GETTING STARTED WITH

WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT

Part 2- Implementation

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Introduction

This article presents simple steps and field-proven strategies to implement and manage an effective workload management program. In this document, you will also learn how to keep your program as simple as possible, by focusing on what really matters, and maximizing athlete and staff buy-in.

Please read on and feel free to contact the author at francois@athletemonitoring.com for any questions.

Establish a relationship of trust and open communication

Because self-reported information is used extensively to quantify internal load, pre-training wellness and readiness, for your monitoring program to work, you must first establish a relationship of trust and open communication between the athletes, the coaching team, and the medical staff.

Ensuring athletes collaboration, and having the performance and medical teams working together to monitor and manage load, are crucial components of a successful workload management program.

Use a specialized software such as AthleteMonitoring

Free monitoring tools (Excel, Google Forms, etc.) can be used but they usually are less time-efficient, less secure, require extensive programming work, and are unable to centralize large amount of data from multiple sources.

AthleteMonitoring (website www.athletemonitoring.com) is a simple, yet robust workload and athlete data management software that will simplify day to day workload management and maximize athlete and staff buy-in.

**AthleteMonitoring will help you to:**

1) Collect quality and meaningful data from the athlete with minimal effort;
2) Monitor wellness, internal and external load metrics and centralize your data;
3) Facilitate the interpretation of key metrics in a time-effective manner.
Figure 1 - AthleteMonitoring dashboard illustrates the integration of all metrics and individual alerts that simplifies workload management decision-making based on evidence-based methods.

To maximize athlete's compliance with data collection, set up a protocol that will allow athletes the time to input their data (ie: at the end of every training or match during cool down).

Configure AthleteMonitoring to automatically send SMS reminders 30 minutes after training and matches, or have athletes place an alert on their phones. Data consistency is key.

Focus on the essentials
To maximize athlete and staff engagement with your workload management program, focus on the essentials.

Only measure what's truly have an impact on health and performance (leave the nice-to-have tools), and keep your monitoring program as simple as possible.

Trying to implement a full-scale athlete monitoring program right away will likely overwhelm athletes and staff, and result in waste of time and poor buy-in across the organization.

The section below presents a suggested four-stage implementation process, for an athlete monitoring program that focuses on performance and injury prevention.
Daily wellness monitoring
Purpose: Identify training readiness issues; detect excessive fatigue; lifestyle issues
Tools: Daily wellness questionnaire
When to start: Immediately

Health monitoring
Tools: Injury self-report form or weekly health survey/OSTRC questionnaire
Purpose: Identify important health and readiness issues; improve communication between athletes and the medical and coaching teams. Detect early stages of overuse injuries and illnesses (as soon as they impact the ability to train or compete), before they become bigger issues that lead to medical attention or time loss; improve injury prevention and epidemiology.
When to start: After 4-6 weeks or when compliance with wellness monitoring is satisfactory

Internal load monitoring
Tools: Post-session RPE & enjoyment self-report form
Purpose: Measure individual response to external load; Detect spikes in loads for internal load measures; prevent overtraining; reduce spikes in load; Collect personal feedback and detect motivational issues.
When to start: After 4-6 weeks or when compliance with wellness monitoring and injury self-reporting are satisfactory

External load monitoring
Tools: GPS, jump tracker, etc.
Purpose: Detect spikes in loads for external load measures; ensure training and external loads matches the demands of the competitive task.
When to start: Immediately or when compliance with wellness monitoring and injury self-reporting are satisfactory

Educate coaches and staff
Coach endorsement is crucial. Help coaches to understand the usefulness of your workload management program by, organizing a coaches’ seminar.

During the first seminar, you will explain how the monitoring process works. The value of monitoring external and internal load, how to rate the session’s difficulty (sRPE), how load is calculated, and how to detect at-risk athletes using wellness measures and load metrics. Also explain what to do when athlete are identified as being at risk.

After the initial educational seminar, add coaches to your AthleteMonitoring platform so they can see and track their athletes and utilize the athlete data.
Don’t forget to regularly present positive results at coaches meetings. Use tables, charts and graphs to demonstrate positive team results, reduce injury rates, etc. And include comments from athlete training logs in regards to strengths and weakness of their team training and game-day performances.

**Educate athletes**

Organizing a formal app educational seminar for athletes and parents (if you work with youth athletes) is a proven way to boost compliance rates.

Encourage athletes to bring their mobile devices and present the app during an interactive tutorial. Use a projector and large screen. Log in as an athlete online and walk the athlete through demonstrations of how to complete the daily wellness questionnaire, record training log data, report an injury, and record a session.

In youth programs, subjective measures should include enjoyment as well as how hard players find training and game play from a technical and tactical perspective. Explain how to rate session-RPE after each session.

All this information needs to be explained clearly and in very simple terms, especially in regards to what an RPE is.
Putting it All Together: The Workload Management Workflow

The flowchart below illustrates the integration of all metrics and the decision-making process. This model may be used as a general template for a practical and evidence-based workload management program.

![Workload Management Workflow](image)

**Conclusion**

Managing workload and optimizing athlete performance while promoting injury-free participation is relatively simple. To optimize performance and minimize injury risk:

1. Start with the right tools
2. Monitor the key metrics
3. Increase weekly loads progressively
4. Avoid spikes in load
5. Alternate hard, moderate, and easy training days
6. Use the athlete’s wellness data to guide daily load adjustments
7. Proactively manage training and competition loads during stressful periods
8. Make sure athletes have an enjoyable sport experience

About the author

Francois Gazzano is a performance coach and athlete monitoring specialist who graduated from the Université de Montreal with a degree in Exercise Science. As a full-time strength and conditioning coach and performance consultant in Europe and North America for more than 15 years, François has helped dozens of youth, elite and professional athletes across a wide range of sports reach their highest performance goals. François is the founder & CEO of AthleteMonitoring.com (http://www.athletemonitoring.com), an evidence-based athlete data management and workload optimization system used elite sport organizations worldwide.

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