

The Ultimate In-Season Program

By Dr. Greg Shepard

The BFS concept of training athletes in-season will give your high school a great edge over any other system. I know that sounds pretty audacious but if you will read this detailed article carefully, you will see this statement is actually understated. Let me put it this way: it will mean an average of two more football victories per year and a huge difference in all other sports as well. How can I make that statement? Pretty easy actually! We've been doing our system for years and we have hundreds of high schools who have switched to BFS during that time. We have an accurate handle on the difference. Another monumental advantage of training hard and heavy in-season is the prevention of injuries. At the college and pro level, we have some helpful information but I make no claim at these levels for differences in winning records.

THE THREE BASIC CONCEPTS

There are three basic in-season training philosophies that may be adopted. First, you don't train at all. You take the philosophy that there is simply just not enough time to train during the season. You have to work on the skills of the sport. You will wait until the off-season to train.

Here's what will happen if you don't train during the season: **You will lose much of the strength that was built up during the off-season and be weak towards the end of the season when it is time for the playoffs.** Not only that, there will be a negative attitude infecting personal and team morale. For example, typically an athlete who can Bench Press 250 pounds at the beginning of the season can only do 220 pounds at the end of the season. As for the time factor, that should be a non-issue. The BFS program only takes two 30-minute workouts per week.

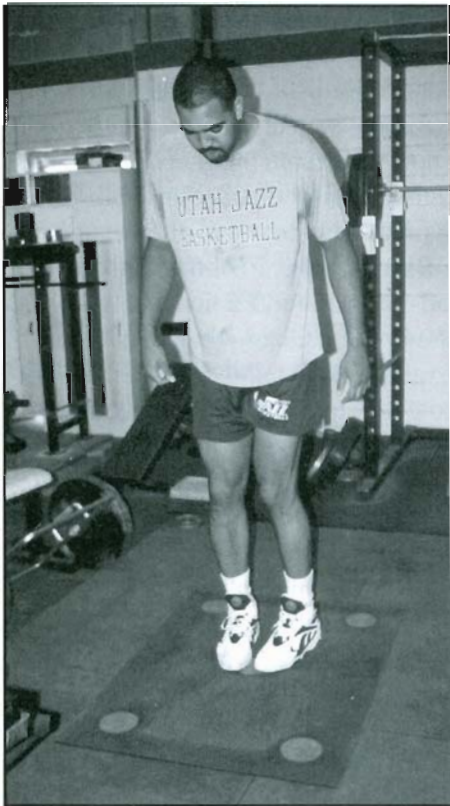
The second philosophy is one of maintaining strength during the season. You feel that with all that is going on during the season and with all the physical demands being placed on your athletes that all that can reasonably be asked is for them to maintain during the season. You have also heard that Division I schools maintain during the season and have read the NSCA's philosophy which has also endorsed a maintenance philosophy. Therefore, it must be okay for your high school. Wrong!

The third philosophy is taking the position that athletes can actually gain strength during the season. It is amazingly easy for all high school athletes to gain strength during the season. It is an injustice and a great disservice to have a maintenance program at that level. The BFS program affords each athlete a wonderful opportunity of making significant gains during each season. Typically, an athlete who Benches 200 pounds at the beginning of a high school season will be able to Bench 220 pounds by the season's end. The same would be true on the Squat, Clean and/or other core lifts. Just think of the mental difference and positive attitude when that happens individually and as a team. Surprisingly, many Division I schools and pro-teams have also taken the "We can make in-season gains" philosophy with some of their athletes.

Are you starting to get the idea of the BFS advantage? If I were a high school football coach, I would want to schedule as many teams as I could who didn't train at all during the season. If I ran out of those teams, I'd start looking for schools who have a maintenance philosophy. But, wait a minute you say. I know this team who doesn't train or just maintains and they won a championship. I know but that's what makes everything so interesting. That coach may be a genius at organizing or motiva-



tion; or perhaps he has a big enrollment compared to the competition. There are many ways to win but if you don't train, your kids will never reach their potential and as more schools "catch on" to what they should be doing, it will become harder and harder to win without the correct concept of gaining strength in-season.



Felton Spencer, The Utah Jazz Starting Center, Doing The BFS Dot Drill

THE THREE DIFFERENT LEVELS

Can you gain strength at the pro-level during the season? Well, yes and no. There are three deciding factors: Age, strength level and attitude. If the athlete is 30 years old with a good strength base, it would be very difficult to do anything other than maintain during the season, especially in football. Naturally, you throw everything out the window, if an ath-

lete simply doesn't want to put the time and effort into increasing. Frankly, the majority of pro-athletes aren't that interested in committing to making gains.

Felton Spencer is a wonderful example of a pro athlete making gains during the season. (For the full story see page 60) Felton was 25 years old last season and was not very strong. He also had a great desire to work and was hungry for success. Our Utah Jazz reject center became one of the top 12 centers in the NBA during the season. Felton lost bodyfat while putting on about 25 pounds of lean, functional bodyweight and significantly increased his strength over a 100 game season in which he started every game! I would also advise pro strength coaches to give non-starters or athletes who don't play much a chance to make some gains during the season, especially if they are younger and are not as strong as they should be. With our Utah Jazz players who are the 9 through 12 guys (they usually play less than 5 minutes per game), we treat them as though it were the off-season, especially if they are a center or a power forward. All pro-athletes should either try to maintain or as circumstances permit try to increase during the season. The older a pro-athlete becomes, the faster he will lose ground from not training so it is imperative that all pro-athletes do something. The most compelling reason would be to prevent injuries and prolong a lucrative career.

The college level has interesting characteristics of its own. Many college strength coaches are now treating red-shirt players as though it were the off-season. This is correct thinking. Get these players really prepared for their turn. Perhaps the younger players who don't play very much could also work a little harder. If a lineman is 19 or 20 years old and can't Bench 350, Squat 500 or Clean

300 and he's not playing, he probably could gain strength during the season. However, for those athletes who are playing and that already have a great strength base like those players featured in this journal, the correct procedure is to incorporate a maintenance program like they are presently doing.

All college athletes in all men's and women's sports should train on a maintenance or a gain type program during the season. To do otherwise is like living in the dark ages. It boggles my mind that in 1994 some college sport coaches and their athletes still do not have a complete grasp of the importance of in-season training. I know it is sometimes frustrating for the college strength coach but every year more and more figure out this absolute truth.

The high school athlete is all together different in terms of in-season training. Of course, there is the difference in age and body maturity but there is also the case of the two and three-sport athlete. We have explained this difference every year for seventeen years but I still read and hear about high school coaches maintaining during the season. What if a coach tells a three-sport athlete who is a 9th grader to maintain during the season? So that's what he does. Every fall, winter and spring, for all four years, this 14-year old boy maintains because that's all he was allowed to do and the coach recommended it because the Division I strength coach in his state explained at a clinic that's what his athletes did.

I will tell you flat out. All athletes on the BFS program make remarkable gains every sport season for all four years of a high school career and we do it with a strength program done twice a week, 30-minutes per workout. There are no exceptions! Every athlete in every school in every state in every county in every sport makes these gains all year long every



year! So when I hear a high school coach speak at a clinic or write an article in "Scholastic Coach" or the "NSCA Journal" explaining the goal for the in-season is to maintain, I just shake my head and shout, "Why don't you just do the BFS program and win!"

The only exception that could possibly enter into this equation would be the super-developed high school athlete who already Parallel Squats over 500 pounds, Benches over 350 pounds and Cleans over 300 pounds before his senior year. However, even in this case, we have a little trick which will keep him breaking records all through his football senior year of football.

In conclusion, a high school boy is naturally growing and maturing during the formative years of fourteen to eighteen. It really doesn't take much to get stronger at this age but I can tell you this, if you don't do anything you, will be weak and risk getting blown away. It is imperative all athletes in all boys and girls sports train for gains during every season. This is the only path leading to one's fullest potential.

NSCA POSITION INCORRECT FOR HIGH SCHOOL

I hope my good friends at the NSCA will forgive me if I have perceived their position on in-season training incorrectly. If I have, let me know and I will correct things in the next BFS Journal and eat crow. The NSCA's position and recommendation is to maintain during the season as this is the natural flow of a periodization type program. I have no problem with this concept with the well-developed individual sport athlete, as this is where it was initially done, especially with the East European-Russian system athletes. I

have no problem with periodization and maintaining in-season with team sports at the college and pro levels. However, I have a huge problem with this philosophy at the high school level. It is fraught with glitches not only with individual and team performances but with a magnitude of seemingly insurmountable administrative challenges.

A head high school football coach wrote an article last June in the NSCA Journal which should illustrate my point. He talked about the four conditioning model phases: the general phase from February to May, the special phase from June until August, the specific phase which is the in-season phase and finally the transition phase which makes up the final two months of the macrocycle. Did you get all that?

Anyway, these phases are designed to build upon each other so that you can "maintain" throughout the season. Now, within these year-round phases, there is also a yearly macrocycle. One needs to be familiar with the Macrocycle Volume, the Phase Volume, the Mesocycle Volume, the Microcycle Volume, the Session Volume and the Session Matrix. Tables were also presented for Volume Distribution for each Macrocycle and a Percentage Distribution for each unit by phase. Are you getting the feeling that I want to shout again?

This hard-working coach is very serious about his profession and my hat is off to him. He was trying to do the best job possible with the recommendations that he was given. You do not have to make your strength and conditioning program complex to be effective. Now, let's examine some problems with this periodization-maintenance model that are unique to the high school situation.

Football players in high school generally have three choices after the season: wrestling, basketball or off-

season. In the above model, I guess you keep maintaining if you are out for a winter sport while the other football players go into the "Transition phase in December and January. Then, in February, the off-season football players start the three month "General Phase". However, in March this will be interrupted because spring sports start. So, some of those who started the "General Phase" will go out for baseball and track. Some of the winter sport football players will go onto a spring sport while some will not. All in all, you have four distinct possibilities with overlap between phases: one, FB-in-off; two, FB-off-off; three, FB-off-in; and four, FB-in-in. I am assuming the basketball coach, for example, will tell the football coach to go fly a kite if he suggests that the basketball players who play football do the "Transition Phase" while the other players do the "Specific Phase" during the season.

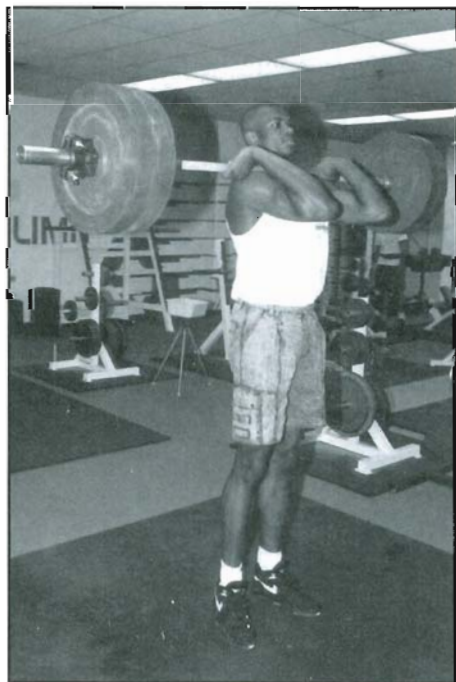
Now, if this isn't confusing enough, try to implement this periodization model with all sports both boys and girls on a year round program. You now have seven distinct possibilities: off-in-in, off-in-off, off-off-in, in-off-off, in-off-in, in-in-off, in-in-in. On top of this, you must be aware of the Percentage Distribution for each unit by phase and Volume Distribution for each Macrocycle. Oh, I almost forgot! What about summer baseball and/or track? Aaarrghhhh!

To the NSCA's credit another article was published last August by Coach Phil Williams strength coach and offensive coordinator at Lexington High School in South Carolina. There were some very valuable statistics presented comparing the number of injuries occurring during last year's football season with two different in-season programs. They had experienced only two winning seasons in 18 years and had an



unusually high incidence of injuries. The team only won one game last year. They decided to “buck traditional wisdom which suggests that football players cannot lift heavy weights and get bigger and stronger during the season, that all they can do is maintain.” Coach Williams, who is fairly new at the school, has been a state leader in lifting and has had a lot of success over a 22-year coaching career. As part of a strategy to convince others about the importance of in-season training, they split their team into two groups. One group lifted heavy and gained weight, got stronger and had a lot less injuries. The other group did a circuit training (light resistance) program and got weaker, lighter and a whole bunch of injuries. The coaches exclaimed, “The results were just short of unbelievable.”

We have been trying to shout this message every year since 1977. The results were not unbelievable but entirely predictable. This is nearly an absolute rule with every team who has ever done the BFS program.



**1994 Jazz Starting Forward
David Benoit, racking a
Power Clean**

Even prior to 1977, I coached high school football for 10 years. We lifted heavy and never had one knee injury that required a missed game or surgery in the off-season. With our Utah Jazz, we have led the NBA 8 out of the last 9 years in fewest games missed and even hold the NBA record for fewest games missed in a year. This knowledge has been out there for decades.

How are the two above teams doing this year? At this writing, the first school has only won one game. The last game was lost 56-15. Lexington High School is now 4-4 and has continued with everyone lifting heavy during the season and have experienced, as expected, far less injuries. Both schools have an enrollment of about 2,000.

THE BFS IN-SEASON PROGRAM

The BFS In-Season Program affords an easy transition between off-season and in-season. It can be incorporated easily into a P.E. class curriculum. You can gain a whole lot of strength during the season as all athletes typically break 8 or more personal records every week even if they are a three-sport athlete. It is easy to implement with 400 or more athletes at the same high school. (See the articles on the Unified Program, page 23, and Jim Brown’s Transition from Junior High to High School on page 47)

The BFS vital concept of in-season training is that all sports do the same program. Everyone lifts, stretches, warms-up, sprints, jumps, etc. the same way. Therefore, when an athlete goes from football to basketball to baseball, he doesn’t miss a beat. Girls sports also operate the very same way. It is called the “United Program”.

All athletes will do two workouts



**1991 Jazz starter, Blue
Edwards doing Parallel
Squats. Blue is now with the
Milwaukee Bucks**

per week. Workout Day #1 consists of three core lifts: the Parallel Squat, the Bench Press and the Trap Bar Lift or Straight Leg Dead Lift. Workout Day #2 also consists of three more core lifts: The Power Clean, the Box Squat and the Towel Bench. Day #1 is the most physically demanding and, therefore should be done farthest away from the contest as possible. Day #2 lifts can be done all-out with extremely fast recuperation. Therefore, an athlete has the option of doing these lifts the day before the competition! What an advantage!

FOOTBALL could be as follows: Monday, Day #1; Thursday, Day #2; (Friday-Game).

BASKETBALL could be as follows: Monday, Day #2; (Tuesday-Game); Wednesday, Day #1; (Friday-Game). Another option could be (Tuesday-Game); Wednesday, Day #2; (Friday-Game); Saturday, Day #1.

Each core lift takes only 10 minutes. Each day takes only 30 minutes. We’re only asking one hour per



Past NBA All-Star Darrell Griffith Spotting Utah Jazz Teammate on the Towel Bench in 1982

week to have spectacular results. Limited auxiliaries can be done as time and energy permits. Our suggestion for two football auxiliaries would be a neck exercise and dips. Dips are done for triceps power which helps all linemen and defensive players. However, you may have another exercise you feel will help you win a football game. If you can justify it, then do it.

The best time of day to do an in-season workout is before lunch, not before or after practice. I'd rather get up a half-hour earlier to lift than try to lift before or after practice. You'll get better results.

The bottom line for all athletes is to Parallel Squat, Bench and Clean with a lot of weight at the end of a high school career. It doesn't matter what you can curl, leg extend or upright row. Stick to the basic core lifts and do them consistently all-year round whether you are in-season or off-season.

WHEN TO START AND FINISH: The BFS Program ends for the year with the last workout before two-a-days. If you are using our BFS Set-Rep Log Books, put them in a file or let the kids take them home. Those books are now history. Get a

new book and start all over with new records. Start your new year after two-a-days. We don't lift during two-a-days because the athletes are worn down and exhausted mentally and physically. This is the trick that was mentioned earlier. Establish all new set and rep records. Then, if the athlete goes to another sport, just keep going. If the athlete goes into an off-season mode, then you can really turn up the juice.

THE REAL SECRET: The one aspect of the BFS Program that really makes the whole thing fly is the Box Squat. When done under our technique guidelines, the Box Squat has not only proven itself to be a very safe lift but wondrous in its effect. Karl Malone of the Utah Jazz states, "The Box Squat helped increase my vertical jump and is my main leg exercise during the season." Because an athlete is using his hip and hip tendon strength during the Box Squat, the legs are left totally fresh in about an hour. In fact, at clinics we always have one of the better athletes Box Squat an all out effort for 11 reps.



Coach Shepard Working with a High School Athlete on the Box Squat

One hour later we have him jump at the basketball hoop. Almost always that athlete has equalled or bettered his previous best jump! Obviously, everyone who attends a BFS Clinic becomes a quick believer.

All athletes must keep their leg strength going but Parallel Squats have a tendency to really drain energy from the legs. Therefore, many athletes not on the BFS Program don't do them during the season or do them light. The Box Squat allows the athlete to keep the Squat movement going while lifting heavy. At the end of the season, our athletes can always Parallel Squat more than they could at the beginning.

Football players Parallel Squat on Monday because that is a lighter practice day. We stay away from training on Tuesday and Wednesday because they are heavy practice days. Then, we Box Squat on Thursday because that, again, is a lighter practice day. We never have to worry about being tired for the game the next day. Basketball, Volleyball and other sports which schedule two games per week really need the flexibility the Box Squat affords. The Towel Bench works on the same principle but it is not as dramatic as the Box Squat.

OTHER TRAINING AREAS: All in-season coaches use the BFS Dot Drill as a warm-up. Therefore, all athletes in the school, whether they are in-season or off-season, continually get quicker feet. All in-season coaches use the BFS 1-2-3-4 Flexibility Program for speed and power. Therefore, all athletes in the school continually improve their flexibility. All coaches should observe their athletes in-season as they run drills for correct sprinting technique. If an athlete is running line drills in basketball and his arms are going across his body rather than forward, we expect that coach to call time out

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and correct his athlete. Granted this is the ideal and it doesn't always happen but if all coaches would coordinate together helping kids to run correctly then you have a great chance to always have good team speed. We also encourage all coaches to do our BFS Plyometric Box Jumping Routine. It is safe, effective and takes less than 10 minutes per session. One or two sessions per week is sufficient.

When this complete program is implemented on a unified basis, marvelous improvements begin to happen. In fact when this model is functioning properly, there really isn't much difference between off-season and in-season. All athletes, both boys and girls, will continually improve in all areas all year round regardless of the season.

SETS & REPS AND TESTING:

We recommend in the strongest terms to use our BFS Set-Rep Log Books or Record Cards. Here each athlete can keep track of all 75 records. He can easily break 8 or more records



Utah Jazz team members going through the 10-minute Plyometric Box Jumping routine 5 years ago



Ex-Jazz Backup Center Al Bannister 7-5" 300 pounds Doing the Adductor Stretch

per week even during the season. We keep a detailed record of all six core lifts. There are four set records for each core lift. For example, one week our workout is 3 sets of 3 reps. Let's say the athlete does 200, 210 and 220 for those three sets. All you do is add them up which gives a total of 630 pounds. Next month when the athlete repeats that particular workout, his goal, purpose and challenge is to simply do more than 630 pounds. With this incredible system, each athlete can "WIN" everyday, even during the season.

There are 8 rep records on the Bench, Squat and their variations, while there are five rep records on the Trap Bar and Power Clean. Let's say the most an athlete has been able to do for three reps is 225 pounds and he comes to his 3X3 workout. On the last set, his goal, purpose and challenge is to try to do 230 pounds for three or more reps. Maybe, he can get four reps. Great! He just broke two more records!

We also keep track of 5 auxiliary lifts, the dot drill, vertical jump, standing long jump, sit & reach, 20 & 40 yard sprints. During the season, it easy to test these areas once per month. When an athlete sees himself continually improve every week, I believe that athlete will have more confidence, have a greater belief and

loyalty to the school, coaches and program and all teams will have a greater chance to win. I also believe when an athlete makes this kind of improvement, he will really listen to a coach's advice on education, family matters and Upper Limit values. This is when a coach can exercise the transfer of Upper Limit ideals which is at the top of our Pyramid-Goal Model. There is no greater satisfaction in coaching than when an athlete returns with his family ten years later just to say, "thanks, coach".

CONCLUSION:

The BFS Unified Total Program Model is what you should use in high school. It will give you a tremendous advantage. It is for all sports both boys and girls to do together all year round. I recommend our brand new "In-Season" video to gain further insight and to show all the coaches in your school so that you can all unite together on a unified program. I also recommend to have a BFS Clinic where one of our clinicians will conduct a two-hour session with the entire staff before the clinic with the athletes. The United Training Program is always enthusiastically endorsed because it makes so much sense. Call our toll free number anytime, if you have questions: We are coaches helping coaches.....□