

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. What is important to understand is 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.

One step is getting to know the types of sport activities that can be utilized throughout a practice session during the week. See the list below to better understand the classifications of these 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.

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

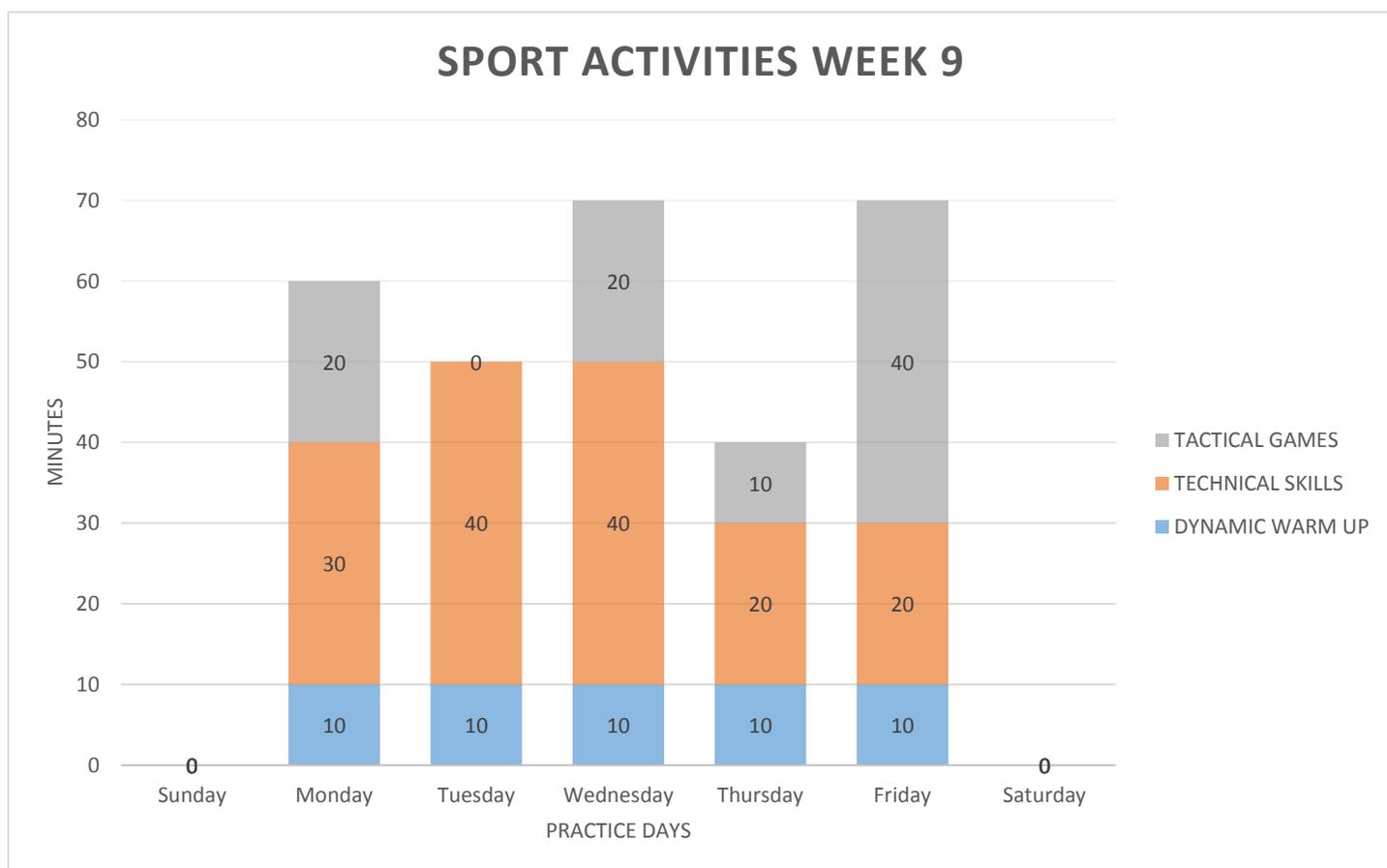
This consists of any activity aimed at improving sport-relevant fitness. See our [website](#) for the free 6-week [Conditioning Program](#) for information on how to gain a base of fitness for sports.

WEEK 9 TIPS FOR RETURNING TO PRACTICE

DYNAMIC WARM UP: Using guidance from the [infographic](#), make warming up a mandatory part of each session, devoting 10 minutes to it at the start of each activity.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES: In Week 9, we adjust work on **Technical Skills** as outlined above to help athletes perform sports skills. This also allows the athlete to work on their foundational sport skills prior to more intensive activities associated with **Tactical Games**. In Week 9 we again increase time spent playing Tactical Games. The periods of Tactical Games performed early in the week can be used for instruction and learning of game situations, so pause often for coaching when needed. Tactical Games played later in the week offer athletes an opportunity to problem solve on the fly, as well as build greater levels of competition fitness for their sport. Managing intense periods of competition during the week allows athletes to continue to build performance while maintaining a high quality of play.

GENERAL CONDITIONING: Now that athletes have completed the 6-week [Conditioning Program](#), from ***Week 7 onwards*** athletes can focus on elevating their performance by practicing their sport in competitive settings that occur in Tactical Games.



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