

WELCOME TO THE COACHES CORNER

Athletes can only be as good as the coaching they get. Our goal is to educate you to successfully coach speed, agility, strength, and injury-prevention. Enjoy!

STRENGTH TRAINING FOR YOUTH ATHLETES

Welcome to all the new coaches, as well as all you returning coaches. We're back with our 2nd ever Coaches' Corner mini-series.

If you missed our first mini-series, the topic was "[Designing a Successful Speed Program](#)" and you can view it here:

[Part 1: Speed Skills](#)

[Part 2: Seasonal Programming](#)

[Part 3: Equipment](#)

On to today's topic: youth strength training. I'm going to assume that you already have done some research and accept that it's important and essential that your kids get stronger to some degree. Stronger kids run faster, kick/throw harder, and get injured less. But they must strength train safely!

Weights, barbells, and other equipment are ways to advance progress, but shouldn't be introduced until a certain age. That's a whole different topic. For now, I'm going to introduce the different "movement patterns" that are appropriate body-weight exercises for all ages.

Today we are going to learn about the 5 primary movements that are going to benefit your athletes most for functional purposes. "Functional" is what will help them on the field, not what's just going to make them look good in the mirror, although that may be a nice side-effect!

In the following emails, we will discuss the variations, progressions, and regressions on the Functional 5. But for now, let's learn the basics!

THE FUNCTIONAL 5

The key to a successful, injury-free athlete is symmetry. The body needs to be balanced front-back, side-side. Any asymmetries are going to result in over-compensation on one side of the body and that's how the majority of soft-tissue injuries occur.

From top-bottom, we obviously need strength both in the upper body and lower body. And don't forget about what connects them together, your core!

So let's start from the top. If we are looking at the upper body, we are talking about the chest, back, and arms. And that's where the first 2 of our Functional 5 begins...

Upper Body

1.) Push-Up

Pushing movements work your chest, shoulders, and triceps. If we're thinking about body regions, it works the front of your upper body and back of your arms. Being able to push an object is a very common movement in sports: blocking, chest pass, throw-ins.

2) Pull-Up

This is the most neglected of the Functional 5. Pull-ups are hard and many kids can't even do one. But in the name of symmetry, we need to pull just as much as we are pushing. Pulling movements strengthen your back and biceps. Having strong chest muscles but weak back muscles often results in shoulder injuries due to overcompensation. Pitchers and quarterbacks need strong backs to protect their shoulders. We'll discuss easier variations to the pull-up in the next article.

Core

3.) Plank

The core is the most important area to train for any athlete. It's where force and energy transitions from upper to lower body. It's what gives you balance. It's what people are talking about when they say, "he/she plays stronger than they look."

And while there are many types of core training (twisting, crunches), the most important for injury-prevention is "stability." If you can't keep your core stable for long periods of time, your surrounding joints will take more of a beating. For this reason, the plank is arguably the most important exercise any athlete can do on a daily basis.

Lower Body

4.) Squat

The squat is an amazing exercise for your legs. And if you didn't know, strong legs make you run faster. Squatting strengthens both the front (quads) and back (glutes) of your legs. My favorite thing

about squats is that they incorporate 3 different joints: ankles, knees, hips. Strength across all 3 is going to yield explosive, injury-free athletes.

5.) Lunge

The lunge is slightly more complicated than the squat, but with good reason. The lunge teaches athletes balance in 2 planes, rather than just 1. Having one leg in front of the other requires side-to-side balance. And a side lunge works this aspect even further. Like the squat, the lunge strengthens both the quads and glutes. And when you think about your legs movements when sprinting, nothing simulates it more than a lunge position.

STAY TUNED!

Did you learn something of value today? I bet your athletes will too when you teach them at practice. Remember that strength work is great in general, but I want you to apply what you learn to make your training more efficient and balanced. Don't be that coach that just does hundreds of sit-ups and push-ups until you have front-loaded athletes with lower back issues. You're smarter than that!

Next time we'll be going deeper into the Push-up and Pull-up, with variations, progressions, and regressions. Stay tuned!

Don't forget to check out our [Athletic Performance Video Series](#) for hundreds of great drills for free!

Faster, Stronger, Smarter

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