



9 Things Strength Coaches Should Do Every Day

COVID-19 EDITION

By Lee Weber



So, you are a strength coach at home stuck with no gym/facility and seemingly no athletes to work with. And if you are like me, this crisis is seriously messing with you. I thrive on working with my athletes and my relationships at school. I miss it everyday.

OK, first let's get over ourselves and let me give you a little slap in the face. We still have the ability to train people and help them perform better without access to our facilities. Humans were strong and fit long before we created these monstrous and glamorous facilities to make them strong and fit. So, we can accomplish what we need to accomplish with our athletes even if they are at home.



You've just got to get ready and rolling and finish mourning the loss of being able to use the shiny toys you have in your facility. TIME TO GO OLD SCHOOL!

Let's all get something else straight. **This is not normal.** Do not try to treat this situation as normal. Be adaptable. Be creative. Be forgiving. Be trusting.

I think one other thing to really consider is that exercise is one of the best things to combat the coronavirus. Checkout this article:

<https://neurosciencenews.com/coronavirus-exercise-16169/> The writers detail how specifically those who exercise and workout have a better chance to combat any onslaught that coronavirus may bring on.

In addition to the physical benefits, exercise can also be a great way to confront the anxiety and mental issues that we may face during the quarantine.






First things first, you have to get yourself in the right state of mind before you worry about your athletes.



It's much like being on an airplane, you need to put on your oxygen mask before you help anybody else. So, in this crisis what does your daily routine look like? Do you have one? You should have one.

Every single day, I get up to make breakfast for my family, I pray, meditate, read, and spend five minutes learning Spanish. I also schedule a time to complete my work with school, build workouts for my athletes, and use Zoom to connect with my athletes and friends.



I also make sure I spend some point of my day either working out or doing some sort of manual labor to keep my mind occupied and give myself a break.

I have been spending a lot of time in my shop working on projects and working around the house. I like take walks with my kids and my family. During this time you should discover the self-care techniques that work well for you and your life.

Find some pursuits to help you get your mind right and if it's just sitting down and hanging out on your couch, then that is okay. You will be okay. This is all new to all of us so if you struggle a little bit or don't attend 3 Zooms a day then that is okay. Handle this in your own way, but handle it as best you can and HAVE HOPE!





Bottom line, you have to take care of yourself.

Just as we will talk about throughout this eBook, if something is important to you should do it every single day. But you can't do that if you sit around the house all day in your pajamas (okay, maybe some days you can). Get yourself out of bed, shave, brush your teeth, take a shower, and do all those things you do that you usually do to go to work each day.

So yes, our role seems diminished now and if you are like me then you probably seem a little bit neutered. You may even wonder, "am I really necessary now?" A local pastor, Joe Cowell, who ministers to my football team shared this great quote by John Maxwell with me;



***If you don't create the future you want,
you must endure the future you get.***

Let that simmer for a bit. So what should your successful high school strength and conditioning program look like now that COVID-19 has disrupted our lives?

It still should be one that meets the most specific needs of the multi-sport athletes and the students in your school. Yes, I said multi-sport athletes. If you are in a school with a ton of single sport athletes then you have to really work with your sport coaches to encourage multi-sport athletes no matter the size of your school.





At the risk of downplaying my job as a strength instructor even more, I think nothing builds better athletes than going out and competing in multiple sports. What we do in the weight room and now at-home should be what puts a multi-sport athlete over the top as a competitor and even tools for non-athletes. I also truly believe that strength and conditioning shouldn't be a replacement for another sport. It's important for us as strength coaches to not downplay the health and skill component of sports-related physical fitness.

One of my mentors, Randy Wells from Emporia (KS) High School, said to me once at a strength clinic that if you think a certain skill, movement, exercise, or muscle group is important then you need to focus on it every day. I bought wholeheartedly into that statement. I saw the value in that philosophy right away. If you feel like agility is important for your athletes' performance and students' health then you probably should be addressing that somehow or some way every day that you are training.

My athletes and students saw the benefits immediately when I started focusing on what I felt was important for them as multi-sport athletes and for the general wellness of our student population.

This has not and will not change with our at home workouts.

Let me run down what I think our athletes and students need daily and why, then briefly discuss how we address that every day and can address them with our at home workouts.



#1. Proper & Varied Warm-Up

It is a basic principle of every training program and one that you should not ignore. We utilize walking stretches, PNF stretching, and even games such as tag to vary up the monotony of a warm-up routine during our normal workouts.



Our warm-up accomplishes the goal of preparing our athletes for exercise and preventing injury. At-home workouts still need do the same thing.

I love to utilize Dan John's Get Up Series or Greg Everett's Catalyst Olympic Warm-Up like the one in the video:



[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF5LLh7kmfk.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XF5LLh7kmfk)

I would recommend utilizing a warm-up your kids know well or one that you can get a video to help guide and teach them.

And for the love of God, please don't be the person who programs a 1 mile jog for offensive linemen as a warm-up during this time. That's laziness.



#2. Agility

Regardless of the sport, there is most likely some component of agility involved in that sport.

In building a strength and conditioning training program for multi-sport athletes, I fully believe that you have to include some sort of agility component. We might do a variety of 3-cone or 5-cone drills on some days while others we might just focus on ladders or a quick foot complex. Even if it takes less than a minute to complete, we still completed our agility work for the day.



Agility is one of the best things that we can work on during this quarantine.

Adding agility and footwork drills into your programming can be super simple and effective. It requires little to no equipment and can be done in a backyard or a park. Your athletes can use cans, milk jugs, or t-shirts if they don't have cones!

PRO AGILITY





#3. Speed & Explosion

I feel like in every sport you can point to a skill set that requires either speed or explosive capacity.



Within our programming we will alternate between high intensity and low intensity exercises but even on low intensity days we always have some sort of speed or explosive component.

Don't overlook speed and explosiveness during this time! Some great drills that we utilize include a speed ladder or wall sprint drill to teach speed mechanics and box jumps or plyometrics to build explosive ability.

Speed mechanics can be worked in tight spaces very easily. Everyone has a street or alley or park that you can go run and run fast at! Program that speed work in! Tell your students to race their siblings or get on a stopwatch (every phone and watch has one now)





#4. Posterior Chain

I feel like focusing the posterior chain especially hamstrings is critical to injury prevention and performance with secondary (high school) level athletes.

I sometimes think very little attention is paid to strengthening and stabilizing young athletes' posterior chain in your typical high school strength and conditioning setting. Weakness in the Posterior Chain (strength or mobility) can lead to a myriad of issues with athletes making them susceptible to injury.

Conversely, a focus on strength and mobility in the posterior chain can significantly increase results in power, speed, agility, and explosiveness.

We do an assortment of posterior chain development every single day, exercises like; back extensions, stiff-legged deadlifts, Theraball exercises, etc. Programming this for your at-home workouts will take some creativity, but it can easily be done!



The posterior chain refers to the muscles located in the posterior, or backside, of the body. These include the glutes, hamstrings, calves, erector spinae (the little muscles surrounding the spine), and the lower and upper back muscles.

Try these at-home exercises:

- Single Leg RDLs
- Glute Bridges
- Supermans
- Bird Dogs
- Step Ups



#5. Multi-Joint Ground Based Movement

Many high school strength and conditioning programs, including ours, focus purely on these multi-joint lifts such as squat, deadlift, power clean, etc.

We try to make a majority of these lifts ground-based to reap the benefits of ground-based movement training. Have no fear, we still do non-ground based movements such as bench press and pull ups as I do believe there is still a place for those movements in any strength and conditioning program.



The question then becomes how can we do these exercises at home?

For the most part, our “lifts” will have to come in two manners: either bodyweight supplementation or finding implements to use as equipment. (If your athletes have access to normal strength training equipment then you're set!)





#5. Multi-Joint Ground Based Movement

During this time I have been programming exercises exactly like I did before, but for my athletes that do not have access a gym or equipment, I have to get creative. I program a variety of bodyweight exercises, manual resistance exercises, or invite them to build some alternative options such as the ones in the Performance Course Video.



Manual Resistance Exercises Document



Performance Course Video

I'm not going to lie to you, this isn't going to be easy to program. You will have to put a lot of thought into it while also doing some research and having confidence that your athletes can do their own research. For example, we have found that you can sub TRX rows by using knotted towels or sheets closed into a door or using a kitchen table for inverted rows.

This is your chance to be creative, inventive, and adaptable!

And please, please, please lay off the burpees...some are okay, but 60 in a workout is not. Any fool can get another fool tired. But hey that's just my opinion!



#6. Core Strength

Developing core strength (abdominal, obliques, and lower back) has been a key component of almost every strength and conditioning program for the past several years as research has shown the importance of core strength to overall health and performance.



We try to do a variety of core strength developers. I am not one to just have our athletes do 100 crunches at the end of session and pretend like we have truly developed core strength.

We focus on doing something with our abdominal and obliques on one day and then do lower back developers on the next day. We want to create balance with the anterior, transverse, lateral, and posterior areas of the core.

This is another focus that requires very little equipment and should be easy to program for at-home quarantine workouts, but remember 100 crunches three times a week isn't going to cut it. You should look to program variety and focus on the needs of your athletes!



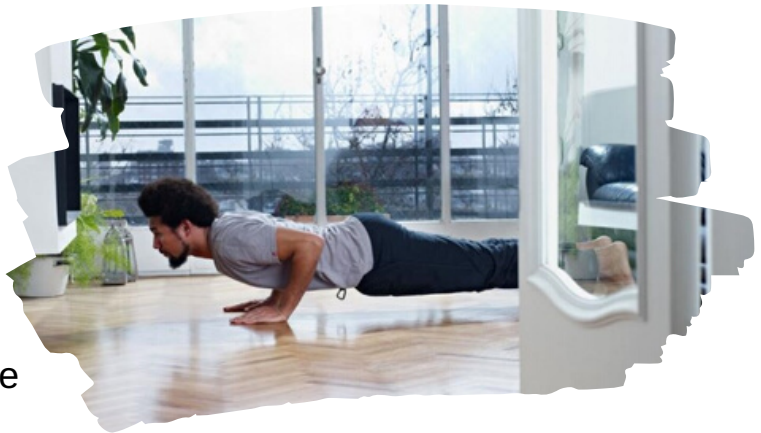
#7. Isometrics

We utilize isometrics already for a multitude of reasons, but now they have become the **secret sauce** for our strength development during COVID-19.

There is no doubt that isometric contractions can truly be a major strength enhancer but I also think they work really well to build core and stabilizer strength.

We try to use the isometric exercises to supplement our multi joint exercises, work on some of the topics already mentioned, or in the place of some of our typical auxiliaries.

These again are perfect for programming within your at-home workouts for your athletes!



Why You Should Be Doing Isometric Training



#8. Competition



I truly believe that some of the biggest benefits in the weight room are in “soft skills” such as learning work ethic, determination, camaraderie, discipline, and a competitive nature. Almost every student I work with will at some point be competing in a sport but even if they are not, I truly believe that learning how to be a competitor is still a soft skill that every successful person should learn.

We try to set up opportunities to compete for our students every day in our weight room. We have done things like a game of tug-of-war at the end of the workout but we have also done workout competitions like the 60,000lb challenge where the athletes total up their poundage for a 60 minute session.

This shouldn't change with a virtual workout and distance learning workout. You can use social media, Google Classroom, TeamBuildr Leaderboard or other avenues to record, rank, and publish results.





#8. Competition

Right now, my athletes have been challenged to create their own obstacle course and video themselves running it. It's makes the athletes be creative and all around it's just fun to watch the videos and see their creations!

Here are some other examples of competitions or challenges that you can implement with your athletes to complete at home:

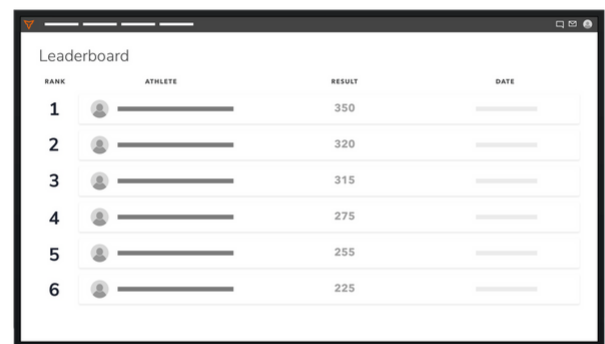
- 1. The 2-Minute Push-Up Challenge**
- 2. Longest Plank Challenge**
- 3. Tabata Air Squats**
- 4. Total Miles Walking/Running In A Week**



TeamBuildr Tip:

You can create your challenges using the Live Leaderboard in your TeamBuildr account!

[Learn More](#)



RANK	ATHLETE	RESULT	DATE
1		350	
2		320	
3		315	
4		275	
5		255	
6		225	

TeamBuildr Leaderboard



#9. Mobility & Recovery



I truly believe mobility and recovery is the new frontier of strength and conditioning. There are a ton of resources out there but two books that I have found to be key are Kelly Starrett's ***Becoming a Supple Leopard*** and ***Ready to Run*** - I highly recommend reading them! Another great resource is your colleagues; reach out and make connections! I have learned some great information from fellow strength coaches including Andrea Hudy with the Texas Longhorns on developing a plan for your athletes to increase mobility and recover faster.

We use foam rollers and lacrosse balls for myofascial release and do yoga as part of our workout to address this focus. I also try to touch base with my athletes on their diet, rest, sleep, hydration, etc. but it's important to remember that we should understand our scope and only offer general and widely supported recommendations as they see fit.



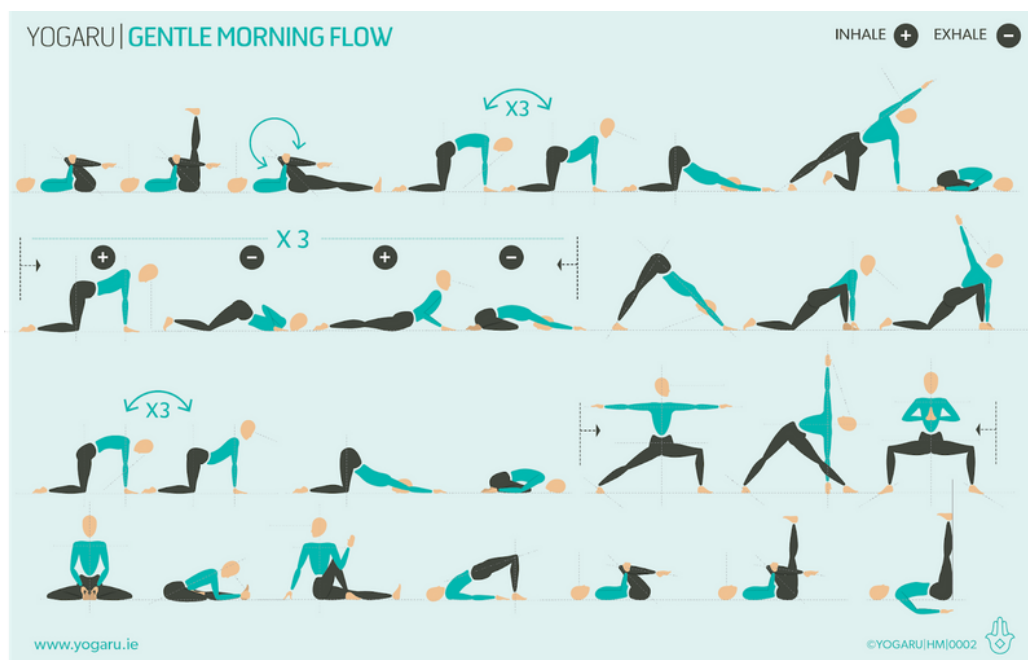


#9. Mobility & Recovery

Even though this quarantine and no-school situation isn't ideal, we can use this time to recover and reload. If you program mobility exercises, foam rolling, dynamic movement patterns, etc. your athletes are more than likely going to do them.



If it is important in your weight room, then it has to be important in your athlete's living room, basement, garage - where ever your athletes are working out now!





Conclusion

This is the perfect opportunity to take some time reflecting on your own strength and conditioning philosophy.

- **What should I focus on in my program?**
- **Do you already focus on the nine mentioned every day?**
- **Are you evaluating the needs of your athletes/students/clients?**
- **What equipment, space, and time is needed to accomplish the programming?**
- **How can I adjust the programming to meet my athletes/students/clients needs?**

Medicine ball activities have always been a part of my focus but it's unlikely that all of my athletes will have one, so now I have to adjust! One year, I had to make shoulder girdle development a main focus as we had multiple shoulder related injuries in the past two seasons (I think we should have bought some stock in Sully braces). Perhaps you work with all female athletes and prevention of ACL injuries is a focus that you should incorporate every day.



Right now, my focus is purely on what can I do to provide variety and opportunity to all my athletes.





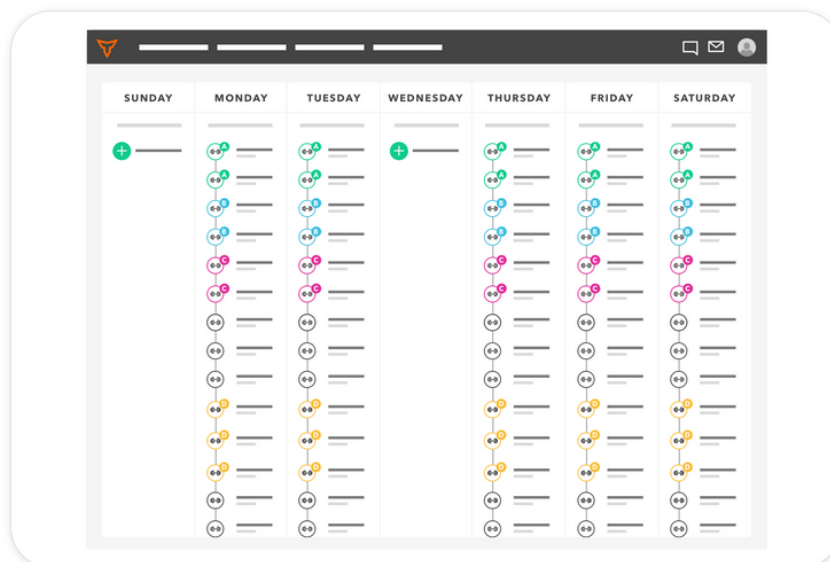
I think it is important to be mindful of the principles of progression, specificity, overload, and recovery when developing your program. I love the benefits of power cleans and triple extension movements, but I can't have my athletes go max effort on power cleans every day. So we use auxiliary exercises like kettlebell swings or weighted box jumps to produce the same movement.

The same should go in your at-home programming - we don't want to program push-ups 5 days in a row, we have to think of different variations.



5 Ways To Add Variety To At-Home Workouts

In terms of using TeamBuildr to help you accomplish zeroing in on a certain focus, **I have found their tools to be extremely valuable.** All I had to do was add my lifts, complexes, and exercises into my database and tag them based on their focus. Now when I program, I can filter based on my focus to add the exercises or lifts for the day.



TeamBuildr Week View





Based on your TeamBuildr plan, they can also provide a list of over 800 exercises and lifts to be imported right into your account that includes great video demonstrations as well.



TeamBuildr has saved me countless hours by allowing me to streamline my workout plans.

I'll leave you with this advice: Investigate what your athletes/students need and address those needs in some manner every time you see your athletes/students. Coach what you know and learn what you don't know.

Strength and conditioning is like a medication script; it's a prescription of movements, exercises, lifts, and skills to be used in your program and as the 'doctor' you should know how to prescribe them to your athletes.

Don't just incorporate lifts because they look cool. Program for specific reasons, choose one or all nine of these things to focus on everyday, and cut out the fluff.



Feel free to contact me at lweber@usd394.com with any questions you may have! I would love to hear any ideas or experiences you have had. I am always game to talk shop when it comes to strength and conditioning!

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