

The 25% - 75% Rule

Year-Round Training With Discipline and Toughness

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PART I

The training program I designed is real simple, and on paper, or in a clinic talk, is probably not going to turn a lot of heads. Our emphasis instead is on cultivating attitude and effort, combined with a year-round climate of discipline and toughness. In summation 25% of our program is WHAT we do, while 75% is HOW we do it.

Let me first start out by talking about conditioning. Work capacity, or the ability to sustain effort, is critical both on the field, and even in the weight room. It is the foundation for optimizing all physical activity, and the lack of it, a precursor for injury. As an athlete you don't need to be in great shape year-round. But you should never be completely out of shape. It doesn't matter how strong or fast you are if you can't sustain effort play after play. There is, however, no off-season program that gets a man totally ready to play football. The biggest part of preparing to play football is practicing football. Our FB coaches must have bodies and minds that physically and mentally prepared to practice at the highest level. That is the primary focus and goal of our off-season.



As we all know, football is the tough sport, and it's not for everyone. To me, it is the best sport there is for offering both a mental and physical challenge, with marathon running and wrestling being right in there with it. (As a matter of fact, when I was at Oregon State, there were times in the winter that was used to send all our linemen to the OSU wrestling coach for their winter conditioning. I assure you that experience has not been forgotten by those involved.)

As previously mentioned, we consequently strive to develop tough minds and bodies in planning and structuring our training programs. I have always believed that the tougher our players are mentally, the tougher they will be physically. Remember, the man who mentally won't do it is the same as the man who physically can't do it. We strive to develop mental toughness by doing several things in our workout program. First, we have what we call mandatory "stand tall" philosophy whenever we are training. No matter what the circumstances we do not allow any athlete to physically bend over, touch their knees, take a knee, sit down, or lean up against anyone or anything for physical support when they are fatigued, ever. This included even when in our weight room where you are never physically allowed to sit down unless doing a specific exercise. This is important for two reasons. Number one: If you bend over physically, you are bending over mentally. Number two is that any appearance of fatigue is encouraging to our opponents. Also true, in the reverse, is that the non-appearance of it is demoralizing as well.

We also don't play the stereo while working out. This is strictly a focus issue. I've seen more workouts over the years ruined or compromised by the distraction of player disagreements over music selection, volume, etc. We don't play music during sport practices either, and the reasons are the same for both. It is belief that if you are focused on working hard, music becomes irrelevant, and, consequently, when you are focused on music, hard work becomes irrelevant, no matter what the activity. In addition, it is more difficult to communicate and coach for all of us with loud music present.

In summation, our mind-set here at WSU is very simple: Make toughness a mandatory part of your thinking whenever you are physically doing anything in our program. I firmly believe this trait can be improved and cultivated in all human beings.

The bottom line to developing mental and physical toughness is this: You must create situations where your players are forced to think about quitting. The key word here is "think." I tell our players that it is no disgrace to think about quitting. We have all been in situations at some point in our lives where we have thought about quitting something. We want to create a mental proving ground for overcoming the urge to quit, while hopefully preventing it from ever happening. If you'll take a play off in a workout, the odds are you'll do it in practice and games.

As Bear Bryant once said, after you quit once, it makes it easier a second time. Here are some other critical points of emphasis:

Group Accountability

Just as in a game, all our players are held accountable when any individual makes a mistake. Knocking over cones, jumping off sides, missing a link, lack of effort, or failing to "stand tall" are all zero tolerance issues. When this occurs, with any player, the whole group will do 5 "up downs" at the conclusion of the workout for each violation. The players at fault are in the middle of the circled group of their teammates and they lead the rest of the group. This creates peer pressure, develops leadership, and creates a sense of urgency that forces greater concentration. Incorrect up downs are not counted.

Off the field, we believe strongly in this as well. For instance, if any player misses his required training table meals, his entire position group runs after our team workout. I enforce any weight room related discipline issues during the winter program on Wednesdays at 6 AM, which is a scheduled team day off from training. The motivation here is obvious. Fair and consistent discipline is critical to the morale of your team, and remember, it's the player's team. They ultimately decide by their actions and attitudes in the off season what kind of team they aspire to be, and they must take ownership of it at their level. In the winter, if there are any player training related discipline issues, they are posted on the weight room grease board. There must be peer pressure and a daily sense of urgency. This is especially true in the summer when workouts by rule are voluntary. Because of that, we also always try to make sure we have player captain or senior presence in each training group year round.

Individual Accountability

We allow no excuses, or the old axiom "I'll try." The minute anyone says this they are giving themselves an out. Either do it, or don't do it. This starts first and foremost with myself, as a coach. Remember, you will only get what you demand from you athletes. Nothing more, and nothing less. We also have a dress code in our weight room for every athlete at WSU. This is school pride issue as well.

Great Effort

I'm starting the obvious here, but players must learn to finish drills. Full speed effort must become second nature in the workouts. Finishing strongly must be demanded. There is a marked finish line, and then is an imaginary line several yards further that is the real finish line. We want a "times 40 yd. dash" effort in finishing all drills and distances.

Competitiveness

You must develop competitiveness in your workouts and identify who your competitors and leaders are. In most cases, our players are either competing against one another, or against a stopwatch. We do as many agility drills as possible with players paired in twos with people at their own position. All sprint work is done by position groups as well. When we condition, players must line up and compete alongside other in their same position group. At the conclusion of our winter program we have had a team wide, weeklong "Superstars" competition. It was not only physically challenging, but great for morale.

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PART 2

Early AM Workouts

Growing up as the son of a Marine, I have always believed in early AM workouts and the discipline that goes with them. It also makes sure your players are awake and on campus, and hopefully on to class. In the winter, we are probably the opposite of most people in that we lift early and run the afternoons as a team. Our first lifting groups start at 5:435 AM, and our entire football team is done lifting by 10 AM, every day. We run at 4:30 PM as a team.

In the summer, on Mondays only, we start our first voluntary lifting group at 1:00 PM, and then run as an entire team that evening at 5:30 PM. I feel that it is important for the bonding of our team that at least once per week our entire team is together working hard. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays we start our first lifting group at 5:45 AM. We run immediately after lifting, and each session is about 2 hours in length. The only exception to this is that on Tuesdays, we do plyo's and our heavy power cleans inside before doing our agility circuit outside. Because this is a full speed workout, and a light leg day, we do all leg work after we run. On Fridays we place our first and highest priority on back squatting heavy steps ups and lunges. We tempo run afterwards.

A typical summer program will last about 8 weeks. A normal week would be as follows:

| Monday | Tuesday | Thursday | Friday * |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| ½ Gassers | Plyo's/QF ** | Plyo's/QF ** | Tempo 100's |
| Form Run | Agility Circuit | Agility Circuit | Form Run |
| Overtime | (Weight Vests) | (Weight Vests) | OT |
| Post Stretch/Core | OT | OT | Post Stretch/Core |
| Balance Drills | Post Stretch/Core | Post Stretch/Core | Balance Drills |

