

SOCCER FIT-FACTS

MARCH 25, 2009

TRAIN TO WIN IN 15 MINUTES A DAY

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The pre-season is here, and for youth soccer players, this means a hectic schedule of practices, games, and tournaments, not to mention school-work and exams. So where does fitness training and physical preparation fit into the equation?

Traditionally, most teams and players use the late winter/early spring months of February, March, and April to do a significant amount of endurance training in order to improve their stamina during regular season games. This type of training usually involves running longer distances, at the same relative intensity, for a set amount of time (usually 30 minutes or more).

The problem with using distance running to train endurance in

soccer, however, is that it does not match the actual physical demands of a soccer game, and as a result, the improvements made in endurance do not necessarily translate into actual improvements in the amount of distance covered during a game. In addition, distance running can be very time consuming, thus it limits the amount of practice time available for technical and tactical training with a ball.

With all the importance placed on endurance training during the pre-season, the problem for players and coaches becomes how to implement

an endurance training program that is both specific to the sport, and also does not require too much of a time commitment away from practice training with a ball. Speed endurance training, which involves performing repeated short sprints without full recovery, is one training method that effectively solves both of these problems. Read on for an example of 3 speed endurance workouts, each of which can be easily incorporated into the first 15-20 minutes of your practice (following warm-up), 2 days per week:

(See Diagram on Page 2)

LEARN ABOUT IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Speed Endurance Training**
- **How to Check Your Morning Heart Rate**
- **Pre- and Post-Game Meals and Snacks**
- **Muscle Activation**

ARE YOU OVERTRAINED? CHECK YOUR MORNING HEART RATE AND FIND OUT!

Overtraining syndrome is an extremely common, yet often undiagnosed problem for amateur soccer players. Overtraining occurs in athletes who train beyond the body's ability to recover and results in decreased performance. The most common causes of overtraining are too frequent /too intense workouts, and/or insufficient rest and recovery between workouts.

Youth soccer players, with their overcrowded practice and game schedules, as well as school and extracurricular activities, can be particularly

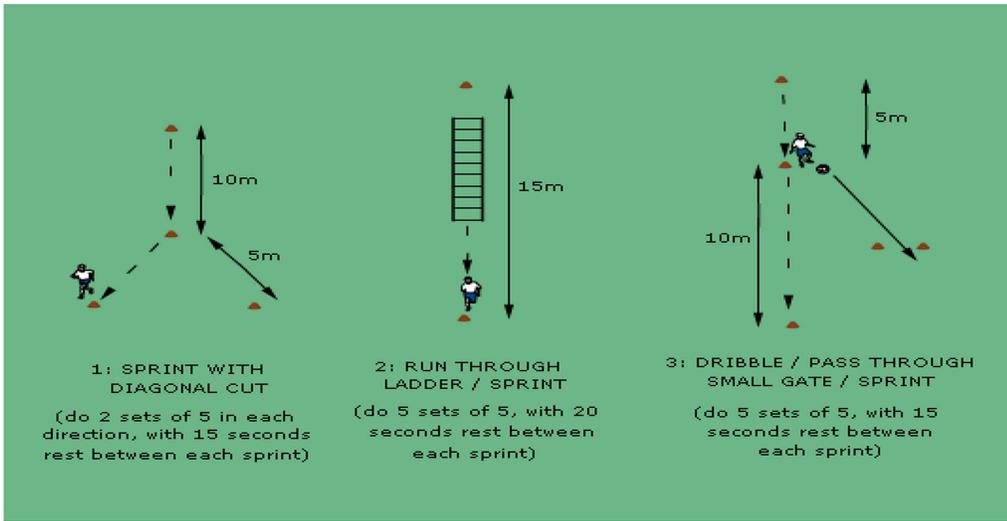
prone to overtraining. One of the main signs of overtraining in athletes is a high morning heart rate. Following is a step-by-step guideline on how you can check your morning heart rate to see if you are overtrained:

- after waking up, and before getting up out of bed, slowly sit up in your bed, with your back flat, and both feet on the floor
- using your index and middle fingers, find a spot about 2 inches to the right of your throat, along the carotid artery

- press your fingers gently on this spot, until you can feel a small pumping action (indicating the heart beating)
- using a stopwatch, start the timer in seconds and count how many beats you feel with your fingers in 6 seconds. Put a "0" beside that number, and you have your morning heart rate in beats-per-minute

A HEALTHY MORNING HEART RATE IS 50-60 BEATS PER MINUTE

SOCCER-SPECIFIC SPEED ENDURANCE EXERCISES



REPLENISHING CARBOHYDRATES AND ELECTROLYTES- FOR SOCCER PLAYERS – IT’S A FULL-TIME JOB!

Spring is here, and with it comes the requisite tournament and competitive season schedule. For youth soccer players, this is an exciting, yet physically demanding time of year. Throughout the spring and summer, many teams will have two or even three games in a single week, as well as weekend tournaments with three to six games spread out over two or three days.

The high-energy requirements of competing multiple times per week over a number of months mean that youth soccer players must constantly be replenishing

their energy stores in order to perform at their best. The two main nutrients that need to be replenished on a consistent basis to optimize recovery and performance are carbohydrates (sugars and starches that the body uses as “fuel”) and electrolytes (salts that the body loses in sweat, along with water).

As a general rule, complex whole grain carbohydrates (starches) should be consumed before and after competition, and foods containing simple carbohydrates (sugars) should be consumed during and after competition. During and after competition is also the

best time to replenish electrolytes, by eating foods high in sodium and potassium (see guidelines below).

Below are some examples of pre-, during, and post-game meals and snacks to help you store and replenish carbohydrates and electrolytes before, during, and after competition:

(Please consult with a physician and a registered dietician/nutritionist before beginning any diet or making any changes to your existing diet.)



“youth soccer players must constantly be replenishing their energy stores in order to perform at their best.”

PRE-, DURING-, AND POST-GAME MEALS AND SNACKS

Pre-Game:

- 1 whole grain bagel with fruit jam
- 1 cup of oatmeal
- 5 rye crackers with low-fat peanut butter

During Competition:

- 2-3 orange slices
- ½ banana
- 200 – 250ml of sports drink (e.g.: Gatorade)

Post-Game:

- 1/3 cup of peanuts
- 1/3 cup of sunflower seeds
- 200-250ml of sports drink (e.g.: Gatorade)

ACTIVATE YOUR MUSCLES WITH DYNAMIC STRETCHES

Warming up and stretching prior to competition is a commonly used and accepted practice among amateur and professional soccer players and coaches today. Following a 10-15 minute warm-up, consisting of exercises and movements that raise the body’s core temperature and increase the elasticity of specific muscles used in the sport, dynamic stretches should be used to optimize performance before competition.

A dynamic stretch is one in which a muscle or group of muscles is stretched while movement occurs at a joint or group of joints.

The advantages of dynamic stretches over static stretches prior to competition are:

- muscles and joints are taken through a large range of motion while moving
- muscles on one side of a limb or joint are stretched, while the

muscles on the other side are activated

- Sport-specific movements (e.g.: kicking and turning movements in soccer) can be used

Try these dynamic stretches, following a 10-15 minute warm-up, before you step onto the pitch to play:

“A dynamic stretch is one in which a muscle or group of muscles is stretched while movement occurs at a joint or group of joints.”

1. Standing Leg Kick:

- hold onto a fence, wall or goalpost with one hand, and stand on the leg of the opposite side of that hand
- raise your other hand in the air, and swing the free leg slowly backwards and then quickly forwards, keeping the knee straight

Sets: 2 sets of 10 reps with each leg

Stretches: Hamstrings, Gluteals

Activates: Hip Flexors, Quadriceps



2. Butt Kicks:

- mark out a 10 metre straight runway with cones
- run forwards, keeping your shoulders relaxed, while quickly bringing your heels upwards and towards the back of your thighs
- focus on swinging one arm while kicking back with the opposite leg (e.g. right hand/left leg)

Sets: 5 sets of 10 metres

Stretches: Quadriceps

Activates: Hamstrings



3. Walking Lunges:

- take an exaggerated step forwards with one leg, keeping the front of the other foot on the ground, and the heel off the ground
- when your foot hits the ground, bend at the knee until your thigh is parallel with the ground
- hold this position for a count of one second, then repeat it with the opposite leg

Sets: 2 sets of 10 lunges with each leg

Stretches: Hip Flexors, Abdominals

Activates: Quadriceps, Hamstrings, Gluteals



We are on the Web!
www.soccerfitness.ca

SOCCER FITNESS TRAINING

24 HARRISON ROAD
 NORTH YORK, ONTARIO
 M2L 1V4

Phone: 647-829-4360

E-mail: richardbucciarelli@hotmail.com



MEET THE PRESIDENT OF SOCCER FITNESS TRAINING

Richard Bucciarelli, BA KINE, CSCS, is a soccer-specific strength and conditioning coach from Toronto. Richard has an extensive background and experience in both training and coaching soccer players of all ages and levels of ability.

A certified Kinesiologist, Richard also holds certifications with the National Strength and Condi-

tioning Association (CSCS) and the American Council on Exercise (CPT, CLWM). He also holds the distinction of being the only trainer in Canada to attend and present research at both the 6th World Congress on Science and Football (Antalya, Turkey, January 2007) and the First World Conference on Science and Soccer (Liverpool, England, May 2008).

In addition to his many qualifications in soccer fitness training, Richard is also an avid soccer coach. A graduate of York University's Coaching Certification Program, he also currently holds an Ontario Provincial "B" License, as well as a US National "Y" License, in coaching.

Soccer Fitness was created to help coaches at all levels of the game improve their knowledge and practical skills in training their athletes. With huge and growing numbers of players registered in Canada at the youth level, it often seems that there are just too many players and not enough qualified fitness trainers. Today, most clubs in Ontario have Club Head Coaches and Technical Staffs, whose primary responsibility is to help train, educate their club's "rep" or competitive coaches, and ensure that they are able to plan and deliver appropriate technical and tactical training to their respective teams. Physical training of soccer players, however, seems to be the missing link in most clubs' overall training programs. **Soccer Fitness is a company that aims to help coaches in understanding and implementing appropriate physical training programs for their athletes.**

