Flexibility

Flexibility training is just as important as strength training for the total development and conditioning of athletes. Especially in the injury phase, we encourage stretching before and after workouts. Flexibility is defined as range of motion at a joint. It is generally felt that those athletes with loose joints are more susceptible to sustaining sprains of their joints, while those with tight joints are susceptible to strains of the muscles and tendons. This has been studied in the high school, college and professional ranks. Nicholas (Nicholas 1970) found flexibility to be a predictor of injury in professional football athletes, while Moretz et. al. found it not significant in high schools (Moretz 1982). Basically, the protocol identified five basic flexibility movements—each performed individually by patients. Those completing two or more tests were identified as “loose-jointed” versus “tight-jointed”. Flexibility training is a key ingredient to the total conditioning of the athlete.

Stretching can take on two types of looks. The traditional stretching technique is the ballistic stretch or bouncing stretch. This has been shown to be contra-indicated for flexibility as it actually causes muscles to tighten and can lead to more muscle strains. The advocated type of stretching is the static stretching where muscles are held for a continuous stretch for six to ten seconds. This promotes elongation of the muscle fiber and the flexibility is maintained for two or three hours of a workout. Should you ever start to sustain more muscle strains with your teams, you should look at your flexibility program and modify things to promote an elongated elasticity throughout the workouts.

In addition, flexibility after exercise is as important as pre-workouts. Encourage athletes prone to muscles strains to stretch before, during and after workouts. When stretching following activity, they return muscles to their supple elongated state. Also it aids in post recovery muscle soreness and also promotes circulation in ridding the muscles of waste products.

In summary, flexibility can be an adjunct to conditioning and rehabilitation programs. Athletic trainers, strength coaches, members of the coaching staff should all encourage aggressive approaches and compliance with flexibility exercises.

Thank you for allowing me to share some thoughts on this all-so-important topic. Please take the content seriously, as there is no replacement for good, sound medical care. Do not take shortcuts, and always listen to your body. Any type of chest pain, syncope (black-eye) episode associated with physical activity should be discussed with your physician.

Be diligent with your work. Exercise should be a progressive regimen with attention to detail. Mark Letendre created a stretching matrix for his professional baseball umpires. This has now been expanded to Minor League umpires. While the stretching matrix is a significantly compilation of stretches, it does address the muscles and muscle groups affected by the rigors of umpire mechanics. Flexibility programs require diligence. You have to have a plan, and follow your plan.

The following discussion will attempt to describe the attached Free Standing Stretching Matrix. Sets and repetitions are based on warm up or fatigue once games have begun, and the wear and tear of umpiring takes it role on umpires. Relative to details, the matrix designed for most prominent motions umpires make in the three planes of motion. It is important for umpires to understand stretch pain — applying tension on muscles to stretch, but not over stretch. Stretch pain helps to determine range of motion, as each umpire is different and has
specific needs relative to flexibility. The first exercise is the overhead reach. As can be visualized, this is a simple reach overhead, followed by lateral overhead stretches. As with all exercises, this exercise is repeated to address the dominant and non-dominant sides of the body. The rotational overhead stretches incorporate the torso muscles, and stretch many of the core stabilizers.

Lunging stretches are performed first with the right leg forward followed by the left. Then a lateral lunge to both the right and left sides, followed by a rotational lunge to the left and right. To accentuate the lower back, the lunge is continued with the forward lunge with reaching to the floor. This is performed for the right leg followed by the left. The activity is continued with lateral lunge with reach to the floor for right and left, followed by rotation lunch with reaching to the floor, again to the right and left.

The next exercise is the forward lunge to overhead reach for the right and left sides. This is followed by the lateral lunge to overhead reach for the right and left sides; and then the rotational lunge to overhead reach for the right and left sides. The forward lunge to rational reach for the right and left sides is followed by the lateral lunge to rotational reach for the right and left sides; and the rotation lunge to rotational reach for the right and left sides. The forward lunge to rotational reach is performed for the right and left sides, followed by the lateral lunge to rotational reach and the rotation lunch to rotational reach for the right and left sides.

References
