

Training Guideline

This guideline is offered as a means of communicating a quantitative training objective for players. It adds substance to the phrase "come fit" which is difficult for players to interpret. Player fitness is paramount to a successful program and to reducing the risk of injury - especially during the early part of the season when physical demands tend to be the highest.

Superior fitness is critical to success at this level.

For soccer, fitness is the combination of an aerobic base (which comes from distance running at a pace you can hold for at least 30 minutes) and anaerobic capacity (which is built through interval training or sprint work after you have built up an aerobic base).

Your training program should begin with aerobic work unless you already have a significant base from participation in a sport such as basketball, lacrosse, or track. To determine whether you have built that base, go out and run for 12 minutes on a track. If you can complete at least 6.5 laps in 12 minutes, a little weekly distance work is all you need to maintain your aerobic base. Once you have reached that level aerobically, begin interval and sprint work.

When running intervals, set a pace you can sustain and intersperse rapid bursts at the manageable intervals. For example, running 5 minute/45 second intervals during a 30 minute run means: run for 5 minutes, then significantly increase your pace for 45 seconds, then revert to your former pace for 5 minutes, then increase your pace for 45 seconds, and so on until you reach the end of the run's duration. In this way, you'll get 5 intervals into a 30 minute run. Obviously, you need a watch for this!

"Sprint" implies high intensity work with maximum effort for a short duration followed by recovery for a (typically) longer duration during which time the heart rate drops somewhat. We manage our training with a controlled "work/rest ratio". "Work" in this context refers to the high intensity segment (sprinting) while "rest" refers to the low intensity segment (walking). Never crash your heart rate by sitting or lying down in between sprints or immediately after sprinting. Good athletes train their bodies to recover quickly and they can thereby sustain longer, more frequent sprints with shorter recoveries. Don't cheat yourself during sprint workouts – it will be obvious as soon as you step on the field. As you progress through your training, push your intensity threshold up with each successive session. Also, begin sprints immediately after the warm-up. The idea is to elevate the heart rate to a moderate training level and then begin ramping it up and down. Resting after the warm-up defeats the purpose of the warm-up and puts excessive stress on your heart.

Whatever your preseason regimen, please;

- Consult your physician before starting and again if your training activities cause pain or other symptoms not typically associated with strenuous exercise.
- Pay close attention to hydration and nutrition before, during and after exercise periods. Hydration is especially critical when exercising on hot days.
- Begin every training session with a proper warm-up period followed by light dynamic stretching. Your warm-up should last at least 10 minutes and build in intensity gradually from beginning to end. As you begin to warm up, pause periodically to stretch.
- Wear good running shoes for distance and sprint work. Cleats offer little support (and many blisters).
- End every session with a proper cool-down period and plenty of stretching. Spend at least 5 minutes in motion walking and another 10 minutes static-stretching after a workout to bring your heart rate down gradually, reduce post workout fatigue/soreness and increase flexibility.
- Break in new cleats before the season!

Finally, **take responsibility for your training**. No amount of pushing from parents, coaches or peers can substitute for an athlete's own motivation to succeed.