

The Weekend Athlete

Spring time is here, flowers are in bloom, warmer temperatures are here, and outdoor activities are ahead including getting out and playing golf, softball, tennis, sand volleyball, along with many family activities. Many of us have been indoors all winter, working a job from 8-5, 5-6 days a week with little or no physical activity for 4-5 months. Now we expect to place this extra strain on our bodies of outdoor athletics with little to no transition time. What we need to do is start including some sports specific conditioning to prepare our bodies for the sports and activities we love in the summertime. If not we will become injured, laid up with muscle strains, sprains, muscle pulls, or overuse soreness, along with a stiff and sore back. With a busy work schedule and family obligations it's difficult at times to be anything more than a forty-eight hour fitness fanatic. There is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying the weekend with family and friends and doing the activities you love. It's only a problem when you take the activities to a point beyond your physical limits. Finding time during the week to add some exercise to prepare the body for this activity is essential. Try to pick a minimum of three to four days a week to include a preparatory training program, give yourself 45-60 minutes and you will begin to get into shape. The best time to exercise is in the morning before work, no distractions, no chances of having to stay at work late to interfere with your workout program, and you will reap the benefits of an increased energy level throughout the day and having more calories burned throughout the day to lose some of that unwanted winter weight gain. Start your program by slowly introducing some aerobic activity, brisk walking, easy jogging, biking, swimming, or other activity that raises the heart rate to about 50-70% of your maximum heart rate for 20-30 minutes. Start with 20-30 minutes in week 1 and 2 at a perceived rate of exertion (RPE) of 5-6 on a scale of 1-10 (1=very easy, 10=very very hard). Slowly increase each week by adding greater intensities of aerobic activity of RPE of up to 7-8 for 1-5 minutes followed by 2-5 minutes of (RPE) of 5-6 for a total duration of 30-60 minutes. The trick is to slowly increase the length of the harder intervals within the entire workout, listen to your body don't overdo it, pace yourself. While it is aerobic exercise that most effectively brings about optimal performance, it is important to introduce some muscular strength, and flexibility exercises to our program a comprehensive program that targets all aspects of overall body conditioning should be followed to maximize the gains of being physically active. After about 2-3 weeks of aerobic exercise include some general strength training exercise to your program. As a minimum it is recommended that a person lift weights 2 times per week at a minimum of one set for two weeks increasing to two sets beyond that, target 12-15 repetitions of 8-10 different exercises that involve all the major muscle groups. Those muscle groups are: chest, back, shoulders, biceps, triceps, gluteus muscles, quadriceps, hamstrings, calves and your abdominal or core muscles including your back. This program will help develop muscular size, strength, endurance and prevent sports related injuries. For overall muscle tone & strength

lift more repetitions (twenty, and fifteen) at a lighter weight and move quickly from machine/exercise to machine/exercise. This will build aerobic strength concurrently with muscular strength.

After about 4-6 weeks of aerobic and strength training lets introduce some sport specific exercises to your program for the outdoor sport(s) of your choice. Here is a list of some conditioning exercises to improve your conditioning, agility, speed, and core strength important to all sports.

1. **Standing Oblique Twist with medicine ball**
 1. Start by standing and holding a medicine ball at waist level.
 2. Rotate to one side keeping the medicine ball in front of your chest.
 3. Now rotate to the other side and then return to the starting position.
 4. Repeat for 40 sec. rest 20 sec., and repeat for 2 - 3 sets.

2. **Bench Blasts**
 1. Stand behind a 8-12" sturdy box or bench and place one foot on top of box, heel close to the closest edge.
 2. Push off the box and explode vertically to bring the other foot onto the box.
 3. Step back down with your feet reversed.
 4. Repeat with other leg and continue repeat for 40 sec. rest 20 sec., and repeat for 2 - 3 sets.

3. **Jump Rope (alternating foot)**

Start with the jump rope in each hand.
Jump off the ground and start swinging the jump rope under your feet.
Continue jumping up and down alternating your feet touching the ground as you bring the jump rope under your feet.
Start with 30 sec. with 30 sec. rest; build to 60 sec. with 15 sec. rest repeat for 2-4 sets.

4. **Standing Row with bands**
 1. Anchor tubing at around belly button or chest level.
 2. Grab the ends of the band in each hand with arms at full extension.
 3. Pull your hands back towards your navel and pinch your shoulder blades together as you pull.
 4. Keep your elbows close to the body and return to the starting position and repeat for 40 sec. rest 30 sec., repeat for 2-3 sets.

5. **Chest Fly with Tubing**
 - 1) Secure door strap waist height.
 - 2) Stand with feet shoulder width apart, knees slightly bent, facing away from the attachment point. You may put one foot in front of the other (staggered stance) for increased stability.
 - 3) Start position: Grasp each handle and position hands wider than

shoulder width with palms facing each other (neutral grip). Elbows should be slightly bent and behind the body.

4) Begin by moving arms in an arcing motion to join hands at chest level.

5) Return to start position, repeat for 40 sec. rest 30 sec., repeat for 2-3 sets.

6. **Chop**

Start Position: Hold medicine ball with your arms extended overhead.

In one continuous motion bring the ball down in front of you like you are chopping wood.

You will have to bend at your knees to complete this.

Return to starting position, repeat for 40 sec. rest 30 sec., repeat for 2-3 sets.

There are an unlimited number of sport specific exercises that can enhance your performance, and conditioning. As your conditioning improves change up your program to continue improving your fitness level. Contact a professional or check out good books on this topic to enhance all your weekend sport activities from golf to mountain climbing. Now it's time to put these ideas to use and become more than a weekend warrior and more than an injury statistic. Soar beyond your friends who have decided not to take these bold mid-week measures. It's time to step out of the shadows of obscurity and into the limelight of victory for those weekend competitive challenges.

List of Books:

Cross-Training for Sports, Gary T. Morgan, Human Kinetics

Sport Stretch, Michael J. Alter, Human Kinetics

High-Performance Sports Conditioning, Bill Foran, Human Kinetics