

**Successful Conditioning: Coaching Tips
by Peter Twist, MSc, BPE, CSCS
Conditioning Consultant to the OMHA**

**President & CEO, Twist Conditioning Inc.
Conditioning Coach and Exercise Physiologist, Vancouver Canucks**

Motivation: Whenever possible, integrate play and competition into structured drills. This is a powerful combination athletes respond to. The result is intense efforts and contagious laughter. Hard work and fun should be a goal of all workouts and practices.

There Are No Limits™: For the fastest physical and skill improvement, players must be willing to go through short-term failure to achieve long term success. Establish an environment in which players are encouraged and rewarded for pushing themselves outside of their comfort zone, failing at drills in front of their peers. Players need to support one another and acknowledge the efforts and courage it takes to explore the boundaries of their capabilities.

Dynamic warm up: For warm ups, do not stretch before workouts. Stretching stationary like a statue turns off the mind and puts the body to sleep. The goal is to activate the mind-muscle connection, warm the muscles, kick start your energy systems, and ready the body for full out efforts. Sitting or lying down stretching is counterproductive. I had Mark Messier use multi joint lifts with bars and dumbbells, plus dynamic leg exercises to prepare his body to move explosively in games. Begin with an easy low impact dynamic warm up, progress to full body exercises, and finish with fast feet drills.

Recovery: Schedule rest and recovery time into each player's weekly schedule. Repetitive overuse leads to performance plateaus and injury on-ice. Off-ice, over training is common, especially if athletes are involved in sports in addition to hockey, plus their training. Consider their entire schedule, not just their training schedule. Remember, without rest, the body will begin to break down rather than improve.

Prehabilitation: Many athletes are 'set up' for injury because of dysfunctional fitness programs. Do not rely on machines. Train more athletically. Use multi joint lifts and multi directional intervals. Incorporate braking, unpredictability and instability into exercises.

Energy: To get top results, you need best efforts. Intensity in the key training variable. Ensure players are well fed at right times before, during and after workouts and practices. Nutrition is the key link between training and performance.

Drink fluids early and often. During workouts, excess heat is dissipated in the form of sweat - your body cools when the sweat evaporates. The rate of heat production by active muscles is 100 times that of resting muscles. Water is also required for the chemical reactions in the muscles that release energy for sport movements, plus your water level determines the performance of your aerobic system. Maintaining an adequate water level is critical for cooling, energy production, and oxygen delivery. Unfortunately, your thirst mechanism is not triggered until you have already lost 1 % of your body weight in water. For optimal conditioning and game performance, you have to drink before you are thirsty!

For more information on hockey conditioning, visit the OMHA web site www.omha.net and Twist's site www.sportconditioning.ca