

Off Season Training

(By John Ruyak, Corporate Fitness Works)

The most successful athletes in the world achieve their goals not only by what they do on the field or court during the season, but also by how consistently they maintain their training program off season. Whether you're an official running the courts of a basketball game three times a week or a 10k runner training for that next race, keeping your body in shape year round allows you to more easily transition into the pace of the season and prevent possible injuries. Applying the most basic exercise guidelines can help you stay consistent in the offseason. By following the F.I.T.T. principle (Frequency, Intensity, Time, Type) and incorporating cardiovascular conditioning, strength training, and flexibility exercises as the core ingredients of the program, a referee can stay in shape long after the last shot is taken.

Frequency—Fitness professionals recommend 3–5 days per week of training with a consistent mix of cardiovascular conditioning, strength training exercises with 48 hours rest in between workouts, and core stretches to maintain flexibility and decrease the chance of injury.

Intensity—Training in your target heart rate zone allows you to maintain efficiency and maximize results. Using a basic formula of “220 minus your age” will give you an estimated maximum heart rate for your training program. Maintaining a heart rate of 50–60 percent of the max heart rate will assist with weight loss goals while 65–80 percent of max heart rate increases endurance.

Time—To accomplish improved health and increased energy levels, shoot for 20–40 minutes of cardiovascular activity within your target heart rate zone. Sustaining activity for 30–60 minutes is conducive to weight loss. An appropriate 5–10 minutes of warmup and cool down should also be included in your program.

Type—Incorporating a variety of exercise modes and activities in your training program ensures cross training benefits and reduces the chance of boredom which can lead to inactivity. Cardiovascular conditioning may include running, walking, cycling, and any other consistent exercise that increases your heart rate into a training zone. Strength training includes core exercises which work the major muscle groups: squats, lunges, leg extensions and leg curls for the lower body and presses, rows, lat pulls and arm exercises for the upper body. Building a strong base and core of stability for the body with lower back and abdominal exercises will ensure a complete workout program. Follow your strength and cardiovascular workouts with a flexibility program to decrease risk of injury and increase efficiency and performance through pliable muscles and joints with greater range of motion.

The final aspect of a good offseason conditioning program is to incorporate sport-specific training activities into your regimen. Simulating game time speed and situations can dramatically increase how your body responds when called on during competition. Running full court wind sprints, walking and jogging at various intervals, and mimicking the sudden change in direction movements that are so important to an official's mobility will ensure that your muscles will be prepared at game time.

Whether you exercise at your local health facility or use personal equipment in the convenience of your home, keeping active during the offseason can pay big dividends when the whistle blows and the ball becomes live. In the next issue and future issues of *Sportorials* each F.I.T.T. principle will be presented individually with helpful hints for a safe and effective preseason regimen.

If you have fitness questions, contact John Ruyak at jruyak@corporatefitnessworks.com.