

Hello again everyone,

I hope that everyone is well on their way to gaining strength and stamina. I would like to hear how players are doing and if there are any questions. Before I start with this week's edition, I would like to say that everyone partaking in this off-season training needs to be drinking at least 2 litres of water per day to replace fluids lost. You will be surprised at how much better you will feel in only a few days after hydrating yourself so well.

This edition is dealing with some of the most important exercises for hockey players to do – plyometric, or plyos for short. Plyos are the perfect off-ice simulation of ice hockey movements. They train both the ATP-CP system and the anaerobic system in just the right way for ice hockey. If I had to choose only one specific set of exercises to increase my speed, agility and balance, it would be plyos.

Plyos are powerful, explosive type of exercises that use the player's body weight; when the techniques are mastered it is appropriate to start adding light weights to everything. There is a common misconception that plyos only involve working your legs. This is completely incorrect but, for ice hockey players, lower body plyos are heavily emphasized. I will first discuss lower body plyos; upper body plyos will be discussed another day.

Because plyometric training is explosive in nature, lower body plyos will naturally involve jumping of some kind. When first starting, you can do exercises without any training aids but you should be able to quickly move on to using boxes and/or weights. Ideally, lower body plyos should be done with one leg only as it more closely mimics the skating stride but two legged exercises should be done to warm up or develop leg strength/balance enough to be able to execute single leg plyos. Here are some examples of lower body plyos:

Without aids

Squat jumps – Stand feet shoulder width apart, bend knees as low as possible and explode up in the air as high as possible bringing the knees up to your chest, upon landing, the knees should bend down to the starting position ready to explode again. This is a good two leg warm up and the real exercise should be done with one leg.

Frog hops – A variation of squat jumps but moving forward as well as straight up. This can also be done going backwards which is good for backward stride power.

Side bounds – Starting on one leg, bend knee as low as possible as in the squat jump, then explode up and to the side landing on the other leg which bends to the starting position ready to explode again in the other direction. This correlates with the hockey stride and should be done frequently.

Travelling side bounds – Side bounds but at 45 degrees so half of the motion is straight forward and the other half sideways. This is a complete mimic of the forward stride.

Toe jumps – Stand legs together, bend knees slightly and explode using only your toes (calf muscles really). This helps with the final toe push in the forward stride. *Essential side note – flicking the toe at the end of the forward stride often separates elite skaters from good skaters.

Lunge hops – Start in a lunge position, explode straight up, in mid-air, change position of your legs and land in a lunge position ready to repeat.

With aids

The most important aid in lower body plyos is a box or a bench without a back rest. The box needs to be able to support at least 3 times the player's weight and be on stable ground because they will be jumping on and off of it. The box should be tall enough to challenge the jumps but not so tall that the player is unable to reach it. Other aids can include hockey sticks, books, rubbish bins (really

anything to challenge jumping height, distance and landing accuracy) and weights like ankle weights, weighted vest, dumbbells and barbells.

Any of the exercises above can be done with jumping onto and off of the box or bench as well as jumping over and across the box or bench. When using the box, it is very effective to try to do the jumps in very quick succession, i.e. try to do as many as you can in a set time period. Doing box jumps/bounds this way will drastically improve quickness and agility.

The workout of the week is geared towards mature 11/12 year olds and older. The younger players can do something similar, only less structured, let them run around, jump on and off stable benches, play games like jumping chase, etc.

Workout for the week:

Day 1 – Plyo Medley – Jog 500 metres (warm up), stretch, 20 squat jumps x2, jog for 60 seconds, 50 metres of frog hops, slow jog back to the start x2, rest 1 minute, 20 side bounds each leg x2, 20 metres travelling side bounds x2, rest 1 minute, 50 toe jumps, jog 60 seconds, 10 lunge hops x2, slow 500 metre jog (cool down) and stretch. *Warning: your legs WILL burn so you MUST stretch!

Day 2 – Rest

Day 3 – Jog 1-2 miles (this is to flush out the lactic acid built up in your legs)

Day 4 – 10 x 3 x 10's (If you are finding this easy, increase the number of reps)

Day 5 – Rest

Day 6 – Intervals (If you are finding this easy by now, increase the number of sprinting intervals and reduce the jogging time).

Day 7 – Rest

I think it is time to have a question and answer session. Please send me any and all questions you may have and the edition next week will be your questions (which I will put anonymously) along with my answers. There are no stupid questions and I guarantee that there are other players or parents out there that would like to know the answer to whatever you may think of.