



Warm-Up

A proper warm-up before any physical exertion is very important, and yet it's frequently ignored by coaches and players. Warm-up should be the first part of every practice. There are psychological and physical components to the warm-up.

Physical Need

- To prevent injuries. Many of the muscle strains in a game occur in the first few minutes. Often these can be prevented.
- To prepare the body for the stresses experienced during the game. Typically, the game places great demands on the heart and respiratory systems, as well as strength and elasticity of muscles and joints. A good warm-up will duplicate game demands and gradually prepare the body to meet those demands.

Psychological Need

- To bring individuals together and help direct their thoughts and actions toward cooperation and teamwork.
- To develop a habit in younger players so they always warm up properly. Not all coaches are trained in proper coaching methods and players can avoid injury if they know the components of a good warm-up.

Intensity

The intensity of the warm-up (the length and pace of the activities) are decided by the following factors:

- Age of players: young players (under 12) are less heavily muscled and require a less intense warm-up. Older players require a more extensive period.
- Player fitness level: early in season vs. mid-season or spring start after winter layoff. Early season requires more attention to the warm-up phase.

Sequence

The currently accepted program of pregame/practice warm-up consists of three phases:

- Light exercise: designed to warm up the muscles and raise body temperature while duplicating movements expected to occur during the game/practice. Movements should be gradual and deliberate. Players should use a ball while lightly jogging, passing, heading in pairs, or juggling.
- Static stretching: designed to stretch and loosen the various muscle groups slowly. The word "static" implies stretching exercise performed without vigorous movement. The stretch should be "held" for 15 seconds for younger players and 20-30 seconds for older players. Special emphasis should be placed on thigh muscles, hamstrings, groin, calves, and abdominal muscles. No bouncing.
- Dynamic stretching: allows for a more rigorous stretching of muscle groups. Emphasis here should be placed on demanding, agility-oriented exercises with vigorous movement such as jumping, forward and backward sprints, stop and go, directional changes in a circle, high stepping in place, etc. Again, a ball should be used whenever possible.



Technique

Relax

The secret to a good warm-up depends greatly on the ability of the player to relax during and after each exercise. To achieve this, it helps to prohibit and avoid talking or “horsing around,” to have players keep their eyes closed, and to “talk through” each exercise. Also allow players to relax or “shake it off” between stretches.

Sequence

Greater benefit and more enjoyment will be derived by starting your stretches from the toe up, i.e., toe lifts, heel raises, hamstring stretches, thigh extensions, leg lifts for abdomen, etc.

For agility exercises with ball, the same sequence will be beneficial, i.e., juggling, bend over figure eight between legs, circle around waist, etc.

Moving into or out of a stretch should be done slowly. Stretch to point of resistance - not until muscle vibrates. Don't bounce in a stretch. Hold 15-30 seconds. Relax.

The dynamic phase should include a dribble, quick dribble, sprint dribble, slow dribble with turns, slow dribble with stop and go, slow dribble with jumps, slow dribble with multiple successive jumps, etc.

Leadership

Alternate your warm-up leaders. Inform leaders ahead of time so they may prepare. Observe and make positive comments to your players.

Coaching Points to Remember for Warm-ups

- Pick a warm-up leader in advance.
- Give the leader some hints (especially young players) but allow for creativity/selection.
- Don't permit “horsing around,” but keep the atmosphere light.
- Players should not face sun.
- Use a shady spot on a hot day.
- Walk around, participate, encourage.
- Have players keep eyes closed during stretching.
- Verbally recognize improvement to motivate players.
- Push players, especially during dynamic phase, but keep eyes on players for over exertion.
- Vary warm-up sequence at practice throughout the year.
- Develop a formal pregame warm-up.