

I hope that everyone was able to give the interval training a shot last week as training like that should feature quite heavily in off-ice workouts.

This week I would like to talk a bit about weight training and going to the gym. I have already had several questions from players and parents of all levels regarding the benefits of weight training. One high level player recently asked me if it is not just good enough to go to the gym... the quick answer is NO! But strength training is important for hockey players. One of the main benefits of strength training is avoidance of injury. If done correctly, strength training exercises can improve the muscles around joints and reduce the impact of the physicality of ice hockey. Strength training is highly effective at reducing the chances of separations and dislocations. I have broken it down into age groups so feel free to skip into the relevant section but I recommend reading it all to understand the progression.

#### U10s

I DO NOT recommend young players (U10s) do any weight training; it is just not the right time in a child's development. Instead, young players should be developing flexibility and overall athleticism by playing games and a variety of sports. Some strength training (NOT WEIGHTS) can be done in a fun way but should be done under the supervision of a qualified trainer to make sure too much strain is not put on your child's muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones.

#### 10-12 year old

Serious strength training can start around the ages of 10-12 by using body weight and things like rubber resistance bands (low resistance only though). Using body weight to gain strength is an excellent way to develop core muscles (the most important set for any athlete – even ice hockey players), flexibility, balance and agility. It will also get the players ready for weight training when their bodies develop enough. Examples of body weight exercises are push-ups, burpees, abdominal work (including, but definitely not limited to sit ups and trunk twists), climbing, using monkey bars and un-weighted squats.

#### 13-16 year old

Light weight training is excellent for this age group. Weights should be kept relatively low and repetitions should be high. Learning proper and safe technique should be the main focus when starting off. Supervision of kids this age is usually required at gyms (if not, find another gym) and is good to make sure they don't go too heavy and are using the correct technique. Basic exercises that do not have over complicated movements are good when just starting but after a bit of experience it is better for hockey players to do exercises with compound movements using multiple muscle groups and involving the core. Machine circuits are great for this age and free weights should be introduced after a solid strength gain.

#### 17-18 year old

By this age, weight training should be common and the players should be at the gym improving their strength. Players should already be experienced enough to work effectively with free weights. The trap for a lot of players at this age level is to want to train like a body builder or just focus on particular muscle groups. Don't forget that we are hockey players and body building will only slow you down. Weight training at this level should be for speed, power, balance and endurance. I know from experience that 17-18 year old males will want to get in the gym and show off how much they can bench press and it is tough to escape that thought.

#### General

For hockey players it is better to be able to do 120 press ups than to bench press 120kg, 120 squat jumps than to squat 150 kg and 60 pull ups than to curl 60 kg and so on. The goal is to get stronger

but not at the cost of speed and quickness. Weight training can be done specifically for ice hockey and it concentrates a lot on core and legs. Exercises like squats (two and one legged), pistol squats, lunges (forward, backward, side and diagonal), leg extensions, leg curls and weighted box steps are great for skating, balance, body checking (giving and receiving) and shooting. Compound upper body exercises like curls into shoulder presses, close grip barbell press into triceps extension, press-up into one-armed row and so on are great for upper body strength while engaging the core and strengthening what I call your 'protective muscles'. There are a set of wrist, forearm and grip exercises that are excellent for hockey players to improve stick control. These include standing wrist rolls (it is best to show this one- pictured below), supported wrist curls, hanging from bars and rotational wrist rolls.

Feel free to ask me or any other coach that has played high level hockey to go through some of these exercises. We are going to go through strength training programmes at the hockey camp this year including showing players how to do everything on the programme so it may be worth thinking about that.



Work out of the week: Interval runs (like last week) + 10 x 3 x 10's

10 x 3 x 10's: 10 push-ups – 10 crunches – 10 squat jumps – Rest. Repeat for a total of 10 times. If you can't do 10 in a row of any exercise then start with what you can do comfortably (it is ok to start at 3). Massive improvements will be made from the first to second and third weeks.