

Use It or Lose It

By Rick Scarpulla

A mistake a lot of athletes and coaches make is as the season begins or even draws close they alter their training so much that their performance actually begins to decline as the season starts. Rather than becoming faster, stronger and more explosive they become slower and weaker which is no benefit at all. This also greatly increases the injury risk factor. When you stop conditioning you become more prone to injury. I have seen it time and time again. Many coaches will push their athletes very hard in the speed and conditioning aspect of training in the off-season. Yet as soon as the season starts many stop all speed and strength work completely. If they do not stop they almost stop which also greatly reduces your performance as well. Now don't get me wrong. I am not saying you should train the same in season as off-season. Obviously baseball players need more batting practice and fielding and sport specific work. What I am saying is this. You must continue to work hard at your speed and strength in order to maintain the gains you have made or should have made in the off-season. Think about it. It is the old adage "use it or lose it". The minute you stop working on your speed you will begin to slow down. The day you stop working on your strength you begin to get weaker. No two-ways about it. I have seen it over and over.

Many athletes start the season fast and strong and end the season slow, weak and tired. Many coaches say it is because of the long season. Some of that may be true, a lot of it is because they simply didn't work as hard as they should have. If you work hard at staying fast and strong by working an in-season workout program that will maintain the gains you should have made in the off-season. You will finish almost as fast and strong as you are at the start of the season. If you were to stop eating what would happen? Obviously you would lose weight and become sickly. If you don't keep filling up your car with gas what happens? You run out of gas and your car won't move. If you have a deep suntan and you stop tanning what happens? I think you get my point. How can you expect to maintain your speed and strength if you don't do some maintenance work? Your speed and strength supply must constantly be re-charged or it begins to diminish. Speed and strength training should be part of your year round program. In-season or off-season it must be worked on or you will begin to go backwards. Sport specific training is not and will not be enough to maintain maximum speed and strength in an athlete. Many pre-season vs. post-season speed and strength tests prove that finding to

be fact.

The big question is how much speed and strength work do you do? The answer is simple as much as possible. If you can fit ½ an hour 3 times weekly then that is what you do. If you can manage 1 hour 3 times weekly then do that but do as much as you can. The closer you can stay to your normal or off-season routine the better. I know I stated earlier that you can't train the same in-season as off-season and you can't. That does not mean not to train hard. It means you must change your exercise and rep selection to fit your in-season demands. I work with some top athletes who continue to push their speed and strength work very hard in-season but they reduce and adjust their training to fit their sport specific needs. They cut reps and frequency and exercise selection to suit their own personal needs. Yet they still run many of the same drills. They have learned to make the most of their in-season training. You can move sideways so-to-speak in your routine without going backwards. Shoot for half of your off-season workload and you should be okay.

Continue to work the important areas. Continue to squat continue to work hams and glutes and core and all the same muscle groups. Continue to do short hill sprints, continue to work agility drills. Continue to work the first step drills and ladders and sleds and all the meat and potatoes speed and strength stuff. Just modify them to fit the needs of your sport your team and of your body. Sometimes in-season you may need to cut way back on certain things. For example if you are a pitcher and you are throwing alot then scale back pressing movements and shoulder work. If you are a sprinter and you can't recover from heavy squats or hills before a meet. Then don't do them. If your hip hurts? Don't sprint or squat or do agility's. Drag the sled to help heal your sore spots help your self heal not further hurt yourself. Think about it and use common sense. It is not rocket science. If your arm hurts do speed work or work that does not hurt or work legs or agility or choose something that you can do. If your leg hurts work arms or do some lite restorative work Be smart and listen to your body. Make adjustments to benefit yourself. Whatever you do you MUST keep working hard on speed and strength training during the season. Your game will continue to improve and you will not backslide into a place you worked so hard to get out of in the off-season. You will be very glad you did and will be a lot less prone to injury. Good Luck.