

## **Kettlebells, the Secret Weapon for High School Sports**

Being a high school Athletic Trainer for the last sixteen years, I have had to deal with the care of thousands of injuries, some due to direct trauma and some due to over use. None the less, they are still injuries and a big part of my job is to treat, and rehabilitate these student athletes. I believe another important part of my job is to make sure these athletes are taking the proper measures to help prevent injuries and enhance performance through comprehensive strength and conditioning programs. As a liaison between coaches, students, parents, and physicians, I can come in contact with many people during the course of a day. I like to take advantage of this many contacts and spread my expertise about the importance of a solid strength and conditioning program for performance enhancement as well as injury prevention. Having these athletes strong, fit, and prepared for competition makes my job easier.

Most coaches are familiar with basic strength programs, and some have gone a step further and have done some research as to what is the best type of training for their athletes. Being in the Sports Medicine and Strength Training fields for nearly eighteen years, I've seen and tried just about every method out there. Only in the past five years have I become involved with Russian Kettlebell Training. In my opinion, Russian kettlebells offer an ideal type of training for the athlete. Nearly every sport requires the ability to be explosive, and as we know, most power is generated from the hips and is transferred to the upper body. A perfect example of this would be a football player using his hip drive to block or tackle his opponent, or a baseball/softball player driving a ball again, using that transfer of power from the hips to the hands. The same thing goes for any other sport involving these ballistic type motions (field hockey, soccer, lacrosse etc). This is exactly the type of training affect kb's offer.

With the recent increase in popularity of female sports e.g. WNBA, Women's World Cup Soccer, there has been a definite influx of female athletic participation. I noticed that many high school athletes are specializing in one sport and are playing that sport year-round. This, along with homework and socializing leave less or no time for the student athlete to do anything else. From further observations, I also have noticed that practice time is focused on the skills and team tactics of the sport which leave minimal time for strength training. All of this repetitive training may lead to fatigue, which can ultimately lead to injury.

This is where the Kettlebell comes in. Like I said, this is ultimate training tool for the athlete on the go. As little as two 20-30 minute training sessions per week (three would be ideal) can make a difference in the athlete's strength and explosiveness, while possibly preventing some overuse injuries. Kettlebell training can be practiced right on the playing field which makes it easy to incorporate into a practice plan. A circuit of drills can be conveniently set up on or off to the side of a soccer, football, field hockey field, or any other field. I mention these particular fall sports because they are the one's I have become mostly involved with over the years at my high school. The following is a sample circuit similar to something I have used for my girl's soccer team in their pre-

season training. A combination of kb, agility, simple plyo, medicine ball, and balance drills have been working very well for these girls. They also have fun with this type of workout.

Dynamic warm-up 5 min: Skips, butt kicks, carioca, inch worms, walk lunges etc.

Kb swings

Agility ladder drills (lateral movement)

Kb cleans

Balance station (Bosu 1 leg or similar)

Med. Ball chop

Kb push press

Agility ladder (forward movement)

Balance station (wobble board)

10 min stretch using bands after the training session.

We do each drill for 30 sec. with 45-60 sec. rest interval. We do a 2 min. jog recovery after completing one full circuit. As the girls progress, rest intervals become shorter 30-45, 20-30 sec. until two full circuits can be completed with 15-20 sec. rest. At this point we add another trip around and keep the rest at about 30 sec. Eventually we end up doing two different circuits three times around. This program ran from the end of June until about half way through August (about one week prior to preseason team training) on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday schedule. The agility drills are changed up from time to time, we may use mini cones as well as mini hurdles or rings. Other kb drills are also worked in such as snatches, front squats, lunge progressions, and double rows. The balance stations seem to work well as an active recovery as well as good ankle, knee, and hip proprioceptive drills to help prevent ankle sprains during the season.

I feel these types of workouts not only make these girls fit and more powerful on the field, they also seemed to boost their confidence and mental toughness. Ever since we have started training in this manner there have been less overuse injuries. This past season the girls finished up with a record of 17-2 and were conference champs. They would like to attribute some of this success to their secret weapon, the Russian Kettlebell.

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