

Why Athlete Categorization Matters in Baseball Training

Without Going Too Far Down the Rabbit Hole

The Problem

Walk into most baseball training environments and you'll usually see one of two extremes.

On one side, everyone gets essentially the same program:

- the same lifts
- the same plyometrics
- the same sprint work
- and the same progression structure regardless of how they move, produce force, or adapt to training.

On the other side, some systems become so hyper-individualized and over-complicated that every athlete is treated like a completely unique snowflake requiring endless assessments, labels, and “corrective” layers before meaningful training even begins.

In reality, the answer is probably somewhere in the middle.

Different athletes absolutely benefit from different training emphases. But that does not mean every athlete needs a completely custom-built program from scratch.

The goal is not perfect classification.

The goal is better programming decisions.

Why Categorization Matters

One of the biggest mistakes in baseball performance training is assuming all athletes should develop through the same exact training lens.

Some athletes naturally rely more on:

- elasticity
- reactive qualities
- quick force expression
- movement fluidity

Others naturally rely more on:

- muscular force production
- longer force application
- stiffness
- compressive strategies

These tendencies influence:

- how athletes sprint
- how they jump
- how they rotate
- how they tolerate loading
- and often how they respond to training.

The important distinction is that these are not rigid identities or permanent labels. They are simply current movement and force-expression tendencies that can help guide training emphasis.

Where Athlete Typing Systems Often Go Wrong

This is where things can quickly become problematic.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in systems involving:

- infrasternal angle (ISA)
- neurotyping
- respiratory archetypes
- fiber type theories
- and other classification models.

Some of these frameworks contain genuinely useful concepts. Others become overly dogmatic very quickly.

The danger is when coaches begin treating categories as identities instead of tendencies.

Athletes evolve. Training changes force strategies, movement organization, tissue qualities, and output characteristics over time.

The takeaway:

Useful concepts become far less useful when overextended.

A More Practical Approach

Rather than trying to create dozens of hyper-specific athlete categories, I prefer a much simpler framework centered around broad force and movement tendencies.

At a practical level, many baseball athletes can generally be viewed through two broad profiles:

Elastic-Dominant Athletes

These athletes often appear:

- springy
- reactive
- fluid
- naturally quick off the ground

Training emphasis for these athletes often includes:

- improving force production
- increasing robustness
- building eccentric control
- improving tissue tolerance

Force-Dominant Athletes

These athletes often appear:

- more muscular
- naturally forceful
- capable of producing large outputs over longer force application windows

Training emphasis for these athletes often includes:

- reactive work
- velocity exposure
- rotational fluidity
- elasticity
- rhythm
- movement adaptability

Again, these are not permanent labels.

They are simply broad training lenses that help guide emphasis.

Why This Matters in Baseball Specifically

Baseball is an extremely rotational and high-velocity sport.

The demands on:

- pitchers
- position players
- rotational sequencing
- deceleration
- elastic energy transfer
- and force production

are enormous.

Because of this, athletes often respond very differently to the same exact training program.

This is one reason why broad athlete categorization can be useful:

not to over-label athletes, but to avoid flattening everyone into the same system.

Structured Individualization

This is ultimately the lens I use within my own programming systems.

Not:

- complete randomness
- or endless hyper-individualization

And not:

- one-size-fits-all training

Instead:

structured individualization.

Athletes still operate within a shared training structure and culture, but programming emphasis shifts based on:

- sport demands
- seasonal demands
- and broad force-expression tendencies.

The result is a system that remains:

- scalable
- practical
- cohesive

while still respecting individual adaptation tendencies.

Final Thoughts

Athlete categorization should never become astrology for sports performance.

But completely ignoring individual movement and force-expression differences is equally problematic.

The goal is not to perfectly classify every athlete.

The goal is to create better training decisions:

- better loading strategies
- better adaptation management
- and ultimately better long-term development.

When applied practically and without dogma, broad athlete categorization can be a valuable tool for building more intelligent baseball performance systems.

References & Further Reading

- **Conor Harris - A Comprehensive Guide to the Infrasternal Angle & Compensation Layers**
<https://www.conorharris.com/blog/a-comprehensive-guide-to-the-infrasternal-angle-exercise-selection>
- **Hunter Eisenhower - Superpower Program**
<https://simplifaster.com/articles/superpower-program-narrow-elastic-driven-vs-wide-muscle/>
- **Hunter Eisenhower — The Force System in Training**
<https://simplifaster.com/articles/force-system-athlete-training/>
- **Greg Nuckols - Training Based On Muscle Fiber Type**
<https://www.strongerbyscience.com/muscle-fiber-type/>
- **Van Vossel et al. (2023)**
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37038845/>
- **Kwon et al. (2015)**
<http://www.kptjournal.org/journal/view.html?doi=10.18857/jkpt.2015.27.3.154>