

## The Importance of Quality Off-Season Training

Heather D'Errico, CPT

*Heather has recently earned her Master's Degree in Kinesiology with a concentration in Exercise Science from the University of Central Missouri, where she interned with Head Strength and Conditioning Coach Sean Teter. Heather also holds an Associate's Degree in Exercise and Fitness and a Bachelor's Degree in Applied Health Studies from Robert Morris University. She is a Certified Personal Trainer through the American Council on Exercise and is on track to become a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA) later this spring. We are excited to welcome Heather to our team of Next Level Strength Coaches this summer!*

One of my favorite quotes comes from Mary Kay Ash and says “there are three types of people in the world, those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who wonder what happened”. This quote can easily be applied to the mindset of athletes in the off season. During the off season there are athletes that go out there and continue to train smart for the next season, athletes that go through the motions and work out once in a while in attempt to maintain their strength, and there are athletes that during pre-season training all of a sudden realize how out of shape they let themselves become and find themselves struggling to catch back up to where they need to be. What many athletes don’t realize is how quickly the body can regress back to pre-training levels after periods of detraining when duration and intensity is reduced. It has been found in research that these changes also occur quicker with females than in males both aerobically and anaerobically. However, for both genders alike this is why the off season is arguably the most crucial time for an athlete to focus on maintaining training and preparing the body for the next season and I’ll tell you why.

Goals of the off season include providing a base level of conditioning, preparing the body for more intense training, and combating muscle imbalances to reduce the risk of injuries. Often times in season the body experiences very repetitive movements and some muscles are worked more than others due to the nature of the sports we engage in. There are three planes of movement the body works through and sometimes in sports we are in one plane of movement more than the others. During the off season we can emphasize increasing strength and mobility in the other muscles and planes of movement that don’t always get enough attention and can lead to injuries. Off season training can be split up into different phases such as a muscle hypertrophy and endurance phase, a basic strength phase, and a strength and power phase. There are many different ways to implement periodization and it is important in any period of training to efficiently balance training and recovery to prevent overtraining and burnout.

Now, some coaches may give you a guideline to your off season training to encourage you to hit the gym and attempt to stay in shape, but it can be difficult to stay motivated and hold yourself accountable enough to be consistent with it. Getting help from professional and experienced strength and conditioning coaches will continuously motivate you and ensure that

you are not just training *harder* but training *smarter* to stay on top of your game and a step ahead of competition!

## Reference

Baechle, T. R., & Earle, R.W. (Eds.). (2000). *Essentials of Strength Training and Conditioning*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.