

TRAINERMAKER

The Role of a Strength & Conditioning Coach

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Introduction

There are a significant number of people who play sport and would like to improve and optimise their performance. Being a strength & conditioning coach offers you the opportunity to offer a personalised programme, pitched toward your client and the sport they participate in

Being a strength & conditioning coach will not make you an expert in each individual sport however, so it is recommended that you also undertake further study and National Governing Body qualifications in order to be better prepared for your future clients

Range of participants

Fun recreational

This participant may consider the sport to be a pastime or a hobby. They have reasonable motor skills and general fitness. For these people, sport may be about the social element as much as it is about winning

Serious recreational

This participant considers the sport to be a serious pastime. Performing well and success is of primary importance to them. The social side of the sport may be of secondary importance

Professional or elite amateur

This participant is an athlete and is more often than not full time training for and competing in their sport. These athlete are performance driven and will strive for continual improvement. Often, they will have a team of people all working with them to help them progress

Factors affecting performance

There are many factors affecting an athlete's performance:

- Physiology
- Biomechanics
- Technique
- Nutrition
- Psychology
- Equipment
- Teamwork
- Physiotherapy
- Tactical knowledge and experience to name but a few...

It would be impossible to be an expert in all of these areas, so know your limits and offer advice only in what your specialism is. If guidance is needed in other areas, then seek help from other professionals

The challenge of a team approach

Where you as a strength & conditioning coach stand in a hierarchy of coaches and fitness professionals when working with an athlete will depend on numerous factors, including:

- Length of relationship
- Experience level
- Impact upon performance
- Personality
- Time availability

There will always be instances where you have to report to the sports coach in control of the overall athlete plan. This is particularly true of sports which require a high level of technical input. It is important to accept this and join the team in the most constructive manner possible

Your role

- Assess strengths and weaknesses
- Plan and periodise programmes 
- Prepare individuals and resources
- Monitor performance
- Adapt and amend
- Review and evaluate
- Balance the needs of the team and the individual
- Communicate clearly with all parties involved

Your specific role is to adequately prepare your athlete physically, for the demands of the sport that they are participating in. To do this well, you must encompass all of the components of fitness into your programming:

- Strength
- Speed
- Endurance
- Skill
- Flexibility

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The sports industry is so fast-paced that on-going development is essential for remaining current

- New scientific findings assist in the development of new coaching practices
- CPD demonstrates commitment to the profession and increases employability and reputation, as well as your knowledge and skills
- CPD is also useful in developing a good network of colleagues and associates that can help both you and your athlete throughout your work

Evaluating new information

There are many new technologies and scientific principles emerging in the sports industry. However, not all of them are useful! You will need to decide whether or not to trust the information you see. Questions to ask include:

- Is it peer reviewed?
- Is it supported by other sources?
- Is it referenced and verified?
- How can you be sure that the information is accurate?
- Who is the author – are they an industry expert and do they have a vested interest in the information that they are presenting?