

The Benefits of Warming Up

“Without optimal preparation it is impossible to expect optimal performance.”
-Jim Heigelman, C.S.C.S.

Performing a specific warm-up program prior to each training has numerous benefits.

❖ Circulation and Muscular Systems

- Warming up increases circulation. Starting a workout without warming up puts unnecessary stress on the heart. With exercise, the blood vessels dilate, stress to the heart decreases and the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide is optimized. Increased circulation helps oxygenate the muscles, aiding performance.
- Gradually increasing the body’s temperature enhances muscle elasticity. As the temperature rises, the muscle fibers stretch and lengthen, increasing flexibility and range of motion.
- The efficiency of the body’s cooling system is raised to a more optimal level.
- The range of motion in the joints is improved (shoulders-hips-knees-ankles)

❖ Neural Preparation

- Focusing on your upcoming workout (speed, form, course, etc.) with positive imagery during a sports specific warm-up results in increased concentration and relaxation during that workout. This mental exercise programs neural reflexes in the brain.
- Consistent rehearsals as described above, program a correct pattern of neural reflexes. This allows the athlete to become more efficient and improves proper walking technique and ultimately their performance.

❖ Psychological Demands

- A structured warm-up prepares the athlete to achieve a “flow state.” This increases mental focus and achieves a state of relaxation and total concentration. (see Sample Warm-up)

Sample Warm-up

Begin with slow walking of 5 to 15 minutes. Continue with basic joint mobility exercises, gradually increasing the range of motion. Start with the ankles (alphabets) and continue with the hips and knee exercises (hurdling). Finish with the torso and shoulders (static or walking windmills). Complete the warm-up with a few (3-4) short quick strides. Relax for a few minutes and start training.

Note: It is recommended to start the season with these three mobility exercises and as the season progresses include additional exercises, as you see fit. A full list of mobility exercises with their descriptions are found in the Tier I and Tier II Certification manuals, entitled "Tom's Top Ten." If they are not available, contact Tom Dooley at geher2@comcast.net.