



INTERNATIONALS
Soccer Club



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Internationals Soccer Club: A History of Excellence

Preparing for Athletics

Why is it important to warm-up? Get loose? Prevent injury? Most athletes and coaches warm-up or "stretch so you don't pull a muscle." A typical routine would be to jog, do some static stretching and begin skill activities. Unfortunately, the rest of the warm up phase is done at the beginning of competition. (that is why the body feels better 20 minutes into a competition than it does in the first 5 minutes) Gain an advantage over the competition simply by being at mid-competition speed and athleticism at the beginning!

Objective: prepare the body to perform efficiently at all levels in all areas of the activity about to be done. Most sports require explosive complex motions with skills and body control that require a high neural demand. Any impact or contact involved with the sport just adds to the demands of the body. So how do we prepare to handle and excel in performance?

The basis of the preparation stage is to perform similar movements and similar speeds that are about to be performed. Jogging and static stretching may feel good but do not send a message to the body of what it is about to do. With this in mind, it is important to start at the low end of the neural chain and begin with low intensity, simple patterns. Examples of butt kicks, ankle hops, shuffles, etc. start to turn on the body while reinforcing proper ground contact and rhythm, an essential base to more advanced movements. Next, progressing to more advanced dynamic flexibility and warm-up exercises allows the athlete to progress up the neural chain and begin to turn on the anaerobic energy system. Usually at this point the legs will get a little heavy and we start breathing harder. This is part of the warm up process, but where many athletes stop because they do not want to get tired for the event. Actually, we need to warm-up **PAST THIS POINT**. If we continue to warm up the legs will feel better and the breathing will level off. (An athlete must be confident in their conditioning to know that they can go through a proper warm up and still have energy to compete.) As we progress through our warm up routine the most complex and explosive should be at the end.

From this point we are ready to begin skill activities. Again, starting with the least complex and progressing to the most advanced. In completing this routine we have accomplished many things:

- Progressively warmed up the muscle through increasing blood flow and muscle contraction
- Awakened the nervous system, enhancing body awareness and movement patterns
- Connected the brain, muscle pathway by duplicating movement patterns we are about to perform
- Turned on the energy systems we are about to use
- Reduced risk of injury by preparing the body to operate aware and efficient.
- **ENHANCED PERFORMANCE** by entering competition with a body that is operating 100%, with all switches turned ON!