

Effort is King

Los Angeles, CA – When ZoneReady staff met with newly assigned Palos Verdes High School Football Coach Guy Gardner at the beginning of the off-season a multitude of topics made their way onto the discussion table. Training philosophy, exercises selection, conditioning frequency, among others was explored to find the best way to take a team back to their league champion status. A complete plan for speed and multi-directional movement development, weight training, flexibility, injury prevention, and conditioning was presented to Coach Gardner by ZoneReady, but there was still one missing ingredient.

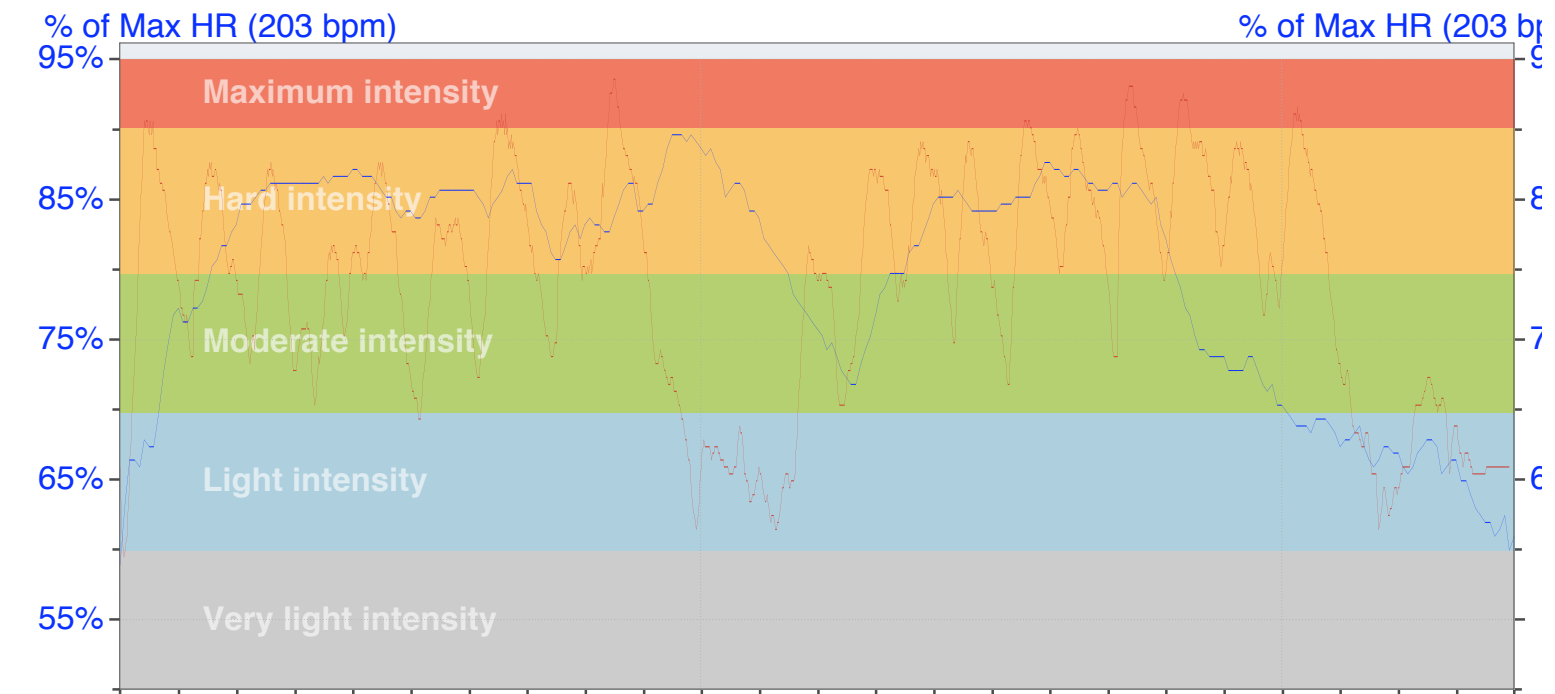
In the words of a coach who's been at this stage of an off-season many times before, Gardner focused on the key ingredient to any training program – effort. The effort of the athlete day in and day out is what makes a program work. ZoneReady Coach Chris Gizzi couldn't agree with this any more, "Without effort, we are kidding ourselves on the effectiveness of a training program. The best plan in the world would be rendered useless if those entrusted to execute it were not passionate about their pursuit of its completion. This is true in any walk of life, and becomes fantastically apparent in sports."

So how do we measure effort? Is it the performance of the athlete during a respective task? Is the athlete moving more weight, running faster, performing more repetitions during the same period of time? For many exercises this is a feasible measuring stick. But what happens when the exercise or drill has no set finish line or the ability to measure multiple reps becomes unfeasible or fatigue wrecks havoc on the performing athletes' memory (or integrity).

ZoneReady introduced a new measuring stick to high school coaches to assist in their measurement of an athletes' effort during a particular drill – heart rate. Powered by Polar – ZoneReady took a device that was once reserved for aerobic based sports and is using in multiple capacities for anaerobic based sports. ZoneReady Coach Doug Gizzi explains, "Because of the responsiveness and ease of use of the Polar receivers and transmitters, athletes get immediate feedback on their effort for any drill. We inform them on what percentage or Polar "Sport Zone" they need to be training in to optimize their training. The heart doesn't lie – if you're not getting your heart rate to a certain point one of two things is happening: 1.) We're not pushing you hard enough or 2.) You're dogging it! The first one is on us; the second is on the player."

Coaches love seeing the "black and white" results. A sweaty t-shirt or an athlete vigorously pumping their arms isn't enough to ensure optimal training. With the Polar hardware (heart rate monitors and transmitters) and the software (Polar Pro Trainer program), the level of effort is framed in terms of a percentage of a heart rate max that is specific for each athlete based on a myriad of personal identifiers. Regardless of age, size, fitness level, or how the athlete is feeling that day – the monitor tailors limits to ensure the specific training effect. Coach Gizzi comments, "We can see if a guy was giving his all, we can compare him with his teammates, we can even see if a guy's looked a little sluggish but was still putting out (maybe he was a little run down that day). The impact when brought to the athlete's attention is incredible – when they see they can give more, they are motivated to do so the next time out. It's like they want to beat the watch."

Take a look at this graph of two athletes performing similar workouts:



These are two graphs laid on top of each other to compare two athlete's efforts:
 Which one do you think is giving more effort? The **RED** or the **BLUE**?
 Better Question – Which one do you think is getting in better football shape? **RED** or **BLUE**?

Both athletes performed a similar workout (2 Quarters/Sets of Metabolics -> 50-60sec rest between Reps (10 Reps per set), 2-3min between the 2 Sets). For more detail see the following link:

<http://zoneready.net/footballreadyquarters.asp>

Although it's not perfect, the **RED** athlete attacked the training aggressively and recovered well. He can still push harder (get into the MAXIMUM INTENSITY 90%+ realm more often) and can be given less rest in between reps/set. The **BLUE** athlete is not pushing – we must see if he is injured before we correct his effort. In an optimal environment we would put him through training to rehabilitate his conditioning so he is not overwhelmed when trying to keep up with the **RED** athlete as the off-season conditioning progresses. If this is not corrected, his probability for injury in the Fall is greatly increased. And he may be a negative influence on teammates who are following his example. Now, team performance lowers and injury probability increases for everyone!