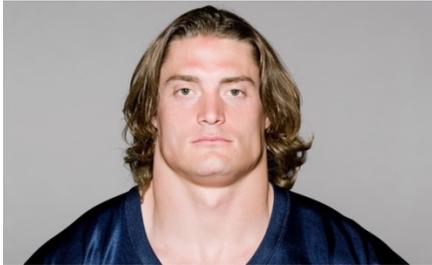


Offseason Football Strength and Conditioning Program

by Joe Giandonato, MS, CSCS

The design and implementation of a comprehensive offseason strength and conditioning program is essential to a successful season and keeping the players free of injuries, which are common in the sport.

Before strength and conditioning coaches arrive at their drawing board of blank Excel spreadsheets, a needs analysis needs to be conducted.



As soon as the season concludes, input should be gathered by coaches with regards to their philosophies, strategies, and needs for improvement. Injury patterns must also be analyzed and subsequent approaches to preventing them must be established within the strength and conditioning program.

Firstly, the strength and conditioning coaches must instill and follow the philosophies of the head coach within the weight room during the offseason.

Secondly, the strategies employed by the coaching staff will dictate the design of the program. For instance, if a spread offense is run from no huddle, the players must be in tip top shape before arriving to their first day of summer camp.

Thirdly, areas that need improvement as they relate to performance on the field need to be addressed. For example, if players are getting pushed around by opponents at the line of scrimmage, linemen will need to dedicate much of their time in the offseason to getting bigger in stronger.

Fourthly, identifying common injury patterns and their occurrences are critical to design of the strength and conditioning program.

Next, logistical parameters must be taken into consideration. Available facilities, equipment, and personnel will dictate the design of the strength and conditioning program and impact its application and subsequent success.

Finally, gaining the support of the coaching staff and getting the players to buy in to your plan is key in launching and carrying out the program.

Meeting the Demands of the Sport

Football is a sport which requires immense physical preparation. Premiums are placed on size, strength, and speed, and each quality needs to be prioritized within blocks of the offseason training. Football also requires the development of foundational work capacity, which includes three distinct energy systems – aerobic, alactic, and anaerobic. Since football is a contact sport, consisting of violent collisions during practice and games, the body needs to be armored with muscle to protect joints and bones. A linear approach works well with football players who do not play another sport or participate in other events

throughout the year. The continuum of the force velocity curve is addressed in order once work capacity is established and each attribute is sequentially developed in order – maximal strength, speed-strength, power, speed-strength and speed.

Early Offseason Training

During the early offseason, which commences a week or two following the conclusion of the season, base work is performed, consisting of high rep hypertrophy protocols, Olympic lift variants incorporating a top down approach, and bodyweight exercises. Each week, volume is progressively increased. Main lifts, consisting of the bench press, squat, overhead press, and barbell Romanian deadlift are performed in sets of 12-15 repetitions. Olympic lifting variants consisting of barbell overhead squat with a snatch grip and barbell front squat with a clean grip are performed with a lightly loaded bar, or with the bar only to groove proper movement patterns. Accessory movements which include a battery of rowing, pulling, and pressing exercises are performed utilizing a similar rep scheme. Rest between sets is limited to 1-2 minutes between sets to improve muscular endurance and increase lactate threshold. Conditioning work is implemented in the form of lower intensity tempo runs performed up to 200 meters throughout the week. Alternatively, engaging in other sports recreationally, like basketball, is encouraged to build aerobic endurance.

Priorities Emphasized: Technical Mastery of lifts, Work Capacity, Hypertrophy, Muscular Endurance, Tensile strength of tendons and ligaments, aerobic endurance

Sample Training Day:

Neck*

Aerobic or Dynamic Warm Up

A1) Barbell Romanian Deadlift 3 x 12

Performed in Alternating Fashion:

B1) Barbell Front Squat 3 x 12

B2) Banded Terminal Knee Extension

Performed in Circuit:

C1) Weighted Hip Thrust 3 x 15 (use barbells, plates, dumbbells, sandbags, chains, or bands with torso elevated on bench)

C2) TRX or Swiss Ball Leg Curl 3 x 8-15

C3) Banded Ankle Traction 3 sets

Core

Conditioning

5 x 200 meter runs conducted at 70% of max intensity with 2:30 rest

Foam Roll and Stretch

Middle of Offseason Training

Main lifts are now performed in sets of 6-10 repetitions, loads are increased on variants of the Olympic lifts and pulls from the floor, including clean pulls, snatch pulls, and high pulls are introduced. Accessory movements are performed in sets of 8-15 repetitions and rotated to prevent staleness. Rest between sets is extended to 1:30-2:30 between sets to afford the ability to recover as heavier weight is being lifted. Conditioning work in the form of low intensity agility and movement work is incorporated as are metabolic circuit finishers to concurrently address body composition and foster team camaraderie.

Priorities Emphasized: Maximal strength, strength-speed, power, alactic capacity

Sample Training Day:

Neck*

Aerobic or Dynamic Warm Up

A1) Barbell Push Press 3 x 6 or Vertical Med Ball Throw 3 x 6

B1) Barbell Bench Press 5 x 6

Performed in Alternating Fashion:

C1) Hammer Strength Iso Lateral Horizontal Row 3 x 8-10 (increase weight each set)

C2) Dumbbell Incline Press with Neutral Grip 3 x 8-10 (shoot for 10 reps on your final set)

Performed in Alternating Fashion:

D1) Dumbbell Row 3 x 8-10

D2) Weighted Push Ups 3 sets (each to failure) using plates, chains, sandbags, or against bands

Performed in Circuit:

E1) Blackburn Six Backs Isometrics – Lie face down on ground and perform the following:

Hands at Shoulder Height with Palms Down – Elevate hands at shoulder height, squeezing shoulder blades together for 10 seconds

Hands at Shoulder Height with Thumbs Up - Elevate hands at shoulder height, squeezing shoulder blades together for 10 seconds

Elbows at Eye Level with Palms Down - Elevate hands with elbows at eye level, squeezing shoulder blades back for 10 seconds

Elbows at Eye Level with Thumbs Up - Elevate hands with elbows at eye level, squeezing shoulder blades back for 10 seconds

Shoulders and Elbows Bent at 90 Degrees with Thumbs Up - Elevate hands with elbows bent and fixed at eye level, squeezing shoulder blades back and down for 10 seconds

Hands at Your Waist with Palms Down - Elevate hands with arms straight and palms down, squeezing shoulder blades back and down for 10 seconds

E2) Timed Shrugs – Load the equivalent of your bodyweight on the barbell and shrug continuously for time prescribed by coach. Keep form tight, squeeze at top and tilt chin up toward nose to complete repetition. Use of straps is acceptable.

Foam Roll / Stretch

Late Offseason Training

Main lifts are now performed in sets of 3-6 repetitions, variants of Olympic lifts are continually loaded and barbell hang cleans and snatches are performed from the floor or blocks, depending on the athlete's preference and ability. Accessory work is exchanged for a greater focus on speed and agility training. Hill sprints, a form of strength-speed work, are utilized to enhance acceleration and used to build sprint endurance. Speed and agility drills are performed in head to head and team relay competition to continue the engenderment of camaraderie and intensify the competitive atmosphere.

Priorities Emphasized: Maximal strength maintenance, power, speed-strength, speed, speed endurance

Sample Training Day:

Neck*

Aerobic or Dynamic Warm Up

A1) Barbell Snatch 6 x 3

B1) Snatch Grip Deadlift 3 x 3

Performed in Alternating Fashion:

C1) Dumbbell Step Up 3 x 6-10

C2) Weighted Glute Ham Raise 3 x 6-10

Agility

Agility Ladders on Hill – Pick Two Drills, performing them 5 times each, and finish with a sprint to the top of the hill

Hill Sprints – 5 sprints, walk down to starting position is your rest

Foam Roll / Stretch

Preseason Training

Football players should be close to reaching their physical peak during the preseason and early part of the season. Power and speed training are prioritized, as is power and speed endurance, which is the ability to express power and speed throughout the course of a workout, practice, or game. Given the

stresses imposed on the wrists, elbows, and shoulders from repetitive contact during camp, heavy overhead lifting is avoided, as is catching the bar during cleans. Power training is implemented with pulls and med ball work. The goal during the preseason and once the season commences, is to maintain what you have gained in the offseason.

Priorities Emphasized: Maximal strength maintenance, power maintenance, speed-strength maintenance, speed endurance maintenance

Sample Training Day:

Neck*

Aerobic or Dynamic Warm Up

A1) High Pull from Blocks 3 x 5

B1) Barbell Three Board Bench Press 3 sets – 8, 5, 3

Performed in Alternating Fashion:

C1) TRX Inverted Row with Feet Elevated 3 x 8-15 (Squeeze for two seconds at the top)

C2) Low Incline Dumbbell Press 3 x 8-15

Performed in Alternating Fashion:

D1) One Armed Dumbbell Shrug 2 x 8-15

D2) Rope Face Pulls 2 x 15

Core

Conditioning optional*

Foam Roll / Stretch