

Do Athletes Need to Strength Train?

Let's say you can run the 100m in 15 seconds. Where does your speed come from? From the *push into the floor* in every step. While genetics, neuromuscular co-ordination, running technique and skill will play a role, the biggest controllable is how much force you can put into the floor. A well-designed strength programme will increase the amount of force, and simplistically speaking, get you faster.

Lets look at some more finer points where this holds relevance.

Strength Preparedness

Is your body prepared to handle the rigorous demands of competitive sports and athletics? This by far is the most important question that (amateur) athlete should ask themselves. For example, the typical training for a tennis player would involve acceleration drills, ballistics and agility drills, Soccer players would need to endure close to 3 hours of training a day as they get close to their season.

In order to prepare your body to withstand such rigours strength training is the key. It doesn't just help you from the perspective of you being stronger but it also trains your body to recover after it has endured a stress.

Injury Management

This is the one thing that athletes dread the most. Let say you are a javelin thrower or a professional swimmer who has torn your rotator cuff or a soccer player or a tennis player who has injured your hamstring. The one thing that is common to all of you is a packed practice schedule followed by regular competitions. This relentless over use of your joints and the muscles associated without the requisite strength training makes you highly vulnerable to injury.

For example a well-planned shoulder strengthening programme which has both resistance training and stability focus will make your shoulder a lot more prepared to handle you practice volume and less vulnerable to injury. If you are a soccer player you should be training your legs and hips through squats, deadlifts and other posterior chain routines and a tennis player apart from all the above must also strengthen their forearm and other muscle groups associated with the elbow joint.

Strength training is not just a means for performance enhancement but also for performance sustenance through better injury management.

Improved performance

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In almost all cases athletic performance is defined based on 2 parameters namely speed and power. Both these parameters are a direct product of strength.

Say you want to increase your high jump from 1.8m to 1.9m or you are a swimmer and you want to be the fastest of the block then your answer is simple. You need your muscle to be providing you with more power. Any increase in muscular performance can only be effected through dedicated strength work.

Once an overall strength training program is in place than the requisite customization with regards to your own specialization can be effected.

Conclusion

In a nutshell strength training helps improve sports and athletic performance at the same time helping you check overuse injuries. Please don't get us wrong. We are not debunking the traditional form of sports and athletic coaching. We just believe that our mindset to approaching sports and athletic coaching for ourselves and for those whom we care about needs to evolve.

It's a no brainer. Coaching for sports and athletics without strength training is not coaching at all.