

POWER DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH AND JUNIOR PLAYERS BY MARK GODWIN, ELITEPERFORMANCE SPORTS CONDITIONING.

Eliteperformance is based outside Chester and the company specialises in the physical conditioning of athletes. They have been involved with the RFU in running 'developing rugby athletes' sessions in the North West and with the RFU Referees Department.



One of the most important components of rugby fitness is power development. The ability to generate force quickly is necessary for making tackles, accelerating into space and breaking through contact. Furthermore, the ability to produce power *repeatedly* makes power endurance a vital role in rugby performance.

Training for power development does not have to be undertaken using Olympic style lifts alone. Effective own body weight and medicine ball-type exercises are suitable for youth and junior power development.

By incorporating power conditioning into more traditional rugby conditioning sessions, a new dimension to training starts to evolve. Athletes increase their ability to move, make contact and power into tackles by following some simple effective drills.

Power Development Tips:

- Precede any power development work with a dynamic warm up.
- Use lighter medicine balls and progress to heavier for ALL athletes (train to train).
- Enforce good form especially back and neck positioning throughout the movement.
- Always use a lighter ball for rotational exercises.
- Ensure that both the left and the right sides are conditioned.

Training Progression:

Technique is vital for all exercises. Ensure that each player can perform each exercise correctly by using the appropriate weight. Remember - start light and progress to heavier loads in all of the exercises.

It is possible to record the distance that each athlete throws the ball and use this as a basis for his personal development.

Shoulder Throw.

- Start with the feet shoulder width apart, with knees relaxed and 'soft'.
- Accelerate the throwing arm forwards, throwing the ball as far as possible (Fig 1&2). Use the non-throwing hand as a direction guide if required.

Fig 1



Fig 2



Chest Press and Press-up.

This provides an excellent way to develop power in the upper body of the chest, front of shoulders and triceps.

- Kneel down with a medicine ball held at chest level (Fig 3).
- Explosively force the arms forward and throw the ball.
- As soon as the ball has left the hands, fall forward into a press up position (Fig 4).
- Return to the start position by pushing up powerfully from the floor.

Fig 3



Fig 4



Overhead Throw.

This exercise is used to provide a more complex multi-joint exercise.

- Start with the medicine ball in two hands.
- Squat down (Fig 5) and powerfully drive upwards (Fig 6). During this phase the arms should also move upwards, releasing the ball as it passes in front of the face.

Fig 5



Fig 6



- Ensure that the core muscles are contracted and look forwards throughout the movement.

Medicine Ball High Pull.

The high pull is part of the development for the clean and snatch Olympic lifts. Performed with a medicine ball, it provides a good opportunity to develop good form alongside power.

- Start with the ball in two hands at the side of the ball. Knees are bent, back straight and the ball is resting near to the floor (Fig 7) or at thigh level (Low or high hang respectively).
- Initiate the drive from the legs, pulling the ball to chest height as the legs straighten (Fig 8). Look forwards with core muscles contracted.

Fig 7



Fig 8

