

Year Round Periodization for High School Football

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The purpose of this article is to provide a simple outline for year-round strength, power, and speed development program for mid to high-level high school football players. This plan will provide the basic parameters for post season recovery, max effort strength development, speed strength development (explosive power), sports specific conditioning, and SAQ (speed/agility/quickness) development. This program is primarily intended for one-sport athletes or those older athletes who have begun to specialize in one sport...in this case football.

Over the years my training philosophy has changed greatly, and although I consider myself a student of Russian Conjugate Training and a Westside disciple, I don't believe that most athletes will benefit from the Conjugate Method year round. WHOA! WHOA! WHOA! Hold on now! Did I say that?!? Before Louie gets on the next plane to Jersey and kicks my ass let me explain.

First, I am not and do not train power lifters, I train athletes. My main focus is in high school and college level football players, tennis player, volleyball athletes, wrestlers, T&F throwers, and sprinters. That being said, I do not believe that young developing athletes can safely max-out with weights above 95% year round. The loading of the spine and the stress on the Central Nervous System are just too much, not to mention all the pounding most athletes take during the sport season. Also, I know for a fact that it is not a good idea to start maxing out as soon as an athlete comes back from a long tough season. There should be several weeks between the cessation of the football season and any CNS intensive work (i.e. Max-Outs, hard sprint work and intense conditioning). That said, there is a place and time for true conjugate training and heavy maxes. However, that training must be done in short bursts of no more than 10-12 weeks or you WILL detrain from your program due to CNS fatigue, and you could possibly injure yourself. That is why one must allocate that style of training to the early pre-competition phase, which for football would be the summer break. So what's a stubborn meat-head to do?

Think outside box! There are many high-level athletes all over the world training with different strength coaches—each with different ideologies—so there must be many different ways to achieve year-round strength and speed development other than the Conjugate Method. You must fit and modify your system and beliefs to accommodate the demographic of athletes you train. The human body is a highly adaptive organism that requires many types of stimuli in order to elicit transformation and adaptation. You must design a program that has a great deal of variation containing periods of high volume, periods of low volume, periods of intense heavy lifts, periods of sub-maximal work and so on. This will allow the athlete to continuously develop the many facets of strength without getting mentally and physically fatigued.

This training program was developed from years of experience, trial and many errors. My system is heavily influenced by Westside methods, Block Periodization, Dr. Verkoshansky, Mell Siff, Charlie Francis, Joe DeFranco, James Smith, Mark Verstegen, my friend and Muay Thai coach Ray Cruz and many more. So this is a diverse yearly plan that I believe covers many aspects of training and philosophies, and is an example of one of the many programs we have used at Varsity House. This program allows athletes to recover, restore, and build muscle mass as well as develop explosive strength, max effort strength, speed, and endurance year round so that each year athletes become stronger, faster and better conditioned.

So let get to the good stuff!

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Block 1:

- 6 weeks Dec 8th - Jan 18th
- **Focus:**
 - Restoration and regeneration of weak muscle groups (Core, External rotators of the hips and arms, static neck work, lower back)
 - Daily flexibility work, return to consistent general strength training.
 - **Implement sound nutritional program.**

The Plan:

- For this stage we employ lots of foam roller work, PNF stretching, sled work and light (mostly unilateral) strength training.
- All Primary exercises are done at around 70% max with a 5x5 set/rep scheme. Assistant work should be done in 3-4 sets of 8-10 reps without reaching muscular failure.
- Rest periods are around 90 seconds between sets and 2 min between exercises (except circuits). *Limited range of motion Bench for most linemen or those with shoulder injuries.*
- Core training is done at least 2x/week alternating between weighted core, rotational core, and static core movements usually at the end of training for the duration of the training year.
- Grip work is done at least 1x/week again alternating between heavy, static, and forearm work for the duration of the training year.

Typical 4-Day Split: Sample exercises.

Max Effort Upper	Light Lower	Light Upper	Heavy Lower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bench Press • Close-Grip Bench • DB Punch Press • Inverted Pull-Ups • Incline Rows • BB Upright Rows • DB Shrugs • Skulls BB or DB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Lunge Variation • SA DB High Pull • GHR or Hypers • DB Step Ups • Hip Band Work • Reverse Hypers • Weighted Core 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull Ups • Alt DB Presses • DB Floor Press • Front/Side Raises • Face Pulls • Hammer Curls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box Squats • Olympic Squats • GHR • Pull Throughs • Hex Deadlifts • DB Lunges

Block 2:

- 8 weeks Jan 19th - March 15th
- **Focus:**
 - This block will focus on the development of strength, increasing muscle tension and neuromuscular output.

The Plan:

- Stick to basic compound movements like the Bench, Squat, and Dead lift at 80% 1RM in a 4x3 set/rep scheme.
- All accessory work is done within 3-4 sets of 6-8 reps.
- Introduction of low intensity jumps such as line hops and wide-outs.
- Begin basic aerobic capacity work such as core circuits and fast paced movement prep as well as light jogs or jump rope post workout.
- Core training is done at least 2x/week alternating between weighted core, rotational core, and static core movements usually at the end of training.

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Typical 4-Day Split: Sample Exercises.

Compound Upper	Unilateral Lower	Unilateral Upper	Compound Lower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bench Variation • T-Bar Rows • Bent Over BB Row • Jerk Press • BB High Pulls • Dips 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line Hops • Low Box Jumps • Lunge Variations • GHR • DB Snatch • Kettle Bell Swings • Reverse Hypers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull Ups/Chin Ups • DB Bench Variation • OneArm DB Rows • OneArm Shld Press • Y,T,W Shld Circuit • Alt DB Curls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box Squats • Olympic Squats • Deadlifts • RDL • Good Mornings • GHR

Block 3:

- 4 weeks March 16th - April 12th
- **Focus:**
 - The focus of this block is on developing explosive strength.

The Plan:

- Here, we begin using weighted box jumps, jump squats, and/or Olympic lifts 2x/week in 3x3, 4x3, 5x3 or 6x2 fashions over the four week period.
- I also like to supplement kneeling/standing heavy med-ball throws with a 5x3 or 6x3 set/rep scheme 1x/week.
- All accessory work is done heavy 3-4 sets of 5-6reps with 2-3 min rest periods for maximum recovery and continuous power output.

Typical 4-Day Split: Sample Exercises.

Max Effort Upper	Dynamic Lower	Repetitious Upper	Max Effort Lower
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MedBall Chest Pass • Bench or DB Variation • Heavy Inc DB Rows • T-Bar Rows • BB Curls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weighted Box Jump • Lunge Variations • GHR (speed reps) • OneLeg Box Squat • Reverse Hyper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30s Chain Push-Up or MaxRep DB Press • Pull-Up/Chin-Up • OneArm DB Row • OneArm High Pull • OneArm Shld Press • DB Skulls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power Cleans (light) or BB Jump Squats • Chain Box Squats • Rack Pulls • Hex Deadlift • BB Step Ups • GHR (heavy)

Block 4:

- 4 weeks April 13th - May 3rd
- **Focus:**
 - Continuation of explosive strength development using a complex system.

The Plan:

- Here, we use loads of 85-90% in the squat in a 5x1 set/rep scheme followed by a 3 min rest then 2-3reps of “best height” box jumps for lower body.
- For upper body, we use 80-85% at 5x2 set/rep fashion, followed by a 2 min rest then 5 reps of moderate weight standing med-ball throws or clap push-ups.
- Again, accessory work is done heavy in 3-4 sets of 5-6 reps with 2-3 min rest periods. Increase total volume of training from previous block.

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Typical 4-Day Split: Sample Exercises

Max Effort Upper	Unilateral Lower	Repetitious Upper	Max Effort Lower
A1 Bench Variation A2 MedBall Throw or Plyo PushUp • Bent Over Row • Inverted PullUp • KettleBell HighPull • Reverse Curls	• Bulgarian Lunges • One Leg RDL • Step Ups • GHR or Pull Though • Reverse Hypers	• Rest Pause Close Grip Bench • Triceps Death • Weighted Pull-Up/Chin-Up • DB Jerk Press • Band Triceps	A1 Box Squat A2 Box Jump • Band Rack Pulls or Speed Deadlift • Power Step Ups • GHR

Block 5:

- 2 weeks May 4th - May 17th
- **Focus:**
 - Deload, restore, decrease CNS stress.
 - **Increase caloric intake.**

The Plan:

- Here, we perform only three workouts per week with **no** CNS intensive work.
- Lots of flexibility work and light sled pulling for GPP and regeneration.
- Core exercises such as Bench, Squat and Dead were performed 3-4 sets of 5 reps at 70% max.
- All accessory work was done in a 3x10-12 rep scheme.

Typical 3-Day Split: Sample Exercises

Upper Concentration	Restoration	Lower Concentration
• Limited ROM Bench Press • DB SwissBall Press • DB Lunges • BW Inverted Pull-Ups • Shoulder Raises • Biceps	• Sled Pulls • Foam Roller Work • Hip Circuits (Circles, Hydrants) • Abdominal Bridges • Light Cardio (Tempo's, Stairs, Air-Dyne)	Box Squats A1 DB Press Variation 3x10e A2 DB Rows Lunges B1 DB Shrugs 3x10e B2 Face Pulls GHR

Block 6:

- 4 weeks May 18th - June 14th
- **Focus:**
 - Return to Conjugate Training Method.
 - Development of max-effort strength.
 - SAQ and conditioning program begins.

The Plan:

- Modified 4 day conjugate training split.
- ME lower lifts are done with loads of 90-95% for 1RM in the squat and 85-90% loads in the bench for 3RM.
- Increase use of accommodating resistance.
- At the end of this block, we will try for a best effort 1RM in the bench, squat and dead in our annual in-house power lifting contest.
- Return to explosive jumps 1x/week in a 5x3 rep scheme using box jumps, broad jumps, or low load squat jumps.
- SAQ work is done Monday AM and Strongman style conditioning circuits on Friday following Max-Effort Lower work.

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- Also light position specific conditioning can be done on Saturdays for active recovery.

Typical 4-Day Split: Sample Exercises

AM SAQ PM MaxEffort Upper	Dynamic Lower	Repetitious Upper	Max Effort Lower
AM SAQ (10yrd,20yrd sprints, combine drills, various technique starts, resisted sprints, prowler) PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bench Variation (board press, floor press, band press) • DB Chest Press • Heavy Rows • Jerk Presses • BB Curls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box Jumps • BB Step Ups • 3-Way Lunges • Pull Throughs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max-Rep Work (Bench, DB Press, Chain PushUp, Pull Ups, Krock Row) • OneArm DB Shld Press or DB High Pulls A1 Shrugs A2 DB "Cleans" B1 Y,T,W Shoulder Circuit B2 Triceps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box or Olympic Squats • Rack Pulls • BB Step Ups • GHR Strongman Circuits Tire Flips Prowler Pushes Sandbag Cary Farmers Walk Keg Lifts/Cary

Block 7:

- 4-5 weeks June 15th - July 5th/July 12th depending on athlete's timeframe.
- **Focus:**
 - This block will focus on a continuation of Max Effort strength, and the introduction of intensive jumps, as to elicit the delayed transformation effect at the start of camp in August.
 - Also the further development of football specific energy system development is greatly increased during this time.

The Plan:

- Here, you should decrease the volume of strength work slightly as to increase the volume of speed work, jumps and explosive med ball throws.
- At this point sport active recovery is highly recommended on Saturdays.
- We remove the 2nd lower body day and replace it with another speed and conditioning session.

Typical 4-Day Split: Sample Exercises

AM SAQ PM Max Effort Upper	Speed & Conditioning	Repetitious Upper	Max Effort Lower
AM SAQ-Increase volume (10yrd,20yrd sprints, combine drills, various technique starts, resisted sprints, prowler) PM Bench Variations (board press, floor press, band press) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kneeling MB Chest Pass • Heavy Rows • Jerk Presses • BB Curls 	Football Conditioning Drills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleds • Bags • Stadium Stairs • Stance & Starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DB Chest Presses • Pull-Ups • OneArm Shld Press or OneArm DB HighPull • Band Pull Aparts • Arm Circuit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BB Jump Squats • Box Squats • GHR • Step Ups or Heavy Sled Pulls Strongman Circuits (Decrease rest periods) Tire Flips Prowler Pushes Sandbag Cary Farmers Walk Keg Lifts/Cary

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Block 8:

- 3-4 weeks July 7th/July 13th - Aug 2nd/Aug 9th Depending on athlete's timeframe.
- **Focus:**
 - The focus of this final block is on sport specific strength, speed, skill as well as specific metabolic conditioning for football.
 - Open-Ended Reaction-Based Agility Drills.
 - Conditioning is done in short burst of high output sled/prowler sprints around 5-7sec with 30-45 sec rest totaling 25-50 repetitions.
 - Begin transmutation of strength training.

The Plan:

- Here, you want to again decrease the volume of strength work down to 3-4 exercises on your Max Effort Days.
- As the athletes get closer to their camp dates you will want to continue to decrease the volume of training for at least 2-3 weeks.
- After that allow for one week of complete rest from strength training with only active recovery and flexibility work.
- Again, active recovery work is highly recommended on Saturdays during this block.
- We usually do our final strength/performance test 3 weeks prior to or athletes leaving for camp.

Typical 4-Day Split: Sample Exercises

AM SAQ PM MaxEffort Upper	Speed & Conditioning	Repetitious Upper	AM Position Drills PM MaxEffort Lower
AM SAQ -Increase volume (10yrd,20yrd sprints, combine drills, various technique starts, resisted sprints, prowler) PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bench Variation • Incline DB Press • OneArm Rows A1 Shrugs A2 Rev. Curls	Football Conditioning Drills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleds • Bags • Stadium Stairs • Stance & Starts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MaxRep rack Push Ups 3xMR • Pull-Up/Chin-Up • BB Hang HighPulls A1 DB "Cleans" A2 Triceps Push ↓	AM Position Drills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duck Walks • Pass Patterns • Pass Defense • Drop Steps • Scrape Drills • Open-Ended Agility Drills PM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Box Squats • GHR • Step Ups or Heavy Sled Pulls Strongman Circuits (Decrease rest periods) Tire Flips Prowler Pushes Sandbag Cary Farmers Walk Keg Lifts/Cary

**Ultimately YOU must decide the appropriate course for you or your athletes to follow, however, I hope this plan gives you some incite into the training methods used at Varsity House which have proven to increase performance time and time again on the football field. This, of course, is all that really matters!*