

The Importance of Recovery

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For you to play your best and be at your best for matches, it is important that you train and work hard. But it is important to remember that training hard every day without adequate rest is not good preparation and can lead to over training and injury.

Here's a quote from Don Hutchison a former professional and Scottish International, he was quoted in December, 2002:

"I've been fed up this week, because I would've been fit enough to be considered for Monday's match at home to Southampton but for a tough training session the morning after our reserve game against Coventry City last Tuesday. We didn't perform well in the 1-1 draw, and subsequently we had to do a running session the next day. Unfortunately our muscles were still tight from the night before and four players went down with muscle injuries, which is a disaster considering our current injury problems."

"I strained my hamstring - which is still bruised - and Freddie Kanoute, Gary Breen and a young pro all picked up strains too. Looking back we probably should have taken it a lot easier and it's very frustrating to think my comeback has been delayed again."

Even fit, professional players, need rest and recovery after matches and training sessions. Ignoring strains, tiredness and stiffness can lead to overtraining and injuries.

You must work and train hard but must also plan recovery sessions. You will then reduce the risk of injuries and also reduce the risk of over training and burn out. Your coaches will provide recovery sessions and guide you in your recovery phases. When you train on your own then your recovery sessions should take place the next day. Record the recovery session in your training log.

If you have any injury or if for any reason, training causes discomfort then do not do a recovery session or any exercise that aggravates the injury. Contact a athletic trainer or doctor for advice if you are concerned about an injury.

Recovery Sessions (Active Rest)

These sessions are very important as they allow your body to rest and recover. This is a guide and suitable for the day after a conditioning session or match, providing there are no injuries.

Slow 5 mins jog
5-10 mins of stretching
Slow 5 mins jog
Running drills (low intensity), bum kicks, side to sides, skipping etc.
6 times 30 – 50 meter strides, start slow and gradually build up to 75% effort
Light ball work – dribbling, juggling, etc. No big kicks, or shooting
Then either 5-10 mins easy run or session with coach and rest of team
Finish with 2 mins easy jog and plenty of stretching.

If later on that day you still feel stiff, a warm bath or shower, followed by some gentle stretching will help. Other sessions that will help are swimming, walking or "running" in water (pool or sea), cycling etc.

Remember also that diet on a recovery day is important. If you feel very tired and jaded, you may need to replenish your energy stores and meals with high carbohydrate content are important, for example pasta, cereals, fruit etc.

Passive Rest Sessions

Sleep is an example of passive rest and it is important that growing bodies get enough sleep. Other examples of passive rest are sitting, reading, watching TV etc. Just relaxing and giving your body and mind a break from training and soccer.

You should take at one day a week where no physical activity takes place. Other days should alternate between training hard and active rest.