Want to hit a homer? Move weight like a linebacker? Have the agility of a basketball player? Our guide lays out the latest in training from experts to help you achieve your goals.
CORE STRENGTH

Every swing, pitch, and throw requires some degree of torso rotation, so a strong core to rotate and slow down the rotation is imperative to play ball.

WOLFE SAYS: “It’s like you’re driving a car: If you don’t have very good brakes, then you’re not going to accelerate very fast. Same thing with baseball. If you’re able to accelerate fast but not able to properly stop, that’s a good way to tear an oblique.”

EXERCISES:
- Swiss Ball Rollout
- Dumbbell Suitcase Carry
- Landmine Rotation
- Reverse Crunch
- Medicine Ball Scoop Toss

AGILITY

Baseball requires the ability to react to different situations: Catchers have to react to botched throws and pop up from a squat to throw out a stealing base runner; outfielders use drop steps and crossover steps to make on-the-fly adjustments to determine a ball’s trajectory.

WOLFE SAYS: “Baseball players are not moving in a straight line, and they have to move fast without thinking. So we work on things like footwork and visualizing the distance for catching and throwing that will have huge carryover on game day.”

EXERCISES:
- Six-inch Hurdle Hop
- Lateral Bound
- Ladder Drill

MOBILITY & PREHAB

The pros perform specific stretches and dynamic drills to target areas like the hips, ankles, and shoulders. Tight hips prevent acceleration; sore ankles can lead to knee pain; and poor shoulder mobility can screw with batting and throwing.

WOLFE SAYS: “However, if a player has good external and internal range of motion, they can develop laxity, meaning the joint becomes too loose. Sometimes a little stiffness actually allows them to throw harder. But it depends on the athlete. So we’ll start with corrective soft tissue work and then move into isolated stretching. Then they’ll perform a series of correctives at the beginning of their program and sprinkle it into their training.”
ALL-STRENGTH GUIDE

EXERCISES:
Prone-arm Trap Raise
Ball-to-wall Stabilization
Half-kneeling External Rotation
Brettzel Stretch
Glute Bridge

SPEED
For baseball, the first 30 feet is going to make all the difference, especially when it comes to stealing bases.

WOLFE SAYS: “I’ll have the athletes do wall drills and sprints with bungees attached to a partner, and high-intensity cardio with equipment like the VersaClimber, Concept2 Rower, a sledgehammer, and a tire.”

EXERCISES:
Harness Run and March
Fall to Sprint
Pushup to Sprint
Straight-leg March
Straight-leg Skip

STRENGTH
Strength is something that transfers to all movements. In baseball, a stronger athlete will be able to hit the ball farther, jump higher, and sprint faster.

WOLFE SAYS: “Strength training is prevalent at the beginning of the season, and the off-season is when we put weight on the bar. Squats and deadlifts are the main focus, and we taper down the weight as we get closer to spring training. Medicine ball work is also huge and has tremendous carryover for pitchers who start in the frontal plane and then go into the transverse plane.”

EXERCISES:
Deadlift
Safety-bar Squat
Half-kneeling Landmine Press
TRX Row
Band-resisted Lateral Bound

FIT BALLER
Think all hoops stars are skinny? Ask LeBron James.

CORE STRENGTH
Malik defines core strength as the dynamic relationship of the hips, trunk, and shoulders that creates a foundational base to move from.

MALIK SAYS: “Core strength is important because it affects force production and injury prevention. Basketball players can build up this area by incorporating exercises that involve the co-contraction and dynamic exercises that involve stabilization between the hips, trunk, and shoulders.”
EXERCISES:
Single-leg Bridge
Swiss Ball Y-T-I
Front Plank
Miniband Lateral Walk

AGILITY
Agility is the ability to stop, start, change direction, and accelerate—and it’s vitally important for basketball players in order to dominate on offense and defense.
MALIK SAYS: “Agility involves whole-body horizontal changes of direction, vertical changes of direction, and rapid movement of body parts, which encapsulate the game of basketball.”

EXERCISES:
T-drill (sprint forward 10 yards, shuffle laterally 5 yards, shuffle laterally the other way 10 yards, shuffle back to the center 5 yards, then backpedal 10 yards)
5-10-5 Drill (on the same line, sprint 5 yards, turn the other way and sprint 10 yards, turn the other way and sprint 5 yards)
4-cone Drill (use 4 cones to form a square with 5-yard sides; sprint, shuffle laterally, and backpedal around the square)

MOBILITY
Mobility is a method of stretching that addresses elements affecting performance, including muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia, and the joint and motor control necessary to perform the movement correctly.
MALIK SAYS: “Mobility is important for players because they need to have a full range of painless motion in all the soft-tissue areas surrounding the feet, calves, hips, and shoulders to increase their fluidity on court.”

EXERCISES:
Lacrosse Ball to Feet
Pigeon Stretch
Downward-facing Dog
Lat Hang

STRENGTH
Malik defines strength as the ability to exert submaximal force against resistance. In the case of professional basketball, this is done for 48 minutes.
MALIK SAYS: “You can build up strength and strength endurance through resistance training by doing multiple sets of particular exercises. But the emphasis is still on developing strength to support the movement for the entire duration of a game.”

EXERCISES:
Bulgarian Split Squat
Dumbbell Chest Press
Deadlift
Barbell Squat
Inverted Row

SPEED
Basketball is played very fast. To be able to sustain acceleration is the nature of the game.
MALIK SAYS: “We put our guys through speed training. We wrap a bungee cord around a player’s waist. You’re getting them to run against resistance, so once the bungee is removed, their nervous system is firing a lot more quickly. This helps with acceleration and quickness in-game.”

EXERCISES:
Resisted Sprint

PREHAB
Prehab involves trying to eliminate as many asymmetries as possible. In basketball, the focus is on the hips and lower legs.
MALIK SAYS: “Foam rolling is a great way to work the soft tissue. Our players will do specific dynamic stretching, and then we’ll take advantage of this new suppleness by having them do specific individual prehab exercises.”

EXERCISES:
Foam Rolling of the Calves
Dorsiflexion of the Ankles
Standing Hurdler Hip Stretch
World’s Greatest Stretch
Hand Walk
CORE STRENGTH
Core strength is your body’s ability to stabilize itself during movements like sprints, jukes, and passes.
KENN SAYS: “For the root [aka core], we do a lot of things where the whole body is in some type of movement fashion. We’re on two feet if we can be. But we’ll also do some isolation work for stability, like dead bugs and planks.”

EXERCISES:
- Total Body: Turkish Getup
- Rotational: Kettlebell Windmill, Landmine Rotation
- Lateral: Kettlebell or Dumbbell Side Bend
- Stabilization: Plank, Dead Bug Series

STRENGTH & POWER
Absolute strength is the basis for all other modalities, while power is the ability to start and stop a movement in an expedient fashion.
KENN SAYS: “When it comes to lower-body lifts—cleans, deadlifts, and squats—you’ve got to be more conscientious because of the injury risk to the knees and lower back. Regarding power development, I’m not a big proponent of training a sport with a sport, so I’m not going to train a football player with an Olympic lifting program. However, I believe in Olympic lifting as a component for development.”

EXERCISES:
- Block Clean
- Weighted Box Jump
- Trap-bar Deadlift
- Front Squat
- Bench Press

CONDITIONING
Players need to be conditioned—aka having a good gas tank—but the training depends on position.
KENN SAYS: “You have to be aware of what the proper goal and recovery times are for a given group. I believe you should rest a little longer than most people do. For 100-yard runs or 300-yard shuttles, I’m going to be close to a 3-to-1 ratio [rest to work].”

EXERCISES:
- 300-yard Shuttles
- 50+ Reps of Short Runs and Drills
- Run/Walk Intervals

AGILITY
Agility means proper footwork and quickness to be able to change directions and react on a play.
KENN SAYS: “We train agility on the field with our conditioning work. We’ll do two different components of agility. One is what I call ‘programmed agility,’ which are standardized drills like shuttles and cone work. Then the more important stuff is your position-specific agility.”

EXERCISES:
- 5-10-5 Pro Agility
- 3-cone Drill
- Stepping Over Bags (linebackers, running backs)
- Back Pedaling and Swiveling the Hips (defensive backs)

PREHAB
Prehab entails utilizing mobility drills, warmup sequences, and accessory work to help prevent injury.
KENN SAYS: “I would tell any athlete in any sport to train the neck. It goes back to talking about the root. It’s all based on posture. Drop your head and where does the rest of your body go? In any sport, your ability to control your head movement is important.”

EXERCISES:
- Face-pull
- Banded Overhead Pull-apart
- Glute-Ham Raise
- 4-way Neck Machine
- Neck Rotation
ATHLETE FUEL: WHAT YOUR BODY NEEDS

Meal Replacement

TAKING YOUR GAME up a notch, either on the field or on the court, requires you to properly fuel your body with nutritionally dense foods that will help aid in recovery, with the right ratio of proteins, carbs, and fats. And since most of us don’t have the time to spend hours prepping meals or the ability to stay in the kitchen all day, snacks, like a meal-replacement bar, can fill the holes of your nutrition program.

Personally, we like the new Big 100 Super Cookie Crunch Meal Replacement Bar for its strong macronutrient profile and muscle-building properties. And strength and conditioning coach for the Denver Nuggets, Steve Hess, agrees.

“I love the ratio of carbohydrates to protein in this incredible bar,” says Hess. “It serves two major functions for my athletes, replenishing glycogen stores through carbohydrates and aiding in muscle rebuilding through its 32 grams of protein.”

To get through a grueling workout, your body uses glycogen—aka carbohydrates—as immediate fuel. After that workout, you need to replenish those glycogen stores to start the muscle-recovery process, which is what leads to growth. The harder you work, the more glycogen you need to replace and calories you need to consume. And a convenient snack—you can fit a whole box of them in your gym bag—that’s packed with protein and clean calories is exactly what your body needs, in and out of the gym.

As for taste, the bar comes in three delicious flavors: Super Cookie Crunch, Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, and Crispy Apple Pie, and Hess adds, “The bars taste amazing and are easy to travel with, which is an absolute must in my business.”

CONTRIBUTORS: SHAWN DONNELLY, ANDREW GUTMAN, AND JOE WUEBBEN

DO YOU NEED TO REFUEL YOUR muscles after an intense training session or practice? Absolutely. But does that mean you have to choke down some dry chicken breast or a chalky shake to do it? No. And if you’re in the market for a better-tasting shake that also packs a nutritional punch, then look no further than MET-Rx’s high-protein Ready to Drink (RTD) shake.

The key to quicker gains is to ingest rapidly digesting foods so that your body can begin the recovery process. And post-workout is when your muscles are most primed for growth.

What you need is a fast-absorbing shake, like MET-Rx’s RTD, that’s void of crap like artificial sweeteners, flavors, colors, and preservatives—which your body isn’t meant to handle—and instead full of ingredients like leucine, an essential amino acid that helps with the muscle-building process.

STEP UP YOUR GAME: Visit muscleandfitness.com/allstrength for complete pro sport training advice, video demonstrations, and nutrition tips to help fuel your game. Powered by MET-Rx.
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