

Completion of a Strength Training-Based Planned Overreach: Perceptions and Experiences From the Perspective of the Highly Trained Individual

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1 INTRODUCTION

- High-performance strength coaches often implement periods of planned overreaching (POR) through **increased weekly training volume and/or relative training intensity**, typically for a duration of ~5-7 days (Bell et al., 2022).
- During POR, **consecutive training bouts** or multiple daily training sessions are often undertaken.
- Previous research has investigated the effects of POR experimentally (performance outcomes) and from the perspective of the coach (perceptions, programming frameworks), however, **no studies have explored experiences of POR from the perspective of the athlete.**

Aim: To explore the perceptions and experiences of highly-trained individuals participating in a 5-day high-intensity, high-volume back squat planned overreaching programme.

2 METHOD



Eight highly trained males (mean ± SD; age = 24.6 ± 2.8 years, training experience = 7.0 ± 3.2 years, relative (to body mass) barbell back squat = 1.9 ± 0.4 kg).



5-day back squat POR protocol (SqOR) was undertaken by all participants, followed by a 14-day taper phase (Figure 1).

SqOR consisted of 5 sets of barbell back squats performed each consecutive day, using 80% of daily adjusted 1-RM. Sets were terminated only when a velocity loss of 40% (VL40) was achieved, or when participants reached concentric muscular failure.

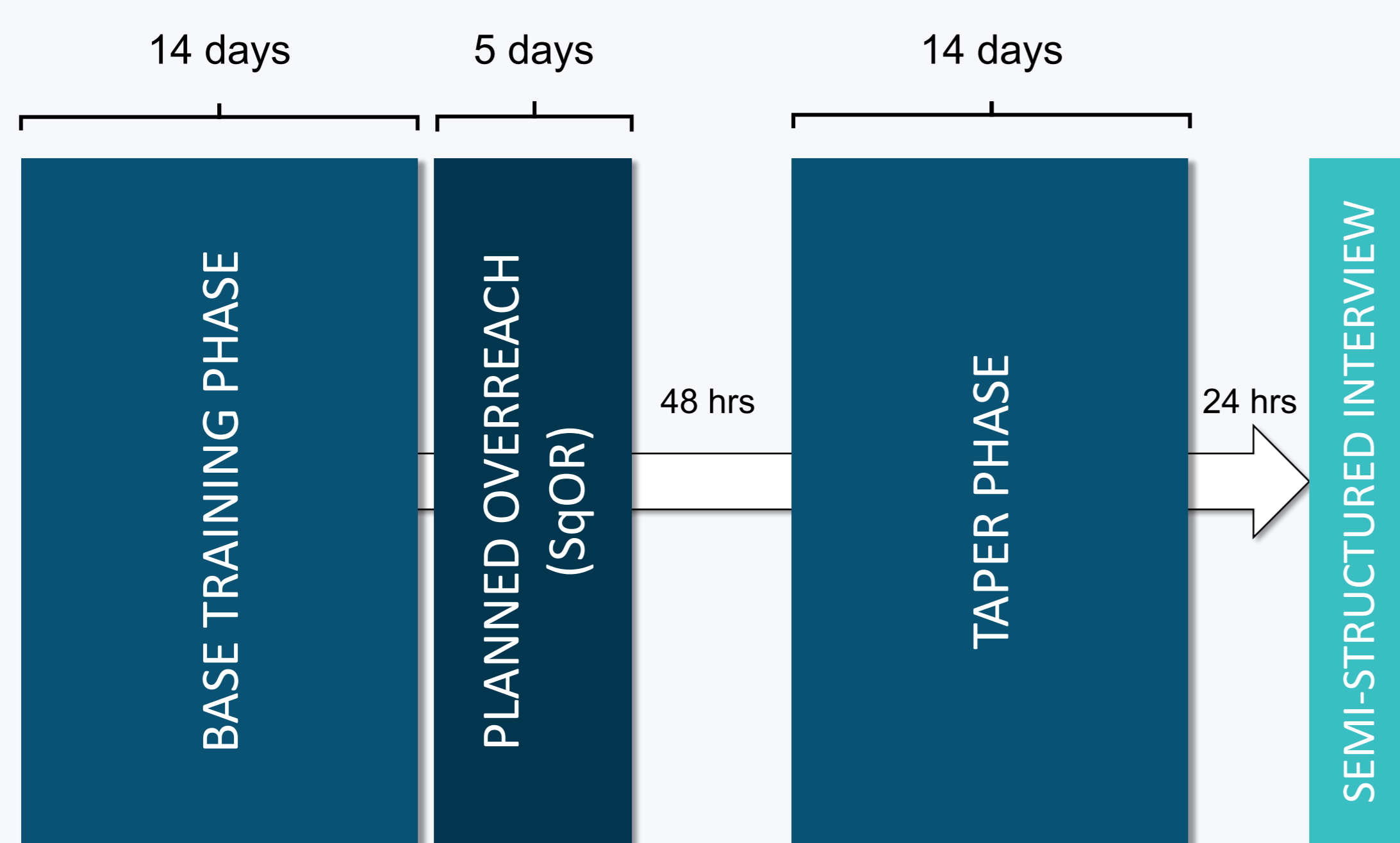


Figure 1. Schematic representation of overall training programme.



Semi-structured interviews were conducted 24 hours after the final taper session using Microsoft Teams.



Interviews were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2019).

- Points of interest identified
- Coding undertaken reflexively
- Open-ended themes generated
- Themes developed and reviewed

3 RESULTS

- *Contextual note:* All participants reported an **increase in back squat one-repetition maximum** 7-days post SqOR (1-RM; range = 7.0 to 12.0 kg). See Bell et al. (2025) for a more detailed breakdown of performance changes.
- Results were organised into five primary themes with subthemes developed to help manage the data and assist in the publicising of information (Figure 2).

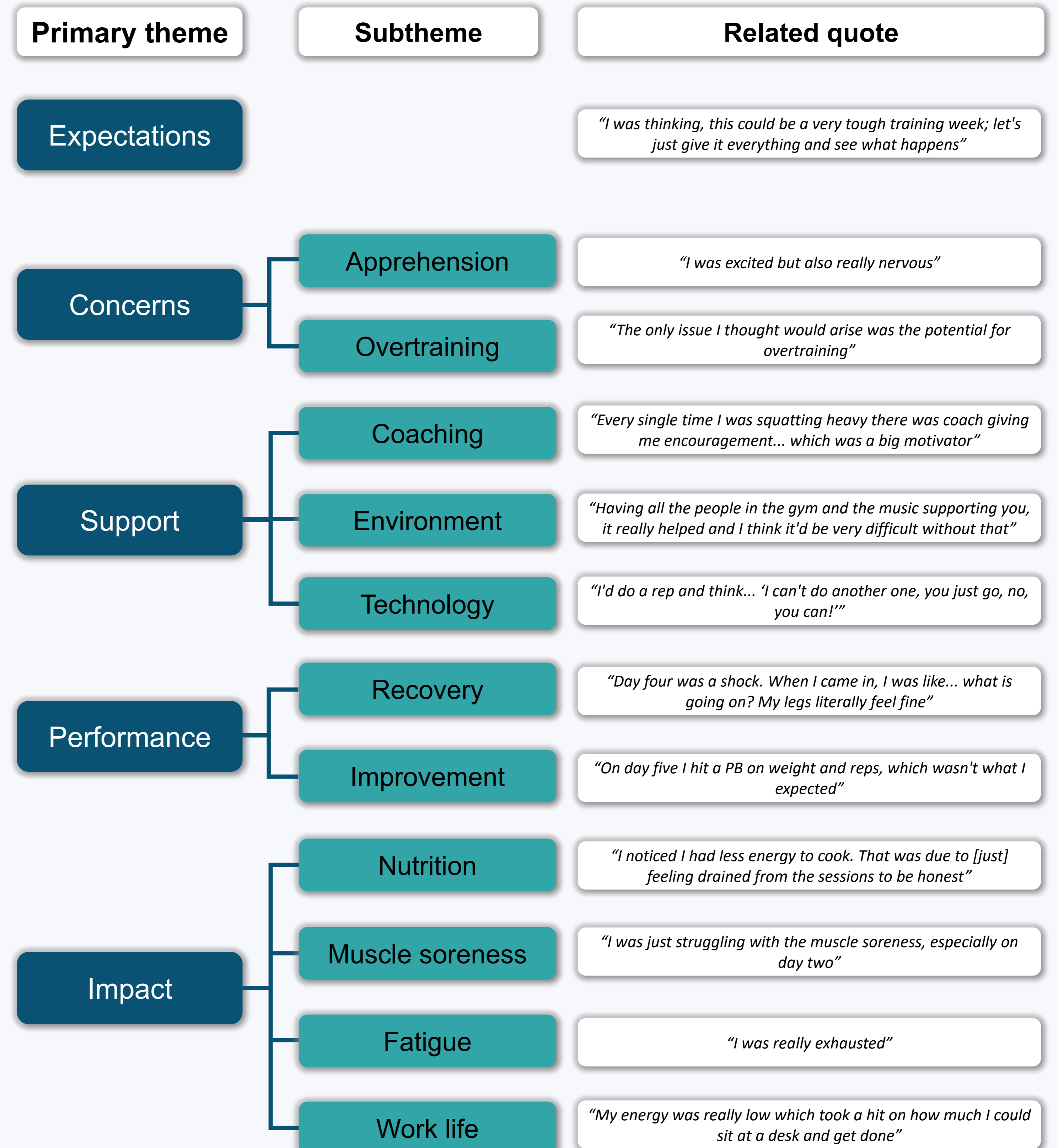


Figure 2. Schematic representation of primary themes, subthemes, and related quotes.

4 SUMMARY

- **Concerns:** Athletes are likely to be worried about overtraining and injuries when undertaking POR.
- **Environment:** Support from coaches and peers is important when undertaking POR.
- **Technology:** Real-time feedback from velocity-based training devices can provide motivation and enhance motivation to succeed.
- **Daily life:** POR is likely to impact aspects of day-to-day life (e.g., blunted energy and concentration levels, reduced productivity, loss of appetite, and negative alterations in sleep quality).
- Coaches can utilise findings from this study to **refine the training process, inform monitoring systems, and to better understand athlete experiences during POR.**

5 ADDITIONAL READING

- Bell, L., Ruddock, A., Boriel, J., Maden-Wilkinson, T., Thompson, S. W., Wright, K. J., Burke, K., & Rogerson, D. (2025). Effects of a 5-Day Back Squat Overreaching Protocol on Strength Performance, Perceived Recovery and Wellness Responses: A Pilot Trial. *Journal of Functional Morphology and Kinesiology*, 10(2).
- Bell, L., Ruddock, A., Maden-Wilkinson, T., Rogerson, D. (2022). "I Want to Create So Much Stimulus That Adaptation Goes Through the Roof": High-Performance Strength Coaches' Perceptions of Planned Overreaching. *Frontier in Sports and Active Living*, 2(4).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4).