

Strength and Conditioning Coach interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for strength and conditioning roles usually combine a conversation about your programming approach with practical scenarios and, often, a session where you coach or present. Panels typically include a head coach, a performance manager, and sometimes a physiotherapist or medical staff member.

- **Technical program design:** Questions that ask you to explain periodisation, testing, or load management decisions.
- **Scenario and problem solving:** Questions about adjusting a program when an athlete is sore, detraining, or returning from injury.
- **Behavioural and teamwork:** Questions about working with coaches, physios, and athletes, using past examples.
- **Safety and risk:** Questions about screening, first aid, and managing training environments.
- **Practical or session-based:** A live or recorded session where you coach a lift, speed drill, or conditioning set.

Usually a phone or video screen, then a face-to-face or panel interview. Many clubs and institutes include a practical coaching task or a short presentation on a program you have designed. You may also meet the medical team separately. Expect the panel to ask follow-up questions that dig into your reasoning, not just what you did.

1. Walk me through how you would design a pre-season strength and conditioning block for a team sport.

Why they ask

This tests whether you can think in phases and link testing, program design, and monitoring to the season calendar.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: start with the season calendar and game model, then testing, then block design, then monitoring. Show you can link each phase to the next.

Example answer

"For a team sport pre-season, I start with the season calendar and the head coach's game model. I test the group in week one: movement screen, force plate testing with VALD ForceDecks, and some speed and conditioning benchmarks. From there I map out a block that builds general strength and work capacity early, then shifts toward power, speed, and sport-specific conditioning as the season gets closer. I schedule the heaviest weeks away from trial games and build in deload weeks. Each week I check GPS and wellness data, and I adjust the next week's load if readiness is low or soreness is high. I also meet the physio weekly so we are on the same page about any player who needs modifying."

2. Tell me about a time you had to adjust a program mid-season because of fatigue or injury.

Why they ask

This probes your judgement, your use of data, and how you communicate changes to other staff.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation and the fatigue or injury, the task of adjusting the program, the action you took with staff and data, and the result for the athlete or team.

Example answer

"Last season, we were three weeks out from finals and a couple of our forwards were showing high GPS loads and low wellness scores. I sat down with the physio and we decided to cut one field session and replace it with a pool recovery and a shorter speed session. I also reduced the volume on the main lifts for those two players while keeping the intensity. We monitored them daily and by the next week their readiness scores had come back up. They played the final and we had no soft tissue injuries in that group."

3. An athlete comes to you two days before a final saying their hamstring feels tight. What do you do?

Why they ask

This is a safety and judgement question. The panel wants to see you put risk management before a quick fix.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: assess first, communicate with the medical team, make a conservative call, and document. Show you can balance the athlete's wish to play with risk.

Example answer

"First, I would ask how tight it feels, when it started, and whether there is any pain with movement. I would not push them into a heavy hamstring session that day. I would do a quick assessment, maybe a hamstring strength test on the NordBord if available, and let the physio know straight away. Depending on what I find, I might modify the session to upper body and core, or if it seems more serious, I would refer them to the physio before they train again. I would document it and follow the return-to-play protocol if needed. The priority is not risking a hamstring injury before a final."

4. How do you use data from GPS and force plates to make decisions?

Why they ask

This checks your technical literacy with the tools named in the role and whether you can turn numbers into a coaching action.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation with a concrete example: name the tools, explain what each tells you, and describe a decision you made because of the data.

Example answer

"I use GPS data to see how much high-speed running and sprint distance players are accumulating across a week. If a player is well above their normal range, I might adjust the next session to keep total load in check. Force plate data from VALD ForceDecks gives me an objective read on asymmetry or a drop in jump performance, which can signal fatigue. I combine that with wellness scores and what I see in the session. Then I make a decision, sometimes it is a small change like reducing volume, other times it is a conversation with the coach about a player's week."

5. Describe a time you disagreed with a head coach about an athlete's training load. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This looks at your ability to influence without authority and to keep the athlete's welfare central.

How to structure your answer

STAR for conflict and influence: set up the disagreement, explain how you brought evidence and a shared goal, describe the compromise, and finish with the outcome.

Example answer

"A head coach wanted to add an extra conditioning session two days before a game. I understood the intent, but I was worried about fatigue and injury risk. I asked to sit down with them and showed the GPS and wellness data from the past few weeks. We agreed to keep the session but make it shorter, and to move it to four days before the game. The coach got the fitness work they wanted, and the players went into the game fresher. It worked because I came with data and a solution, not just a no."

6. What is your approach to return-to-play collaboration with physiotherapists?

Why they ask

This tests whether you understand shared decision-making and criteria-based progressions, which are central to the role.

How to structure your answer

Process and communication: outline the shared decision-making with the physio, the criteria you use, and how you keep the coach informed.

Example answer

"I work closely with the physio from the first day of an injury. They lead the medical side, and I build the strength and conditioning progressions once the athlete is cleared for each stage. I use criteria, not just time, so we test hamstring strength with NordBord or force plates before moving to running and then to full training. I document every session and check in with the physio weekly. I also make sure the head coach knows where the athlete is in the plan so there are no surprises."