



Athletic Development; It's all in the planning!

The second of a two part series from David Yeager, ATC, CSCS* and Brian Niswender, MA, CSCS**; Strength and Conditioning Mentors and Coaches - Worldwide Baseball Prospects

Planning for the Position Player Part 2

To review from part one, athletic performance in baseball is an intricate relationship between several major areas: Technical skills, physical training and psychological and perceptual fine-tuning. No one factor outweighs the others and there is a great deal of overlap between them. Achievement in these areas represents the ideal make-up of the successful baseball player.

With so many factors and components that go into developing a well-rounded baseball player, how can they all fit into a training plan? Although no one component of training outweighs the others, there are more appropriate times to emphasize each area. A well thought out and progressed Year Round Training Plan can help to determine when to focus more on one component rather than another. When the year is broken down into shorter, more manageable seasons, an athlete can plan his training program for peak conditioning at the appropriate times as well as limit over training and reduce the risk of injuries. The High School baseball player can divide his training year into four basic training seasons: The Off Season, the High School Season, the Summer Season, and the Fall Season. This article will focus primarily on the physiological training factors, (i.e. strength, speed and agility, metabolic conditioning, and nutrition) and explain proper progression throughout the different training seasons when developing programs for pitchers and position players.

See table to the right

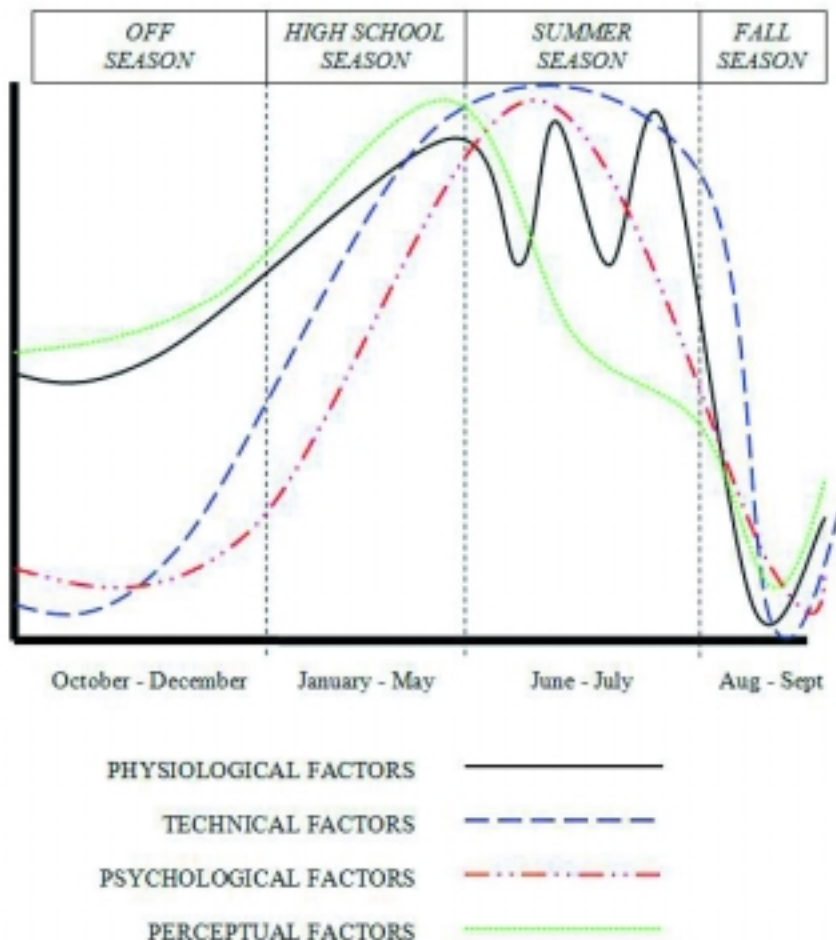
As stated in part one the pitcher possesses unique challenges for a performance enhancement program, the position player also possesses unique challenges for a program. Now unlike the pitcher, the position player does not have to exert maximal force every inning, with every pitch. A position player must be able to exert that force on a moment's notice with multiple factors to control. Examples of those factors include judging the ball, reacting to the ball, making a play and recovering from the play. The position player must be explosive in all directions, have focus and be able to do his job day in and day out; a position player does not get 5 days off.

The most important time of the training year for pitchers is the Off Season period. For the high school athlete this occurs between the months of October and December. The Off Season sets the foundation for athletic development. There is minimal to no baseball activity occurring at this time. Therefore, the Off Season is the main window of opportunity for developing strength and athleticism. Initially (October), the athlete must allow time for the body and mind to rest, recover, and regenerate following the competitive season. Nutritionally, the decreased activity level dictates that the athlete plan

for the decreased need for calories in order to prevent unwanted weight gain. Increasing lean protein can help promote tissue healing and repair, while fruits and vegetables increase fiber, which can control appetite and help adjust to the change in calorie needs. The training focus at this point should be on general conditioning and fun, relaxing activities (i.e. spinning, yoga, massage, etc.).

As the Off Season continues (November – December), training shifts to increased intensity, while a slower progression exists for pitchers, position players hit the gym harder to increase muscle size and strength according to the demands of their position. This is done through the development of strength and power endurance exercises. During hitting and throwing, the hips and legs create 50-60% of the generated force, and initiate all movement. Therefore position players need a strong lower body with a stable pelvic platform and core to ensure the proper transmission of this force to the shoulder, arm, hand, and ultimately the bat and ball. Because of the increases in training volume and intensity, athletes should be mindful of the increased calorie needs. Carbohydrates should be increased to provide fuel for activity. A high carbohydrate / moderate protein snack following activity will replenish fuel stores and begin the muscle recovery process. The most appropriate time for the initiation of a "throwing conditioning" program (long toss) is the latter period of the Off Season (December). This allows for safe and adequate progression of volume and distance.

The beginning of the New Year allows for schools to begin organized practice activities. Training intensity is the highest as the coordinated movement patterns that were developed in the off-season are enhanced through strength-power activities (i.e. plyometric jumps, medicine ball tosses, etc.). Conditioning activities advance to sprint training. The player should consume enough



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calories to sustain the workload and muscle rebuilding following activity. With the onset of the competitive season, training activities should be tailored to promote recovery and maintain strength and power developed during the off season.

See table below:

Performance and competition are the spotlights of the Summer Season. As with the High School Season, training activities should be tailored to promote recovery. Athletes need to realize that as intensity and effort increase, there is a greater need for planned recovery. Monitoring workouts and perform-

Position Players Power Exercises	Description	Purpose
MB Side Toss	Take ball to side rotate back and throw to partner	Increase Rotational Power
MB Chest Pass	Take ball to chest, extend the arm and throw to partner	Increase core and chest power
MB Underhand Toss	Take ball between legs, reverse the action and throw ball into air	Increase shoulder and core power

ance by paying attention to how the body feels and motivation can be helpful in assessing recovery and the need to modify the training program. During the summer, the player should strive to maintain the strength and athleticism that has been developed up to the competitive phase. By incorporating an undulating plan of mini-cycles ranging from the strength-endurance, strength, and strength-power activities, the player can minimize the effects of competition and detraining. Consuming a steady stream of energy combined with adequate hydration can help to ensure recovery as well as the maintenance of endurance, strength, and power.

Training in the Fall Season tapers to transition from the rigors of competition and maintenance to the active rest period of

the Off Season. Begin to modify calorie consumption to coincide with the decreased activity levels.

A well thought out and progressed training plan that separates the year into shorter, more manageable periods (Off Season, High School Season, Summer Season, Fall Season) can help the athlete peak conditioning at the appropriate times as well as limit over training and reduce the risk of injuries. Performance on the baseball field is a relationship between the fuel that an athlete consumes, how much work and force he can harness / produce, the energy systems that are utilized and the quality / quantity of recovery that the athlete receives. A breakdown in one of these areas can result in a breakdown of the others and ultimately a breakdown in performance.

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 Brian has his Masters Degree in Kinesiology, Bachelors Degree in Exercise Physiology and a Minor in coaching from the University of Northern Colorado. 2003 to Present: Owner/Director of Warrior Sports Training www.warriortraining.org (formerly known as) Performance Dynamics. 2006 to 2007 - Fossile Ridge High School Strength and Conditioning Coach. 2006 to Present - Strength

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