

POSITION TRAINING IN FOOTBALL

“I THINK IT’S A BAD IDEA FOR HIGH SCHOOLS”

BY DR. GREG SHEPARD

Many strength coaches at the college or pro level have different programs for different positions. The NSCA even had a symposium featuring the topic of training football players by position. The idea is that QBs would train differently than linemen and linebackers would train in another way. But, is this really a good idea at the high school level? I think not.

First, let’s analyze the positives of position training. Defensive linemen and linebackers need powerful chest and tricep muscles for keeping offensive players away from their body. Defensive players must create a distance between themselves and the offensive player to be effective. Wide receivers and QBs don’t need this area developed like those defensive players. So, perhaps on the surface, the idea of position training really makes sense. But, should QBs Parallel Squat, Power Clean and go for maxes or do the same routines as linemen or linebackers?

What are your goals and objectives? Once you have a clear idea of this, you can better determine your approach to strength and conditioning. I urge you to look closely at our BFS Pyramid on the left outlining our goals and objectives. We want massive voluntary participation that creates team unity, loyalty and belief in the program and in each other. The overall purpose of our strength and conditioning program is to win football games. If you are a head high school football coach and run most or all of the strength and conditioning program,

you will probably like this approach.

I want my QB sweating the same sweat as my linemen. In fact, I like the idea of having my QB in a training group with three other offensive linemen. Why? Hey, when it’s 4th and one, I want my QB to take command in the huddle. Maybe he will slap the guys on the helmet and say, “Okay men, let’s suck it up and get the yard.” If he has sweated the same sweat, I believe his line will work harder for him and they will rise to the occasion for him. I don’t want any QB or wide receiver off doing something different on a machine or wimping through some watered down program. Football is a team sport which thrives on putting team things first. There are no elite. There are no prima donnas on my team. The bottom line is this: we work together and we win together. Everybody Parallel Squats, Power Cleans and Benches together in the same way. Everybody does the same Core Lifts in the same way. In fact, with us, the whole dang school does the same thing: All sports both boys and girls. Not only is this a better approach in high school, it is a whole lot easier to administer.

What about Auxiliary Lifts? Here is where some variation can be done. For example, does a basketball player need to spend time building a big, thick, strong neck. Of course not, so only football players, wrestler’s and perhaps soccer players need to focus hard on neck exercises. The same can be said for linemen and linebackers on building triceps. Dips and tricep pushdowns are great to do.

However, in our BFS program, the neck exercise is the about the only variation we have between positions or sports. But, we always leave room for any coach or athlete to include any auxiliary exercise that will help him win.

Another unique situation at the high school level compared to the college level is the athlete’s position. Most of the time in college, the athlete is recruited for one position. There is not a whole lot of position changing and you only play on one side of the ball. Many high school athletes play both ways and are constantly being shifted from one position to another. Make it easy on yourself. Have everyone do the same basic program. Concentrate and focus your energy on HOW to Squat and Clean correctly not so much on merely WHAT to do. Have fun. Build team spirit. Ride the High Places together.

Now, what about college? Color me stubborn but I’d do it the same way in college as I would in high school. I don’t like the concept of an athlete coming in for an appointment for a personal training session. I’d give the football team, at most, two or three choices of times to come in and be together. We are not going to Pump Iron or BULK Up or even lift weights or strength and condition ourselves. We are going to PRACTICE!

Our purpose is to WIN as a team. We encourage each other. We grow to care about one another. We help one another when needed. We laugh, cry and rise together. We do this by traveling down the same hard road. Together Training is better than Position Training!.....□

