

GABRIELE

FITNESS & PERFORMANCE



The Importance of Preparation Training for High School Athletes

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Preparation is one aspect of life that simply creates success. When you are more prepared for a speech you will feel more confident and do a better job, when you prepare your nutrition ahead of time you will eat the foods you are supposed to eat, when you study hard for a test you will usually get a better grade.

In sports, athletes will spend time practicing their specific sport such as shooting free throws or working on their stick skills. This is only one part of becoming a better athlete. The other side is the overall preparation of the athlete's body to be ready to play.

How a typical athlete gets prepared for their sport:

Let's use soccer as an example. The pre-season starts in August and the athlete begins to prepare to get in shape in July. The training typically involves going out for a jog. This will do little for performance enhancement and injury prevention - and just starting in July leaves you little time to prepare your body for the rigors of a 3 month sport.

What are the consequences of not properly preparing for a sport?

1. **Increased risk of injury** - The injury risk of a poorly conditioned athlete is much higher. Muscle pulls and ligament tears are just a few of the injuries that can occur in an untrained athlete.
2. **Losing a starting position** - I have seen many athletes start as a sophomore and the next year be on the bench because someone else with an equal talent level has outworked them

3. **Overall poor performance** - An out of shape athlete will be slower, weaker and get tired much faster. This will drop their performance and will not help contribute to the success of their team.

How should an athlete properly prepare for their sport?

1. **Block out a period of 12 weeks**- before the season to start a training program. Serious athletes should train year round. 12 weeks is a solid amount of time to improve all the areas needed to prepare the body for a sport season.
2. **Strength Training** - Strength training is not lifting the 5 pound dumbbells for 30 reps. The forces that go through the body in sports are higher than you can imagine. Think of a collision in football or landing from a jump in basketball - these forces are huge and one needs strength to help diminish the stress on the body. Focus on working movement patterns like squatting, lunging, deadlifting, pushing, pulling and core stability training. 3-4 times per week is ideal.
3. **Speed and Agility** - This helps to develop your ability to move, improves performance and decreases the risk of injury. A faster, more agile athlete will usually perform better than a slower athlete. Focus on speed and agility training 2-4 times per week making sure to use great form to reinforce proper movement patterns.
4. **Conditioning** - Get in Shape! This is different from speed and agility as it is working on the energy system it takes to actually play your sport. Going out for a jog is old news. Take a minute and figure out the demands of your sport and try to mimic them when you condition. For example, a football play lasts about 7-10 seconds followed by a rest period of about 40 seconds. A conditioning program for this athlete would be to run hard or ride a bike hard for 7-10 seconds and then take 45 to 60 second rest, repeating this 4-16 times. Conditioning should be performed 3-4 times per week.

Train Together!

A great situation for training is in groups of 3-6 athletes, preferably with the athletes that are on the same team. This increases motivation during the training, helps to build team unity and will usually yield better results. On the other side, we always have athletes that play against each other during the season, train together in the Off-Season. This builds respect for your opponent and creates a more intense training atmosphere because your opponent is very closely working right next to you.

Overall, athletes need to understand the value and commit to a better approach in preparing their bodies to play sports. This will improve performance and decrease the risk of injury during competition. Another reason for taking time to prepare the body is to teach athletes the ropes of physical conditioning, particularly important for the future when they are no longer are playing sports. A person that has had experience with proper training will usually have a better chance to stay in shape their entire life. This helps improve quality of life, prevents against disease and provides you with a more functional body to live your life.

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