

The Importance of Performance Testing

Athletes are continually evaluated for their performance on the field, whether it be wins/losses or statistics specific to their sport. However, a majority of the athlete's time is spent in training, and the lack of evaluation in this realm can drastically affect performance on the field. So what do you look at when evaluating a strengthening and conditioning program?

Preparing for a test day.

Test days are just as important as game days from both the athlete's and coach's perspective. Therefore, the days leading up to the test day should be treated as those leading up to any other game day. This differs from sport to sport, and from coach to coach. You want to emphasize that your athletes take care of their nutritional needs, academic loads, personal lives, and anything else that could affect their performance. When test day arrives, you have to insure that safety is first. Athletes will do whatever is necessary to get that extra repetition, but it can put them at risk for injury. Any time an athlete's form breaks down, the lift should be stopped. Would you rather say your athlete lifted that extra 5-10 lbs or have the athlete healthy for the upcoming season?



What tests to use and why?

What sport do you coach? What position does the athlete play? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Are you assessing your program?

Answering these questions will give you a better idea of what tests to use.

Here is a table of tests you can use to effectively measure various aspects of a program.

Power	Strength	Speed & Agility	Endurance
Vertical jump Broad jump Seated med-ball throw	One-rep max Five-rep max 225 lb bench max rep	40 yard dash T-test Box drill	VO2 max Bruce protocol PACER test

Using the test results.

Once you have test results available you can compare the current results to those the athlete has produced in the past or you can compare them to other athletes. This allows you to pin point an athlete's needs. If you have an athlete that fell short on the vertical jump test then you know you need to focus on power in this athlete's training. If an athlete is not making progress compared to others in the same program then you know that the training program isn't the issue. At that point you can determine what has been holding the athlete back.

The greatest benefit of the test results is that it shows the athlete that their hard work and training is paying off. This prevents you from having to persuade the athlete to work hard, and instead they take ownership of their training. Especially if the athlete has aspirations to get to the next level such as collegiate or professional. You can show your athlete how other athletes at the next level perform in these tests, and you can set goals for the athlete to strive for.

How do performance tests help your program?

Not only do performance tests allow you to motivate your current athletes and make them better performers on the field, they also help you develop your program. You can take the test results from each season and compare them to the past to see where your program is headed. If you see major changes in the results of your program at certain points in the year, you should seek out the cause. For instance, if your athletes performed worse this year than they ever have in the past, you or their specific coach may be pushing them hard in practice. This is resulting in overtraining, and changes must be made to improve their performance on and off the field.

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