

An Effective, Yet Simple Strength and Conditioning Program by Justin Lascek

Nowadays many people are interested in improving performance for general fitness, recreation, competitions and meets, team or combative sports, and different levels of military operational status. These people indulge in high intensity training because of its mental and physical rigor and never lack effort. However, in most cases the majority of these hard workers have capped their ability to improve by neglecting an effective emphasis on strength. Infrequent squatting, deadlifting, and pressing will not establish a proper foundation that will flourish into athletic prowess. This program aims to help trainees that have an admitted deficit in strength.

This Strength and Conditioning Program (S&CP) is a combination of barbell training and metabolic conditioning. The goal of the program is to simultaneously increase strength and maintain or improve conditioning. Strength indicates the ability of muscles to exert force against an external resistance, and it is an adaptation that is gained and lost slowly. It is the fundamental capacity for physical ability and understanding the nature of strength helps the trainee prioritize his training within the program. Every physical attribute is directly augmented and limited by strength. The most efficient way to increase the capacity of all physical attributes in a novice is to get stronger, hence the strength emphasis.

Metabolic conditioning is a collection of movements and activities that are organized to A) produce and maintain a high metabolic output relative to the amount of time it is performed and B) minimize any necessary recovery, if any, between those bouts of high output. Subsequently the body mobilizes and distributes resources more efficiently and effectively – an adaptation that is gained and lost quickly. Even though metabolic conditioning is an important aspect of performance, it must be understood that its expression is strength-dependent. As strength improves, the effort to maintain an output becomes a smaller fraction of absolute strength, and/or there is a reduction in effort to maintain a higher output. Therefore, recovering for strength training maintains precedence over conditioning in this program.

Understanding the General Adaptation Syndrome (Hans Selye, 1936) is imperative to constructing and maintaining an optimal program. To summarize, the body undergoes a sub-lethal stress, recovers from the stress, and adapts to that stress so it can handle it again or more of it in the future. This biological process is necessary for survival as well as getting more strong and conditioned. Every aspect in an optimal training program exists to drive a subsequent adaptation of improved performance. The S&CP should be programmed as such.

The S&CP can be adapted for use in different scenarios that include higher training advancement, plateau, or specific training goals. Discussion of such program adaptations leave the scope of this article and will be discussed in future versions.

The Strength and Conditioning Program is as follows:

Monday

Squat – Weight lifted x 5 reps x 3 sets, sets across
Press – 5x3, sets across
Chins/Pull-ups – 3 sets of as many reps as possible

Tuesday

Power Clean – 3 reps x 5 sets, sets across
Dips – 3 sets of as many reps as possible
Conditioning

Wednesday

Off or Skill Day

Thursday

Squat – 5x3, sets across
Bench Press – 5x3, sets across
Dips – 3 sets of as many reps as possible

Friday

Deadlift – 5 reps x 1 work set
Pull-ups/Chins – 3 sets of as many reps as possible (can be moved to Saturday)
Conditioning

Saturday

Optional conditioning

Notes:

1 – Conditioning workouts should not be in excess of ten minutes and typically will stay around the six to eight minute mark. Anything exceeding fifteen minutes will not yield appropriate output levels to cause adaptive stress. There is a difference between being sweaty and training.

2 – “Sets across” means performing the same amount of weight for all of the working sets after warming up.

3 – Standard increases in weight on the lifts is five pounds. In the beginning of the program, the trainee may use larger increases to find their current strength level. The more muscles being used, the more the lift can be increased. Thus, the deadlift can increase by as much as fifteen pounds and will average about ten. All other lifts should stick to a five pound increase. Eventually the press and bench will need to be micro-loaded to continue their weekly increase.

4 – Chin-ups, pull-ups, and dips should start out with just body weight. When the trainee can do three sets of at least ten reps, they can opt to weight the exercise. Weighted calisthenics work well for three sets of five.

5 – Skill day should constitute a new or fun activity. Practicing Pose running, riding mountain

bikes, or walking the dog are a ways to avoid sloth. Mobility and stretching drills may be in order for some trainees. Stressful activity should be avoided since there is important squatting the next day.

Future versions will include example conditioning workouts.