

Catching Up with WVU Head Strength Coach Mike Joseph



Photo by David Miller



By Jess McCadam for wvillustrated.com

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MORGANTOWN, W. VA - Getting in the weight room and training during the summer months is a crucial part in making sure West Virginia is considered one of college football's elite powerhouses. Although working out during the summer is completely voluntary, Offensive Coordinator Dana Holgorsen says if they are not doing it, some other team is.

"Working out in the summer....it's all voluntary and guys don't have to do it," says Holgorsen. "Now, if they don't do it, they are getting passed up by people at Pitt and people at Louisville, South Florida, Rutgers and Connecticut. All those teams are doing things in the summer to get themselves better. If our guys aren't doing things in the summer to get better, they are going to get passed up, which I don't think is going to happen."

So, we decided to check in with the guy in charge of making sure the Mountaineers do not get out-worked by any of their Big East competition this summer. We talked with WVU Football's Director of Strength and Conditioning, Mike Joseph, to get the scoop on just why summer workouts are so important.

WVI: How important are summer workouts for players?

MJ: Workouts are very important for the players. It is the time of the year when they can continue to get stronger, faster, more powerful and develop a great conditioning base for fall camp. Players can spend a good amount of time working on their position work with their teammates, and it's a great time for the team to bond.

WVI: Do you feel it gives them an edge over players who choose not to participate in summer workouts?

MJ: The comparison between players that participate in a structured program and the players that choose to not workout over the summer is drastic. The players who put the work in the off-season usually are physically more prepared for fall camp and tend to perform better and have less injuries.

WVI: How are summer workouts and in-season workouts different?

MJ: Summer workouts have more volume and time compared to in-season workouts. In-season workouts are only 3 times per week, and the time working out is greatly reduced. The workouts focus on 5-6 core lifts and try to maintain as much

strength and power as possible. The conditioning and speed/agility work are practically cut out due to the demands of practice and competition. The summer workouts are more intense, and the demands are very high because the factor of playing a game every week is not part of the equation. The athletes are pushed and challenged as much as possible to maximize their gains physically and mentally. The athletes need to have competition among teammates and with themselves every workout to keep the edge during the off-season when games are not available. Athletes workout 4-5 times per week. The program encompasses speed, agility, lifting and conditioning in a very systematic progression that continues to fall camp.

WVI: What's the intent of summer workouts?

MJ: Summer workouts are geared toward the development of athletes through a very demanding regimen of training. The goal is very simple: make the strongest, most explosive fast athlete possible. If a football player becomes a stronger better athlete, more than likely he will be a better lineman, better linebacker, better receiver, etc...

WVI: Summer workouts are voluntary, right?

MJ: All summer workouts are voluntary to the student athlete. We are allowed to use 8 weeks during the summer as countable weeks of training but must be under 8 hours per week of total training.

WVI: Are coaches allowed to check in with you on a player's progress? Do coaches have any participation at all in player's summer workouts?

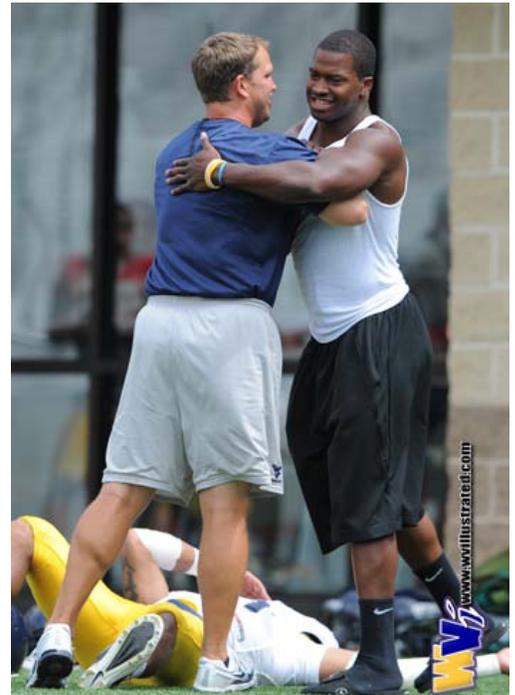
MJ: The coaches do not have interaction with the athletes unless the athlete initiates the meeting away from training in a voluntary manner. I do not report back to the coaches at any point to discuss the summer workouts. The summer workouts are a time when the coaching staff must trust the strength staff to develop the players in the direction that they want the team to go in, and trust that we will have them prepared for fall camp. It is a time when the athletes must do a lot of individual work on their own, and try to develop their team chemistry and position work through drills with their peers with no coaches around.

WVI: How does it feel to be such strong and positive influence to your players during the summer, since you will be the one seeing them day in and day out?

MJ: The strength staff will always have a constant influence on the athletes. The players know that every time they step into the weight room or on the field, that our staff will challenge them individually and as a group. But, we will always have their best interest in mind at all times. My goal is to develop each athlete fully to their potential and allow them to be in the best physically prepared state to compete for a starting position or be the best in the conference or have the chance to make it to the next level. And if each athlete fully gives everything at all times, he as an athlete will be successful, and we as a team will always be able to compete at the highest level.

WVI: Is it rewarding for you to see guys who make the choice to be there in the summer and want to get better?

MJ: The most rewarding part of being a strength coach is to see an athlete physically develop from his freshman year to his senior year, and know that you had a lasting impression on him as a person and helped develop his character and work ethic that will allow him to be successful in his life.



WVI Photo/David Miller