

You Want To Get Faster But You Don't Lift?!  
\*Four Reasons why you should start today!

All athletes can get something out of a solid strength training program. Everyone from your throwing and sprinting athletes, all the way up to your distance runners. The question at that point is what are you trying to have your athlete accomplish by doing the training? Do you want your athletes to get more explosive? Faster? Prevent over-training (think repetitive patterns from endurance sports)? No matter what your answer is I am here to tell you to start today. Below are four reasons why you need to start...now...get reading, and then get lifting!

**Reason #1: Lifting makes you stronger which will then allow you to produce more force. The more force you produce, the faster you can potentially run.** There are numerous studies out there to support the fact that strength training helps improve sprinting speed (1). Unfortunately people don't always realize that it needs to be part of a proper training program in addition to the actual sprinting. I always use a car analogy when talking to my athletes about improving speed; think of having an engine (your speed potential) and then slowly tweaking it by adding more horsepower (more strength), more efficiency (plyometrics), and a better transmission (sprint training). Imagine the possibilities in your performance if you improve each of those qualities.

**Reason #2: Doing plyometrics without proper progressions or strength training is like driving a car with your eyes closed: you can only make it so far before you crash.** Why you ask; simple, plyometrics are a nervous system based response which basically allows an athlete to learn to apply force more quickly. The problem is that as an athlete maximizes the use of the force that they already have, they need to be able to produce more force period. This is where strength training comes into play. Strength training allows the athlete to be able to produce more force. Many athletes can make a lot of progress initially with a plyometric program; the problem is most athletes hit a wall where they won't see anymore progress. At this point strength training becomes the tool to dig them out of that hole.

**Reason #3: Lifting weights can reduce the risk of injury.** There is a lot of debate about how to do this; is it unstable training, heavy strength training, core training, etc., the list could go on and on and the topic is better saved for another article. However, there is too much practical information and too much research that supports the idea that a proper strength training program will help reduce (not necessarily prevent) the risk of injury (2). It is imperative as a coach to make sure that your athletes are healthy and able to compete. I see far too many kids sidelined because of simple muscle pulls, strains, tendon issues, etc. that could be prevented or at least reduced with a solid weight training program.

**Reason #4: The more muscle you have, the more fat you lose.** The muscle you have, the faster metabolism your body has (3). This means that you won't be carrying "dead" weight when you sprint. Unless your specific sport and/or position demands require you to have extra mass, there is no reason to carry extra fat, particularly as an athlete. If you

want to know what it's like to carry around extra weight that isn't doing anything for you (i.e. weight that isn't muscle), all you need to do is throw on a weight vest and see what it feels like to walk around with an extra 10-20lbs. Not fun is it? Build the muscle—lose the fat.

There you have it: four simple and practical reasons you or your team should be doing strength training on a regular basis. If your athletes aren't strength training, you're missing out on a key component to improving your athletes' abilities.

### References

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3. Zurlo, F., et al. Skeletal Muscle Metabolism is a Major Determinant of Resting Energy Expenditure. *The Journal of Clinical Investigation*. 1990 November. 86(5): Pp 1423-1427.

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