

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

U.C. Riverside Women's Basketball

Off-Season Strength & Conditioning

Josh Everett



Junior forward Kemie Nkele power cleans 185 pounds; has 33 consecutive chin-ups, does "Helen" in 8:16; and averages 16.0 pts, 8.3 rebounds, and 2.0 blocks per game.

In my article in last month's journal, I described our baseball team's strength and conditioning training this past fall. This month, I will outline an entire year of our women's basketball training, taking into account the demands and interruptions of student athletes' schedules.

Before I delve into describing the team's the training regimen, here's a little background information. This off-season began on the heels of our first Big West Conference tournament championship and the team making it to the NCAA tournament for the first time in school history. The best news is that we did this with mostly freshman, two sophomores, and two seniors. Way back in August 2005 I knew we had a special group that would one day be conference champions, even before I had ever seen most of them dribble a basketball. The crop of frosh that year were athletic, hardworking, and coachable. I knew our outstanding basketball coaches would be able to take these young women to the top.

Our trip to last year's NCAA tournament was a short one, as we drew #1-seeded UNC in the opening round. We simply were unable to compete with their size, athleticism, and skill. The head coach came back and asked me if we could put 20 pounds on all the players so we could be more competitive the next year. I told him that 20 pounds of muscle would be essentially impossible for our team, but that 10 was an achievable goal. (We ended up getting an average



Referenced Figures
and Tables

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weight gain of 6 pounds.) My goal for the off-season was for us to be able to physically dominate the teams in our conference and to narrow the gap between us and the schools of the Pac 10, ACC, Big 10, etc. No amount of training will see our athletes pass up those at women's basketball powerhouse schools like UNC, but we can work to narrow the gap. Here is how we went about doing so.

During spring quarter, our focus was on increasing size and strength. By NCAA rule, last year we were allowed eight hours a week of training in the off season. Four could be spent on basketball and four on anything else. Our anything else was a hardcore strength phase. The program we used was one by Tony Ciarelli that I picked up from mikesgym.org. As I've said before, I may not be very smart, but I'm smart enough to know to borrow from good coaches, and Ciarelli is one of the best. He has been highly successful as a strength, football, track, and Olympic lifting coach, and I adapted his program to fit our basketball team's needs. Figure 1 in the download package shows what our program looked like for April.

After the first four weeks we shifted to lower reps and added cleans and snatches (see Figure 2).

That completed our "strength" phase of training, and then I wanted to add in some athleticism and metabolic conditioning work. We finished out the school year by starting to mix basic tumbling, plyo work, short "CrossFits," and sprints in with our core strength lifts of cleans, squats, and presses (see Figure 3).

After that, we moved into summer training. Most of our teams at UCR were given a summer workout program very similar to the one I describe here. I really like this format, as an effective way to cover most of the elements of fitness thoroughly without burning out the athletes. I did overshoot a little bit though, in that I think there are too many strength exercises in this program on the days we also do "CrossFits." I saw this early on in the summer and adjusted the workouts for our teams' training by cutting back to one or two strength moves before the day's CrossFit workout.

During the first phase of the summer, the women's basketball team was off on their own. They went home from mid-June until the last week of July. During this time, one athlete followed the workouts religiously (she made huge gains in all aspects of her fitness), most trained a few days a week (and came back slightly weaker and less fit), and one or two did nothing during this six-

week period (and were dying during the warm-up on the first day back). This is the frustrating part of being a college strength coach: you spend a lot of time just getting kids back to where they were before summer break or Christmas break.

Figures 4 and 5 describe what we did during that time. The general pattern is as follows:

Mondays

Speed and power. Cleans, plyometrics, medicine ball throws, agility drills, and short sprints with full recovery between reps. Mondays were the perfect day for this type of training as speed and power are highly nervous-system-dependent and the nervous system and body were rested after having Sunday off.

Tuesdays

Strength work and running-based CrossFit workouts.

Wednesdays

Off/recovery

Thursdays

Speed and power. Same as Monday except the sprints were longer and the recovery time between reps was shorter.

Fridays

Strength work followed by a weight-room-based CrossFit workout.

Saturdays

Track intervals. Only one woman on the basketball team did any of these workouts though, so this part of the program wasn't relevant to our results.

The team came back the last week of July, as they were all enrolled in second-session summer school, and we began the second phase of summer training (See Figure 6), which looked much like the first with a few modifications. Our summer workouts lasted no longer than an hour and 10 minutes.

When school began, the coaches wanted to take over the team's running and conditioning training, so in the weight room we shifted to a more traditional strength program (See Figure 7).

Once the season started, we moved to two lifting days a week. The first day consisted of a pretty basic routine; on the second lifting day, we took those exercises and

CrossFit Workout Descriptions for Summer Training Weeks 1-15

Week 1

"Helen": 3 rounds for time: Run 400m + 21 swings + 12 chins

- Division 1: 24-kg KB or 55-lb DB
- Division 2: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB
- Division 3: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB + band-assisted chins

"Angie": For time: 100 chins + 100 push-ups + 100sit-ups + 100 squats

- Division 1: Finish all 100 reps of one exercise before moving on to the next
- Division 2: Subset the exercises however you want (example: 5 rounds of 20)
- Division 3: Subset + use a band for chins

Week 2

"Tajma": 3 rounds for time: Run 800m + 50 squats + 50 sit-ups

"Grace": For time: 30 reps power clean & jerk

- Division 1: Blue bumpers or 135 lbs
- Division 2: Green Bumpers or 95 lbs
- Division 3: 65 lbs

Week 3

"Oliver": For time: 50 wall balls (10ft target) + 50 push-ups + 35 wall balls + 35 push-ups + 20 wall balls + 20 push-ups

- Division 1: 20-lb med ball
- Division 2: 12-lb med ball, 25 push-ups, 17 push-ups, 10 push-ups

"Cindy": Rounds in 20 minutes: 5 chins + 10 push-ups + 15 squats

- Division 1: As written
- Division 2: Band-assisted chins

Week 4

"Kelly": 5 rounds for time: Run 400m+ 30 box jumps (18") + 30 ball slams

- Division 1: 20-lb ball
- Division 2: 12-lb ball

*If you do not have a slam ball, do wall balls instead.

"Fran": 3 rounds, 21-15-9 reps: Thrusters + chins

- Division 1: 95 lbs or 45-lb DBs
- Division 2: 65 lbs or 25-lb DBs
- Division 3: 65 lbs + band-assisted chins

Week 5

Highlander Mile: Run 1 mile with 4 stations per lap: 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups, 50 squats, 50 swings

- Division 1: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB swings
- Division 2: 12-kg KB or 25lb DB swings
- Division 3: 12-kg KB swings + 25 push-ups per lap

"Elizabeth": 3 rounds, 21-15-9 reps: Power clean + bumper push-ups

- Division 1: Blues on the bar and a blue plate on your back
- Division 2: Greens on the bar and a green plate on your back
- Division 3: 65 lbs on the bar and no plate for push-ups

Week 6

"Big Fat Helen": 5 rounds for time: Run 400m + 21 swings + 12 chins

- Division 1: 24 kg
- Division 2: 16 kg
- Division 3: 16 kg + band-assisted chins

"Angie": For time: 100 chins + 100 push-ups + 100sit-ups + 100 squats

- Division 1: Finish all 100 reps of one exercise before moving on to the next
- Division 2: Subset the exercises however you want (example: 5 rounds of 20)
- Division 3: Subset + use a band for chins

Week 7

"Joan": 3 rounds for time: Run 800m + 30chins

- Division 1: As written
- Division 2: Band-assisted chins

"EJ": 5 rounds: Max push-ups immediately followed by max chins, then 2 min rest between rounds.

The total number of chins + push-ups you do in 5 rounds is the score.

CrossFit Workout Descriptions for Summer Training Weeks 1-15

Week 8

"Helen": 3 rounds for time: Run 400m + 21 swings + 12 chins

- Division 1: 24-kg KB or 55-lb DB
- Division 2: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB
- Division 3: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB + band-assisted chins

"Cindy": Rounds in 20 minutes: 5 chins + 10 push-ups + 15 squats

- Division 1: As written
- Division 2: Band-assisted chins

Week 9

"Tajma": 3 rounds for time: Run 800m + 50 squats + 50 sit-ups

"Tabata This": Chins, push-ups, sit-ups, squats: 20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest, for 8 consecutive sets. One-minute break between exercises. Count total number of reps completed as your score.

Week 10

"Oliver": For time: 50 wall balls (10ft target) + 50 push-ups + 35 wall balls + 35 push-ups + 20 wall balls + 20 push-ups

- Division 1: 20-lb med ball
- Division 2: 12-lb med ball, 25 push-ups, 17 push-ups, 10 push-ups

"Grace": For time: 30 reps power clean & jerk

- Division 1: Blue bumpers or 135 lbs
- Division 2: Green Bumpers or 95 lbs
- Division 3: 65 lbs

Week 11

"Kelly": 5 rounds for time: Run 400m+ 30 box jumps (18") + 30 ball slams

- Division 1: 20-lb ball
- Division 2: 12-lb ball

*If you do not have a slam ball, do wall balls instead.

"Diane": 3 rounds, 21-15-9 reps: Handstand push-ups + deadlift 225 lbs.

- Division 1: As written
- Division 2: Reduce weight on DL, substitute push press for HSPU

Week 12

Max out on chins!

Week 13

"Joan": 3 rounds for time: Run 800m + 30chins

- Division 1: As written
- Division 2: Band-assisted chins

"Fran": 3 rounds, 21-15-9 reps: Thrusters + chins

- Division 1: 95 lbs or 45-lb DBs
- Division 2: 65 lbs or 25-lb DBs
- Division 3: 65 lbs + band-assisted chins

Week 14

"Helen": 3 rounds for time: Run 400m + 21 swings + 12 chins

- Division 1: 24-kg KB or 55-lb DB
- Division 2: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB
- Division 3: 16-kg KB or 35-lb DB + band-assisted chins

"EJ": 5 rounds: Max push-ups immediately followed by max chins, then 2 min rest between rounds. The total number of chins + push-ups you do in 5 rounds is the score.

Week 15

"Kelly": 5 rounds for time: Run 400m+ 30 box jumps (18") + 30 ball slams.

- Division 1: 20-lb ball
- Division 2: 12-lb ball

*If you do not have a slam ball, do wall balls instead.

"Tabata This": Chins, push-ups, sit-ups, squats: 20 seconds work, 10 seconds rest, for 8 consecutive sets. One-minute break between exercises. Count total number of reps completed as your score.

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(left) Chanel Foster
155-lb. power clean
220-lb. back squat,
9:23 "Helen"

(right) Tainoisouti Lott:
170-lb. power clean
200-lb. back squat
32 chins



put them into a Crossfit circuit (See Figure 8). We stayed with this programming through January.

In February, we shifted to a largely kettlebell-based workout (See Figure 9). At this point the idea was to maintain strength while keeping the athletes as fresh as possible. Kettlebell lifting by nature is lighter than barbell lifting (the women use 12-kg KBs) and hopefully will be less fatiguing and easier on the body. It's a long, physically draining season, and we want to be strong and sharp heading into the post-season. Another advantage to using KBs is that if we happen to be traveling for post-season play, we can pack a few KBs and continue our program on the road.

Here are some of the results we've had with this program. As of February 20, we are in first place in the conference, with a conference record of 11-1. The highlight of our non-conference games was victory over then-undefeated Wisconsin of the Big-10. As you read the lifting statistics, keep in mind that four of the players are brand-new to the program this year and have not had time to achieve great numbers as our intensity drops greatly once November rolls around. On the power clean, we have five athletes lifting 150 pounds or more, and seven who have power cleaned more than their body weight. Three have squatted 200+ pounds

(we need work here), and eight have 20+ chin-ups, with three of those being able to do 30 or more (and, remember, these are not gymnast-sized athletes). We have eight players with a sub-10-minute "Helen" time (with a 16-kg Russian swing), with three of those under 9:00 and two of them under 8:30.

You can follow our results and find a schedule of games if you'd like to watch them in action at <http://www.athletics.ucr.edu/wbasketball/wbkfront.html>. You are also welcome to come watch any of our teams train in the weight room here at UCR. Just send me a note at josh.everett@ucr.edu and we can set something up.



Josh Everett has been the head strength and conditioning coach at UC Riverside since 2001. Before that, he was assistant strength coach at UCLA for two years and spent one year as an assistant strength coach at Ohio University.