

Behind-the-Scenes: Team Lift

By Erica Hayden

Bustling and energetic voices fill the 5th-floor gym at 8 A.M., yoga mats scattered across a fifth of the gym floor, medicine balls contacting against the glossy floors. One may think there were 100 people in the gym. However, those sounds would be coming from our one and only Roosevelt University football team. The team conducts their weekly lifts on Mondays and Thursdays, since we have such a big team, the lifts are broken down at different times of the day to also accommodate the players with classes and work. The lifts are from 7 A.M., 8 A.M., 9 A.M., 10 A.M., and 2 P.M. The team was getting ready for the season's final game against Grand Valley State on Saturday (11/16/24). Let's dive in to see what their lift consists of and how the team is getting ready for their game.

The athletic coach was kind enough to inform us that their lifts usually change up every week but still work on the same muscle groups. This week, the team was tasked to work on:

- Start with hip 90/90- 10 reps: a seated floor exercise where you position both legs at a 90-degree angle, with one leg bent in front of you and the other bent out to the side.
- Greatest (or World's Greatest) stretch 5/6 on each side: performed by going into a deep lunge position, involving a twist of the torso while reaching one arm towards the sky.
- Inch worms-5/6 in total: This is done by standing upright, then bending at the hips to reach your hands towards your feet, walking your hands forward until you're in a plank position, and then "walking" your feet back to meet your hands.
- Shoulder cars- 5/6 on each side: either by standing or kneeling, extend arms to perform circular motions forward for a set duration, then in reverse motion.

- Open books—5/6 on each side: This is a stretching movement that requires you to lie on your side, bend your knees, and rotate your upper body away from the ground.
- Get [exercise] bands out for shoulders around the world and forward and back
- Do resistant bands lateral walks two rounds
- Monster walks two rounds forward and backward: take wide sideways steps while slightly squatting.

After the players are done with their tasks, they are asked to stretch and are offered physical therapy, foam rolling, and or massages if they were recently injured or recovering from an injury. Of course, if the player is injured, they will not participate in the lift, as they will be tasked with their physical therapy alone. However, sometimes, the players had to be reined in by the athletic trainer- as they were performing mini-competitions with one another, chatting with the other players on Grand Valley State's stats, or simply messing up the other players exercises on purpose (even though they claimed it was an accident). Personally, as someone who isn't used to waking up so early in the day (especially to workout), I had a hard time keeping up with the boy's energy. So, it was up to my team and I to get to the bottom of this- how is this team so rowdy at seven in the morning?

When asking some of the players how they feel about their weekly lifts as a team and how that may impact them negatively or positively, this is how quarterback, Freedom Ali, freshman, responded. "I come to the 7 A.M. lifts; it's the only time I have to spare with our schedule. And- usually, I dread it, no one wants to wake up that early. But every time I always see my friends on the team and see them pumped, it kind of rubs off on you- it's contagious. Once you start, the time goes by, now, not only did you get a good workout in, but you did it with a bunch of clowns hyping you up."

From Ali's take on this, if one were in the room with these guys during their workout, it was evident how close the team was to each other. In some instances, during the interviews, I mistakenly assumed some of the players were on the team longer or knew the other players for longer. When in reality, some of the players were freshmen straight from high school or just recently met their best friends on the team.

Yet, a question remains unanswered: how do these lifts impact the players? Well, defensive back Micheal Bolds, junior, had some words to shed some light on the matter. "Honestly, I like that there are different periods when we complete our lifts as a team. My schedule is never consistent with classes, and I also have a job, so it makes it easier to pick up a shift or crank out schoolwork- that way, I still have time to go to the lift. I've had a crazy schedule since high school- I was in a lot of extracurriculars as well as being on the football team. Yes, our football schedule can get kind of crazy, but once you set aside time and outline a schedule- it's not that hard."

All in all, the guys take their team lifts as seriously as the next college football team. However, they're still going to find a way to have a quick laugh or fool around. Even if a player simply wants to participate in a lift and take it seriously, they'll respect that, too. But, if you need a spot or a hype man, they always got your back. They surely had mine when they convinced me to participate in some of the exercises; let's just say I'm not D2 material.

