San Marcos High School's Weight Training Program

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To accomplish these goals, we focused on the appearance of the weight room, enthusiasm about the program, and coed classes offered every period.

We emphasize to the students the importance of setting goals and keeping accurate records of their daily workout to reach those goals. We discuss the work ethic needed to meet those goals, and pride in effort and achievement, continually encouraging them to aim higher. The work habits and leadership of our top seniors serve as important examples for the underclassmen and incoming freshmen.

In January 1997 we implemented Olympic-style lifts into our program. These lifts require strength and speed in equal parts. They also require flexibility, discipline, timing, intensity, and a great deal of concentration simultaneously, followed by an explosive move.

We believe Olympic-style lifting enhances athleticism. Coaches always insist on proper technique when the athletes are performing drills, fundamentals, practicing, or playing. We work at helping our athletes understand that technique may help them overcome a disadvantage they might have against an opponent. Olympic-style lifts help us in this process by illustrating that the little details as well as the obvious may spell the difference between success and failure.

Although we stress Olympic-style lifts, we still do the bench press (mostly incline) and the squat. During the first semester of 1997, we introduced the clean and jerk to those students already in weight training classes. It proved successful. During the following summer we began using the power snatch.

In hindsight, we could have begun both lifts at the same time because of the enthusiasm for these exercises. After performing
the clean and jerk for only 4 months, weightlifting students improved their muscular coordination, foot speed, hand speed, and overall hand-eye coordination. Our records indicate that pounds lifted have increased, 40-yd dash times have improved, and vertical jump has increased.

Also, we have noted fewer stumbles and falls when doing our plyometric exercises which include directional quick change, squat/broad jump, squat/lateral jump, and small skips/giant skips, to name a few.

To teach the Olympic-style lifts, we used videotapes of experienced lifters and employed one-word coaching cues. We also videotaped the athletes as a teaching tool. As the students improved, they began coaching each other with the one-word coaching cues.

This is a never ending process, always working to improve the technique of the lift, which in turn increases the weight of the lift. Classes are organized into A, B, and C groups. Each group has 4 to 6 subgroups of 3 individuals each. Our weight room has 5 stations to work the squat, 4 stations to work the bench, 3 stations to work the incline bench, and 4 platforms for power clean and jerk, plus several areas for supplemental lifts.

Groups are instructed to perform a main lift, then 2 or 3 supplemental lifts that correspond with the main lift. Table 1 shows a sample program for 1 week.

First, we establish a one-repetition maximum (1-RM) using a rep chart. This helps to keep the weight down, avoids poor technique related to excessive weights, and establishes a valid max. We use the 12-week periodization program and the student’s 1-RM to determine each week’s weight for and intensity of the workout. This continually helps to improve technique and strength. It also informs the students where they are in relation to their goals.

The enthusiastic response to our weightlifting program has rejuvenated me as a teacher. We believe this enthusiasm is partly due to the incorporation of Olympic-style lifts. The Olympic-style lifts are fun and effective, as well as being fun to teach.

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