |
| ○ Range   | <b>71.4% - 97.3%</b>  |
| □ Stage 3 – <b>Cambered Bar Box Squat to Parallel Box</b> |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Back Squat Max                            | <b>76%</b>            |
| ○ Range   | <b>65.1% - 90.1%</b>  |
| □ Stage 4 – <b>Buffalo Bar Box Squat to Parallel Box</b>  |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Back Squat Max                            | <b>94.3%</b>          |
| ○ Range   | <b>85.8% - 104.9%</b> |

### Additional Data

Average 5 rep max compared to 1 rep max per movement = 79.83%

Average 3 rep max compared to 1 rep max per movement = 89.94%

Safety Squat Bar Deadlift – Double Overhand Grip = 103.3% of Back Squat

### Lower Body Notes

Front Squat – hand placement 2 choices, clean grip position or the athlete can utilize straps

Safety Squat Bar – hand placement – hands were placed on the yolks

Regardless of Bar Variation we count the weight of the bar as 45 pounds

This cycle helped our team reach the second highest team average on the back squat in our tenure here and the second highest output in my 12 years of directing a college program.

### **Upper Body Rotation**

The traditional Bench Press (grip 1 or 2) is our true foundation movement for the upper body. As with the Back Squat this is where we were going to end the rotation and worked backwards as to what exercises in order would prepare the athlete to exceed his best bench press. Our rotation went as follows:

- |                  |                    |                                  |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| □ <b>Stage 1</b> | <b>weeks 1-3</b>   | <b>Grip 2 – 3 Board Press</b>    |
| □ <b>Stage 2</b> | <b>weeks 4-6</b>   | <b>Grip 2 – 2 Board Press</b>    |
| □ <b>Stage 3</b> | <b>weeks 7-9</b>   | <b>Grip 2 – Floor Press</b>      |
| □ <b>Stage 4</b> | <b>weeks 10-12</b> | <b>Grip 3 – Bench Press</b>      |
| □ <b>Stage 5</b> | <b>weeks 13-15</b> | <b>Grip 1 or 2 – Bench Press</b> |

#### Data Collection of Upper Body Rotation

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| □ Stage 1 – <b>Grip 2 – 3 Board Press</b>   |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Grip 1 or 2 Bench Press Max | <b>107.1%</b>         |
| ○ Range                                     | <b>96.1% - 120.3%</b> |
| □ Stage 2 – <b>Grip 2 – 2 Board Press</b>   |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Grip 1 or 2 Bench Press Max | <b>105.6%</b>         |
| ○ Range                                     | <b>91.2% - 116.9%</b> |
| □ Stage 3 – <b>Grip 2 – Floor Press</b>     |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Grip 1 or 2 Bench Press Max | <b>97.1%</b>          |
| ○ Range                                     | <b>85.4% - 110%</b>   |
| □ Stage 4 – <b>Grip 3 – Bench Press</b>     |                       |
| ○ Percentage of Grip 1 or 2 Bench Press Max | <b>98.5%</b>          |
| ○ Range                                     | <b>91.8% - 108.5%</b> |

#### Additional Data

Average 5 rep max compared to 1 rep max per movement = 84.5%

Average 3 rep max compared to 1 rep max per movement = 89.38%

#### Upper Body Notes

Grip 3 – half a thumb length from the inside smooth

Grip 2 – full thumb length from the inside smooth

Grip 1 – pinky on the knurl line

The majority of our athletes test the bench press at grip 2. Those who do not are those individual with particularly long arms. They are allowed to test grip 1 if they choose to.

This cycle helped our team reach the highest team average on the bench press in our tenure here and the highest output in my 12 years of directing a college program.

### **2005 Challenge**

We incorporated a point system for each week and for each stage to determine weekly and stage champions based on their maximal efforts through the program. Each athlete had his best repetition maximum for the week recorded onto a master roster. The athlete was assigned a specific point value based on his placing for the week. For example, if the athlete had the 3<sup>rd</sup> best max he was awarded 3 points. If he had the 43<sup>rd</sup> best max he received 43 points. At the end of the stage the weekly points were totaled and the individual with the lowest number was the stage champion.

The challenge was extremely helpful when the athlete had completed the 5<sup>th</sup> set and wanted to know what he needed to move up in the standings. The 6<sup>th</sup> bonus set allowed them to move up the standings if they completed the designated repetition max for the week. If they did not reach the rep goal this set allowed them one more opportunity to strain under big weights. Not only did the individuals who were vying for the championship utilize the bonus set, but also for those who were fighting for places 15-20. This made a huge difference in our training, as the athletes were highly motivated to secure personal bests each week.

#### *Example of a Challenge Template – these are true results*

<b>2 Board</b>	<b>5 RM</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>3 RM</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>1 RM</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Total Pts</b>
Athlete A	380	1	385	2	435	1	4
Athlete B	365	2	380	4	430	2	8
Athlete C	350	4	390	1	425	3	8
Athlete D	350	4	385	2	425	3	9
Athlete E	355	3	370	7	405	5	15

### **Revisions**

It should be noted that week 9 was spring break so stage 3 was a 2 week program where the athlete completed the 5 repetition max week 1 and week 2 the athlete's cycle was 3x3, 3x1. Also, weeks 10-13 were completed during spring football practice. The only volume change during spring ball occurs in our mobility section of the training session.

After evaluating this training plan the following revisions will be made for next year's program. Before beginning the Winter Program our athletes can have between 2-5 weeks of unsupervised training based on the success of the previous team. Because of this, we will begin stage one as the 2-week cycle and only perform the 5 rm and 3 rm weeks. We will not go to a 1rm.

For the Upper Body we will utilize the 3 Board Press but will switch the Front Squat with the Cambered Bar Box Squat (CBBS). After reviewing the program and ranking the lower body movements the CBBS finished a distant fifth to the other four movements. This will also allow us to structure the next 4 stages of the lower body rotation with similar movements in a box stage, freestanding stage rotation.

#### 2006 Winter/Spring Program Lower Body Rotation

Stage 1	Weeks 1-2	Cambered Bar Box Squat
Stage 2	Weeks 3-5	Safety Bar Box Squat
Stage 3	Weeks 5-8	Front Squat
	Week 9	Spring Break
Stage 4	Weeks 10-12	Buffalo Bar Box Squat
Stage 5	Weeks 13-15	Barbell Back Squat

We feel this will enhance the maximums of both the traditional front and back squats.

In closing, Max Effort rotations are not only important for improving limit strength but also for motivating and challenging individuals to continue the quest of becoming strong! Good Luck to all of you in your quest for improving your athletes physical abilities.