

**Presented By:**



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**Training the Explosive Athlete**  
**Part 2: Developing a Philosophy**

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To recap the previous article that I wrote, we have found that 80% of our need in developing our athletes is found in movement (Speed, Agility, Power, Endurance and Strength). Whereas the strength portion of our program only contributes 20% of our overall need.

The 80% of our program that is based in movement is the key to the program. It is the key because it helps to develop your athletes. Ahh... “Athletes”. The word that everyone throws around but so few people do anything to improve this ability.

Just think about it. When someone wins it’s because they have better athletes, when some one loses it’s because they don’t have enough of them. When your coaches are out recruiting, the biggest thing that they recruit is athletic ability. Why is it that most strength programs spend 80% of their time in the weight room? I’ve had people say to me that if they had the athletes we have had they could win too. Well then go get them. Then make them better. If you are spending your time just lifting weights you are limiting the ability that they have.

About five or six years ago I began noticing that after a year or two in our program our kids were closer in ability to the NFL players then they were to a college player. I began to notice that they didn’t need to become stronger, because they were strong enough. They didn’t need to get bigger, they didn’t need to get leaner they were really “finished athletes”. To be finished meant that they were able to what we needed them to do, physically, and do it at the highest level against the best talent in the country.

What they needed to do was to specialize and improve on more specific issues. If you look at what is going on at the NFL level there is a tendency to move away from testing maximal one effort movements whether it is on the field or in the weight room. What is being trained are the abilities that a teams needs to be highlighted or sharpened so that the player can do it better then anyone else.

Don’t get me wrong, we still lift, we train heavy and we train hard in the weight room. But we also train it in the proper place and time. As we look at the needs of the game of football or basketball, or whatever sport you are working with, you will find what “needs” to be done to be the best. In the end it’s all about improving the player’s athletic ability.

When we have college athletes we prepare them for our needs at USC. When our kids have finished their eligibility we will focus on their combine needs. After they have made a team they come back and train

for the needs of an NFL player. Actually except for the load level the needs are the same as what our kids work on a normal day.

To have a successful program you need to have a philosophy. When I have a job opening at USC I will ask the candidate, during the interview process, what their philosophy is. I had one guy who went on for 20 minutes trying to put the whole kitchen cabinet in to his philosophy to make sure he hit all the buzz words and to use his kinesiology and physiology to good use. After he was finished I asked him how he would incorporate all of that in a short period of training time. He had no idea how it could be done. He had all of the theory and had gone to enough clinics and had taken all of the classes but he couldn't put it on the floor. He didn't get the job. I get banged in my own profession all of the time when I hire people to my staff. The biggest gripe is based on two things, first what qualifications does this person have that was hired at USC, second, people are upset that they weren't hired.

I have hired former high school coaches, track athletes, junior college coaches, GA's, fitness professionals and head and assistant strength coaches from other programs. I have found that the people who think they have all of the answers have been my worst hires. They're so caught up in what they want to do that they forget that they are working in an established program.

My best coaches have been the ones that came to me with very little experience in this profession. They had three things I was looking for. First, they had a great history of loyalty. Second, they have a great work ethic. The last thing I looked for was what they knew about the business. I could teach them what they needed to do. My educational background is a BS in education and a Masters degree in History. Getting certified has been so watered down now that anyone can become a "certified strength coach". Right now I have eight strength coaches who I have worked with that are head strength coaches around the country. I've only been in the business for 12 years of my 24 year coaching career, not a bad average.

Your philosophy must be able to be put in to a concise clear organized statement. Let's say fewer than 25 words. My training philosophy is: How To / How Fast / How Much. Six words. When my coaches go on to the field or out on the floor they will carry this with them.

How To is the technique that is used. The work ethic that is built in our athletes. The way we do things right all of the time.

How Fast is the speed of the movement whether it is the athlete changing direction or jumping or lifting a bar this will allow you to consistently improve the way that they play. How fast is also about how quickly we will progress from basic movements to complex movements.

How Much is the number of reps and sets and the weight or the time that is being given to finish a movement. This is the last thing that we concern ourselves with. We've got to do the movement right with great speed before we load the athlete.

Too many programs I have seen are based on How Much / How Much / How Much. Where the only concern was to see how much you can load your athletes, how much you can run your athletes, how much work can you get in during a workout. All the focus is about quantity, not quality. In the end these programs get so caught up in creating "media numbers" they forget to do their job ... which is the development of better athletes.