

# COACHES COACHING COACHES

teaching, training, learning



# Table of Contents

---

Editor's Message

**The Strength of Vulnerability: Transforming Team Dynamics in Sports**

Cody Roder

4

**The Understanding of the Qualities and Practices Needed for Strength and Conditioning Coaches to Enhance Training Effectiveness**

Danielle Holt

8

**Enhancing Sporting Experiences Through Competitive Engineering**

Payton Armijo

12

**The Big Picture**

Dallas Raftenvold

17

**Navigating The Ups and Downs of Sports: Analyzing the Fear of Failure, Overcoming Adversity, and Fostering Growth in Coaches and Athletes**

Baylee Gartner

20

**Periodization in Track and Field**

Brandon Lewis

22

## Editor's Message

---

Every year, newly graduated college students enter the coaching profession. In most cases, these newly minted coaches have completed at least one coaching course with some earning a coaching minor. But, as every experienced coach knows, no amount of book learning or required college courses can truly prepare one to be an effective coach. There is truly no better way of learning than through experience.

An adage I learned many years ago truly explains how one learns and how one helps the next generation learn.

I do, you watch, and we talk.

I do, you help, and we talk.

You do, I help, and we talk.

You do, I watch, and we talk.

And then we each go help the next person

Coaches Coaching Coaches (CCC) is a supplement to Dakota Coach. The purpose of CCC is to provide an outlet for coaches to share coaching knowledge that helps other coaches become better coaches. CCC is interested in all topics related to coaching, for example, skill techniques, game tactics, coaching strategies, practice planning, team and individual psychology, nutrition, culture, first aid, training and conditioning, motivation, parent relationships, practice planning, mental health, leadership, mentoring, and relationships.

To submit an article to Coaches Coaching Coaches, send your article in Word format to [bradford.strand@ndsu.edu](mailto:bradford.strand@ndsu.edu)

*Brad Strand*

# The Strength of Vulnerability: Transforming Team Dynamics in Sports

Cody Roder, North Dakota State University

---

The pressure and high-demanding culture that surrounds today's sports in American society has been continuing to rise, placing a greater strain on the athletes and coaches. This strain has led to elevated levels of fatigue, depression, anxiety, and overall burnout. For a coach, it is their responsibility to be aware of the pressures their sport involves and provide an environment where these issues are limited. One of the more beneficial strategies in combating these pressures is by encouraging vulnerability throughout a given team. Being vulnerable creates a connection, which leads to trust, which leads to a sense of belonging, which leads to unity. It is a relationship based on trust, accountability, and authenticity.

Being vulnerable has often been conceived as a weakness. When in reality it can show inner strength and courage. Brené Brown who has extensively researched vulnerability raised awareness for the subject in a 2010 Ted Talk. She describes vulnerability as "The feeling we get during times of uncertainty, risk, or emotional exposure. This uncertainty in turn often produces a sense of emotional exposure for the participants who care deeply about that result. And emotional exposure then represents a risk to the ego, as it faces the potential backlash from mistakes or failure."<sup>1</sup> For an athlete when they are presented with these uncertain situations their response will inform you what sort of mindset they currently have. An individual that protects themselves from a negative emotional response from others will shield themselves. Whereas an individual who is embracing vulnerability will test their limits, pushing forward even as fear is

still present. Promoting and encouraging being vulnerable on an athletic team is an extensive process.

The first essential aspect is a positive relationship between all. A relationship that is built on trust. Although trust can be earned, Montana Volleyball coach Dana Hallisey explains what she instills in her team. "We focus on trust being a choice rather than something that is earned." This encourages her athletes to assume the best about each other to receive the best out of each other.<sup>2</sup> Holding team meetings is an example of what many coaches do as a way to communicate without being in a space where they normally practice. Typically held in a classroom, it allows for a team to ingest and think differently than in a practice facility. The expectations are that team members will be actively communicating about the discussed topics. A team is going to contain many different personalities, and these meetings are a place where everyone should be able to be themselves and share their thoughts. A successful team shows love, care, and acceptance for every member. Even if there are disagreements, which there will be, everyone must understand where each person comes from. Unified goals and team expectations may be established from the input during the initial communication. Allowing everyone to be on the same page. How each individual listens, interprets, and reacts to these thoughts will allow for trust to be built. Especially for a coach. There will be times when things are not going your way for a team—losing streaks, injuries, negativity on performances, etc. By bringing these things up it allows for the team

to speak up and share. Having the players in these meetings allows them to explain what they need to be successful.

A coach who holds their team to high values will have success in encouraging their athletes to build this relationship. By promoting that everyone on the team is there for each other and a family-like mentality, a coach is allowing more opportunities for vulnerability. A relationship is a two-way street and should they want their athletes to be vulnerable, the coach will need to have active participation and be practicing vulnerability. The team will need to see examples for their minds to accept it. A coach who admits his mistakes and responds to others with acceptance and support will spark an initial interest. The coach will need to be the first one to start the conversation to build up a psychologically safe team environment. A study conducted with the *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics* emphasized the importance of high-quality interpersonal relationships, particularly the coach-athlete relationship. Intentional communication and active listening included simple acts such as asking athletes how their day was and taking the time to listen. In addition, athletes felt “seen” when their coaches questioned them and seemed concerned if they seemed “off.”<sup>3</sup> It is these little things that can help start to build interpersonal relationships. The study participants also concluded that they felt uneasy when words and actions from a coach did not correlate. As it left them unsure of the “real” expectations. Participants yearned for accountability on their team. Accountability that is led consistently for all. Everyone on a given team must be presented and treated as equals. This responsibility will lie greatly with the coach. There are two different forms of accountability. Constructive and destructive. Constructive accountability reinforces the desired behavior with the reasoning behind it. An example could be on a travel trip having an

own-room curfew time the night before a competition. A coach should explain how they are holding their team accountable to adhere to the curfew because they care about the individual and the team meeting their goals for the next day. This reinforces the team's values without diminishing them as a person. Destructive accountability is attacking the person instead of the behavior. Should an individual break that curfew, a coach that attacks the player's values will harm the relationship. Explaining to the team why the behavior is not correct will lead to a better understanding by all.

In the book, *Culture Code* Daniel Coyle studies the legendary San Antonio Spurs coach Greg Popovich, who develops his championship culture with vulnerability and trust. He can be seen even after losses reaching out, smiling, and talking with each player. He holds a unique bond with each player on his team. Coach Popovich also makes sure that on away games the team and coaches all eat together. These all come together to pair high expectations with a sense of belonging. One reason why he is so successful is his authenticity. Authenticity plays hand in hand with vulnerability as a team is only going to respond to someone that they know cares about them.<sup>4</sup> Greg Popovich cares about the growth of his players, even when they are already at the highest level because they are not just players. They are people. A study by the Universities of Birmingham and Suffolk was conducted to better understand how athletes' attitudes were affected when they were coached by an “authentic leader.” The study devised four components of an authentic leader. Self-awareness to be mindful of one's strengths and weaknesses. Relational transparency is to express one's thoughts in a way that is aware of their impact on others. A balancing and objective processing of information. Finally, a positive moral reflection. Athletes who are coached by an

'Authentic leader' show an increase in enjoyment and commitment to the team.<sup>5</sup> Coach Popovich also exceeds in pulling his team's focus away from the narrow viewpoint of professional sports. During the season, he makes sure to discuss current events and humanities problems to force his players to think and remind them of the world beyond their sport. A world that they are a part of. For an athlete and a coach, this is a critical portion of the relationship-building strategy. Athletes are using sports as a release from other hardships that they may be dealing with in their lives. The sport itself has its performance-based stressors. Stressors that keep players fatigued, and anxious, and prevent them from being their best. Focusing and using the mind for exercises other than sports can help growth occur while simultaneously working away from stress. This opportunity for vulnerable communication helps improve creative thinking, team conversation, and production.

To conclude, the journey to ease the pressures of American sports culture lies in embracing vulnerability and authentic relationships within teams. Encouraging vulnerability on a given team is an extensive process. It is a formed relationship that is based on trust, accountability, and authenticity. A coach with the mindset of improving their athletes' character would benefit from implementing vulnerability practices on their team. Coaches looking to apply these concepts can take examples from teams that have proved their successes. They can emulate Coach Dana Hallisey's approach of cultivating trust as a foundational choice where they encourage athletes to believe in and support each other. Likewise, coaches can adopt Greg Popovich's practices such as ensuring team dinners during away games to foster unity and discussing broader world issues to maintain perspective and holistic growth. These will prepare them for life outside of sports. Being vulnerable will help better equip them for

future employment, professional relationships, being part of a family, and overall, a sense of being cared about. The pressures that are put on athletes can lead to an abundance of mental health struggles, even though sports are meant to be a release. Many players feel as though their voice is being suppressed and often teams are not psychologically safe. Vulnerability allows each person to show up to the best of their abilities and contribute. A coach's responsibility is to maximize the ability of their team and prepare them for what is next in their lives.

### About the Author

A former All-American Division 1 Track and Field athlete, Cody Roder has continued his education by studying Leadership in Physical Education and Sport in the master's program at North Dakota State University. By combining his experiences and mindset as an athlete with his growing knowledge of team dynamics and leadership skills, he provides a unique perspective on ways to support student-athletes in the current era of athletics.

### Works Cited

- Brown, B. (2010). The power of vulnerability. TED Conferences. [https://www.ted.com/talks/brene\\_brown\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability)
- Coyle, D. (2018). *The culture code: the secrets of highly successful groups*. First edition. New York, Bantam Books.
- Hallisey, D. (2020, April 20). Coaching With Vulnerability [web log]. [https://www.avca.org/Blog/Article/257/Coaching-with-Vulnerability-\(Presented-by-Sports-Imports\)#:~:text=Vulnerability%2C%20as%20defined%20by%20Bren%C3%A9,even%20when%20they%20feel%20impossible](https://www.avca.org/Blog/Article/257/Coaching-with-Vulnerability-(Presented-by-Sports-Imports)#:~:text=Vulnerability%2C%20as%20defined%20by%20Bren%C3%A9,even%20when%20they%20feel%20impossible)

Malloy, E., Kavussanu, M., & Yukhymenko-Lescroart, M. A. (2022). Changes in authentic leadership over a sports season predict changes in athlete outcomes. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology, 11*(3), 275–289. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000297>

Saxe, K., Smith, A., & Hardin, R. (2022, August 9). *Cultivating psychologically safe team environments*. Athletic Director U. <https://athleticdirector.uconn.edu/articles/cultivating-psychologically-safe-team-environments/>

# The Understanding of the Qualities and Practices Needed for Strength and Conditioning Coaches to Enhance Training Effectiveness

Danielle Holt, Bellevue University

---

## Beyond the Program

A strength and conditioning (S&C) coach's job is to supplement athletes or teams, to improve athlete resiliency, and athletic ability. Thus, the importance of S&C coaches' knowledge in sport science and human performance is stressed. Ideally, the coach can write a program, and the athlete will follow the program, resulting in an increase in the desired qualities for that specific athlete. The caveat is that athletes are humans first, not athletes. Effective training must consider all the other factors needed to engage in deliberate practice for each individual athlete. Coyle (2020), stated, "A coach's true skill consists not in some universally applicable wisdom that he or she can communicate to all, but rather the supple ability to locate the sweet spot on the edge of each individual's ability and to repeatedly send the right signals to help the athlete reach toward the right goal." (p.156). Everyone has different backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and learning styles. This differentiated instruction is key to an effective training program (Joseph et al., 2013). International Journal of Higher Education (2013) conducted a study to examine the impact of differentiated instruction. Responses from the study indicated that 91% of students reported higher levels of intellectual growth because of exposure to differentiated instruction.

Many arguments in the coaching field have suggested that S&C coaching is a form of teaching and appropriate pedagogies may enhance S&C coaches' practice. (Holt, 2016) proposed a range of pedagogical methods for S&C coaches including instructional techniques, scaffolding, session organization and management, communication demonstration, and questioning. Pedagogy is a term that refers to the method of how coaches teach, in theory and in practice.

Pedagogy is formed by a coach's beliefs and concerns the interplay between culture, environment, and different ways to learn. A coach can write the most scientifically sound program to advance elite athletic performance, but if the coach cannot teach the program, then it is ineffective. The quality of teaching and instruction is what is crucial to the program. Effective training is conducive of effective teaching. Coaches must demonstrate developed capacities across a range of areas to be optimally effective in a dynamic social context (Jeffreys, 2014). In O'Neil & Hopkins (2002), *The Teacher as Coach Approach: Pedagogical Choices for Management Educators*, state that "We have a role as coaches in our students' being and becoming: extending a hand at the elbow, providing an imperceptible nudge, creating a climate of freedom and dignity, asking deep questions, challenging values, and calling for reflection." Ideas like this are supported by O'Connor & Yballe's (2004) article *Maslow*



*revisited: Constructing a road map of human nature.* The article states “Our pedagogy must be appreciative, helping our students to be aware of their peak experiences and best moments.” The following sections will outline a blueprint of building a pedagogical approach for S&C coaches.

### **Knowledge**

There is currently a paucity of literature on what constitutes effective S&C coaching (Gearity, 2009). This issue provides a challenge to making universal recommendations for coach education and development programs (Cushion et al., 2003). In Grant and Dorgo’s (2014) article, *Developing Expertise in Strength and Conditioning Coaching*, they explain how a S&C coach’s formal education is not enough for a coach to progress from a beginner coach to a competent coach. A coach must build on their minimal competencies by seeking professional development and gaining the ability to communicate effectively and influence their athletes’ behavior.

Werthner et al. (2006), classify knowledge required for effective coaching into two types: sport-specific content knowledge and coaching pedagogical knowledge. This idea means effective coaching requires a coach to have an enhanced capacity for critical thinking. An effective coach must make decisions and compromises by utilizing both content knowledge areas. No single training session can make an athlete, but one training session can break an athlete. This idea is why the teaching aspect of a S&C coach is crucial. The intent behind each training session and each exercise is pivotal for development. Formal education in S&C is mostly focused on exercise science which is seen by coaches as essential for effective coaching. This understanding of basic exercise science is crucial in a coach’s success but is not enough to run an effective program on its own.

Academic study of S&C will often encourage coaches to integrate the latest findings of research with less emphasis on the logistics of delivery (Jeffreys, 2014). Literature and recent findings related to training techniques and modalities are great advancements, but most are unrealistic for application to the average coach. This form of development does not prepare a coach to handle the daily challenges S&C coaches encounter such as time, resources, and varying personalities. Plans and programs used by coaches often differ by form, education, and controlled unproblematic scenarios where complexity often needs to be reduced to ensure deliverable results (Jeffreys, 2014). A need exists for coaches to develop pedagogical approaches to supplement their scientific knowledge. Bond & Lavalley, (2012) reported that S&C coaches cited developing trust, being flexible, and motivating athletes as the most influential aspects of their coaching. This item presided over scientific principles, emphasizing the importance of learned practical knowledge for effective coaching (Bond & Lavalley, 2012).

### **Connection**

Effective S&C teaches athletes how to use the safest and most effective positions for their bodies to optimize performance. A strength coach is to teach an athlete a skill or ability so they can go and apply said skill to their sport. A strength coach would use their two areas of content knowledge to select said skill. Coaches should select activities that are ideal to meet the needs of their athletes and the desired adaptation. Once the activities or program has been decided by utilizing knowledge across different capacities, the coach must focus on the execution of the training plan. This includes the presentation and explanation of the program, the quality of instruction and feedback, the quality of error detection, the acceptance of the plan by the athletes, and the athletes' motivation in carrying out the plan. The coach must develop a safe learning

environment that encourages athletes to struggle and achieve. For the strength coach, it is not simply about struggling. It is about seeking out a particular struggle. The book, *The Talent Code*, provides a cycle of actions to help individuals execute this struggle. That could be useful to S&C coaches. “1. Pick a target. 2. Reach for it. 3. Evaluate the gap between the target and reach. 4. Return to step one. (p. 92). The coach is to set a target, standard, skill or movement for the athlete to accomplish. For example, a S&C coach decides they want their athletes to perform a power clean. The coach prepares or reaches for the target or movement by providing basic progressions into the movement.

Continuing with our example of the power clean, to prepare for the power clean, the coach needs to break down the movement into chunks. The first step would be by first learning the deadlift. As the athlete prepares for the power clean by learning the deadlift, the coach can evaluate the gap between the target and the reach. This process allows the coach and athlete to be successful for many reasons. First, there are fewer moving parts. By chunking the movement or standard into pieces, the athlete has fewer standards to focus on and allows them to be successful. This process also allows a coach to recognize any dysfunction in movement and correct it. Breaking down the exercise into different parts also puts the coach in a better position to hold the athlete accountable. If an athlete can demonstrate “pulling the slack out of a bar” on a deadlift, the same can be expected on the power clean. Allowing a S&C coach to “connect the dots” for an athlete by delivering already familiar cues and instruction during the power clean creates better understanding. This process is otherwise known in education as scaffolding. Scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and greater independence in the learning process. Farias et al. (2017) suggested the use

of scaffolding should be undulating in fashion, considering different aspects such as the difficulty of the learning content, learning age, uncontrollable outside sources of stress, student progress, or the time of year. This requires the strength coach to develop a relationship and work with his or her athletes by using the appropriate context for everyone’s situation.

### Relationship

The athlete is the main piece to a coach’s practice, and developing an understanding of the athlete is vital for a coach to develop a repertoire of what the athlete needs to be successful. It is important to remember that practitioners coach people, not programs. One study interviewed athletes to understand their perceptions of S&C coach behaviors. Findings showed that athletes perceived coach effectiveness to increase to the degree of coaches’ relationships with the athletes (trust, approachability, sense of humor) and teaching (feedback, instruction, communication, and organization) (Szedlak et al., 2015). Coach-athlete relationships will affect athlete performance and subsequently the overall success of the program (Gearity, 2012).

The purpose of this article was to expand our understanding of the qualities and practices needed for S&C coaches to enhance training effectiveness. Effective S&C coaching is a series of actions that require competencies in a wide range of areas. It is important for the S&C coach to consider all interconnected factors discussed above when planning and implementing a training program to ensure effective deliberate training. Through my own experience, I believe athletes want to know how much you care before they care about how much you know. The teams I have the best individual relationships see the most progress. Building a relationship allows me as a coach to be able to relate to the athlete, and tailor my coaching to their personal needs or learning styles. Developing relationships with my

athletes allows me to set realistic goals with each person, and create buy-in, which is crucial to running a successful, effective program.

### References

- Bond, K. A., & Lavalley, D. (2012). Professional development themes in strength and conditioning coaches. *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, 26(3), 851-860.  
doi:10.1519/jsc.0b013e318225eed1
- Coyle, D. (2020). *The talent code*. London: Random House Business Books.
- Cushion, C. J., Armour, K. M., & Jones, R. L. (2003). Coach education and continuing professional development: Experience and learning to coach. *Quest*, 55(3), 215-230.  
doi:10.1080/00336297.2003.10491800
- Farias, C., Hastie, P. A., & Mesquita, I. (2017). Scaffolding student-coaches' instructional leadership toward student-centered peer interactions. *European Physical Education Review*, 24(3), 269-291.  
doi:10.1177/1356336x16687303
- Gearity, B. (2009). Effective collegiate baseball strength coaching. *Strength & Conditioning Journal*, 31(2), 74-78.  
doi:10.1519/ssc.0b013e31819d65d9
- Gearity, B. (2012). Coach as unfair and uncaring. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 6(2), 173-200.  
doi:10.1179/ssa.2012.6.2.173
- Grant, M. A., & Dorgo, S. (2014). Developing expertise in strength and conditioning coaching. *Strength & Conditioning Journal*, 36(1), 9-15.  
doi:10.1519/ssc.0000000000000028
- Holt, A. (2016). Using Shulman's pedagogical reasoning model to improve strength and conditioning coaching. *The Australian Strength and Conditioning Association (ASCA)*, 24(3), 6-22. Retrieved 2021.
- Jeffreys, I. (2014). The five minds of the modern strength and conditioning coach. *Strength & Conditioning Journal*, 36(1), 2-8.  
doi:10.1519/ssc.0000000000000035
- Joseph, S., Thomas, M., Simonette, G., & Ramsook, L. (2013). The impact of differentiated instruction in a teacher education setting: Successes and challenges. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 2(3). doi:10.5430/ijhe.v2n3p28
- O'Connor, D., & Yballe, L. (2007). Maslow revisited: Constructing a road map of human nature. *Journal of Management Education*, 31(6), 738-756.  
doi:10.1177/1052562907307639
- O'Neil, D. A., & Hopkins, M. M. (2002). The teacher as coach approach: Pedagogical choices for management educators. *Journal of Management Education*, 26(4), 402-414.  
doi:10.1177/105256290202600406
- Szedlak, C., Smith, M. J., Day, M. C., & Greenlees, I. A. (2015). Effective behaviours of strength and conditioning coaches as perceived by athletes. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 10(5), 967-984.  
doi:10.1260/1747-9541.10.5.967
- Till, K., Muir, B., Abraham, A., Piggott, D., & Tee, J. (2019). A framework for decision-making within strength and conditioning coaching. *Strength & Conditioning Journal*, 41(1), 14-26.  
doi:10.1519/ssc.0000000000000408
- Werthner, P., & Trudel, P. (2006). A new theoretical perspective for understanding how coaches learn to coach. *The Sport Psychologist*, 20(2), 198-212.  
doi:10.1123/tsp.20.2.198

### About the Author

Danielle Holt is the head strength and conditioning coach at Bellevue University in Bellevue, NE.

# Enhancing Sporting Experiences Through Competitive Engineering

Payton Armijo, Soccer Coach  
Bakersfield, CA

---

Organized sport provides wonderful opportunities for children and youth to develop sports skills, improve relationships, and gain leadership skills. Unfortunately, many youth sports programs are designed for the more skilled athletes while many lesser-skilled athletes are marginalized. To provide opportunities for all children, intentional competitive engineering (CE) is recommended. In short, (CE) involves the process of making modifications to the competitive environment by altering sport structure, rules, facilities, and equipment to enhance desired cognitive, social, and behavioral outcomes (Burton et al., 2011).

Coaching efforts that modify sports and classroom environments to focus on mastery goals rather than outcome goals will enhance cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes (Harwood et al., 2008). The greatest coaching challenge to creating a positive environmental change in youth sports is navigating the competitive culture that tends to detract from an autonomy-supportive climate designed to enhance intrinsic motivation (Felak, 2011). CE advocates a systematic approach to change by emphasizing the impact of environmental factors on motivation, performance, and enjoyment. CE targets the psychological basic needs of competency, autonomy, and relatedness among young athletes to enhance intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2000).

The main objective of CE is to create programs that ensure positive competitive experiences. The implementation strategies of CE focus on making athlete involvement the highest priority and winning a natural by-product of that process. The purpose of this paper is to provide a conceptual framework for competitive engineering, to identify goals and implementation strategies that foster greater intrinsic motivation in youth sport, and to discuss how utilizing these strategies as a future and current coach will promote an autonomous supported environment in which to enhance sports experience and influences future sports involvement.

## Conceptual Framework

CE demonstrates a developmentally focused philosophy; maintain the enjoyment of sports for athletes as they progress through their youth sports careers, grow their psychosocial maturation, maximize age-appropriate skill development, and minimize burnout (Burton et al., 2011). Motivational climate research highlights mastery-focused coaching behaviors for creating task-oriented athletes. However, this approach to motivational change may be less effective in programs where coaches may not create autonomy-supportive sporting climates. This would likely be the case in youth sports, where most coaching positions are held by parental

figures who lack proper coaching education (Smoll et al., 2011). In CE, sports administrators are the primary change agents, thus eliminating the problems of having to deal with resistant or ill-prepared coaches. CE is designed to enhance intrinsic motivation based on modifications to the rules, facilities, equipment, and structure of competitive sport, creating autonomy-supportive structural change in how youth sport is conducted (Burton et al., 2011).

The self-determination theory outlines motivational behaviors based on three fundamental human needs: a) competence, b) autonomy, and c) relatedness (Ryan et al., 2000). In youth sports, competence can be fulfilled by improved performance strategies, enhanced mental skills, better teamwork, and positive social comparison (Duda et al., 2010). Achieved autonomy is essential for self-sufficiency as it provides greater control over success, improved independence, and increased input into the decision-making processes. When players are allowed to play with their friends, feel a part of a team, and enjoy playing in a cohesive environment, their need for relatedness is enhanced. Research identifies the relationship between autonomy and athlete motivation (Amorose et al., 2007) in that the more autonomous an athlete's motivation, the greater the benefits such as performance, persistence, and overall well-being (Gagne et al., 2003). CE and its systematic modifications to the structural side of competition enhance autonomy support in youth sports by giving all athletes additional methods to meet their needs.

### **Goals and Implementation Strategies**

Identifying athlete preferences is one approach to playing sports a more enjoyable and intrinsically motivating experience for young competitors. Based on Coakley's (1980),

assessment of formal (adult-organized) and informal (athlete-directed) youth competitive environments, post-game interviews confirmed that athletes enjoyed the informal environments more than adult-organized youth sports. These athlete-organized sandlot games create more opportunities for young athletes to maximize intrinsic motivation. Young athletes prefer a competitive environment that includes four athlete engagement goals: extensive action and scoring, high levels of personal involvement, close scores, and promotion of positive social relationships.

The CE model highlights four implementation strategies for attaining athlete engagement goals through the fulfillment of their basic needs (Burton et al., 2011). Autonomy needs are met through goals that promote extensive action in scoring, high personal involvement, close scores, and positive social relationships. Relatedness outcomes are promoted through the goals of maintaining positive social relationships. Flow, intrinsic motivation that occurs during peak performance, helps athletes develop a passion for their support. The goals presented in the model enhance athletes' probability of experiencing flow.

### **Increased Action and Scoring**

This goal will produce more opportunities for developing competence and experiencing flow. As more offensive opportunities are engineered into the sport, greater autonomy is achieved and competitive goals, then, fulfill internal motivators. Additionally, relatedness is accomplished by teams working together to attain the increased offensive goals. The best way to improve action and stimulate scoring is the competitive engineering implementation strategy of modifying facilities to scale down the size of fields, rinks, and courts. For

example, eight-year-olds playing soccer on regulation fields can quickly become fatigued and therefore reduce their chances of scoring. With a shorter field, however, scoring opportunities will be increased therefore improving the autonomy of the players. Additionally, lowering volleyball nets, producing the distance of free throws, rearranging serving lines, and decreasing the size of goal boxes to dimensions that are more appropriate for the age of participants should also enhance action and scoring.

Equipment modifications can also promote increased action and scoring by modifying the size and weight or flight properties of balls. For example, scaling footballs to the size of the hands and feet of participants should increase the competence and autonomy of the sporting environment. Lastly, reducing enforced rules involving slow action (free throws, penalty kicks, timeouts, etc) will also stimulate greater action and scoring.

Maximizing development while enhancing engagement and enjoyment can be achieved by coaches who create action-packed training sessions. Finding an optimal amount of activity and variety during training is essential for avoiding boredom, reduced learning, and burnout. Excessive variety requires new learning drills that are designed to mirror competition for the realistic transfer of skills to competitive situations. With the upkeep of training prioritizing enjoyment in highly motivating stimuli, personal development becomes consistent daily.

### **Extensive Personal Involvement**

Autonomy support is enhanced when all athletes feel a part of the action and have an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to their team's success (Ryan et al., 2000). Unsurprisingly, players who are regulated to

positions with few opportunities to be involved quickly lose interest and often drop out of sports participation. Personal is related to two factors: playing time and playmaking (ball handlers) opportunities.

Playing time and position rotation rules are designed to increase meaningful personal involvement by increasing feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. To enhance playing time, teams can keep a small roster of players who will spend most of their time performing rather than sitting on the bench. Further, engineering rules to guarantee all players significant playing time enhances the competitive experience and provides the opportunity to develop skills that are meaningfully involved.

Position rotation is also a strategy to enhance involvement for all players and therefore achieve a satisfactory experience. If players continue to play at a single position, their skills will remain underdeveloped, and their full potential will not be achieved. Playing multiple positions allows players to become more well-rounded and develop a better perspective concerning the importance of individual success rather than team success, which enhances feelings of competence.

### **Keeping Scores Close**

When games are highly competitive, feelings of competence increase as motivation and enjoyment are the highest during close-scoring games (Duda et al., 2010). Athletes who experience frequent wide-margin losses are prime candidates to drop out of sports because they believe the losses reflect their lack of competence. Equally, easy wins promote a lack of challenge which prompts athletes to seek other avenues of excitement.

With CE, there is a two-stage process that is needed to consistently promote close scores.

First, coaches need to equalize talent across teams during the initial selection process. This strategy will minimize talent inequities and keep teams evenly matched. Second, developing rules (catch-up rules) to keep scores close in individual competitions and maintain balance for player interest. Catch-up rules allow the lower team to receive extra competitive advantages such as more swings, outs, serves, downs, possession, etc. Returning from large benefits promotes a greater feeling of personal autonomy, thus increasing internal motivation.

Another type of catch-up strategy is instituting rules that allow trailing teams to use special tactics that may be beneficial and help them catch up such as allowing a hockey team to add a player and create a power play situation. A final handicap strategy is to enact rules that limit the role of top players such as placing a constraint on the number of points or goals scored. Instead, challenge the top players by regulating them to a new position. These catch-up strategies and rule modifications are designed to promote continued play and increase competitive balance for enhanced intrinsic motivation.

### **Promoting Positive Social Relationships**

Unfortunately, organized sports programs often teach athletes to dislike their opponents, even though competition requires cooperation between opponents. As a result, disliking opponents impairs the development of an autonomy-supportive competitive climate. It also reduces the opportunity to develop positive social relationships which are essential for the attainment of relatedness needs for intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2000).

Fortunately, CE offers several strategies to enhance social relationships between both teammates and opponents: 1) joint practices involving two or more teams help develop

positive relationships in a learning environment that enhances development and competence, 2) socialization rules such as shaking hands before and after games or helpful in creating a more positive social environment, 3) emphasizing teamwork, cohesion, and sportsmanship during competition also promotes cooperative goals and relatedness, 4) joint tasks such as having the two teams cooperate on preparing the facility for competition, fundraising, or field maintenance built better and more cooperative social relationships between opponents (Conroy et al., 2007; McArdle et al., 2002; Treasure, 2001). Finally, organizing formal and informal social events, such as post-game meals, alumni games, or program-wide barbecues, will help bring players together (Treasure, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

Youth professionals can champion CE through structured autonomy-supportive environments that enhance intrinsic motivation, enjoyment, and skill development. Through CE, facilities and equipment are developmentally appropriate for the age, size, and ability of young performers, who in turn, develop sound fundamental skills. Additionally, CE helps produce well-rounded skills because altered rules require performers to learn multiple positions and develop a wide variety of skills, further enhancing personal involvement. More opportunities are also provided to meet the needs of low-ability or late-developing participants, which assists with lowering drop-out rates. The engineering that regulates improved action and scoring provides more opportunities for all performers to execute skills correctly, which increases competence. Conversely, the more action and scoring, the less important a single mistake becomes, decreasing high pressure and performance anxiety.

Even though these strategies are most important in allowing low-ability performers to be successful, skilled athletes should experience more fun and excitement with action-packed, high-scoring contests. Above all, CE guides how to structure programs by modifying rules facilities, equipment, and structures to reach athlete engagement goals that help enhance intrinsic motivation outcomes by meeting competence, autonomy, and relatedness needs that promote positive competitive experiences.

### References

- Amorose, A. J., & Anderson-Butcher, D. (2007). Autonomy-supportive coaching and self-determined motivation in high school and college athletes: A test self-determination theory. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 8, 654-670. DOI: [10.1016/j.psychsport.2006.11.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2006.11.003)
- Burton, D., O'Connell, K., Gillham, A. D., & Hammermeister, J. (2011). More cheers and fewer tears: Examining the impact of competitive engineering on scoring and attrition in youth Flag football. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 6, 219–228.
- Coakley, J. (1980) Play, games and sport: Developmental implications for young people. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 3, 99-118.
- Conroy, D. E., & Coatsworth, J. D. (2007). Assessing autonomy-supportive coaching strategies in youth sport. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 671-684.
- Duda, J. L., & Treasure, D. C. (2010). Motivational processes and the facilitation of quality engagement in sport. *Applied Sport Psychology: Personal Growth to Peak Performance*, 59-80.
- Felak, M. (2011). The effects of motivational climate and coaching behaviors on sport commitment in recreational youth sports. All Theses. 1185. [https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all\\_theses/1185](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/1185)
- Gagne, M., Ryan, R. M., & Bargmann, K. (2003). Autonomy supports and needs satisfaction in the motivation and well-being of gymnasts. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 372-390.
- Harwood, C., Spray, C. M., & Keegan, R. (2008). Achievement goal theories in sport. *Advances in Sport Psychology*, 157-185.
- McArdle, S., & Duda, J. K. (2002). Implications of motivational climate in youth sports. *Children and Youth in Sport: A Biopsychosocial Perspective*, 409-434.
- Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.
- Smoll, F. L., Cumming, S. P., & Smith, R. E. (2011). Enhancing coach-parent relationships in youth sports: Increasing harmony and minimizing hassle. *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*, 6(1), 13-26. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1260/1747-9541.6.1.13>
- Treasure, D. (2001). Enhancing young people's motivation in youth sport: An achievement goal approach. *Advances in Motivation in Sport and Exercise*, 79-100.

### About the Author

Payton Armijo is a former college soccer player at North Dakota State University. She is currently a high school soccer coach and teacher in Bakersfield, CA.



# The Big Picture

Dallas Raftevoll, Robert Asp Elementary School

---

Many times, individuals, or groups of people are so caught up in their everyday lives and routines that they are oblivious to what they are doing and the reasons behind their actions. They may be causing harm to others when they think they are helping or creating an undesired mindset for others to follow. This may result from different reasons, but leadership or direction may be at the forefront of what is going on, for good or bad. Leadership is what guides direction based on the idea of a big-picture model. In the profession of motivating individuals and groups, what truly is the big picture and how can we get there?

Every big picture has many little bits and pieces that were perfected to create a masterpiece at the end. Just like every championship team was committed to showing up every day to better themselves and their teammates. It is the in-depth process with the big picture constantly in mind that drives individuals and teams to be the best they can be. With a task that may seem difficult at first, the more one practices and is persistent in their training, myelin will grow and strengthen, and the task will become more desirable later.

Keeping athletes motivated to continue working, through effort-based language early on, compared to general feedback, will allow them to see that their effort is not going unnoticed, and eventually, with the same effort, they will reach their goal. Athletes who were praised for their efforts were 90 percent more likely to take a harder test than students who were not praised that way (Williams & Wigmore, 2020). If coaches can believe in their athletes and show them praise for working

hard, they will gain the self-confidence to take risks that they may never have tried.

Another aspect of connecting the big picture to the process is trying to strengthen the overall mental toughness of a group to be able to overcome obstacles they may be faced with daily. The best players on sports teams may not be the best athletes but they often have the best minds. Whether they are talking about decision-making during a game or the way they cannot get back after a mistake; to continually pushing through and bringing their teammates with them. The big picture is something that should drive the decisions of the process and how things are done, but without a clear big picture, it is hard to create a map to get to that destination.

How is it that some leaders can get their athletes to buy in better than others? That is a question that constantly drives many coaches as they try to reach the youth they interact with daily. First, one must be an authentic leader who sets his or her core behaviors and priorities early on and then leads by example. If one is unable to hold oneself to his or her standards, it would be very hypocritical to hold individuals accountable to the same standards. An authentic leader is not someone who is dictating every movement and behavior of the individuals, but rather sets guidelines that act as guardrails to keep followers on track of where they, as a team, want to go. Letting students and athletes have a bit of autonomy within the guidelines to mature and grow keeps in line with the big picture.

A goal of many youth coaches is to have their athletes enjoy being physically active. I have found that if athletes have a fun

experience with the physical activity they are doing, they are much more willing to put effort into that activity. That is certainly much easier said than done as there will always be a handful of athletes who may lack self-efficacy in a particular skill, which then takes away any intrinsic motivation there could be. That is when it is a coach's job to break down the skills or activities that are being worked on to try and build intrinsic motivation through chunking. Being able to chunk up a skill can be very beneficial for these individuals to work on a step-by-step approach and experience small success after small success and eventually put it all together as a whole.

All coaches find it fulfilling to see athletes who may have doubted themselves early on and then after this process, the look they have in their eyes when they realize that they can do it. Being able to encourage intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation through chunking will create a sense of accomplishment for the individuals that hopefully carries into a positive attitude toward that skill and into the future. Creating a positive learning environment for athletes, where mistakes can be learning experiences and challenges can be overcome through self-development, it will build upon the big picture that keeps them within the guidelines to get where they want to go.

Learning the process of what works for certain individuals to get them to strive towards the big picture may not work for others, but by consistently learning and growing as professionals, coaches can better prepare the individuals they influence for their futures. A learning curve that was very helpful to me has been getting to the big picture the right way. Focusing much more on the process than the product. Teams that show up to win are much more outcome-oriented, focused on tasks they have no control over, play much more uptight in fear of losing, and therefore do not showcase their best performance. Conversely, teams that show up to compete focused on controlling the tasks they can control play with

much more confidence and can put their best performance on display, accepting whatever happens after that. They can be proud of knowing they gave it their best effort.

As an athlete, I was always process-driven because I knew that if I could practice and set myself up for success, then the rest would play out how it is supposed to. As a new coach and teacher, this did not come to me initially, but over time, it has been a light bulb moment that has changed my entire approach to teaching and coaching the students and athletes I get to influence. I am much more focused on getting them to control what they can control, and the rest will take care of itself. One way I do this is with deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is knowing which buttons to push and when to push them for certain individuals to get them out of their comfort zones to allow them to grow beyond where they thought they could. They may experience mistakes at first, but by encouraging and motivating the individuals, they can learn from their mistakes which as a result builds upon the abilities they previously had.

### Summary

A big-picture idea may look overwhelming at first, but with the right approach taken, it can have an everlasting impact on many individuals. Teachers and coaches can change lives for the better, and for the worse, if not approached the right way. Create a big picture that you and many others want to be a part of and put your heart and soul into the process of motivating others to get there with you. A well-articulated BIG picture can have a BIG impact for so many!

### Reference

Williams, M., & Wigmore, T. (2020). *The best: How elite athletes are made*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, Boston.

**About the Author**

Dallas is currently an elementary physical education and health education teacher at Robert Asp Elementary School in Moorhead Minnesota. He coaches junior high football

and an assistant varsity boys golf coach. He also helps run a youth football program that serves roughly 1300 4th-6th graders every year.

# Navigating The Ups and Downs of Youth: Analyzing the Fear of Failure, Overcoming Adversity, and Fostering Growth in Coaches and Athletes

Baylee Gartner, Parks Rapids, MN

---

"I've missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and repeatedly in my life. And that is why I succeed." - Michael Jordan. "Every strike brings me closer to the next home run." - Babe Ruth. Two quotes from two of the best athletes of all time. The purpose of this paper is to discuss failure in sports, its effects on athletes, and how one can use failure to their advantage.

Fear of failure is one of the most common issues in youth sports today. The evolution of youth sports from the early 2000s to now has been dramatic. Youth sports have become more competitive, parents are more involved, and in some cases, they have higher stakes. When I was younger, one could sign up for youth soccer, show up to games, no practices, and just play for fun. Now it is every weeknight practice, club fees, and traveling games. Parents are frequently too involved in youth sports as well. The pressure parents put on their children to compete at a higher level and do well is ridiculous. In the What Drives Winning video titled *The Biggest Issues in Sports*, Coach Geno Auriemma and host Brett Ledbetter talked about the ride home after a game (What Drives Winning, 2017). Geno and Brett discussed how some athletes described the ride home after a game as the worst part of participating in a sport. They did not want to face their parents after a bad game or even sometimes a good game because what they did was not good enough.

Another video from What Drives Winning (2015) discussed different ways to overcome failure as an athlete and a coach. This video featured a discussion between Coach Billy Donovan and Brett Ledbetter. He was talking with his player about missing shots in a game. The player was so upset because he had missed nine shots in his game. Billy asked the player how long it took him to take those nine shots. The player decided probably about a second per shot. Billy then asked the player why he was letting those nine bad seconds ruin the rest of the 37 minutes and 51 seconds of a good game.

Athletes too often let bad experiences dictate how the remainder of their meet, game, or even season will go. I currently serve as a swim coach. This past summer, we had a swimmer who had a rough first race at the state meet. From this, she then had the attitude that she was not good anymore and she could not compare to any of the other swimmers from our state. After that one bad race, out of four for her that meet, she gave up.

She had horrible races the rest of the day because of her attitude and struggled coming back from it. Some would call this a self-fulfilling prophesy. She did not make it to the second day of finals, and she let the failure of the first race defeat her. Young adults, even at the collegiate level, are so concerned with what others think of them that the fear of failure and embarrassment is enough to keep them from doing what they love and taking risks in sports (Gorant, 2021).

Consider the two quotes posted at the beginning of this paper. Both athletes, Michael Jordan and Babe Ruth, were highly successful at what they did, and they credited part of that success to failure. Obviously, one can learn some hard lessons from failure.

Failure can help one grow as an athlete, as well as a person. In Jordan's quote, he talked about all his losses, and he even mentioned how he had been relied on 26 times to make the game-winning shot and missed. For some, that pressure would be too much, and the pressure of failure would be the thing that makes them fail. Jordan was able to learn from his failures and bounce back to be one of the greatest of all time.

A video from *What Drives Winning* (2019a) featured Steph Curry, his shooting woes, and how he recovered. In the first game, he missed every shot he took. He went 0 and 10 for 3-pointers that night. Even though he failed the first time, he went back nine more times and failed every single time. In the video, he kept trying and he did not look phased, even though internally, he was probably struggling. The night after missing all ten shots, Curry went on to set the record for most 3-pointers made in an NBA game by one person. Curry learned from his failures the night before and continued to believe in himself even though he had failed ten times the night before.

Related to failure is embarrassment. As mentioned earlier, young adults, and even many adults, are too afraid to do things out of fear of being embarrassed. Some might suggest that embarrassment and failure are very similar. Most of the time in a sports sense, when one gets embarrassed, it is because of a failure or mistake they have made. As a coach, it is hard to teach athletes not to be embarrassed because you cannot help it. Kelly Inouye-Perez, the head softball coach for UCLA decided she needed to take matters into her own hands

when concerning embarrassment with athletes (*What Drives Winning*, 2019b). Her softball team was having a banquet after a hard loss and started talking about how they were frustrated and embarrassed after losing these big games. Coach Inouye-Perez asked her players why they were even embarrassed, and they had said it was because they had failed. It was at that moment that Inouye-Perez decided she was going to change the way they approached embarrassment.

The team decided they were all going to respond to embarrassment the same way and they were not going to be affected anymore. Instead, they would learn from their failures and embarrassment. When the next big game came around and they had made mistakes, the girls decided, "We are not going to be embarrassed about this" and they made the game more enjoyable. After that moment, UCLA went on to win against the Oklahoma Sooners in two games.

The topic of embarrassment leads us back to a girls' swim meet this past season. Sadly, our girl involved did not grow from her embarrassment or failure as well as UCLA did, but it was a lesson learned regardless. We were at an important dual meet against our biggest rival. It was our first-time swimming against them this season, so the pressure was high. All of our girls were extremely nervous going into the meet because the score in these meets is always close, and we were currently undefeated. The girl involved got disqualified in her first race for leaving the blocks too soon in a relay. No big deal, we told her to shake it off and prepare for her next race. She was unable to stop thinking about it and in her next individual race, she was disqualified again for leaving too soon. At this point, she is inconsolable. Unable to get out of her head, her biggest competitor is herself at this point. By the time of her last race, you could physically see she was embarrassed and felt like a failure.

When they blow the whistle to get up on the blocks, she goes up, the official says, “take your marks” and she goes down, she starts to wobble and then falls off the blocks into the water. She then had to try to shake that off and get back up to redo the whole starting process. She was not disqualified but she was so embarrassed from falling off the blocks and the other two disqualifications that she was a goner. That night she let her failure and embarrassment get the best of her and she could not let go.

Fast forward a month. We are back at the same pool. Same officials and everything. She was nervous going in, but confident she was going to do better. She was joking around about the previous meet in this pool, talking about her disqualifications and embarrassing fall off the blocks, but you could tell it was bothering her. My co-coach and I were both worried she was getting in her head because of the previous meet's events. She ended up earning a spot on the podium for every event this time. No disqualifications, and she was even our conference champion in the 100-meter breaststroke. She came back so ecstatic. She was so excited about winning and when we asked her if the previous meets failures were in her head, she said yes, but she was determined to have a better meet and learn from the previous experience.

Failure is not only an athlete problem, but a problem for coaches too. Especially new young coaches. Young coaches tend to worry so much about the win and losses that they don't consider the lessons and growth that is happening around them with their team.

I have provided two stories of my athletes where they have learned some hard lessons

from failures, and I think I should be included in that. I have learned from my failures as a coach and their “failures” as athletes. However, we shouldn't refer to them as failures. Instead, we should consider these events as lessons or setbacks, like how Michael Jordan and Babe Ruth viewed their struggles to perform.

### References

- Gorant, J. (2021). *Stress less*. Golf Journal, winter, 49-56.
- What Drives Winning. (2015). Billy Donovan: Beating human nature Part 2 [Video]. <https://whatdriveswinning.com/?conference-video=part-ii-beating-human-nature>
- What Drives Winning. (2017). *Geno Auremma Part 1 The Biggest Issues in Sports* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsUuz5rpMO0>
- What Drives Winning. (2019a). *Third visit: Water the bamboo*. [Video]. <https://whatdriveswinning.com/?conference-video=gonzaga-water-the-bamboo>
- What Drives Winning. (2019b). Sue Enquist and Kelly Inouye-Perez. *How to respond to the heat*. [Video]. <https://whatdriveswinning.com/conference-videos/how-to-respond-to-the-heat/>

### About the Author

Baylee Gartner is a physical education teacher and swim coach in Park Rapids MN. She is a two-time assistant coach of the year for boys and girls swimming. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from North Dakota State University.

# Periodization in Track and Field

Brandon Lewis, NDSU Graduate Student

---

A track and field periodization plan is going to look different than other sports. The main difference is that track and field at the collegiate level has two different seasons, an indoor season, and an outdoor season. With two different seasons comes two different macrocycles. Macrocycles define an entire season(s) plan, it may not be the whole annual plan, but the entire season(s) plan is defined as such.

Within each macrocycle there are phases, the phases are summed up to preparatory (preparation) and competition. Preparatory refers to preparation for competition, this includes general preparation and specific preparation for all events. The competition phase is where you will see more detailed focus on technique and working on things that may be struggles throughout the season, ironing out the wrinkles, this can be split into the precompetition and the competition phases.

Each season has both a preparatory and competition phase, this means in track and field you will have two of each. A preparatory phase at the beginning of the indoor and outdoor training phases and a competition phase during the competition weeks of both seasons. With fall training lasting 3-4 months before the first competition, the first preparatory phase will be the longest of the phases.

Once the second preparatory phase starts after the indoor season and before the outdoor season, there is no need for another general preparation phase, as this phase would set the athletes back in their training and the general preparation is not needed because the athletes

are already conditioned for competition. This short preparatory phase will focus more on rest and getting ready for the next precompetition and competition phases.

Traditionally there are nine mesocycles in a training plan in track and field at the college level. Each mesocycle is four-five weeks of training with its own theme. The athletes need to start with general training to get in shape, so the first mesocycle theme is work capacity in September. October: the second mesocycle and we are still focusing on work capacity but also focusing on the technical aspects of our events. September and October fall into the “General Preparation” period in the “Preparatory Phase.”

November, mesocycle three, is focusing on speed. This is when we work on increasing our maximum velocity, whether it is on the runway or the track. During November we are preparing for the first indoor track meet at the beginning of December so there will also be focus on technique during this mesocycle, but this is mostly working on speed with small aspects of technical training. In December, the fourth mesocycle, we mainly want to focus on strength. This is easier for the athletes to manage during Christmas break, it is also important for them to do before the season truly takes off. November and December fall into the “Specific Preparation Period” in the “Preparatory Phase.”

After Christmas break is over and everyone is through their strength mesocycle, we hit mesocycle five in January. This is where we really focus on ironing out the details of everything, the run, takeoff, landing,

everything. We will still be working on technique and speed, but now with a strength mesocycle in December we can now get faster, stronger, and jump farther. January is our “Precompetition Period.”

February starts our “Competition Period” with mesocycle six, peaking. This is where we want our athletes to peak in preparation for the conference meet. Peaking in this case means this is when the athlete should be their fastest, strongest, and most powerful. Both January and February fall under our “Competition Phase,” but are in different training periods or mesocycles.

In March we switch gears into the outdoor season training. We go back into our “Preparatory Phase” and our “Specific Preparation Period.” With March comes mesocycle seven, review. This is where we review what we struggled with during the indoor season and hit the ground running to correct those mistakes that we were making. We may not be correcting all of them at that point, but we are making sure we recognize them.

April starts the eighth mesocycle. We transition into our “Competition Phase” and our “Precompetition Period.” This is where we iron out the wrinkles in our technique. We did the same in our first “Precompetition Period” in January. We recognized what we did not do well during the indoor season; this is our chance to improve where we need to.

Finally, May starts our ninth and our final mesocycle. We are still in our “Competition Phase,” but we have transitioned into our “Competition Period” as well. Like the end of the indoor season, the end of outdoor season ends with the peaking mesocycle. This is where each athlete should be in the best shape they can be, the strongest, fastest, and most powerful they have been all year in preparation for the conference meet and what may come after the conference meet (regionals, nationals,

and any meets that may be related to world competitions). If an athlete qualifies for any meet after the conference meet, then the peaking mesocycle continues until their season ends.

Along with designing a training plan comes supercompensation. Coaches need to make sure that their athletes are in an adequate training zone. If the athletes’ training is too easy, they will not get anything out of it. Same goes for if the training is too difficult, the athlete will not get anything out of it. Supercompensation relates to allowing the athlete to return to homeostasis after a training session. However, the compensation effect can diminish once an athlete begins to adapt to the training. This means that the training in each mesocycle must continuously get more challenging so that the athlete can continue to perform at increasingly higher levels. For example, if your athletes are running ten 100m sprints at 80% one week, the next week they should be able to run ten 100m sprints at 90% without it feeling too much more difficult than the 80%. Increasing the number of repetitions can have a similar effect.

It is imperative that you do not overtrain/overload your athletes. If an athlete is doing too much at practice, they will not be able to recover properly before their next training session. This means an increased chance of injury can occur. Having a rest day/active recovery day in the middle of the week is a terrific way to combat too much training. As an athlete that took part in active recovery days each Wednesday during my college career, this will be something that I will always have implemented in my training. Along with that, we do not want to experience reversibility. This means if an athlete performs the exact same task every day, they will stop gaining anything from it once they adapt to it. At that point, the athlete will be getting worse performance wise versus performing at a higher level.



One of the more important parts of sport at any age is a saying, “You play how you practice.” A saying that almost every athlete has heard in their lifetime. Certain practices should have a competitive atmosphere, especially testing weeks. If you have a day with short approach jumps, put cones out for each person to see who can jump the farthest. In some cases, when developing the fundamentals of the technique of the events this would not be a promising idea, but once the fundamentals are set, use this technique to see if it transfers over to a competitive atmosphere. This helps coaches know what tendencies the athletes may have in a meet. At NDSU we had a lot of competition days, we all loved it because it got us thinking more about the competition than the technique. That sounds counterintuitive, but it allowed the coach to see what we changed in that atmosphere and allowed him to help us make the changes necessary to jump better and more efficiently.

Lastly, there needs to be individuality. ALL athletes are different athletes. Some may react negatively to a certain drill. They may not be able to do the drill at all due to a physical issue. This needs to be understood to design training. Injuries are also a big part of this. If an athlete is hurt or injured, adjustments must be made to their training to adhere to what they are going through. Another way to adhere to an athlete is when an athlete may not be ready for a certain amount of volume. Taking a repetition or two from them can help or telling them to take it down 5-10% of effort. It is

different for all athletes so I will have to be able to be open with the athletes and make sure they are doing okay physically and mentally during practice and competitions. If changes need to be made, they will be made.

Now it is time for me to touch on the ratio between volume and intensity. Each macrocycle and mesocycle will start with high-volume, low-intensity and end with low-volume, high-intensity training. In simple terms, as a jumps coach, intensity can be defined as how fast the athlete must move to complete a task. This could be sprinting low repetitions at a short distance but doing so at 95-100%. Volume relates to how much the athlete does, this could mean more work capacity with running two sets of three 200m at a 30-32 second place, that is not intense for the athlete, but it will be more volume. It is important to find a good ratio between the two during training. You do not want to have the athletes do high-volume and high-intensity simultaneously, that will be too difficult for the athletes. The same goes for low-volume and low-intensity, that will be too easy for the athletes. There must be a ratio between the two that will benefit the athletes.

### About the Author

Brandon Lewis is a former track and field athlete at NDSU. He is currently working as a volunteer assistant with the University of Minnesota track and field program.

Annual Training Plan Two Peaks (Indoor and Outdoor) (2024-2025)																																										
Month	September				October				November				December				January				February				March				April				May				June					
Dates (Mondays)	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	3	10	17	24	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9		
Competitions (ASM)												X						X	X	X	X	X	X	CC			NC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		CC		NC		NC		
Annual Plan	Annual Plan																																									
Macrocycles	Indoor Season																				Outdoor Season																					
Phases	Preparatory										Competition										Preparatory										Competition											
Periods	General Preparation										Specific Preparation										Precompetition										Competition											
Mesocycles	1				2				3				4				5				6				7				8				9									
Mesocycle Themes	Work Capacity Strength Sprint Technique				Intro Jumping Work Capacity Testing				Speed Jumping Technique Power				Strength Power Light Jumping				Approach Jumping Progression Speed				Peaking				Review Short Approach Sprint Technique				Approach Jumping Progression Speed				Peaking									
Microcycles (Weeks)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40		
Intensity	2	3	3	4	5	5	3	8	3	4	8	3	5	8	4	4	3	8	5	3	8	3	5	4	4	3	8	3	4	3	8	6	4	5	3	4	5	3	5	3	5	3
Volume	5	6	4	7	6	8	4	4	6	8	3	4	7	4	8	3	7	4	3	4	5	9	3	3	4	7	4	5	8	4	3	4	7	3	3	3	3	6	3	3	3	3
	Intro	Low-I/Mid-V	Recovery	Low-I/High-V	Intro	Mid-I/High-V	Recovery	High-I/Low-V	Low-I/Mid-V	Low-I/High-V	High-I/Low-V	Recovery	Mid-I/High-V	High-I/Low-V	Low-I/High-V	Recovery	Low-I/High-V	High-I/Low-V	Mid-I/Low-V	Recovery	High-I/Mid-V	Low-I/High-V	Mid-I/Low-V	Low-I/Low-V	Recovery	Low-I/High-V	High-I/Low-V	Low-I/Mid-V	Low-I/High-V	Recovery	Mid-I/Low-V	Mid-I/Low-V	Low-I/Low-V	Recovery	Mid-I/Low-V	Low-I/Mid-V	Mid-I/Low-V	Recovery				
V Tots:																																									182	
																																									195	