



## Long Term Athlete Development: Explanation of Training Phases at SVSP

### Learning to Train (ALL AGES)

Learning to Train is a program which all new athletes MUST take when they enter the SVSP program. The Learning to Train program is based around a skill acquisition checklist and athletes must master these skills to the satisfaction of the coach in order to progress into one of our athletic development classes. The program may take some a couple of weeks, and others months. On average we look for athletes to complete the program in 3 weeks. What is important to understand is that this is not a race. What we do know for sure, is once the athlete has acquired all the skills taught in the program, that athlete will already have decreased their risk of injury, as well as increased overall athletic ability. The program focuses on core strength, neuromuscular activation, body movement patterns including how to properly squat, push, pull, and activate the musculature surrounding the shoulder blades and posterior chain. Achieving all of this educates the athlete on how to move in an efficient and safe manner. They then progress on to either Training to Train or Training to Compete, based on their age.

### Training to Train (Grades 6 -9)

Training to Train is the athlete's first introduction to how to train. This is the age when we introduce free weights, as well as continue to utilize implements such as medicine balls, stability balls, and TRX trainers to strengthen the athlete and teach effective movement patterns. The emphasis is on QUALITY of movement, not QUANTITY of movement. As we monitor the growth of the athlete, we work to target windows of accelerated adaptation which occur during this stage. The most noticeable such window is speed. During this stage we find one of the best times in developing athlete's lives to train speed and power.

The training within this stage is predominantly general. There is an introduction to sport specific training, however a base level of conditioning, strength, and understanding of training must first be built. At least 50% of the athlete's annual plan should be dedicated to General Physical Preparedness.

### Training to Compete (Grades 9-12)

It must be noted that athletes in grade 9 can go into either Training to Train, or Training to Compete. This is because there is one noticeable marker to progress an athlete to Training to Compete – the onset of the athlete's largest growth spurt. Athletes will receive recommendations on which class to take based on physical maturation. If they are a late bloomer they can remain for one more year in Training to Train. If they are physically mature, they will be placed in Training to Compete. **It must be noted that this should not be viewed as a negative for the late blooming athlete.** On the contrary, we must embrace these athletes as they develop the sport skills to be successful and we know they will catch up on growth. By the time they are seniors, these are often the athletes that are at the top of their sport.

Training to Compete focuses on the same concepts as Training to Train, only with an increase in intensity, an increase in weight being lifted, and an increase in the amount of time spent training in a sport specific manner. Once physical maturation has occurred, spinal loading becomes safe and more emphasis can be placed on the weighted squat. Again, we focus on windows of accelerated adaptation, only this time training becomes focused on strength. As with all the other levels, there is always an emphasis on functional movement, core strength, neuromuscular adaptation and quality of movement patterns.