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## Strength, Conditioning and Injury Prevention

With any physical activity sport or otherwise, injuries are almost inevitable. However, there are many things you can do to minimise your chances of experiencing such injuries. Strength and Conditioning may prove to be one of the most significant forms of injury prevention and performance enhancement. Some general tips regarding injury prevention are:

- **Rest.** Never under-estimate the importance of rest. Sleep provides our bodies with much needed recovery and rebuilding time. If we deprive ourselves of this, our muscles and joints may still be fatigued and less able to withstand certain stresses. This is also true during training sessions.
- **Hydration** is vital for the optimal performance of the body. Note that some of the early signs of dehydration include fatigue and muscle strains. Also, remember that alcohol and caffeine are diuretics, meaning they can rob your body of much needed fluids. Alcohol consumption immediately after activity also slows recovery both post match and training.
- **Warm-up.** Proper "**warming-up**" is necessary to prepare the body for the upcoming activity. A Dynamic warm up is an excellent method of increasing circulation to the necessary tissues.
- **Biomechanical Alignment.** Almost every injury has underlying biomechanical causes. Simply put, this means faults in body alignment or movement put added stresses on certain structures, which may lead to injury if not corrected over time. Correct technique is the key to minimising long term or overuse injuries, strains or sprains.
- **Well Rounded Fitness.** Training with focus on all aspects of fitness, including strength, stability, endurance, flexibility, aerobic and anaerobic conditioning. Your level of fitness in each category will work towards performance enhancement and preventing injury.
- **Core Stability.** Developing sound core stability will help prevent a multitude of injuries. Core stability is not "abs". It is based on the stabilizing abilities of 3 different muscle groups with strong attachment to the pelvis and low back. When functioning properly they will maintain lumbo-pelvic (*low back and pelvis*) support and control during movement. Smooth functioning of this region results in more controlled movement of the entire body, thereby decreasing the likelihood of many injuries.
- **Proper Mobility.** Attaining the proper level of mobility for various parts of the body (*such as the torso and hips*) can help prevent forces from affecting other parts

of the body (*such as the low back*). Finding this relationship between core stability and functional mobility is the key to dealing with most non-traumatic injuries.

- ***Sport Specific Training***. Training should include activities that are directly related to the specific sport or activity. For example, someone may train by running long distances, but when considering football repeatable speed efforts may be more beneficial.
- ***Proper Nutrition***. Food is the building blocks and fuel of your body's function. It is essential for good performance and virtually everyone has room for improvement in this area. The benefits of proper nutrition will impact your body's performance as quickly as it is digested. Protein and Carbohydrates prior to, and immediately after resistance training enhances your recovery when looking to increase lean muscle mass.
- ***External Factors***. Don't forget the outside factors as well, such as utilising the appropriate equipment for the activity. This involves safety and performance equipment such as protective pads, proper footwear and eye-guards and mouth guards (*to name a few*).

If you feel an injury "creeping up", or are aware of a significant form or postural problem, it is wise to deal with it as soon as possible. Continuing to work or exercise through such problems will often further the extent of the initial condition and give rise to new problems due to compensation for the original problem.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours in Good Health

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