

STRENGTH & CONDITIONING COACHES CLINIC

PROBLEM SOLVING, CULTURE & RELATIONSHIPS

The weight room is the most controllable environment in your program.
How to lead it, build it, and fix it when it breaks.

YOU CAN'T PROGRAM YOUR WAY OUT OF A PEOPLE PROBLEM



PROGRAMMING IS DOWNLOADABLE

Templates, percentages, periodization — they're everywhere, and plenty of them are good. The X's and O's are the easy part.



CULTURE IS NOT

The habits, standards, and shared expectations that decide how athletes show up when nobody's making them. You can't download that.



THE ROOM DECIDES NOVEMBER

Rooms with real culture compete hard, hold each other accountable, and handle adversity. Rooms without it do the minimum and fold.

THE CHAIN: more effective strength coaching → more consistent training → better athletes → more wins. Every topic today feeds that chain.

PART 01

PROBLEM SOLVING

The daily S&C problems of a smaller school — and the systems that turn constraints into training quality.

THE SMALL-SCHOOL REALITY



EQUIPMENT & TIME

Four racks, thirty athletes, a 45-minute period that's 25 minutes of actual lifting after dress-out and announcements.

The constraint isn't going away. The plan has to absorb it.



EVERY KID IS EVERY SPORT

Your starting QB is also your point guard and your 4×100 anchor. There is no true off-season — only seasons stacked on seasons.

The calendar is the program.



YOU ARE THE DEPARTMENT

Head coach, PE teacher, bus driver, and the entire S&C staff — often for free. Every system has to run without you standing over it.

Simple beats optimal.

CONSTRAINTS DON'T LOSE GAMES — UNPLANNED RESPONSES TO THEM DO. The small schools that win don't have more equipment. They have better systems for the equipment they have.

A LOOP YOU CAN RUN EVERY TIME

1

NAME THE TRAINING COST

Specific and measurable.
“Group 2 gets 12 minutes of lifting” — not “we never have enough time.”

2

FIND THE ROOT

Equipment, schedule, staffing, or buy-in? Ask why until you hit a cause you can change by Monday.

3

PICK THE SMALLEST FIX

Supersets and stations beat begging the principal for a longer period. Small fixes survive busy weeks.

4

ACT & EXPLAIN

Change the system and tell athletes why: “This gets every one of you more quality sets.”

5

REVIEW THE TRAINING

Did sets completed, bar speed, or attendance improve? If not, you fixed the wrong root. Run it again.

Every problem gets measured in the same currency: quality training time per athlete. Protect that number and the performance — and the wins — follow.

RUN THE LOOP ON YOUR REAL PROBLEMS

THE PROBLEM	LIKELY ROOT	FIRST MOVE
30 athletes, 4 racks	Equipment	Station circuits — bar, DB, and jump stations so every kid trains every minute
45-min period = 20 min of lifting	Schedule + transitions	Posted plan, timed warm-up, supersets. Density beats duration
Three-sport kids, no off-season	Calendar	Train through seasons — a 2-day in-season template so nobody starts over in March
In-season lifting disappears	Buy-in + plan	2×/week maintenance holds strength all season. Show sport coaches the data
Freshmen with zero training age	Training age	Developmental tier: movement before load. Don't max-test in month one
Summer attendance fades by July	Purpose	Test, post progress, make PRs visible — kids show up for what gets measured

EVERY ONE OF THESE FIXES BUYS BACK TRAINING TIME. And the ones that keep coming back are culture problems wearing an equipment disguise — which brings us to Part 02.

PART 02

CULTURE

Culture is what your athletes do when nobody's making them — and it decides whether summer strength survives until the playoffs.

CULTURE IS BEHAVIOR — NOT A POSTER

WHAT CULTURE IS NOT

- A motto printed on a t-shirt
- A poster on the weight room wall
- The preseason speech
- A hashtag

WHAT CULTURE IS

- Weights re-racked without being told
- Athletes cheering a teammate's heavy set
- The room going quiet when it's time to work
- Arriving early — not barely on time

“Culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal. It's not something you are. It's something you do.”

DANIEL COYLE — THE CULTURE CODE

THE THREE PILLARS OF HIGH-PERFORMANCE CULTURE



01 — BUILD SAFETY

The room must be safe to work hard, fail, and try again. Without psychological safety, athletes protect themselves instead of pushing themselves.



02 — SHARE VULNERABILITY

Coaches who admit mistakes and ask questions give athletes permission to do the same. Trust isn't built through authority — it's built through honesty.



03 — ESTABLISH PURPOSE

Every rep has a reason. When athletes know how today connects to fall camp, effort becomes intentional instead of mechanical.

*Safety allows vulnerability. Vulnerability deepens purpose. Purpose reinforces safety.
A room with all three trains harder, more often, with fewer kids lost — and that compounds into performance.*

SIX STANDARDS THAT BUILD THE ROOM

STANDARD	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHY IT MATTERS
Equipment re-rack	All weight returned before leaving the floor — no reminders needed	Collective ownership of the space
On-time presence	Ready — not walking in — at session start	Sets the tone before the first rep
Cues acknowledged	Athletes repeat back or nod — no passive reception	Active listening under fatigue
Teammate encouragement	Genuine support on working sets — not performative	Group identity that sustains intensity
Honest self-reporting	Sore, fatigued, or off — reported without fear	Prevents training through injury
No phones on the floor	Devices stay in bags during working sets	The hour belongs to the work

THE FIRST TIME A STANDARD IS IGNORED AND NOTHING IS SAID, THAT STANDARD IS GONE.

YOU ARE THE PRIMARY CULTURE SIGNAL



HOW YOU HANDLE A MISS

Coach the failure or criticize it?
The room watches every single time.



HOW PREPARED YOU ARE

A clear plan signals the program is worth showing up for.



WHAT YOU CELEBRATE

Only PRs? You're teaching outcomes over process. Celebrate the grinder at 80% with better technique than last week.



HOW YOU HANDLE CHAOS

Broken racks, shifted schedules, flat athletes — your reaction to adversity is a teaching moment.

“Sweep the sheds.” — JAMES KERR, LEGACY (ALL BLACKS PRINCIPLE)

All Blacks veterans clean the locker room after matches. Nobody is above the culture. Coaches who set up the room, stay late, and demonstrate the standard — instead of describing it — build programs that take on a life of their own.

YOUR STARTING FRAMEWORK

1

DEFINE THREE NON-NEGOTIABLES

Observable, coachable, and enforced regardless of the athlete's status. Write them down. Say them out loud at session one.

2

REINFORCE DAILY, NOT SEASONALLY

Culture is set on the third Tuesday of June when the room is half-awake — not in the preseason speech. Ordinary days decide it.

3

NAME THE PURPOSE REPEATEDLY

Tie every block to a specific outcome. Not “get stronger” — “still competing on the third rep when two-a-days hit in August.”

4

MAKE ACCOUNTABILITY PEER-LED

The best rooms are maintained by athletes, not policed by coaches. Acknowledge it publicly when athletes hold each other accountable.

5

AUDIT WHAT YOU CELEBRATE

What you notice, post, and mention is what your culture values — regardless of what's on the poster.

PART 03

RELATIONSHIPS

Athletes don't work for coaches they respect from a distance.

COACHING IS A RELATIONSHIP SKILL

“The science of programming is secondary to the human ability to connect, communicate, and earn trust.”

BRETT BARTHOLOMEW — THE ART OF COACHING

The most effective coaches aren't the ones projecting the most certainty — they're the ones honest about what they don't know, and committed to finding out.

SEE THEM

Athletes work for coaches who notice them — not coaches they respect from a distance.

KNOW THEM

Sport, family, what's hard this week. Knowledge is the raw material of trust.

INVEST IN THEM

Buy-in follows belief that the coach is genuinely invested in the athlete — not just the output.

BELONGING CUES: SMALL SIGNALS, BIG RETURNS



GREET BY NAME

Eye contact and a name when they walk in. The weight room door is your first opportunity, every session.



COACH THE MISS

A missed lift is coached, not mocked — by you and by teammates. That's the rule.



PAIR ROOKIES WITH VETS

New athletes train with veterans early — nobody figures the room out alone.



RECOGNIZE EFFORT

Publicly recognize effort and technique — not just the load on the bar.

START TOMORROW: greet every athlete by name as they enter the room. It's the highest-leverage habit in this entire presentation.

MODEL WHAT YOU WANT MIRRORED

You can't demand a standard you don't model. If you want athletes who are honest about weaknesses and coachable in the moment, demonstrate those behaviors first. In practice:

EXPLAIN YOUR ADJUSTMENTS

"I'm changing your sets this week based on how you responded last week — here's why."

DITCH CUES THAT AREN'T LANDING

Admit it, try a different approach. Athletes notice coaches who adapt.

ASK FOR FEEDBACK — AND ACT ON IT

How are sessions going? Then actually change something based on what you hear.

OWN THE AGGRESSIVE WEIGHT CALL

When your load selection was too hot, adjust without making the athlete feel like the failure.

THIS ISN'T SOFTNESS. It's the foundation of a locker room that tells each other the truth — and that's the foundation of every program that wins consistently.

THE RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND YOUR ATHLETES



SPORT COACHES

Shared athletes, shared calendar. Align before the season — in-season lifting survives on trust, not on policy. A multi-sport athlete should never be the rope in a tug-of-war.



ADMIN & YOUR AD

Advocate for the weight room before you need something. Share testing data, injury trends, and wins — make the program's value visible year-round.

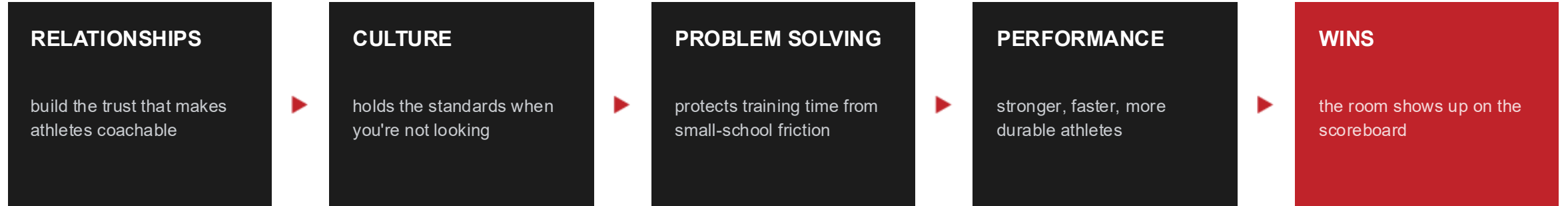


PARENTS

When athletes can explain the why at the dinner table, parents become allies instead of skeptics. Purpose communicates itself — through the kid.

In a smaller school, the strength program only thrives with the building behind it. Build these in June — because every athlete these relationships keep in the weight room is performance on Friday night.

HOW IT ALL CONNECTS



THIS WEEK, BACK IN YOUR ROOM:

- Count one number: minutes of actual lifting per athlete, per session — then buy some back with stations and supersets
- Pick your three non-negotiables — write them down before Friday
- Greet every athlete by name at the door, every session
- Get the in-season plan in front of your sport coaches now — strength that survives the season is the cheapest wins you'll ever buy

STRENGTH & CONDITIONING COACHES CLINIC

BUILD YOUR ROOM.

Better strength coaching → better athletes → more wins.

GO DEEPER

Full article: “Building Weight Room Culture” — nebraskasc.com/blog

Reading list: *The Culture Code* (Coyle) · *Legacy* (Kerr) · *The Art of Coaching* (Bartholomew)

FREE RESOURCES

Programs, field guides, handouts & coaching tools — nebraskasc.com

Free 30-minute consultation with a D1 strength coach — [book online](#)

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