

Soccer Warm-up

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Preparing your body for soccer is a process that is often overlooked, especially at the lower levels of the game. There are three main aspects that must be touched upon in order to achieve maximum physiological readiness.

Circulation - Picking up the Metabolic Rate

Passive

Before jumping into a competitive event, the body's cardio-vascular activity needs to be increased gradually. Up to 30 minutes before kickoff, it is recommended to drink tea (preferably with a lemon and sweetened by honey rather than sugar.) The tea contains caffeine, which will increase a player's heart rate. Tea is rich in Sodium, a mineral that regulates and balances the amount of fluids outside the cells in the body, aiding in muscle contraction and nerve function. Sodium is usually lost during endurance events like soccer in the means of sweat.

Prior to going out to the field, light massage should be applied to the poorly circulated parts of the body like the ankles, knees, lower back and shoulders. This is especially important in cold weather.

Active

The active warm-up must begin about 20-30 minutes before the actual event. During this process, the body has to be warmed up through active exercises such as light jogging. The intensity should be gradually picked up. Incorporating different muscle groups at this stage will uniformly warm up the body.

Musculature - Stretching

Stretching is misunderstood and misused by many coaches at the lower levels of the game. First off, it must never be used on "cold muscles." Unless your body has been warmed up, stretching can only cause harm. Remember that it should never feel painful. Flexibility is influenced by genetic factors. The same result cannot be expected for two different players when it comes to stretching.

Static

Static stretches are done by gradually assuming a position and holding it for a period of time. The only advantage of using Static stretches before a game is that they will ease sore muscles and calm down the player. It is true that they also improve flexibility but only when used in a long-term program.

Ballistic

Dynamic or Ballistic stretches involve moving a specific joint in full-range from one extreme to the other. It has been shown that Ballistic stretching decreases a risk factor for injury called muscle stiffness. Muscle stiffness is the ratio between change in muscle resistance and the change in muscle length. Static stretches have no effect on muscle stiffness.

Therefore, stretches, done before soccer games or practices, need to be Ballistic. Nearly all established teams address only Ballistic stretches in their pre-game routine and go right into a technical workout.

Coordination - Technical-specific Workout

The final step before kickoff is the technical warm-up. At this point, the body should be well warmed up. Ideally, the technical warm-up should incorporate all four major areas of skill including kicking, dribbling, ball control and tackling. In fact, many teams conduct a "compressed" technical practice just before they actually play. They start off with simple technical drills and build up to a small-sided possession game.

References

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