



TO: Freshmen Football Parents

FROM: Coach Moritz

DATE: May 15, 2008

SUBJECT: OFF-SEASON CONDITIONING

As we begin off-season training for the coming football season it is important that your son not only participate in the workouts scheduled, but also prepare himself for the physical demands of high school football in his free time over the summer. We will train three days a week throughout June, then increase workouts to four days a week in July, and finally to five days a week in August to ensure that players are prepared mentally and physically for the greater intensity that the regular season will demand.

Please read the attached handout which provides some general guidelines concerning off-season training and conditioning, as well as a very important article concerning steroids and performance enhancing drugs.

Several points made in these articles warrant emphasis:

- **Madden football does not prepare you for playing football. Your son needs to get outside throughout the summer to properly acclimate himself to the heat and humidity that he will be exposed to during summer workouts and practices in the fall.**
- **Your son should arrive at workouts properly hydrated; encourage him to drink plenty of fluids throughout the day.**
- **Endurance training should involve sprints of varying distances with a short rest periods in between repetitions.**
- **You do not need a health club membership to do sit-ups and push-ups in progressively greater numbers.**
- **Training and conditioning can help minimize the number and severity of injuries, and shorten the recovery time necessary when they do occur.**
- **Steroids and other performance enhancing drugs such as human growth hormone shorten lives, and the quality of that life. It is never too early or too often for you to discuss with your son that simple fact.**

Our coaches look forward to working with your sons throughout the summer, and are appreciative of all the support you give to our efforts.

Off-Season Training

Strength and conditioning expert Michael Barnes answers questions about off-season training

A solid off-season training regimen can give youth and high school athletes an edge and help prevent injuries when the next season begins.

It is important for coaches and parents to assist players in developing an off-season routine that is safe and effective for football.

Michael Barnes, Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist who is currently the Director of Education for the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) and formerly the Strength Development Coordinator of the San Francisco 49ers answered some frequently asked questions about off-season football training. The NSCA is made up of experts in the fields of sport science, athletics, and fitness who stay on the cutting edge of strength and conditioning research and education.

When should a football player begin an off-season training regimen?

General fitness levels should be maintained throughout the year. But specific training for youth football in particular can start as early as eight weeks in advance of the pre-season.

Why is off-season training important for young athletes?

Off-season training has many advantages. Some of them include having the body better prepared and acclimated to the specific demands of football. These demands can include tolerance to the environmental conditions (heat and humidity), adaptations to the body such as strength and power, and resistance to injury.

What are the disadvantages to not doing proper off-season training?

The primary factor that would leave a player at a disadvantage of an improper off-season program is not having the body prepared for the demands of football. This ultimately compromises the health and safety of the athlete.

What types of training should be done in the off-season?

There are many effective methods of training in the off-season. For youth football, it is advised that the player acclimate gradually to the environmental conditions. The duration of time, training, and acclimating will vary with the conditions and intensity of the session. General calisthenics, football specific drills, flexibility, and interval sprints are all excellent choices to begin an off-season program.

How should off-season training differ for youth vs. high school players?

The essential components will remain the same for both populations, but the volume and intensity of the youth program will be reduced compared to the high school program. Also, the focus and structure of training will be accentuated at the higher levels of football.

How often should a player train in the off-season?

This will depend on the condition of the athlete and their current activity level. Generally three times per week would be a good start early in the off-season. This should be increased to four to five times per week as the season approaches.

What safety precautions should be taken when training?

Safety of the athlete is priority number one. They should start with a complete medical examination from their doctor and be cleared to participate in the activity. The physical environment should be evaluated by a professional and approved for activity. This would include a weight room and field. A qualified professional to structure the exercise program should be sought out. They should have a degree in exercise science, hold a national accredited certification, and have experience working with athletes.

What resources are available to coaches who are planning off-season training for their players?

The National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) has many resources including position papers on youth resistance training and published articles on training for football that can be accessed. For more information on the NSCA, call 1-800-815-6826 or visit their website at: <http://www.nasca-lift.org/>

Sprinting into Football Shape

Fifteen seconds remain in the game, and your team is in its hurry-up offense. As you line up for the eighth straight play without a huddle, you gasp for air and try to focus. One more successful play can get you the game-winning touchdown.

The quarterback calls the cadence, but you can't hear. Your heart is pounding in your ears. What was the play call? You're too tired to remember. The ball is snapped, but you move too slowly. As you try to block your man, he slips away, and you turn to see him sacking the quarterback. The last two seconds tick away and the game is lost because you were too tired to give your best effort.

Exercise Your Heart and Lungs

No player ever wants to have a moment like that. How can you make sure it never happens to you? Train your heart and lungs. Being in great shape improves your blood's ability to quickly deliver needed oxygen to your muscles.

Most players don't train for the football season until a few weeks before the season, usually because they don't know what type of off-season exercises work the best. That's too bad. Now that your season is over, it's the perfect time to plan a conditioning strategy that will get you ready in time for football camp or your team's summer workouts.

The best way to train for any sport is to look at what you do when you play the sport and mimic those activities. Your workouts should be slightly more difficult than the actual play to make games seem easier.

Training for Football

Playing football involves hitting, jumping, changing direction and sprinting for short distances with short rests in between. That is why the running part of a football player's training should be sprints followed by short rests. This trains your body to respond like it should during games.

Common mistake: Players often condition for football with long runs around the field. These long runs hurt more than help because the type of muscle used to run distances is different than the muscle used to sprint. Your long-distance muscles (they're called Type I fibers) react more slowly and produce less power than your sprinting muscles (they're called Type IIb fibers). If you only train the slower muscle fibers by running long distances, your body will only use those slower-reacting muscles when you play football. Since football requires power and speed, football players should train the muscles used for sprinting.

The Program

Stick to your workout plan year-round, three days a week. Two days should be used for interval sprints; use the third day for change-of-direction, agility, foot speed and plyometric drills, which include jumping, landing and throwing. This will make you more explosive by improving your muscles' ability to stretch and shorten more quickly.

The two "running" days should consist of a series of timed sprints with brief rest periods in between (see Table 1 for an example). Each rest period should be twice as long as the time it took to run the sprint. If it takes you 10 seconds to run an 80-yard sprint, you should rest for 20 seconds before running your next 80-yard sprint. Run your sprints for a set number of total yards for the day.

Each week, the number of yards can be increased (see Table 2 for an example). Early in the week, do a "heavy" sprint day by running more total yards, and later in the week do a "light" sprint day. Reducing the number of yards you sprint later in the week will help your muscles recover from the week's work.

Train Smart

A year-round training plan that includes interval sprints will keep you from pooping out during games, and it will help you avoid having to get back in shape each season. But never train alone. Always have an adult supervise your workouts. During the warmer months, train during the cooler parts of the day. Exercise indoors when it is too hot. Drink plenty of water before, during and after your workout. It will prevent problems like dehydration and heat-related illness, and it will help your body recover.

Win Without Steroids

The hard truth about anabolic steroid abuse

Anabolic steroids is the common name for a group of synthetic hormones related to testosterone. It is an illegal drug used by some athletes to stimulate muscle growth and strength. Any short-term gain is far outweighed by the long-term dangers, and a new game plan needs to be put into action to curb the abuse.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) conducted a 2001 study, *Monitoring the Future*, surveying kids in grades 8 through 12, which revealed that since 1991, the numbers of anabolic steroid users has increased significantly. Among 8th graders, an increase of 50 percent was noted, with increases of 75 percent among 10th graders, and 60 percent among 12th graders. Even though adolescent boys use anabolic steroids at a higher rate than adolescent girls, the abuse is growing most rapidly amongst adolescent girls.

More troubling is the fact that the increase indicates that these youths are either unaware of the hazardous risks associated with anabolic steroids, or unphased by them. "In December 1999 when our *Monitoring the Future* survey showed that...the perceived risk about steroids had declined among 12th graders, we knew we had to take steps to reverse this trend before it gained momentum," explained Dr. Alan I. Leshner, Director, NIDA.

For those who might think that anabolic steroids are a harmless way to "bulk up" or achieve athletic goals, NIDA has evidence to dispute that fallacy. With the launch of its website, <http://www.steroidabuse.org/>, and a multimedia public education initiative, NIDA has embarked on a comprehensive campaign to educate coaches, parents, teachers, and athletes on the dangers of anabolic steroids and healthy alternatives to strength training.

NIDA researchers are aware that most adolescents understand that anabolic steroids build muscles and can increase athletic prowess. Credibility issues arise, as research has shown, when educators fail to acknowledge the potential benefits of steroids and in turn make young teens more likely to try the drugs.

Once young teens are fully aware of what anabolic steroids can do for them and to them, they may be less likely to take the risk of trying.

Stunted bone growth, and permanent damage to the heart, liver, and kidneys are only some of the effects of steroid abuse. In addition to the 70 major physical and psychological side effects of the drug, other major health threats include increased risk of prostate, liver, and kidney cancers, jaundice, fluid retention, heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, and uncontrolled cholesterol.

A knowledge of the apparent risks of anabolic steroids should be in the minds of coaches, educators, parents, and players. When athletes decide to take shortcuts to get an advantage, they will not find themselves ahead of the game. In a November 17, 2003, *New York Times* article, N. D. Kalu, a defensive end for the Philadelphia Eagles, said, "That's something you're not supposed to do."

To learn more about the dangers of anabolic steroid abuse, visit www.steroidabuse.org/

Source: <http://www.usafootball.com>