FULL STRENGTH
COACHING

THE ATHLETE'S COMEBACK BLUEPRINT

5 STEPS TO REBUILD MUSCLE, GET LEAN, AND FEEL ATHLETIC AGAIN AFTER 40

Your athletic past doesn't have to be your physical peak.

A PRACTICAL, NO-NONSENSE STARTING POINT

You haven’t lost the athlete. Your life has changed.

Remember when training was a priority instead of something you squeezed between meetings, obligations, and everything else? Maybe you played high school or college sports, or simply loved having a goal to chase or physique to build.

Now you’re over 40. You’ve built a great career and a life, but your fitness and appearance may not reflect the athlete you remember. The answer isn’t to recreate your training from 20 years ago. It’s to build a smarter system for the person you are today.

Why I built Full Strength Coaching

I’ve spent more than 20 years coaching collegiate athletes at institutions including Army West Point and Villanova University. Along the way, I’ve coached Olympic Trials qualifiers, All-Americans, and national-level competitors.

I’ve also pursued my own athletic goals through endurance sports and then strength training. I won 15 triathlons, finished in the top-100 in the Ironman 70.3 World Championships twice, and qualified for the Ironman World Championships. I also qualified and ran the Boston Marathon three times and did a 2:40 marathon. Then life took over, I lost my direction, and put on 30-35 pounds. My subsequent comeback focused heavily on strength training and a more moderate dosage of aerobic activity than in the endurance racing days, and the result is I am stronger and learner than ever in my mid-40s, with a 6-pack I never had even when racing at an elite level.

I share my experiences because they taught me something important: progress doesn’t always come from collecting harder and harder workouts. It comes from matching the right training, nutrition, and recovery to the individual. Progress comes from consistently stacking workings with progressive overload, recovering, dialing in the nutrition plan, and repeating the process long enough for it to work.

That’s the purpose of this guide. I’ve boiled this down to five principles, a sample beginner’s training structure, and a practical first-week checklist. No miracle methods. No cure-all pharmaceuticals. No pretending you can drop 25 pounds overnight. No pretending that being 38 or 45 or 52 is the same as being 23.

The process is simple, but it isn’t easy. Consistency, implementing systems, and accountability will get you from point A to point B if you stick with it.

The comeback mindset

- Your competitive instincts are an asset. Your old training volume is not necessarily your blueprint.
- A plan that fits your real schedule beats an ambitious plan you abandon after 10 days every single time.
- You can pursue strength, leanness, and conditioning together—but the priorities need to be clear.

THE GOAL ISN’T TO GO BACK. IT’S TO MOVE FORWARD STRONGER.

The five principles of your comeback

1 Train with purpose

Decide what you're actually training for. More muscle? Less body fat? Better endurance? Feeling athletic again? Your week should reflect that answer. Strength training builds and preserves muscle; aerobic conditioning supports cardiovascular fitness and health. The right mix depends on your goals, experience, and recovery capacity.

> TRY THIS: Write one primary 12-week goal and one secondary goal. If everything is the priority, nothing is.

2 Make consistency win

Former athletes usually know how to work hard. The harder skill is making training happen when work and life are crowded. Put workouts on your calendar. Build a shorter fallback session for days when the ideal workout isn't possible. Motivation is helpful; **but systems are more reliable.**

> TRY THIS: Reserve three training windows for next week and identify a 20-minute backup option.

3 Eat for results

You don't need a trendy diet. You need an honest picture of your intake, enough protein to support muscle, and energy intake that matches your goal. Fat loss generally requires a sustained caloric deficit; gaining muscle is often easier with adequate energy and progressive training, combined with caloric balance or a slight surplus.

> TRY THIS: Record three ordinary days of food and drink. Observe and learn where you are before you overhaul what you're doing.

The five principles, continued

4 Recover to perform

Training is the stimulus; but adaptation happens when you recover. Sleep, nutrition, hydration, and the overall load of your week matter. If you're constantly exhausted, sore, or watching performance decline, piling on more work is unlikely to solve the problem. It will likely make it worse.

> TRY THIS: For three days, track sleep duration and how recovered, along with how you feel before each workout.

5 Track real progress

The scale can be useful, but it is only one measure and doesn't tell the whole story. Track a few key indicators that match your goals: strength performance in workouts, waist measurement, workout completion rate, aerobic conditioning performance, progress photos, or average body weight. More advanced methods could include recovery rates, body fat percentage (I strongly recommend this), and lean muscle mass (again, I strongly recommend). Look for trends over weeks, not verdicts from one morning.

> TRY THIS: Choose three metrics that make sense to you and you can measure consistently and reliably, and establish your starting baseline this week.

An example week for a busy former athlete

This is a sample structure for a beginner's plan, not an individualized prescription. An experienced coach can customize exercises, intensity, volume and workout time to your ability and personal circumstances.

Day	Focus
Monday	Full-body strength: squat or hinge, push, pull
Tuesday	Aerobic activity or brisk walk, 25–40 min, core work
Wednesday	Full-body strength: alternate movement patterns
Thursday	Rest or low-intensity movement
Friday	Full-body strength: repeat and progress gradually
Saturday	Optional enjoyable conditioning: bike, run, hike – outside if possible!
Sunday	Core work, Recovery, planning, and preparation

Start conservatively if you have been inactive. Aim for controlled technique and gradual progression rather than maximal efforts in week one.

Your first seven days: the comeback checklist

You do not need to transform your body in Week 1. **You need to create the conditions that make a transformation possible.**

- ☐ Write one clear, measurable goal for the next 12 weeks.
- ☐ Put 3 realistic training sessions on your calendar.
- ☐ Complete a manageable first workout and record what you did.
- ☐ Track 3 normal days of eating, including beverages.
- ☐ Choose a sleep schedule you can follow most nights. Track it and record it.
- ☐ Record 3 baseline metrics that matter to your goal.
- ☐ Review what worked at the end of the week; adjust your plan.

Your starting point

My 12-week goal: _____

My 3 workout windows: _____

The biggest obstacle I expect: _____

My backup plan when life gets busy: _____

The 3 metrics I'll track: _____

A quick reality check

If your plan requires perfect sleep, an empty calendar, and unlimited motivation, it is not a plan for your real life. Make it sustainable first. Make it harder when you've earned that progression.

START WHERE YOU ARE. BUILD A SYSTEM THAT LASTS AND PROGRESSES WITH YOU!

You have the blueprint. Now build the comeback.

Knowing the principles is one thing. Knowing exactly how to structure your training, adjust your nutrition, manage recovery, and stay consistent when life gets busy is another.

That's where personalized coaching makes the difference.

Full Strength Coaching

I work with former athletes over 40 who want to rebuild strength, improve body composition, and feel athletic again, all without organizing their entire lives around the gym.

Together, we build a plan around your goals, schedule, training history, and starting point. Then we monitor progress and make adjustments as your body and life respond.

What coaching includes

- Training structured around your goals and available time
- Nutrition auditing, guidance and practical habit development
- Progress tracking, feedback, and ongoing adjustments
- Accountability from a coach with two decades of high-level experience
- An investment in your present and future health (that can also be tax deductible for business owners)

READY TO MAKE YOUR COMEBACK?

Book a free coaching consultation

OR

DM Coach Ben @bendelia on IG

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This guide is educational and not a substitute for individualized medical advice. If you have health concerns or are returning after a long layoff, seek appropriate medical professional guidance before beginning a new exercise program.