

Ultimate Forearm Training for Baseball & Softball Players

Jedd Johnson and Joey Myers Interview 2020-12-21

Joey Myers 00:00

Hello and welcome to swing smarter monthly newsletter. This is your host Joey Myers from hittingperformancelab.com and I have an old friend of mine that probably when I started, for those of you who know me from swingsmarter.com as Jedd Johnson of diesel crew, he's one of the diesel crew and I want to first of all, thank you for making the time and coming up.

Jedd Johnson 00:20

Oh, dude, I really appreciate you reaching out to me, man. It's been so long since we connected and I'm happy to be a part of it. So, thank you very much.

Joey Myers 00:29

You got it, brother. Well, hey, I saw on the site or on your personal blog that you have a nickname and I want you to go into where did you get the nickname? And is it napalm?

Where did the nickname "Napalm" come from?

Jedd Johnson 00:39

Napalm, yes. On all my YouTube videos, I say, this is Jedd Johnson from diesel crew. Of course, you know, they call me napalm. Actually, nobody calls me napalm. There might be two people. What that comes from is I actually wanted to be a pro wrestler. I wanted to come up with some kind of a gimmick that was different from everybody else. Do you know wrestling at all?

Joey Myers 01:14

Little bit.

Jedd Johnson 01:14

WWF from the 90s. Do you remember Cain, the guy who was in a red suit? There was this match where he got his arm on fire? I'm like, how did they do that? I found out there was that solution that you could put on your arm that you could set fire and it wouldn't burn you for a certain amount of time? I was like, I could be a pyromaniac that every time he wanted to celebrate, he would set himself on fire.

Jedd Johnson 01:46

That's where napalm came from. If your viewers don't know, napalm is a like a chemical or a weapon that they used, I think in either Korea or Vietnam to burn the vegetation, you would you would set this stuff on fire and this chemical would just burn and burn and burn and it would take down the vegetation and then, try to expose the enemy.

Joey Myers 02:11

Right.

Jedd Johnson 02:12

That's my understanding. That's where I came up with that, I always thought napalm was a cool word. I was like, I could I could use that. I was going to go with napalm jack. Napalm was going to work just fine. I sent that character in first tough enough, dude. I took a hand sanitizer and I put it in my hand. And I would set that on fire at parties. It burns like a blue flame. It was really freaky.

Joey Myers 02:48

It doesn't burn you?

Jedd Johnson 02:51

It does burn you. For a few seconds, you're good. It's not like the stuff that Cain had on his arm. I would have somebody ready with a big towel and they would just smother it and it would all go out. Usually there were some adult beverages involved before this happened. One time there were a few too many involved, and the guy who's supposed to have the towel had like a dish rag. I'm like, give me the towel and he put it on my hand and it didn't do the trick, dude. It burnt too long and I had these burned blisters in between my fingers, it was sore forever. It made training so uncomfortable. But memories, man.

Joey Myers 03:37

No, I love that. I love that. I always like to hear where the nicknames come from. I love how it's on the marketing side. Hey, everybody calls me napalm but only two people call you that but I love that story. Well, I probably should tell everybody who doesn't know or haven't been following me since swing smarter days, but Jedd is a grip strength ninja. That's the reason I wanted to have him on because in the baseball circle, softball circles, I know baseball for sure, grip strength is a big one. I know just by reading and watching Jedd stuff that there are a lot of mistakes that are being made. What are some of those mistakes to grip training that you see going on?

What are some mistakes to grip training that you see going on?

Jedd Johnson 04:21

I think a lot of mistakes that are made that people consider grip strength training to be synonymous with just four arm training. They'll just do some forearm work, maybe some wrist curls behind the back wrist curls, some stuff like that, basic stuff. That's better than doing nothing, but there's a lot more stuff that you can do that's more effective and there's nothing wrong walking around with big forearms either, you're going to get stronger so if you aren't doing grip training at all, and you do some forearm stuff, it will help you, but there's a lot more stuff that you can do.

Jedd Johnson 05:08

There are two things that I see people doing online all the time and it just drives me insane. The one thing, since the early 2000s, this freaked me out, is they'll do the deal where they take like the dowel

rod or a PVC pipe, and then they will put a wire or a rope on it, and then they will stick their arms straight out and then do the wrist rolling.

Joey Myers 05:37

Yeah.

Jedd Johnson 05:40

It pumps blood into your hands and into your forearms, but as far as the time that you're doing that, that could be so much more wisely used to develop some hand, wrist, and forearm strength. The other one is like brand new, it's only from the last couple years, it's when I see the people taking a 25- or 45-pound plate, and flipping it and catching it. It's tough, it's hard but you're getting nothing out of it. There's so much risk involved.

Why “finger” pullups aren’t a good decision...

Jedd Johnson 06:15

You could tweak a fit; you can carry an A two pulley in your finger and you might have to deal with that for months. I've done that twice. I actually did it on both middle fingers on the same day in 2011 one time because I was being stupid. I dealt with that for three months. Then another time, I did this ring finger, my right ring finger, I'm just doing dumb stuff. I had to deal with that, I was able to work around it and do some training, but I could feel that pain for four months. Plus, not to mention if you miss and it hits your foot or something, it's just not wise. It's not wise. Those two things drive me nuts.

Joey Myers 07:03

Yes, and we did those all the time. I remember doing that one like you mentioned the wrist at the curl and then behind the back. When we did all that, we did this one, we did the extension, wrist extension, deflection, and those in our repertoire back in the early 2000s. We landed about that same spot, and we were experimenting, just like you said being stupid with one finger, two finger pull ups. I think I did the same thing.

Jedd Johnson 07:30

Oh, no. Yeah, so risky.

Joey Myers 07:32

Oh, I can't remember what hand it was but I remember it was the middle finger, I'd never seen that before. It's you're talking tendons and connective tissues. It's a lot longer to get it to heal.

Jedd Johnson 07:47

Sure, it does, man. It sure does. Hands are so important for ballplayers to manage and deal with something like that. It can mess stuff up for a long time and I shudder to think especially like a prospect, who's really got a bright future ahead of them and they go and do something like that, because they saw online, or an uninformed coach has them do that. That's a good point, hanging off of bars with just one hand or using like climbing grips.

Jedd Johnson 08:16

I have wrestlers and baseball players in my gym, and I have a set of their Metolius rock rings, just a product that you would use for moving towards specific training for rock climbing. I have them hung up on my bar, and everybody always asked me about them. I do not use those grips at all. What I like to do is grip on top of it and then if I'm having any kind of shoulder pain or elbow pain, I can do my pull ups on those and they're hanging from a rope, so I can grip on top of that. It's not a grip challenge at all and I can move my hands however I want to and for that pull up motion, and it's totally pain free. I look over and I see kids trying to stick like their two middle fingers in there and do pull up, no, no, dude, don't. It's just not worth it.

Joey Myers 09:11

Is that the same one? Did you see the documentary was a free solo?

Jedd Johnson 09:15

I did, yes.

Joey Myers 09:15

Is that the one he's got in his van? Do you remember it was towards the last quarter of the movie, I think, it was right before he was going to do the big climb, the free solo? He had those, it must have been those and he had them hanging from that little VW bus...

Jedd Johnson 09:32

What color were they?

Joey Myers 09:33

I think so, he had him up there and he was doing different finger type stuff but that guy was a frickin G when it came to rock climbing.

Jedd Johnson 09:41

That it I don't recall. They very well could have, I know most of the ones that I've seen, there are specific products that are green. If they were green in the movie, they are probably the exact same thing. The climbers also use things called campus boards, which are generally fixed right to a wall or some kind of surface, a lot of times you see him over top of people's doorways, you can get just a finger crimp hold on there, and you generally hang for time.

Jedd Johnson 10:10

They do that, because there's so much hanging for time on the rock ledge. It makes sense to go out there and just hang and get your fingers accustomed to it. What happens is people go up there and grab it, and then they're trying to do pull ups, and then they're trying to reach up and pull themselves up, reach up to the neck and that is just way too much pressure for an untrained individual.

Joey Myers 10:32

I want to say you have maybe eight different things to do grip wise, because like you said, you just named a few that get into your girdle, the wrist flexion extension, that kind of thing. What are the eight principles, half a dozen, whatever that you guys work on for grip and strength?

What are eight principles you guys work on for grip strength?

Jedd Johnson 10:55

The movement patterns are flexion, so that's closing your hands. Also, flexion would be bending the wrist like this, you have extension where you're opening your fingers or extending your wrist, that's two. You have ulnar and radial deviation. Ulnar is where you would bend your wrist in the direction of the pinky, radial deviation is where you bend toward your thumb, and also, you're bending towards the ulna towards the radius. You have supination, which is where you're turning your hands so that your palm faces up, you have pronation, where you're turning your hands so that the palm faces down. The way you can remember that is pouring soup, you would pour soup into a bowl, so pronation, supination.

Jedd Johnson 11:44

You have circumduction, which is where you move your hand through a range of motion. Those are the technical terms. In grip sport, what the terms that we use are crushing, which would be the flexion, but crushing would be through a range of motion. If it's static, it's called supporting, support or supporting.

Jedd Johnson 12:09

Pinching is where you use your thumb, your thumb would generally be opposing your fingers that can be static or dynamic. Any pinching, the limiting factor would be your thumb strength. You have an open hand, which is anything where you can't reach your fingers around and touch your thumb to your fingers. Of course, some pinch would be considered open hand too, because you'll never get your thumb all the way around some things.

Jedd Johnson 12:38

Crimping is where you apply force like this with your fingers and that would be the kind of strength that you would need to rip a deck of cards or telephone book apart, something like that. Those are some off the top of my head. Those are some of the main terminologies that are used.

Joey Myers 12:58

I've heard you talk about the thick bar, thick bar deadlifts and there were a couple other ones that you were taught. The one I liked, you talked about the flexion extension, whereas you just put a rubber band around here, and it's really slick.

Jedd Johnson 13:17

Yes, if anyone has any kind of forearm pain up near their elbow, on the back of their forearm, that's a great drill. You just put rubber bands over your fingers, you can extend it, extend against the band, it works all the extensors in the back of the forearm. It can bring blood in there and help that area recover if someone's sore.

Joey Myers 13:40

Carpal tunnel, too?

Jedd Johnson 13:43

Yes, it can be used for carpal tunnel. Absolutely. To help improve that a little bit. A lot of times, from what I understand, carpal tunnel can actually be related to something in your shoulder. A lot of times when you see someone that has carpal tunnel, a lot of times it does come from overuse as well, but because people get the forward shoulder posture, internally rotated, that can cause issues that will gradually lead to carpal tunnel as well. It goes hand in hand.

Jedd Johnson 14:23

If you have a problem up at the top of your arm, it can translate downstream they say. You have to be aware of those things, too. That's why it's important for ballplayers and all athletes to maintain good posture, good enough antagonistic balance between their chest and your back. You don't want to have an athlete that's all tight in here, that's not going to be good. You want to have them opened up and their upper back be strong and maintain that balance between the opposing muscle groups.

Joey Myers 14:57

I like how you said that because some of my hitters they come in, throwing sports, so a lot of times they'll come in, they'll say, "Oh, my elbows really, really hurt me" and we'll talk about things that they can do with their wrist increased mobility, and they're going "but my elbow" and I said, no, no, let's loosen this up or you see things in the shoulder, like you said, either building the backside, like they do a lot of band work, right? Your band type stuff and building the doing, the whys, and the Tees and the eyes and things like that. They're like "but my elbow". No, no, no shoulder, wrist.

Why elbow issues can be solved through the shoulder or wrist, not the elbow...

Jedd Johnson 15:31

Sometimes there's a problem elsewhere, and you don't feel it but because things are tight, it can either shut something down or cause a misalignment elsewhere, which can further result in some kind of overuse or irritation in a connective tissue. It's definitely something to be aware of.

Joey Myers 15:52

Now, you said you had some baseball guys, maybe even softball girls that you train or have trained. What are the top three when it comes to grip and grip strength stuff? What are the top three exercises that you do with them?

Jedd Johnson 16:03

I have everybody do open hand training, like the thick bar stuff. For instance, not tonight, but last week, I had them just take hex head dumbbells, stand them up and grab them by the top and they're stuck. I found that right there can help so many different athletes because it gets their hands out and makes each finger work individually. That's real beneficial, of course any thick bar stuff.

Joey Myers 16:44

They are standing with that hex bar dumbbell holder just standing there or are they walking with it?

Jedd Johnson 16:49

They're standing and the weights are at their sides. Basically, you just dead lift them up and stand there and if they can hold something, you know how you can just look at someone and see the effort. A lot of times, what I'll do is if the proper weight for them is a 20, like a 20-pound dumbbell in their hand, I'll have them start on the 25 and then drop down to the 20 and I'll have them get a total of 20 seconds. Because the 20, they could probably hold for like 30-40 seconds but because the weight increases, but also the implement gets bigger in size, it becomes more difficult. I like to have two dumbbells setup for each person, two sets of dumbbells so that they can drop down.

Jedd Johnson 17:41

That works out really, really nice. You know what else I have? I had a coach, a dad coach, the father of one of my players was also a coach. He ended up getting one of those bats. I don't know if they use them anymore. I don't watch a lot of Major League Baseball anymore but they used to back in the day, they have one of those heavy bats, they had the weight on it that you could span as it went out, and it would feel heavier. The coach donated that to the gym.

Jedd Johnson 18:12

I don't have them do it like this, it's down at their side but basically, they're going to grip somewhere on that bat. I'll do like this and we just call them jigs. You take to the front like you're jiggling a fishing rod and so it's down at their side, and they're jiggling to the front, they'll jig to the rear. When they're doing it to the front, the weight is out in front of them and you're doing it to the rear, it's in the back.

Jedd Johnson 18:38

I'll also have them do circles to the front either way, to the back either way. You know what else I like to have ballplayers do? I have a nice collection of sledgehammers, actually, my sledgehammers range from three pounds, it goes 3,6,8, 10, 12, 14, 16,20. I'll have them stand with the sledge hammer at their side. The sledge hammer head is on the floor and then they grab the top of the sledgehammer. If this flashlight is the top of the sledgehammer, they're going to grab here and they're going to do a finger walk.

Jedd Johnson 19:22

They're walking their fingers down like that and the goal is to go all the way to the bottom of the sledgehammer until they can touch the head of the sledgehammer. You'd be surprised how tough a six-pound sledge hammer is for a lot of kids. The nice thing is, I like it for baseball and softball players, especially the pitchers and I end up working with a lot of pitchers. It just seems like in my area the pitchers are the most serious athletes. I don't know if that's the case everywhere, but it trains you to apply pressure.

Jedd Johnson 20:08

One of my seniors last year, he was developing some tremendous curve ball movement, and slider and stuff like that just by being able to regulate that pressure on the ball. His whole season got taken away from due to the COVID shut down. My heart is broken because this kid put in so much work. Those are

a few drills that you can do, either at the gym, or you might have some of that stuff at your house. Even if you don't have a giant sledge hammer, maybe you just have a carpenter's hammer, that only weighs a couple pounds, well work your way down, work your way up, work your way down. I know that probably sounds a lot like a wrist roller, but it's not.

Why the traditional wrist roller isn't good for ball players, and how to make it more functional...

Joey Myers 21:03

Like you said, the wrist roller, you're not even working your fingers. It's just more of this with the finger pressure, which is much more functional, especially when it comes to softball.

Jedd Johnson 21:16

Now, to go back to that wrist roller really quick, if you're mounting the wrist roller onto something, and you're actually like pulling up some serious weight, I'm all about it. What we'll do is we'll take a loading pin, or a kettlebell or a dumbbell, and we'll choke a band around it. I'll take another band and choke around the loading sleeve of a barbell and then they're like, "Oh, my gosh, this is so heavy". How they roll it up, they let it spin down, they roll it back the other way, that's a lot more weight. Historically, the wrist roller that's used is, maybe a two-and-a-half-pound plate on there and if anything, I always felt it more in my shoulder than my grip.

Joey Myers 22:02

How many guys you see or girls doing that? They're arching their back and they're new, because maybe their shoulders aren't even developed enough to be able to hold the weight in that position straight out.

Jedd Johnson 22:14

That's another great point. That's another great point. You should maintain that neutral alignment in your spine and everything when you're training, for sure.

Joey Myers 22:23

Well, hey, I want to be respectful of your time, so I want you to give a shout out to where people can find you. If you have any kind of offers or new products, go ahead, just leave it out there.

Ultimate Forearm Training for Baseball (and Softball!)

Jedd Johnson 22:41

Basically, my main website is dieselcrew.com. I don't have a ton of articles up there about baseball by any means but I do have a product called Ultimate Forearm Training for Baseball. I named it that because I didn't figure anybody would know what grip training was, so it's forearm training, ultimate forearm training for baseball. If you go to: <http://gohpl.com/forearmtraining>

Joey Myers 23:19

Do you still have that up on Clickbank?

Jedd Johnson 23:20

Yes, it is. I'll put up a link they can go through and I think it'll help out people tremendously and it's got 20 workouts already set up, that are based around. You can go in there and just totally hit your lower arms as hard as you want to. Or if you don't have time, or if you're not ready for all that then do like two or three movements and it'll be great for you really well.

Joey Myers 23:50

What I like about everything that you do is you say, well, if you can't afford the weights or whatever you can use, be creative and use something that's similar to that that you have at your house.

Jedd Johnson 24:00

Yeah. Even if you don't have one of those heavy bats or whatever they are?

Joey Myers 24:10

Just like a warm up bat, I'm not sure of the actual name of it, but I know the people will know what you're talking about.

Jedd Johnson 24:16

For years, instead of doing the heavy bat, I just put a doughnut on a softball bat. My beer league softball bat, so we just did it with that. With a lot of the bats, you can actually fit like a two-and-a-half-pound plate on there, and it'll go on there just fine. If you have an old bat, that's got a little bit bigger barrel, you can slide it on there, and that'll work. Lots of potential for grip training using stuff that's probably already at your house and your equipment bag.

Joey Myers 24:52

Very cool. Well, thank you, man. It was great to catch up. We'll have to do a part two, for sure, in the future. You guys are doing well and dealing with all this nonsense that's going on and you hear that you're out there training people.

Jedd Johnson 25:06

Yeah, for sure, I appreciate it. One other thing, I don't know if your viewers watch YouTube much, I have a YouTube channel. Just search for Jedd Johnson and grip strength it'll come up and go ahead and subscribe and I'm always putting stuff up there related to grip training, as well as some other stuff that's like functional for athletes as well as like muscle building and strength. General strength training as well, so I invite everybody to check that out too.

Joey Myers 25:34

Are you on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or just mostly YouTube?

Jedd Johnson 25:38

Yes, I'm on Instagram. It's a jedd dot diesel and I'm on Facebook just under my name, under my personal account. I also have Jedd Johnson comma dieselcrew dot com, I'm all over. I have a Twitter but I don't really use it, I never really got into that.

Joey Myers 26:01

It's a good thing.

Jedd Johnson 26:04

The snap thing.

Joey Myers 26:08

Don't even get me started.

Jedd Johnson 26:09

Yeah, I don't do that one. Instagram and Facebook and YouTube, basically.

Joey Myers 26:15

Very cool, man. Well, thanks again for your time today and Merry Christmas to you guys out there. Hold the line out there in Pennsylvania.

Jedd Johnson 26:23

We will, no doubt.

Joey Myers 26:25

All right, brother. Take care of yourself.

Jedd Johnson 26:28

You, too.

Joey Myers 26:28

Alright, Jedd.

Jedd Johnson 26:30

Yeah