

Year Round Training Program

By Coach J. Haubrick, Lewistown Area High School

And Coach J. Hoy

Why is it important?

One question I often get from parents, athletes, and coaches involves the importance of training continuously on an annual (year-round) basis. In this article, I'm going to summarize the key points to participating in a year-round performance training program.

A year-round approach is ultimately important to maximize any athlete's sports training success. This means that just training in the off – season, although beneficial, is not enough. Resistance training, as well as speed and agility training, are important during the in – season training period to maintain speed, strength, and power, and to prevent injuries from repetitive sport skills (doing the same movements repeatedly without addressing other movements will cause weaknesses and imbalances in the areas not involved in the primary sports movements).

Detraining Effects of Not Training

Detraining effects (this is where you lose what any gains you obtained through prior performance training) can begin as early as 48 hours without specific performance training (for highly trained advanced athletes) and often occurs within an average of seven days for most athletes. Within this time period, the body will start to go back to its pre – training state. After an athlete trains for a period of time, the athlete's body adapts to the stressors placed upon it during the training sessions. These adaptations cause improvements in areas such as coordination, speed, size and strength. After an athlete stops training, the body begins to adapt in the opposite way when those stressors are no longer introduced.

A good example of detraining is when a cast is used to immobilize a joint or bone. Anyone who has ever had a cast knows how quickly the muscles that are not used lose size, strength and coordination. Both neurological and physical detraining can begin if exercises and athletic movements are not performed for a long period of time.

During in – season training, sports practices will make up the majority of the athlete's training time. The specific sport skills will improve (such as shooting or throwing a ball), but the same muscles will be utilized everyday. This is where the in - season training becomes of the utmost importance. It is the job of the sports performance coach to monitor each athlete's recovery (from workouts, games, etc.), address individual weak points (weaknesses) and to continue the strength and speed gains that were made in the off – season.

Train with the Post-Season in Mind

Why just be strong and fast at the beginning of the season and not at the end during district, state, or national playoff time? The competitive season is meant to prepare the athletes and the team for post-season competition and success. How many athletes (this may include you) do you know who started their last competitive season strong, fast, and powerful and finished the season weaker, weighing less, and in worse shape? That is not preparing correctly for the most important time of the season, and, unfortunately, this is becoming the norm.

The bottom line is that year-round training is necessary to play your best throughout the entire season. It is also essential for decreasing the likelihood of getting injured. If you are not currently on a year-round performance training program, you need to re-think your objectives and commitments, plan accordingly, and stick to your plan. Remember, failing to plan is the same as planning to fail!