

## Sandbag Training Interview with U.S.C. Coach Zach Even-esh



JH: Why did you choose to start implementing sandbags into your clients' routines?

ZE: Ironic question Josh! When I first started training I quickly became a member of Ryan Lee's web site SportSpecific.com - I listened to your interview on using odd objects to train athletes and how the results were great. You spoke about kids who were raised on farms and carried around bags of horse feed, hay, pushed wheel barrows around, lifted, pushed and pulled heavy objects. It made a lot of sense to me and I decided to give it a go w/the sandbags since I could get the bags for cheap from the local army navy store.

Also, I was broke and had no money to purchase barbells, dumbbells, etc to help me train kids in groups. It all made sense and the results that followed made me a believer even more so. Of great importance was that the athletes had a blast using them.

JH: What were the results you started to notice?

ZE: Full body strength and power carried over to the mat and the football field quickly. I train mostly football players and wrestlers and they need this type of strength from picking up heavy sandbags and heaving them around using various movements. The economical nature of sandbags, requiring them to be picked off the ground is great for the athletes. There is no isolation happening.

My wrestlers were lifting their opponents constantly during takedowns, and with great ease. The football players were faster and tougher. Their GPP raised greatly and they were by the far the better conditioned players on the field.

JH: How do you think sandbags compare with other tools such as dumbbells, barbells, and other odd implements?

ZE: All of these implements or tools are very effective. I would not use one over the other as I think that is ridiculous. Too many coaches subscribe to using one tool or method at the expense of all others? I say why not use them all? There are benefits and differences to all of them.

The sandbag is versatile for movements like squats and all the variations - we do zercher front squats, zercher good mornings, zercher lunges in all directions, rotational movements, shouldering, etc. - you can still find ways to do most of these with barbells or dumbbells. They all give their own unique advantage, I emphasize staying away from using one tool at the expense of others.

JH: How have you used sandbags into your routines?

ZE: I use them for simple movements, especially w/my beginners; exercises like zercher carries are great as they help develop the upper back, lower back, abdominals, and then picking the weight up, placing it down helps promote proper squat and dead lift technique.

We use heavy bags for low reps on exercises like squats, shouldering, military presses, lunges, but we also use lighter and moderately weighted bags for rotations (plus the above exercises for higher reps), rowing movements, we even throw the bags in various directions, curls, as well as using them for extra loading during push ups, or using them as weights on our sleds.

When we load our sleds w/sandbags we perform sled work mixed in w/sandbag training. Great for conditioning athletes and general population.

JH: Do you think sandbags are limited to just athletes?

ZE: No, not at all. They can be safely implemented w/general population just like any other tool. Simply adjust the load to allow for proper execution of any exercise and you're good to go. In addition, sandbags make it very easy to use the economical exercises I spoke of before - shouldering, clean and press, zercher exercises (zercher holds work the upper body while you perform a lower body exercise) and rows and carries.

JH: Thanks so much for your time and thoughts Zach. Where could our readers learn more about your programs?

ZE: Thanks for the interview Josh. Your readers can check out my two sites and get a free course on Underground training at [\\_www.CombatGrappler.com\\_](http://www.CombatGrappler.com) (<http://www.CombatGrappler.com>) . The other site is [www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com\\_](http://www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com) (<http://www.UndergroundStrengthCoach.com>) where we're lucky enough to have you as our most powerful contributor!

Thanks again brother!