

THE WINNING FORMULA

7 KEYS TO SPORT
& STRENGTH COACH
COLLABORATION



In high-performance sports, success rarely happens without collaboration. Behind every successful program is a network of professionals working in unison to support athletes from all angles. At the center of this lies a vital relationship: collaboration between sport coaches and strength and conditioning coaches.

Athletes can benefit the most when both of these roles are operating in harmony. Through cohesive development plans, clear messaging, and consistent standards, coaches and professionals within athletic departments will be on the same page. When they don't have a plan, progress is stunted, confusion arises, and performance suffers.

So, what separates great sport coach and strength and conditioning coach partnerships from the rest? Here are the 7 keys to unlocking effective collaboration:

1 ALIGNMENT OF VALUES

Everything starts with shared values. Do both the sport coach and the strength coach believe in developing the person as much as the athlete? Are they aligned on long-term vs short-term development? A unified philosophy around work ethic, communication, discipline, and athlete care creates a strong foundation. Without this, even the best plans fall apart due to conflicting priorities.

To help with this, plan a meeting at the beginning of the season defining core values and coaching principles to get on the same page right away.

2 SHARE ANNUAL PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS

Great teams plan with intent. When sport coaches and strength and conditioning coaches share their annual plans—including competition days, peak periods, and tapering windows—they can align training volume, intensity, and recovery. Here, trust is established. A sport coach would need to understand why lifting on a competition day could be important for the athletes.

To help with this, create a shared yearly training calendar and discuss the “why” behind key decisions to foster deeper understanding and trust.

3 BE TRANSPARENT WITH PRACTICE PLANNING STRUCTURE

Session structure sets the tone for each day. Strength and conditioning coaches need clarity on what's happening during practices—whether it's a high-intensity scrimmage or a technical walk-through—so they can appropriately structure training loads. Transparent planning helps avoid overtraining, injuries, and burnout.

To help with this, use shared planning tools to keep everyone in the loop and update plans on the fly.

4 STAY CONSISTENT IN UPHOLDING TEAM STANDARDS

Mixed messages derail culture. If the sport coach enforces one set of standards, and the strength and conditioning coach another (or none), athletes will exploit the cracks. Strong partnerships support one another in upholding expectations—whether it's showing up on time, bringing energy, or giving full effort.

To help with this, agree on non-negotiables and hold athletes accountable in a united front. Your consistency reinforces credibility.

5 SCHEDULE RECURRING MEETINGS

No partnership thrives without regular communication. Weekly or bi-weekly meetings give coaches a chance to reflect, plan, and adjust. Whether it's reviewing data, discussing athlete injuries, or adjusting the microcycle, can help the team progress well.

To help with this, put recurring meetings on the calendar—even 15 minutes makes a difference. Protect this time like you would a team practice.

6 DETERMINE MESSAGE STRUCTURE

Confusion kills momentum. When sport and strength coaches send mixed signals—or worse, contradict each other—it undermines leadership. Instead, determine who communicates what, and how. Whether it's in meetings, group chats, or post-training huddles, a clear and consistent messaging structure builds trust and unity.

To help with this, establish “lanes” for communication: the strength and conditioning coach might handle physical readiness and effort feedback, while the sport coach focuses on execution and tactics.

7 COLLABORATE WITH INTENT, NOT EGO

Ultimately, collaboration is about putting the athlete first. That means checking egos, embracing each other's expertise, and committing to shared success. When sport and strength coaches respect one another's craft, ask questions, and stay flexible, the entire program benefits.

To help with this, build the relationship first. Go to each other's sessions, talk training ideas, and celebrate shared wins.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Athletes thrive in environments where the message is clear, the support is cohesive, and the energy is aligned. By prioritizing these seven keys to collaboration, sport and strength coaches can unlock a winning formula that goes far beyond sets and reps. It builds trust. It builds culture. And most importantly, make it a fun experience for athletes.