



A great way to make over a weightroom is with new bars, bumpers, platforms, vertical bar holders and horizontal bumper plate racks.

The BFS *Weightroom Makeover*

How to make big improvements in your weightroom on a small budget

One of the popular themes in reality television is the makeover. First there were the shows that focused on giving women and men new haircuts, makeup and stylish clothes. Then it expanded with teams of architects and contractors who would come into homes and businesses and transform them into models of style and efficiency. In the case of *BFS* magazine, we would feature articles about schools that replaced all their old equipment with new purchases. That was then – this is now.

In the current economic environment where budgets are tight, and except for the rare event where a new school is built, you seldom find schools that can afford completely new weight training equipment. What these schools can do, however, is best described as a *weightroom makeover*.

The first step in a weightroom makeover is to increase the safety of the facility. Start by downloading a copy of the free *BFS Safety and Liability Manual*, which includes a weightroom design checklist. Go through the checklist, and then look at the traffic patterns and positioning of your current equipment to ensure they comply with safety standards and manufacturer recommendations.

Often, you'll find that simple changes not only make a weightroom safer and more efficient but also will enable more athletes to use the facility. And don't hesitate to call BFS and ask our staff of highly trained coaches about your facility or to arrange a safety inspection by a certified BFS clinician.

The next step is to look at equipment that needs to be replaced. Often trying to fix weight training equipment yourself is expensive, violates equipment warranties and compromises the safety of the equipment. The most common example is barbells, which due to high use often need to be replaced after several years. After that you should consider bumper plates, platforms, vertical weight holders, bumper plate holders, medicine ball racks and flooring. Let's look at each of these in turn.

Barbells

There are basically three types of barbells: powerlifting bars, Olympic lifting bars and general-purpose bars. Powerlifting bars are designed for the basic power lifts: the squat, bench press and deadlift – these bars are generally stiffer. Olympic lifting bars should be more flexible and should rotate more easily; they also tend to be

more expensive, with top-of-the-line bars costing as much as \$1,000. In high schools, the best choice is usually a general-purpose bar, which is a hybrid of the powerlifting bar and the Olympic bar and is reasonably priced. The majority of our bar sales to high schools are for multipurpose bars.

Key qualities to look for in a barbell are yield strength, sleeve construction, knurling and finish.

Yield Strength. Yield strength refers to the number of pounds per square inch (PSI) it takes for steel to bend and stay bent. The higher the number, the better; and you should not consider a bar of less than 125,000 PSI.

Sleeve Construction. The revolution of the sleeve is commonly accomplished in two ways: needle bearings or bushings. What you need to know on this subject is that for the best rotation, needle bearings are the best; bushings are not as good as needle bearings, but they are less expensive and tend to last longer. A slightly more expensive bushing, the oil-impregnated bronze bushing, creates better rotation but not to the level of the needle bearing.

Knurling. Knurling refers to the jagged marks that help you grip the

TRAINING & EQUIPMENT

bar. Powerlifters tend to like a thicker knurling than do Olympic lifters. Also, for the squat, having an area of center knurling helps secure the weight on the shoulders.

Finish. Regarding finish, there are several ways of finishing a bar surface, including zinc oxide/silver, zinc oxide/black, chrome, and nickel. The best possible finish is made of polished stainless steel, which provides the best protection against rust; the cost of upgrading to this type of material is a good investment.

Regardless of the type of bar you decide to purchase, you need to take care of it, and one way is to use

bumper plates for the Olympic lifts, lifting platforms and vertical bar racks.

Bumper Plates

In the early part of the century, a platform was a must because weight plates were primarily solid steel. If a lifter dropped a loaded barbell on a cement floor, that floor would be damaged along with the barbell. In the sport of Olympic lifting, spotters were used to prevent such accidents; but as the weights lifted became heavier, trying to catch heavy snatches and clean and jerks became too risky for the spotters. Then along came rubber bumper plates.

The first bumper plates were primarily smaller-diameter weight plates with a rubber strip attached to the rims. They were certainly an improvement, but as with retreaded tires for your car, those early bumper plates were not as durable as the solid bumper plates that came along later. Now, with steel prices being what they are, solid rubber bumper plates have become much more economical. Although steel plates that are rubber lined are generally less expensive, they place more stress on the bar.

Platforms

Do not make the mistake of

As shown here in these before-and-after photos, a FREE BFS Safety Inspection can do wonders for improving the safety and efficiency of a weightroom. Call BFS today so we can show you how you can achieve the type of results shown here.

Before



After



thinking that a platform is not necessary, as dropping heavy weights can easily damage a bare floor. In fact, BFS heard recently of one school that decided that rubber bumper plates would be enough protection – the result was extensive damage to the floor that was extremely expensive to repair.

The early platforms were primarily wood, and in weightlifting competitions this is a preferred surface. The major problem with wood is that it can warp, which creates an unstable surface for the athlete to lift on. Wood can also chip easily (especially around the corners if a frame is not used), and as such often needs to be replaced, as the divots create a safety issue. Because wood is often not very attractive and is difficult to keep clean, some manufacturers will use coatings that give the wood a shine and make it more durable, but the drawback is that these coatings often become very slick when chalk or water gets on them.

Many platform manufacturers use a polyurethane surface, which is sticky (like a basketball court) and does not allow the feet to slide easily for lifts such as power cleans and jerks. The two best coatings are rubber and an upgrade to a special vinyl surface we call Protect-All®, which is placed on top of two layers of heavy rubber for shock absorption. Protect-All is an attractive gray surface that is easy to clean and is extremely durable (it has 3-4 times the life span of wood or polyurethane – it is rare that a Protect-All surface ever has to be replaced). Also, the surface allows for the placement of durable logos; and having a school logo provides personality that creates team unity and school pride.

Vertical Bar Holders

If a gym has a large variety of barbells, including Hex bars, it's not a good idea from a safety standpoint to let them



Hunter High School basketball player Alise Larson shows how upgrading to color bumpers and a custom platform with a personalized logo can make a big difference in the appearance of a weightroom. Just visible at far right is a vertical medicine ball rack to efficiently store medicine balls.

rest on the floor or the corner of the wall. Vertical racks, as opposed to horizontal racks, have a much smaller footprint. The BFS vertical rack holds five bars and is available in custom colors.

Bumper Plate Racks

Because bumper plates tend to be thicker than steel plates and are used primarily for deadlifts and Olympic lifting exercises, they should be stored with horizontal or vertical bumper plate holders. For ease of use, horizontal plate racks have become the most popular.

Medicine Ball Racks

Medicine balls can be a safety hazard if they are not stored properly, and the way to store them with the smallest footprint is with a medicine ball tree. BFS offers several types, with our newest version holding up to six balls.

Flooring

Having a quality floor does wonders for improving the appearance of a weightroom. Carpeting is definitely out, as it will quickly be torn up with high use, and the best surface is rubber.

There are many types of rubber flooring, such as interlocking mats, loose mats and rolled flooring. The major issue with the first two types is that they require more effort to clean, as dirt can seep in between the cracks. Rolled flooring costs a bit more but has a neater appearance and cleans quickly.

Hopefully the economy will continue to rebound and school budgets will rebound along with them. Until then, a weightroom makeover with new bars, bumpers, lifting platforms, vertical racks, and rolled flooring is the next-best option. BFS

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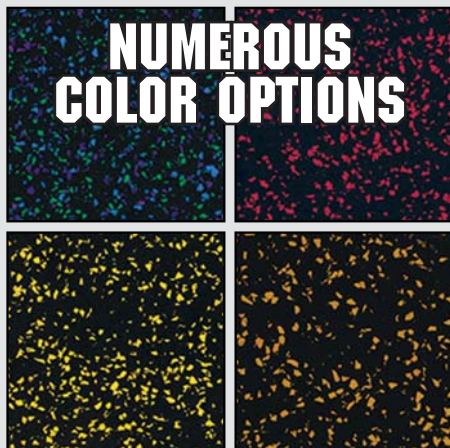


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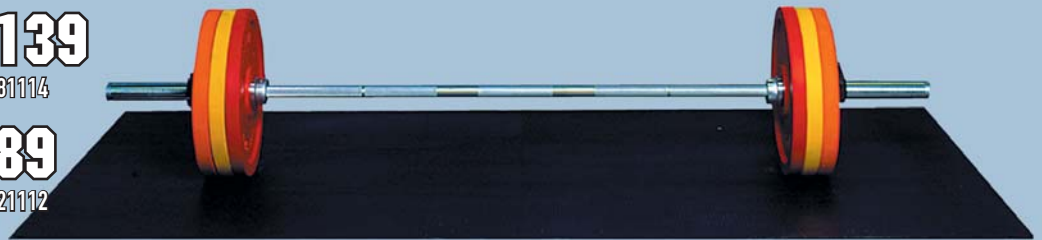
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