

Weight Circuits for Fitness Training

The science of weight lifting can be effectively used to help any athlete progress, regardless of age or skill level.

Thibodaux Regional's Sports Medicine Center recently gave area high school and college coaches more insight into how to maximize their athletes' potential by bringing in internationally recognized training expert Irving "Boo" Schexnayder, who is also the Director of Sports Performance at Thibodaux Regional.

"Be diverse," Schexnayder advised. "If your kids are in the weight room a lot, make sure you mix it up."

Schexnayder, who helped guide the LSU Track and Field teams for 12 years, recommends dividing weightlifting workout days into two categories: regional or auxiliary lifts and big lifts.

Regional lifts are exercises that work specific parts of the body - such as lunges, machines, dumb bells and plate play. Big lifts are squats, presses, bench, cleans.

"You can absolutely lift two days in a row, but do your big lifts one day and your regional lifts the next," Schexnayder said. "Don't make the mistake of scattering your regional lifts all throughout the week. Do them all together in one circuit session, in one bunch, for maximum results."

This schedule will allow coaches to take their athletes deeper into their training regimen to hit trouble spots.

"If your kids do deep squats on Day 1, sure, they're going to be tired and fatigued," Schexnayder explained. "But they still haven't hit all of the muscle fibers. If you have them do lunges on Day 2, you'll hit more of those fibers and force the body to be more resourceful."

Regional lifts do have their drawbacks. They're not particularly good overall strength developers and unless they're done correctly, they don't stimulate the blood and hormonal changes that big lifts do. Those blood and hormonal changes trigger human growth hormone release naturally into the body.

In order to use regional lifts correctly, Schexnayder recommends several keys.

1. Be careful of imbalances: This is where diversity comes into play. Mix up your exercises with twists and turns, literally. If your athletes do lunges one day for example, the next time have them lunge backwards or twist to alternating sides as they lunge. Make sure that twisting motion accounts for about half of your athletes' core workout. "Fifty percent of your ab workout should be twisting or diagonal motions," Schexnayder said. "Remember to take things side to side."
2. Prevent Injuries with Diverse Circuits: Mixing up how your athletes perform exercises will also help prevent chronic injuries. "Diversity is the mother of injury prevention," Schexnayder said. "You don't want to keep beating up the same muscles, ligaments and bones in the same manner. Different exercises or modifications stretch the tendons, ligaments and muscles in different ways. Diverse circuits are huge injury reducers." Be sure your regional lift circuits include pushes and pulls, extensions and flexions, upper and lower body, linear and twisting motions, front and back exercises.

Example of a Schexnayder Circuit:

| | | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| -Leg Curl | -Bent Over Row | -Behind the Neck Press | -Hanging Leg Lifts |
| -Twist Lunge | -Back Pull Downs | -Leg Extension | -Russian Twist |
| -Hyper Ups | -Dips | -Twisting Sit Ups | -Windmill |

Schexnayder recommends having 2 circuits and alternating between them or combining components of both circuits on different days.

3. Proper Reps: The reason Schexnayder recommends bunching regional lifts instead of scattering them throughout the week is because unless athletes perform enough repetitions, there will be little response from the body's endocrine system. "If you do 4 sets of regional lifts, your body will laugh at you," Schexnayder said. "But if you do 24 sets of work, you're going to get that growth hormone release. That release helps you recover better, plus body composition changes always follow endocrine adjustments. It's safe because your body is producing the human growth hormones in an internal way, not through external substances." Schexnayder recommends 24 sets of 8-12 exercises, but no less than 8 because then you don't have enough diversity. "Do 10 reps per set," Schexnayder said. "As far as how heavy should you go, your athlete should feel the 10th rep."
4. Proper Recovery in between sets: Allow 60-90 seconds of rest. This timing is critical in order for your athletes to get the maximum benefit out of their regional lifts circuit. "If you work too fast, hormone levels descend rather than ascend," Schexnayder said. "But if you allow too much rest, there is no stimulation of the endocrine system."

For more information contact the Sports Medicine Center of Thibodaux Regional, 985.493.4502.