

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RETURN TO SPORTS PRACTICE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR COACHES

Providence Sports Medicine is committed to supporting athletes as sports gradually return from the COVID layoff. Many athletes have not been able to train and condition their bodies for appropriate levels of activity on a consistent basis. Because of this, our Providence Sports Medicine team of specialists wants to provide coaches with helpful guidelines when planning activities for athletes returning to sports. During the continued return to sports in the coming months, our practice planning considerations will be made available each week on our [website](#) for coaches and administrators to access. Additionally, we will be posting videos on our Instagram account (@ProvSportsMed) with helpful educational material for coaches to follow on how to get the most out of your sports activities during this return to sports.

With the prolonged layoff from sports, it is important to understand that the longer an athlete was unable to train at high levels on a consistent basis, the longer they will need to rebuild their physical performance. As sports at professional levels have returned, there have been many instances of injury across multiple sports. This has largely been due to a lack of adequate time to prepare for the unique physical demands of competition after prolonged periods of inconsistent training. While not every injury can be avoided, there are a few key steps that can be followed to help maximize athlete performance while helping reduce the risk of injuries.

The practice planning considerations are designed to outline how coaches can organize each session during weekly practices over the next few months in a manner that helps improve performance while helping reduce the risk of injury. This is accomplished by outlining both the types of activities to include in your session, as well as the total duration the session should last. When choosing sport activities to be utilized throughout a practice session, it is helpful to consider how these activities might physically challenge the athlete. See the list below to better understand the classifications of activities, examples of each type, and how to understand the difficulty or intensity that these activities present each athlete. The difficulty or intensity of the activity is important to consider because of how that activity might impact the physical performance, health, and wellness of the athlete.

For groups or teams of athletes who have already started return to sport activities, our Providence Sports Medicine practice planning considerations can still offer a good framework for progressing forward with practice plans. We have ordered the documents in a numerical fashion that coincides with the week of participation the athletes are in. While we will have new material each week for coaches to follow, we have included the first several weeks of the program all at once for those who may be further along in return to sport activities. If athletes have already started return to sport activities, it is recommended to begin our Providence Sports Medicine practice planning considerations either from the start of Week 1, or by progressing no further than the Week 3 template to begin participation in our program.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER FOR PRACTICES

DYNAMIC WARM UP

A good dynamic warm up is an essential element of any sport related physical activity. Devoting 10 to 15 minutes to a thorough warm up can help improve performance by increasing core body temperatures, priming metabolism for activity, preparing muscles and joints for movements, fine tuning the nervous system for skills, as well as sharpening mental focus. Most importantly, a proper warm up can help decrease injury risk. For a great guideline on putting a warm up together, [see our infographic for the warm-up checklist](#).

SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Technical Skills: These are activities like ball handling and passing in soccer, batting practice and playing catch in softball or baseball, dribbling, passing, free-throws, and shooting in basketball, passing and serving in volleyball, catching, position footwork, and non-contact blocking or tackling 'fits' in football. These can be done by one athlete alone or with 2 or more athletes working together on the same team or skill.

Tactical Games: Think of these as anything involving the "X's and O's" of a sport where 2 or more athletes compete against each other within the game. This could include full on 11 v 11 soccer on a full field, or a small 5 v 5 possession game. It might include 3 v 3 half-court basketball games, or 5 on 5 full court games.

GENERAL CONDITIONING

This consists of any activity aimed at improving sport-relevant fitness. See our [website](#) for the free [Conditioning Program](#) for information on how to gain a base of fitness for sports.

VISIT OUR PROVIDENCE SPORTS MEDICINE [WEBSITE](#) FOR WEEKLY PROGRAM UPDATES!

FOR PROGRAM QUESTIONS, SEND US AN [EMAIL](#) TO CONTACT OUR EXPERTS