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Strength and conditioning for rugby

There are many misconceptions about strength and conditioning for rugby players and how it should be approached. There a couple of concepts that we will be discussing on this page that will help you to understand where you are as a play and where you should work too. It can also help coaches and parents in understanding how to support players in their athletic development. The first thing that comes to mind when people start talking about strength and conditioning for rugby players is the idea of a weight room and having to lift heavy the whole time. This is not what we will be focusing on! Strength and conditioning should be something that forms a part of player development at ALL age levels. There is a place for the weight room, but it is far from the only area that you should be focusing on. There is far more to strength and conditioning that that and we will try to uncover some of the details here. What you should cover in a strength and conditioning program Hypertrophy - building muscle This is one of the main points that should be discussed as people are very divided on it. Hypertrophy is not just the idea of packing on endless amounts of muscle like a bodybuilder, but rather adding lean muscle mass to improve functional movement. The Springbok team that won the 2019 World Cup had a famous photo taken of them in a locker room and it is clear to see that these guys weren't holding back in the weight room. Hypertrophy can be achieved through many forms of resistance training and we will discuss it in a little more detail later as we look at the focus for different age groups. In an ideal situation from about the age of 15 players should include hypertrophy training during the offseason to increase lean muscle mass. In a weight room the staples of hypertrophy should be built around compound (multi joint) exercises. They are: deadliftsquatsbench press pull-upsshoulder press Power training - being able to move explosively The ability to exert force as well as being able to handle impact is the focus of power training. The demands of the game are extreme on a player's body and the better they are conditioned to handle this, the better they will play and be less prone to injury. Power training follows preseasons hypertrophy training and focuses on improving the functionality of the newly acquired lean muscle mass. There is a lot of complexity that comes into play with power training and the training usually centres around: Olympic liftsjumpsresistance band work Speed & agility Some people are born with the genes to be faster than others, but like all skills everyone can develop their abilities. You will not often see props outrunning wings, despite the amount of speed training they do. They can however improve their speed as well as their agility through regular training. The basis of improving both speed and agility lies in hypertrophy and power training. If your muscles are able to move weight (including your bodyweight) efficiently and forcefully, you are able to develop more speed. One of the most important things you need to remember about speed training is that it shouldn't be tiring. Let me repeat. It should NOT be tiring. Coaches often talk about working on speed, but then lob it in with cardiovascular endurance. The result is that players run with bad form and their bodies aren't able to operate at their peak. Speed sessions only need to be focused on once or twice a week. They are shorter sessions both in time and distance when compared to a lot of the other training. If you adhere to these simple rules when doing speed training you are bound to see better results: don't run more than 300 meters in total per session (WHAT?!!?!?)rest for at least a minute between each run or until your breath isn't racing More on that "WHAT?!!?!?!?" a little later... Cardiovascular endurance I call it that, because that is the term most people are familiar with. The one that I would like to touch on is repeat sprint ability (RSA). Players have different energy systems in their body. Some are aimed at very short bursts of maximum force energy exertion, like sprinting. These energy stores are depleted in around 8 seconds. Then there are energy stores needed to run at nearly full speed or a jog. The reality of a game of rugby is that players do the following during a game: sprint - rarelyrun relatively fast - more oftenjog - most of the timewalk - sometimesstands still - sometimes The goal of improving RSA is to help players adapt to the demands of the modern game and be able to play the full length of the game. The quicker they can recover, the faster they are able to contribute effectively again to the team effort. This type of training is most often referred to as high-intensity interval training (HIIT). It is basically a mixture of maximum effort training followed by a short rest period and then repeated for a total of between 10 and 30 minutes. This is exceptionally taxing on the body and should be done as part of an overall routine a maximum of twice per week. Periodization Simply put it is when to do what throughout the year. In the offseason - after the season ended This is the time to focus on building lean muscle. Hypertrophy is your best friend here. Work hard, eat healthily and get enough sleep. Repeating that consistently will see you gain lean muscle mass as efficiently as possible. In the pre-season - in the month or two before the season starts This is when you start practicing as a team and start focusing on skills drills. During this time your strength and conditioning should move away from pure hypertrophy and you should start focusing on: power speed and agilityimproving repeat sprint ability In season - you have matches once a week This is the trickiest time to incorporate your strength and conditioning work as a rugby player. As an example if you play games on a Saturday, you should approach it like this: Tuesday: speed and agility workWednesday: short powerlifting session, repeat sprint ability That is the ideal way of doing it and the focus during the season is on maintaining the gains of the offseason and pre-season. Simply focusing on each of these 3 areas once a week will help you maintain strength, power, speed and the ability to run the whole game. Through the rest of your practice sessions in the week, you will also get conditioning benefits, but it is not as focused or intense. Strength and Conditioning for rugby players at different ages There are different requirements on a rugby player's body at different ages. The goal is to gradually develop a player's overall athletic ability and enable them to be the best player they can be. These principles apply to both male and female rugby players. Males are always keen to put on loads of muscle mass and look like one of the players in the photo above, while females are more keen to just increase muscle tone, rather than size. Biologically that is exactly what will happen through strength and conditioning; Males have higher testosterone levels which helps them to increase muscle mass easilyFemales have very low testosterone levels and high estrogen levels, which makes muscle gain a lot more challenging For ease of reference, we will have a look at three main age groups of players, namely: Primary school, high school and senior. Primary school players - 13 and younger These players will not step a foot in the gym or lift a single weight. Their bodies are not yet ready to handle it. At this age the players should focus on functional movement in various ways. Players can focus on bodyweight exercises to build up their overall strength and this can be done by focusing on four simple exercises: air squatspush-upsglute raisessitups These exercises would build a stronger functional core as well as enable players to move their own bodies around the field with ease. Many players at this age lack a lot of upper body, grip and core strength as a result of spending less time playing outside. Finding ways to get kids to just simply play more outside will help them improve in all areas Improving repeat sprint ability through a slightly modified version of HIIT can be done by: Running shuttles over 5m, 10m and to the 22m respectivelyCarrying tackle bags or small tyres in different waysBurpiesDoing bear crawls The sessions for players at this age can be 10 minutes max as their games are far shorter and there are far more stoppages. High school players: 14 - 16 years of age The biggest challenge with players at high school level is getting them to gradually get used to weight training. It is a challenging time going through puberty and being a LOT more aware of your body and that of others. Everyone wants to look lean and ripped, which is understandable, but a key to success is being consistent. Know that you are starting at the bottom, but that you will see the results in a healthy way over time. Have patience! Hypertrophy and power training can start to incorporate resistance bands and small weights at 14 and 15. From 16 onwards it is okay to start lifting weights as most players would have gone through their growth phase. Although this is a VERY exciting time it is terribly important to focus on gradually increasing weight. At first you should make 100% sure that you have the correct form. Youtube is full of tutorials on how to do different exercises. Learn how to do it correctly and then gradually work your way up. When you start out use an empty bar for your lifts (deadlift, squat, bench press), a resistance band to assist with pull-ups and the lightest dumbbells for other exercises. This is the starting point only. You should increase the weight for each of these as you start to move the weight easily with good form. There needs to be a challenge to every next weight level without compromising good form. Hypertrophy should only be focused on during the offseason. When preseason starts it is time to shift gears and move on to power work, speed & agility and improving repeat sprint ability. Senior players - after leaving high school By the time a player leaves school, they would have been used to training in a gym. The routine of an offseason, pre-season and in-season training would also be familiar to them. When players leave school they should set realistic expectations of their training. They will start to get busy with studies and work and time would be at a premium. The goal should be to still have a clear distinction between the offseason, pre-season and in-season training. If a player were to focus on hypertrophy from high school and keep the discipline through their to when they play senior rugby, they are bound to see a plateau eventually. This usually happens between the ages of 22 and 24 if a player has been training consistently. The focus from here onwards is to try and get back to the exact same level as the previous season. In some cases it would be possible to see small improvements after this, but if you only manage to get to the same levels, don't be discouraged. The biggest drawback of adult life on a rugby player is that you spend a lot more time sitting. This results in the posterior muscles (the ones at the back) doing a lot less work. The posterior muscles are however the most crucial to athletic performance as a rugby player. Simply put the anterior muscles (in front) are more for "show", while the posterior muscles (at the back) are for go. It is therefore very important to make sure that your hypertrophy and power training targets both sets of muscles. strength and conditioning for rugby union. strength and conditioning for rugby league. strength and conditioning for rugby union pdf. strength and conditioning training for rugby league. strength and conditioning program for rugby. strength and conditioning for a rugby player. strength and conditioning coach for rugby. strength and conditioning tests for rugby

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