



Pre-Season Rugby Training

Improving your understanding of the game, your core fitness and developing your playing skills can only be achieved with regular hard work! Rugby is a physically demanding and challenging sport which requires high levels of strength, stamina and speed.

Although watching lots of rugby on TV and/or clips on the internet can certainly help your understanding of the game, ultimately you have to get out there and *'do it'*! In order to be in good shape for the start of the new season in September, you will need to keep yourself as fit as possible over the summer months.

Therefore, I am recommending that you try and keep yourself active over the holiday and try and do some form of physical activity every day. This can include many different activities such as cycling, swimming, tennis, golf, football on the beach – even taking the dog out for a long walk! The main challenge is not to just sit around attached to your Play Station, Nintendo or Game Boy!!

Knowledge of the Game

To improve your knowledge of the game over the holiday, why don't you try and complete the on-line IRB "Rugby Ready" course. You will get an IRB certificate when you complete the test at the end. <http://www.irbrugbyready.com/>

You could also test your knowledge of the laws of rugby by taking the IRB law exam over the holiday? You will get an IRB certificate when you've completed the exam. You'll need to register first: <http://www.irblaws.com/EN/login/>

Pre-Season Fitness & Skills Training Ideas

Players should try and do as much sport as possible over the holidays. Ideally sessions should last no more than one hour. Gym work is fantastic if you have access, but also make the most of the outdoors and the good weather: cycle, run, play squash, tennis, swim, Frisbee on the beach or in the park,.... there are numerous ways to stay active and keep your cardiovascular and muscular fitness alive!

Developing and maintaining a high aerobic capacity is vital and players should try and do at least one 4 - 5 km run per week over the holidays. You should also aim to develop and maintain a high "body power to weight" ratio. Remember your power is a function of strength x speed so you should aim to perform your press-ups, sit-ups, deep knee bends, squat thrusts, and other simple dynamic exercises with or without weights. Using your own body weight to perform a wide range of exercises is more than adequate to help develop core strength and stamina. See section below on 'conditioning without weights'.

And whenever you can, try and pass the rugby ball around with your family and friends to keep your handling skills sharp. You could also try and set up a small game of touch rugby in the park or on the beach with friends.

We want you to start the new season a fitter and more knowledgeable rugby player!

Useful Websites:

Skills: <http://www.rfu.com/TakingPart/Play/Skills.aspx>

Fitness: <http://www.rfu.com/TakingPart/Fitness.aspx>

Fitness training: <http://www.rfu.com/TakingPart/Fitness/Training.aspx>

Nutritional guidance: <http://www.rfu.com/TakingPart/Fitness/NutritionGuidance.aspx>

Conditioning without Weights

- **Legs:** Burpees/squat thrusts, short sprints/ shuttles (up hills are good!), skipping rope drills, lunges, bench hopping, bounding....
- **Core strength:** Pilates, fit ball exercises, abdominal crunches, sit ups, star jumps...
- **Upper body:** press-ups (various hand positions), bench-dips, pull-ups
- One plyometric session per week: SAQ activities, skipping, some bounding and hopping activities. A thorough warm-up is required.
- A circuit can easily be set up in the garden, rotating the body parts worked at each station. This can be based on time (e.g. 25 seconds at each station) or on number of repetitions (e.g. 15 press-ups – 100 skips – 15 lunges – 15 dips - 15 sit-ups/crunches – 15 pull ups with heels on ground using a bar 3 feet from the floor – 30 step ups onto a one to two foot high step) .
- Running is essential! Combine long distance runs with shorter distance speed work.
- Shuttle pyramid: you can't beat pace (straight line sprints, changes of directions & practise carrying a ball). Sprint 10 m and walk to recover – repeat x 10 - 2 mins rest - sprint 20m x 6 repetitions - 2 mins rest - sprint 40 m x 4 repetitions - 2 mins rest - sprint 50 m x 2 repetitions. Repeat in reverse if able.
- One method of improving speed is by running on very gentle downhill gradients, which helps to promote the use of 'fast twitch' muscle fibres.
- "Fartlek" (speed play) Running: This is based on moving at differing speeds, e.g. walk 20m – sprint 20m – jog 20m – walk 20m – full sprint 20m – jog 20m. Gauge the repetitions yourself but aim to work for at least 15 mins

Whatever exercise you carry out, make sure you don't overdo it: 'Listen to your body' & ensure you take rest days - between similar sessions.

Nearer the season (mid-August) replicate / mirror the game, i.e. reduce the recovery time between sets of exercises e.g. Sprint 10 m – 3 press-ups – sprint 10m, change direction around a cone and sprint another 10 m – 3 burpees / star jumps / sit ups – sprint 30 m.

Skills

Practise generic rugby playing skills and those fundamental to your position. Running skills with the ball, passing to both sides over varied distances and angles, kicking (box, up & under, grubber, wipers, touch) and throwing are all important. Start without pressure. There are lots of internet sites which demonstrate good technique. Then mirror the game by doing these when tired, e.g. at the end of a sprint session: for a hooker, do 10 press ups, 10 burpees and then try to hit a branch on a tree 3 times in a row with your line out throw in.

Diet & Rest

In addition to regular exercise, make sure you eat a well balanced diet rich in protein, low in fat and accompanied by plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. To this end I attach some generic dietary advice. It is also vital that you let your body rest between training sessions and that you get a decent amount of sleep. Remember that as teenagers your bodies are still developing at a rapid pace and it is therefore essential that you get plenty of good quality sleep to allow your body to build new muscle and bone tissue and to recover after training. Finally, make sure you take good care of any niggling post-season injuries – go and see your doctor or physio now if you think you may need some professional medical help to recover from any injuries that you may still be carrying.

Enjoy your holiday - but put some effort into returning to start the new season fitter, more knowledgeable and a more skilled rugby player

Please contact me if you need further information or more specific guidance.

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