

The Dog Days of 2-a-Days

Training camps are some of the most physically and mentally exhausting sporting events an athlete can face. Whether it's Bison football running their last set of "stadium snakes" or the U-16/U-18 programs working on their foot speed and agility, many of the athletes I work with have two weeks of summer left. While many of us might be enjoying a few final weeks of BBQ's and Boating, these athletes will be finishing off their summer vacations in "cold tubs" and film study. With the Cfl season already kicked off and the NFL (finally) getting ready to get back to work, football is again in the air. With this in mind, I decided to dedicate this blog to the dog days of training camp. I sat down and talked to 2 of our local pro players (Doug Brown and Obby Khan) after one of their last training sessions before Main camp started to get some insight into what their mind set is like preparing for a CFL training Camp, what happens during camp, and how they have been preparing themselves for the upcoming season. For many of you their daily schedules will be very reminiscent of your own.

Coach Harper- *How many training camps have you participated in? How does this upcoming one compare to your first training camp?*

Obby Kahn- *This is my 8th training camp (2 with Ottawa, 6 with Winnipeg). I was very nervous my first training camp. I did not know what to expect and I did not know anyone. So my first training camp was very hard. All training camps are physically hard, but they also test your mental strength, by throwing a lot at you in a very short period of time. A typical 2 a day: wake up around 6 am. We are on the field by 8 till about 10, then break for 20 min, then back at it around 1030 till 12. We then get a break for lunch and are back in meetings (for film study) around 3 till 530. We get a dinner break from 530 till 7. Then meetings from 7 till 9 or 10 pm according to the coaches.*

Doug Brown- *This is my 15th year of playing professional football (13 in the CFL, 2 in the NFL) and my 15th training camp. From my first camp with the Redskins to this upcoming 2011 camp with the Bombers I have always tried to improve my play every year. Depending on the coaching staff, you can usually predict how camp is going to be run. Some coaches want to focus on physicality and basically will run camp as a survival of the fittest expedition. Others will focus their attention on techniques and installing systems, and you might spend more time in meetings and watching film than you do on the field. Both are very exhausting, physically and mentally.*

C.H. - *What is your mindset like going into, during, after camp?*

O.K. - *You have to be mentally and physically prepared for the hardest thing your body*

has gone and will go through. You have to have a no quit to no die attitude. It is very hard! One of the hardest things I have done.

D.B. - *You can't really describe the feeling during camp, you have to experience it first hand to really understand it. You have to remember that this is now a career. Unlike high school and University, these are grown men competing to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. It is a more mental test than anything; you have to be very emotionally strong to succeed. Everything you do is under a microscope, with little room for error (especially as a rookie).*

C.H. - *What is your favorite training camp/memory from Camp?*

O.K. - *This is a tough one. All training camps kind of blur together to one. It might have to be the time I won my first one on one vs. Jerome Haywood in Ottawa. Or When I had to sing a song to the team because I was the first draft pick. I choose Righteous Brothers - Lost that loving feeling. The guys loved it!*

D.B. - *Probably my first camp in the NFL. It was pretty eye opening. Going to a media hotbed of football like Washington was a pretty big change from playing University ball at SFU. We would get a couple thousand people out everyday to watch us practice. I remember how much faster the game was, and how much information was thrown at you in such a small amount of time. It was very easy to get overwhelmed; especially when you were lining up against guys you were watching just a year ago on TV. Again, so much of it is mental. The feeling after though that you had "made" it was pretty amazing.*

C.H. - *What do you do in the off season to prepare for camp, have you done anything differently this year compared to years past?*

O.K. - *I train very hard in various sports and the gym. I usually lift weights and cardio 5 days a week (M-F) over at Elite. I owe the staff there a lot; a few years ago I became very sick, so sick that I was told that I might never play football again. I walked into Elite weighting just under 200lbs and was unable to lift a bar off my chest. 2 years later I was back to my playing weight (around 300lbs) and stronger than I had ever been before. I went from not ever playing football again to being back to a full time starter. I try to incorporate some other activities as well into my regime. I do Yoga once a week, play squash once a week, and kick boxing once or twice a week. I tried something new this year called Kendo (A martial art - meaning "Way of The Sword", is a modern Japanese martial art of sword-fighting based on traditional samurai swordsmanship).*

This is more of a passion of mine but I do think this will help me on the football field. I also for the first time followed my Elite nutrition plan 100%. As a Lineman, I am not a stranger to a buffet line, but halfway through last season I felt very sluggish and

"Heavy". (Matt) Harper has been on me since I started with Elite to follow my diet 100% so this off-season I decided I was going to give a full effort to it. This is probably the best I have felt going into a camp, I have more energy, I am leaner and most importantly I don't have that extra weight slowing me down anymore. My movement skills are some of the best I have ever had. I also will be training at Elite during the season as well, which is something I have not done before.

D.B. - *I have been training at Elite for the past 5 years, and during those 5 years I have been an all star. I do not think that is a coincidence. I workout 5 days a week, and my programming involves a mixture of strength training, lots of conditioning, core and balance strength and position work as well. I pride myself on being able to go 100% during a full game, and there is no way I would be able to do that if I didn't get the amount of conditioning that I do. I also try to do some form of kick boxing a couple times a week. The kickboxing helps improve my hand and foot speed, which is imperative for my position. Last year was the first time I trained at Elite during the season as well, which I will do this year again. I have worked with the same team in the offseason for the past 5 years; so if it's not broken, why fix it.*

C.H. - *Let's Talk game day. Do you have any pre-game rituals how bout a pre-game meal?*

O.K. - *Not really. I usually only eat breakfast the day of a game and have a light snack before the game. I like to feel light and not have anything in my stomach. As for a ritual, I like to go to the stadium early and cut my nails on the bench and visualize a lot of the game in different scenarios and situation. I then walk around the field for about 30 min.*

D.B. - *I'm not superstitious, but I am a creature of habit. Generally I like to be calm before a game. I sometimes will take my dog out for a walk before home games, just to help clear my head. In the locker room, I'm not a rah rah guy, I like to visualize what I'm going to do in a game, so I am pretty quiet before game time. I don't like to eat too much before a game, usually just a good breakfast and lots of water, I feel sluggish if I eat too much beforehand.*

C.H. - *What is the biggest thing you have learned and would tell a young player to do in regards to preparing to be a professional football player*

O.K. - *It is a lot of hard work but worth every minute. You have to sacrifice a lot of and over come a lot of adversity to accomplish your goals. But never ever give up!*

D.B. - *Do the right things to get you ready, I ran track in University to help improve my speed, I do kickboxing to help my grappling and hand speed, and I train with the right people to make sure I'm giving everything I have. You have to have the mindset that*

someone is working harder than you, that way you are pushing yourself everyday. A more specific piece of advice I would give to a young lineman, is don't focus all your energy and time on training to be as big and strong as possible. I see so many rookies coming into camp who have put in a lot of work on trying to have a big bench and weight as much as possible, but they can't move or last even a full quarter of a game. You have to have a high level of aerobic conditioning at this level, just because you play on the line, dose not mean that you don't run, and run a lot. Spend as much, if not more time on the track/treadmill and working your feet, that is how you will become successful on the field.

C.H. - *Final question, for all the Bomber fans, Are you going to win the Grey Cup this year*

O.K. - *I am going to try my best to Win the Grey Cup!*

D.B. - *The talent is there, and as long as we can stay healthy and stay focused, I don't see why we can't be there in the end.*