Transitioning from off-season into preseason

A common misconception is that off-season is synonymous with a rest-break and that preseason is the time to get into shape. While it’s true that at the end of the regular or postseason, you should allow some time for injury healing and rehabilitation, it doesn’t mean that there is no working out. Off-season activities should allow for fun and unstructured play, different from the rigors of in-season practice. These off-season activities should support cardiovascular fitness and strength levels, thus allowing the athlete to enter the pre-season in peak physical condition.

During pre-season, the emphasis should be on fine-tuning skills specific to your sport. In addition to those sports-specific skills, however, agility and flexibility for the lower extremity should be incorporated. Too often, players pull or strain a hamstring early in the season and are then plagued by the injury for months afterward. A sequence that can be utilized daily to prepare for the season is as follows.

Warm-up by either jogging or cycling, for approximately 5 to 10 minutes, or until you break a sweat. Then, be sure to stretch. Stretch hamsstrings by sitting, tucking one foot into the groin, and reaching for the toes of the opposite straight leg until you feel a slight stretch. Stretch hamsstrings by sitting, tucking one foot into the groin, and reaching for the toes of the opposite straight leg until you feel a slight stretch.

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Get ready for the preseason

10 feet apart; begin at a slow pace, gradually building speed. Run sprint drills of different distances: 10 yards and back, 15 yards and back, 20 yards and back. Again, begin at a slow pace and gradually increase speed throughout the drill.

Then warm—or cool—down by gradually decreasing activity intensity, slowing a jog to a walk, until the heart rate returns to near resting levels.

The key to this exercise protocol is to gradually build up to full sprinting capability.

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