THE PARENT'S GUIDE TO YEAR-ROUND TRACK TRAINING

A Season-by-Season Roadmap for Helping Your Track Athlete Train, Recover, and Prepare for Their Next Outdoor Season

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INTRODUCTION: SPEED IS EARNED, NOT GENETIC

One of the most persistent and damaging myths in youth athletics is that speed is purely genetic. Parents and even school coaches frequently assume that if an athlete is slow, they are doomed to stay slow, and that targeted sprint training is a waste of time. I am here to tell you that this belief is flat-out wrong. Speed is a highly trainable physical skill, just like throwing a football or swinging a bat.

To prove this, I look no further than my own daughter, Anna. During her freshman year at Bishop Watterson High School, Anna was tied for 116th in the state of Ohio in the D1 outdoor 100M dash, sporting a personal record of 12.85 seconds. Her freshman 60M indoor time of 8.34 seconds ranked her tied for 99th. On paper, she was on nobody's recruitment radar.

We felt if she put in the work those times could drop. We just didn't realize how much they would drop.

Over the next four years, she committed to a highly disciplined, year-round speed and strength program off the track. By her senior year in 2021, Anna dropped her 100M time by an astonishing **1.08 seconds** to a blazing 11.77 seconds, ranking her #1 in the entire state of Ohio in Division 1. She dropped her 60M dash down by .65 seconds to a 7.69, taking 4th at the indoor state meet, and she won a state championship anchoring Watterson's 4x200M relay.

This was the largest sprint improvement of any girl in her graduating class across Ohio—and it was not born of genetic luck. It was the product of a structured, year-round approach to speed and strength development. This guide delivers that exact roadmap to you, providing a seasonal, year-round plan designed to build elite athleticism, prevent nagging injuries, and raise your athlete's absolute physical ceiling.

> ***The Golden Core Rule of Speed:*** *Leg strength is the ultimate foundation of running velocity. A stronger athlete throws more force into the ground with every stride. According to Newton's third law, the ground throws that exact force back into the athlete, propelling them forward. If you are not building relative lower-body strength, your athlete will never reach their true speed potential.*

About the Coach: Why You Should Listen to Me

I have been a strength & conditioning coach and speed coach for over 25 years. I've worked with youth, high school, collegiate, and professional athletes. I've spoken at NSCA State Strength and Conditioning Clinics, written for STACK, and served as the head track and field coach at Bishop Watterson High School. In 2021, I was named the Central Ohio Girls Track Coach of the Year.

But if you are a parent, my resume isn't the main reason you should trust me with your athlete.

You should trust me because I am a **father first**, and a **coach second.**

I have two daughters who played competitive sports, and I understand the exact anxieties you are facing. I know the fear of watching your child play through pain, and I know the frustration of watching them ride the bench when you know they have the drive to contribute if they just had a little more speed and power. I've sat in the bleachers for years of club soccer tournaments and youth leagues, experiencing the exact same youth sports grind you are living right now.

I also draw heavily on my own experiences as a high school athlete. Back in high school, I was fortunate enough to receive college offers to play both basketball and run track. I ultimately chose to focus strictly on academics—a decision I look back on and wish I had handled differently, even if just to try college sports for a single year. That is why I am so passionate about helping today's athletes chase their dreams. If they have the desire to compete at the next level, I want to make sure they get the chance to see how far their athleticism can take them.

Over the last two decades, my system has helped transition athletes from average performers into state champions, All-Americans, and collegiate recruits. Whether it's helping Aziza Ayoub transition from a 400M runner to a D1 All-American at Ohio State, or helping long jumper Maria D'Orazio add a foot and a half to her jump to qualify for college track—we focus on identifying individual weaknesses, building absolute speed, and giving athletes the mental confidence to dominate.

As a track coach responsible for the sprints, I've coached state champions, state runners-up, individual medalists and relay medalists. I've also had the unique opportunity to coach athletes who trained with me at FPC while competing on my high school team. That allowed me to oversee nearly every aspect of their development—from strength and speed training in the off-season through their in-season program and ultimately the state championships.

I treat every single kid who walks through the doors of my Dublin facility as if they were my own. Let's get to work.

PHASE 1: OUTDOOR TRACK SEASON — COMPETE & PERFORM

The outdoor track season runs from March through early June. This is the competitive peaking phase where the hard work from the previous months must transfer directly to the clock. However, a major roadblock during this phase is the school training environment. Many school practices consist of high-volume running and cardio conditioning. This heavy cardio strain is highly taxing, and without strategic physical management, your athlete's strength and power will begin to rapidly decay.

The Two-Week Rule of Strength Maintenance: Athletes can begin losing strength and training adaptations when strength training is removed for extended periods. That's why I don't recommend that track athletes completely stop lifting once the competitive season begins.

To help maintain these qualities, athletes must continue high-intensity, low-volume lifting at least once or twice a week. In-season lifting should not focus on building mass or inducing muscle fatigue; it is a *recovery and neurological retention tool*. Because cardiovascular running strain is significantly harder on the body than brief, heavy strength lifting, a brief, properly programmed lifting session can help maintain strength, power and neuromuscular qualities without creating excessive fatigue.

FPC's In-Season Contrast Protocol: To maintain maximum vertical explosiveness and explosive start power, we utilize Post-Activation Potentiation (PAP). We take our higher-level athletes through the following routine:

- **Heavy Hex Bar Deadlifts:** Perform 2 reps at 90% to 95% of their maximum capacity, for 2 to 3 sets.

- **Immediate Plyometric Transition:** Exactly 30 seconds after completing a set of deadlifts, the athlete immediately performs a high-intensity plyometric jump (such as 4 rapid vertical jumps or squat jumps).

- **Why It Works:** The heavy submaximal load 'tricks' the central nervous system into maximum muscle fiber recruitment. When the weight is stripped away, those primed fast-twitch fibers fire with extreme, explosive velocity, keeping your athlete's start times razor-sharp.

Maintaining a lifting program will keep your developed speed in the off-season at a maximal level. Combine that with your coach’s track program and it will really help your times drop in time for the tournament run.

> ***Coaching Note:*** *Anna Kessler and Sydney Workman both deadlifted heavy (230 lbs and 200 lbs, respectively) just days before their state track prelims. Instead of fatiguing them, this kept their fast-twitch fibers firing. The result? Anna won her state title, and Sydney set a new school record in the 200M on the podium.*

PHASE 2 & 3: RECOVER, EVALUATE & THE SUMMER ROADMAP

Phase 2: Immediately After Outdoor — Recover & Evaluate (Early June)

Once the final meet of the spring concludes, your athlete must enter a mandatory 1-to-2-week **Recharge Phase**. This is a non-negotiable period of complete physical rest. The intense pounding of running on hard tracks, paired with high school academic stress and postseason pressure, leaves many athletes physically and mentally fatigued. Letting the body fully repair prevents long-term joint wear and keeps overall athletic drive high.

During this recharge, sit down with your athlete and perform the **'Mirror Test' Evaluation**. Look honestly at the season's film and data: Was their flat sprint speed the bottleneck, or did their hurdle technique or jump steps break down? Avoid external excuses about playing time or track conditions. True growth begins with identifying exactly what physical or mechanical weaknesses must be targeted in the coming off-season.

Phase 3: Summer — Race More or Train? (Mid-June – August)

This is one of the most critical decision points for track parents, and my answer is often counterintuitive: *Should your athlete run summer track? The answer is usually no.*

High school track athletes should almost never compete in summer club meets unless they missed their spring season due to an injury or competed in 1 or 2 meets. Then, you could justify that you never really got settled into the workout's periodization and could run in some summer meets to see where you stand.

Otherwise, running a double postseason (peaking in May for high school and then trying to re-peak in July for club championships) is a recipe for physical breakdown. It leads directly to overuse injuries, severe mental fatigue, and performance plateaus because the human body cannot sustain top-end speed over a multi-peak season without adequate recovery.

Instead of racing more, healthy sprinters, jumpers, and hurdles should use the summer months to step away from the track entirely and build their raw engine in the weight room. Summer is the perfect, stress-free window to dedicate 3 sessions a week to building relative strength, linear acceleration mechanics, and explosive power, setting the stage to dominate next spring.

> ***The P.S. Rule of Summer Workouts:*** *A vacation doesn't have to mean complete inactivity. Even during time away, athletes can stay active with short workouts, mobility work or other physical activity without turning the trip into a full training camp.*

PHASE 4 & 5: THE FALL BUILD & WINTER PREPARATION

Phase 4: Fall — Build (September – November)

Fall is where the true physical transformation occurs. At FPC, our entire training philosophy during the fall focuses on *developing the overall athlete, not just the track runner*. We systematically build the body around three off-season pillars:

1. **Running Mechanics First:** We strip away faulty running form. We focus on achieving a neutral pelvis (preventing anterior pelvic tilt that stresses the hamstrings), ankle stiffness (dorsiflexing the foot to act like a springboard), and eliminating excessive backside mechanics (keeping the knee gap closed).
2. **Relative Strength:** We target an elite **2:1 strength-to-bodyweight ratio** on the deadlift. Lower-body force generation directly dictates linear acceleration and top-end velocity.
3. **Posterior Chain Development:** Sprinters and jumpers generate all their propulsion from the backside of the body. We heavily target the glutes and hamstrings to handle massive ground impact forces and shield the athlete from hamstring pulls and ACL tears.

Phase 5: Winter — Prepare or Compete (December – February)

Winter represents the indoor track season, which too many parents treat as a high-stakes championship window. At FPC, we view the indoor season strictly as **glorified workouts**. Trying to peak for an indoor state title in February makes it nearly impossible for a young athlete to decompress and re-peak for the outdoor state finals in June.

In the winter, training must prioritize **top-end speed development, running mechanics, continual strength power, and building a solid cardiovascular base**. To achieve this safely in freezing Ohio winters, we utilize the human-powered **Curve Treadmill**. The curved surface forces the athlete to run with perfect mechanics (striking directly under the pelvis) and allows us to capture high-speed video to make real-time technical corrections. Speed cannot develop running short 20-yard dash workouts in a cramped school hallway; the Curve Treadmill allows us to safely train top-end speed over longer distances.

> ***Winter Supplement Protocol:*** *To support explosive ATP replenishment and immune health during flu season, we strategically recommend three supplements:* ***Creatine Monohydrate*** *(replenishes muscular ATP during short 10-15s bursts),* ***Quercetin*** *(increases mitochondria for energy and decreases inflammatory cytokines), and* ***Zinc*** *(to block illness and cut recovery time in half).*

THE EVENT-SPECIFIC PLAYBOOKS — PART 1

1. The Sprinter's Winter Focus: The Peaking Trap

Off-season winter training for sprinters must focus strictly on: top-end speed development, running mechanics, continual strength power, and developing a solid aerobic foundation. At no time during the winter should a sprinter be performing speed endurance or longer speed workouts. If you introduce speed endurance too early, the athlete will be physically fried by May, completely stalling their times when postseason championships arrive.

2. The Distance Runner's Playbook: Raising the Speed Ceiling

Most parents of distance runners assume that the only way to get faster is to pile on slow, steady road mileage. Distance runners still need speed. Improving an athlete's maximum sprint speed can give them a higher performance ceiling, even though their primary event depends heavily on endurance. To drop race times, distance runners must raise their absolute speed limit.

Think of it this way: if your athlete's top-end sprint speed is 18 mph and their aerobic race pace is 13 mph, they are running at roughly 72% of their absolute maximum capacity. If we use off-season sprint work to raise their top-end ceiling to 19 mph, then running at that same 13 mph pace now only requires 68% of their maximum effort. By raising the speed ceiling, we make their cruising speed feel dramatically easier, allowing them to sustain a faster pace for longer.

The Distance Calendar: A short 1-to-2 week transition of complete rest in June, followed by school cross country prep (most distance runners in track run cross country). No summer meets. After the XC season ends in November, they take another brief transition, and spend the winter building a massive *aerobic base*. In the spring, their school distance coach takes over to refine racing strategy.

3. The Hurdler's Playbook: Speed vs. Technical Efficiency

A hurdler's final time is a simple equation: *Flat Sprint Speed + Hurdling Efficiency = Lower Times*. If an athlete has elite speed but floats over the hurdles, they waste time in the air. If they have flawless technique but lack raw explosive power, they will simply get outrun between the barriers. You must evaluate which of these elements is lagging and train accordingly.

The Pounding Rule: Hurdling is incredibly high-impact. During the winter, hurdle work should be limited to **once a week** (twice a week on rare occasions) to protect their shins and hips from breakdown. Save their legs for the spring, when school practices increase hurdle sessions to twice a week, and meet weeks require clearing barriers three times a week.

> ***The Wall Start Secret:*** *Hurdlers and sprinters must explode out of blocks using their posterior chain (glutes) rather than pulling forward with their smaller hip flexors. To teach this, we use the* ***Wall Start Drill****: the athlete stands facing away from a wall, places their back foot flush against it, and aggressively pushes off that foot on command. This primes the exact glute-driven push-off required to clear the blocks with power.*

THE EVENT-SPECIFIC PLAYBOOKS — PART 2

4. The Jumper's Playbook: Runway Speed & Takeoff Steps

Young jumpers frequently make the mistake of having wildly inconsistent approaches. They either start way too far back, sprinting 100 feet and exhausting themselves before the board, or they start too close, failing to build enough takeoff velocity. We solve runway inconsistency by establishing a highly consistent **14-step approach** to hit peak velocity exactly at the board.

To build single-leg takeoff power, we utilize horizontal and vertical plyometrics (such as single-leg box jumps). However, the athlete must first master single-leg jump roping to prove their ankles have the structural stiffness to handle high impact forces.

Long Jump Focus (Fast & Flat): The penultimate (second-to-last) step and the final step are the critical phases. The penultimate step must be a slightly longer, settling stride to lower the center of gravity, followed by a slightly shorter, quick, explosive final step to project runway speed vertically. Technical runway work should be limited to once a week in the winter.

High Jump Focus (Explosive & Rhythmic): The last two steps must be incredibly fast and explosive to plant and convert a curved runway approach into vertical drive. Because high jump is highly technical, curves and technique drills can be practiced earlier (once a week).

5. The Thrower's Playbook: Brute Strength & Rotational Footwork

Shot put and discus are not upper-body events. All throwing velocity and power is generated from the lower body. In the off-season, throwers must lift heavy to build a massive strength foundation, paired with plyometric jumps to develop rapid fast-twitch firing.

Most of our high-level throwers are football players. Their strength program starts immediately in June to prepare for August practices. When playing football or winter sports, they must continue to lift at least once or twice a week to retain their strength. Unlike runners, throwing footwork is low-impact on joints, meaning throwers can safely practice circle technique **twice a week** in the winter.

6. The Pole Vaulter's Playbook: The Speed-Strength Gymnast

Pole vaulters are hybrid athletes: part sprinter, part heavy weightlifter, and part high-flying gymnast. They require intense upper and lower body strength, linear runway speed, and absolute commitment to technique. Camps are excellent in the early summer for concentrated technical work. However, they must take the fall completely off from vaulting to let their shoulders and joints recover, focusing strictly on speed-strength development before resuming vault practice twice a week in early November.

> ***The 4 Jump Test Standards:*** *We track our jumpers' explosive metrics using a vertical jump mat to measure: 1)* ***Average Foot Contact Time:*** *The goal is to reach the collegiate standard of .20 to .23 seconds. 2)* ***Leg Power Index (Air Time / Contact Time):*** *The target is a metric of 2.5. Improvement in these numbers is a strong indicator that the athlete is developing the reactive strength and explosiveness needed for better jumping performance.*

PHASE 6 & 7: PRE-OUTDOOR TRANSITION & PERFORM

Phase 6: Pre-Outdoor — Transition (Late February – March)

As the school outdoor track season approaches, we systematically transition our athletes' training. We will continue to develop the athlete's strength and explosiveness right up to the week before the first regular season meet. At that point, we shift to the in-season lifting mentioned previously.

This is also the phase where parents must manage the recovery details. Ensure your athlete gets **8 to 9 hours of sleep** nightly (which regulates growth hormone and muscle repair). Additionally, enforce our non-negotiable **'Sweats' Rule**: the athlete must wear long sleeves and sweatpants during their entire warm-up. Warming up in shorts and t-shirts in the chilly 50-degree early spring elements prevents muscle elasticity, heavily increasing the risk of hamstring strains and shin splints.

Phase 7: Outdoor — Perform (April – June)

We are back where we started. The physical foundation built over the previous six months is locked in. Your athlete enters the competitive track season stronger, faster and better prepared to handle the demands of competition. The work shows up directly on the clock.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP: SECURE YOUR ATHLETE'S ADVANTAGE

Every day your athlete trains with a generic program, runs on tired legs, or skips essential off-season strength work, they are actively limiting their potential. Let my 25 years of sports performance expertise and proven, cutting-edge training methodologies guide your athlete to achievements they never thought possible.

Every track athlete has different strengths, weaknesses and goals. The key is identifying what your athlete needs most and building the right training plan around it. If you'd like help determining the best next step for your athlete, FPC offers several ways to get started.

- **Free Consultation:** A 30 minute consult with you and our coaches to see where your goals are and if this is the right fit for you.
- **Initial Athletic Assessment ($105 Value):** A comprehensive evaluation of your athlete's running mechanics, relative strength, and vertical power standards. Includes a personalized goal-setting blueprint. Backed by a **100% Money-Back Guarantee**—if you do not find the assessment incredibly valuable, you pay nothing.
- **Private Track Coaching w/Adam:** If you want your track athlete to work with Adam in the off-season with specific track workouts (this is different then our speed/strength program you would do the assessment above for), then go here to fill out an application and see if you'd be a good fit for this. He only handles a few clients per season. Apply for private track coaching!

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