

Post-season and Off-season Training

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Overview

We can divide a high performance sports conditioning program into a sequence of progressive steps or phases. For simplicity, these phases can be defined as:

1. Post-season (*Rest & Recovery*)
2. Off-season (*Building the Base*)
3. Pre-season (*Getting Specific*)
4. In-season (*Maintaining*)

These phases may be further sub-divided into smaller steps with their own specific objective(s). Overall, this "building blocks" approach to training fosters the evolution of athletic abilities over time. This evolution ultimately culminates in the optimal readiness of the athlete to meet the demands of major competitions.

The Importance of Staying Active in the Off-season

If athletes stop training, then they can easily lose their fitness (referred to as "detraining").

For example, well-conditioned athletes can lose half of their current level of fitness after only three months of inactivity. For beginning athletes, the situation is even worse, and the athletes can lose up to 100% of their fitness gains after only two months of inactivity.

In a sense, your body adheres to the "use it or lose it" principle. The bottom line is that if you stop training, you can lose the fitness that you worked so hard to develop.

The following is an overview of how to maintain and develop your physical conditioning so that you are prepared for Pre-season training and high performance rugby.

Post-season

Training Theme

- "Rest and recovery"

When

- Starts: at the end of the In-season
- Ends: after approximately 4 weeks

What

- Rest and active recovery - no "detraining"

How

- Unload:
 - Start with an unloading week - a complete break from fitness and strength training.
- Flexibility:
 - During the unloading week and the weeks afterward, plenty of stretching can help improve flexibility and can also help alleviate the stiffness associated with an intense competition period.
- Cross-training:
 - Use variety and cross-training to maintain a base level of fitness and strength. Do some of the other physical activities that you like to do, but don't often have time for.
 - The key is that you give your mind and body a much-needed break from intense training and competition, while remaining physically active.

Ideas for Consideration

- Massage
- Yoga
- Swimming
- Intramural sports
- Dance or fitness classes
- Cycling
- etc.

Off-season - *"Grab the lead"*

Training Theme

- "Building the base"

When

- Starts: at the end of the Post-season phase
- Ends: at the start of Pre-season training

What

- Spend a lot of time developing overall physical conditioning, and address the athlete's individual weak points
- Spend a bit of time addressing individual weak points in technical, tactical and/or mental skills

How

- Do some self-assessment and seek the feedback of others to identify your weak points in both skills and conditioning, then set goals for yourself
- Perform a small proportion of exercises focused on addressing individual weaknesses in technical, tactical and/or mental skills. Here is a useful reference for skills and drills: <http://www.coachingtoolbox.co.nz/toolbox/>
- Develop a weekly training schedule that focuses on the areas of:
 - Fitness - aerobic capacity
 - Full Body and Core Strength
 - Speed, Agility and Quickness
 - Flexibility

Ideas for Consideration

The following page provides an example of a weekly training schedule. The key is that you establish a plan that you will actually do. As required, please seek the advice of a trained professional prior to engaging in these activities.

Example

Off-Season: Weekly Training Schedule		
Day	Daily Training Theme	Activity Summary
Monday	Strength	Full Body and Core Strength Training
Tuesday	Speed, Agility and Quickness	Fun Game (e.g. Touch Rugby)
Wednesday	Aerobic Capacity	(e.g. running, spinning, boxing or swimming)
Thursday	Strength	Full Body and Core Strength Training
Friday	<i>Recovery</i>	Rest and light physical activity (e.g. walk)
Saturday	Aerobic Capacity	(e.g. running, spinning, boxing or swimming)
Sunday	<i>Recovery</i>	Rest and light physical activity (e.g. walk)
Useful reference for specific exercises:		
http://www.coachingtoolbox.co.nz/toolbox/index.php?option=com_physical&Itemid=149		

References:

Gambetta, V. (2006). Athletic Development: Art & Science of Functional Sports Conditioning. Human Kinetics.

Foran, B. (2001). High-Performance Sports Conditioning. Human Kinetics.

<http://www.coachingtoolbox.co.nz/toolbox/>