

Train smarter

I am amazed at how dedicated and focused so many of the young volleyball players in our area are. The commitment level of youth sports these days blows me away. Kids are playing both club and high school, going to camps and tournaments year round, and putting in as much as 20+ hours per week on top of crazy academic schedules.

There is no question about the level of dedication.

There are huge gaps in the effectiveness of the training programs though.

There is an obsession with certain components of ability and a lack of concern with other potentially more important things...

Too many injuries.

Too much time missed playing.

Too many knee braces.

Too much time spent on conditioning and not enough on strength

What can we do about this?

The Performance Pyramid is one way Rise Volleyball Academy addresses the issue. It is a very helpful way to think about athleticism, performance, and the hierarchy of movement ability



*The Performance Pyramid has 3 Levels.
Each Level is built on the one below it.*

THE THREE LEVELS OF THE PERFORMANCE PYRAMID

LEVEL 1: MOVEMENT

The first level is simple, basic movement. It has nothing to do with athleticism or skill, it is simply the ability to move your body in all of the basic ways that every three year old on the planet should be able to do. Stepping, reaching, squatting, getting up off the floor, etc.

We use the Functional Movement Screen to test this level. We assess these movement skills the same way for an athlete as we would for their grandmother. It is not a fitness test of any kind. The FMS covers this level entirely and can be completed in under ten minutes. It catches all dysfunctional movement and makes it easy to know what to focus on for each individual. The idea is that if you don't have these basics down, it is impossible to complete higher level movement tasks correctly - you may get it done, but only with a lot of substitution and compensation that can cause injury and limitations over time.

LEVEL 2: ATHLETICISM

The second level is a look at general athletic capacity. Jumping, running, skipping, throwing, lifting a heavy weight, moving an external load, etc. Performance here requires a solid first level of movement ability. This is not yet volleyball specific in any way, which is important. These measurements are the same for athletes of all sports. Of course a swimmer isn't aiming for the same jumping ability as a volleyball player, but since vertical jump is one of the best measurements of power in general, the swimmer still needs to be in the appropriate range of for their sport. The measurements taken at the NFL and NBA combines fit into this category. Most strength training programs are focused on level two, but if they are performed by athletes with poor level one abilities, they are adding strength to dysfunction and making movement problems worse.

LEVEL 3: SPORT SPECIFIC SKILL

Level three is sport-specific skill. This is where volleyball specific movement patterns are found. Arm swing mechanics, approach footwork, blocking, passing, setting, court awareness, etc. all are found in level three of the performance pyramid. Sport coaches live and specialize in this level and the typical volleyball player spends 90% of their time working on this level.

Of course this skill category is massively important - but the problem, and the main point I am wanting to make, is that there is a huge obsession on skill practice with athletes who have massive dysfunction and limitations in the first two levels of the pyramid.

The best coaching in the world can't get an athlete where they want to go if they don't have adequate trunk stability, thoracic mobility, or ankle range of motion. If you are paying significant money for private hitting lessons and the athlete has an asymmetry in their shoulders and thoracic mobility and/or trunk stability problems, the athlete will compensate in order to apply the advice rather than develop new healthy habits.

Volleyball coaches need the first and second level to be stable and functioning well for the the coaching to have the long term effect they are hoping for.

I see so many young athletes who practice diligently, spend hours "exercising", and yet cannot move well during a simple movement screen.

I strongly advise all volleyball players to complete the Functional Movement Screen to find out about basic movement issues and then progress into more current and efficient second level training customized to them as an individual.

Our USA Volleyball program has each athlete tested using the FMS, first and foremost to insure each athlete remains healthy throughout their training season, and secondly to maximize their training by making it specific to the individual's needs.

Most coaches have their athletes on a strength training program of some kind but these programs only go down to the second level and typically apply a one size fits all approach. If an athlete has all the basic movement abilities measured on the first level, most second level programming is going to really help that athlete - but it is rare that athletes have no issues on the first level.

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So if you put an athlete with basic movement problems on a program that involves box jumps, hang cleans, and other high level plyometric movements, it is only going to make their issues worse and they are not going to get the benefits they are hoping for. In fact they may hurt themselves or get even slower and less explosive.

The other issue is that even if all athletes had acceptable basic movement patterns on the first level, the exercise programming they are being given on the second level is usually extremely inefficient and outdated compared to what they could and should be doing.

The Seattle Seahawks have been using the FMS Screen for years and have one of the lowest injury rates in the NFL. Here is a link to a video showing the athletes going through the FMS: <http://goo.gl/vPwC9M>

Most of these programs put “intensity” before “quality” , something that belongs back in the 1980’s.

Performance training has evolved a tremendous amount since then.

These outdated programs use exercises geared more toward bodybuilders or powerlifters, never train the hips one at a time, don’t pay any attention to symmetry, and often the type of strength is specific to the weight room and doesn’t carry over to the court.

**STRENGTH STACKED ON
TOP OF DYSFUNCTIONAL
MOVEMENT
LEADS TO INJURY**

Don’t put the cart before the horse.

Don’t add strength and/or skill to dysfunctional movement.

What these second level programs should be based on is first checking and developing basic movement (first level), then correcting symmetry in

the trunk, then training the hips individually to maintain symmetry. Single leg training is huge but hip mobility must be present first. Basic movements like crawling and rolling allow the vestibular system and reactive musculature to develop. Kneeling exercises like cable chopping and lifting develop symmetry in the trunk. Loaded carries are one of the best ways to develop strength and posture. Turkish get-ups neurologically connect all of the segments of the body.

These are just a few examples.

This is how our olympic teams and professional teams train but the information is not being used at lower levels to prepare athletes.

It is unfortunate how many athletes are not spending enough time correcting and working in the first and second level of the movement pyramid. This causes countless athletes to fall short of their potential, not make the team they want, sit the bench, or get cut. They think that they have done the best they can and their potential just isn’t enough, but really they have tons of untapped ability that is being held hostage by limitations on the first and second level.

Thousands of hours of practice won’t fix underlying movement issues.

Our Rise Athlete Development (RAD) Program focuses on the first and second level and removes movement barriers. This solid foundation is an essential ingredient in any young athletes journey.

RAD is offered June 6-August 10.

This year we will be offering two training options:

1. In Gym Training

Offered Mon-Thu, 8am - 10am or 4pm-5pm. Each athlete will be screened using the Functional Movement Screen and have their workout developed based on their personal goals and needs. Athletes will have access to our gym and the equipment we have in the gym. Coaches will be here to oversee the training and to assist athletes when necessary. Workouts will typically take about an hour.

- **\$150 through May 15**
- **\$175 after May 15**

2. Mobile Training App

New this year! We will be offering an offsite, athlete driven program that will be delivered to you through the mobile training platform FitBot. Athletes will need to come to the gym twice: for the initial screening and for an exercise instruction session. After that, they can workout on their own, wherever they want. Workouts can be tailored to whatever equipment and space the athlete has access to.

- **\$50 for Mobile Training only**
 - Includes in person screening and exercise instruction
- **\$20 to add Mobile Training to the In Gym Training.**

If you are interested in registering for our RAD program, please go to <http://risevolleyballacademy.net/radprogram> to sign up.