



PLAYING for SUCCESS

THE 10 MINUTE WARM UP

Most players know that they should warm up before going on court to play a match or to practice. However, many players do not bother & many of those that do, often go through a few motions rather than a structured warm up.

How often do you see a player jog from the locker room, followed by a few toe touches & calf stretches, then a few swishes of the racquet, “now ready to play!” This rather casual warm up approach is far from the way players should be warming up before a match. What does a structured warm up bring to your game?

DOES WARMING UP REDUCE THE RISK OF INJURY?

The answer is YES. There is a lot of scientific evidence which shows that a proper structured warm up reduces the risk of injury such as muscle & joint strains.

DOES WARMING UP IMPROVE YOUR STAMINA & SPEED?

There is some evidence to suggest that it may, but there is no debate that a structured warm up before stepping on the court, will allow you to be more agile & move faster sooner. You will not need to use the 1st game to get warmed up properly.

SHOULD STRETCHING BE PART OF THE WARM UP?

The main goal of a structured warm up is to increase body temperature. Stretching will not achieve this, nor will the risk of injury be reduced. There is evidence that static stretches immediately reduce muscle power & strength, which is not ideal before stepping on court. Stretch after your match.

WHAT SHOULD A STRUCTURED WARM UP INCLUDE?

A combination of continuous activity such as biking & dynamic exercises which will help activate the nervous system. This will increase body temperature, optimize flexibility, stimulating the muscles which in turn helps coordination. The warm up should “WARM YOUR BODY”. Ideally the warm up exercises should mimic court movement & some should mimic the intensity at which you will be playing. A structured warm up should have you sweating slightly, breathing slightly harder than at rest, making you feel warm & ready to play.

A 10 MINUTE WARM UP ROUTINE

I am suggesting a 10 minute warm up routine as I know many club players turn up for their matches with only 10 minutes to spare, often rushing from work. I have also been at tournaments when there are transport issues, leading to the late arrival of players & a long warm up is not an option. In such a situation having a condensed warm up routine is a must.

1. STATIONARY BIKING OR OTHER CONTINUOUS EXERCISE - 5 MINS

2. SIDE TO SIDE STEPPING - 30 SECONDS

Move laterally, leading with one leg & then skipping with the opposite foot to bring it alongside the leading foot at a comfortable speed. Complete 5 or so side steps & then change direction.

3. CROSS OVER STEPPING - 30 SECONDS

Moving laterally, take a short step with the right foot, then cross the left foot behind the right foot, then take a short step again with the right, then cross the left foot behind the right foot & so on. Change directions after a few cross over steps, so that you then lead with the left foot, crossing the right foot behind. You can also twist the shoulders & trunk with each step. This helps loosen the core & back muscles. A variation is to cross behind & then cross in front & so on.

4. HIGH KNEE STEPPING - 30 SECONDS

Run at jogging speed in a straight line, lift the knees to hip height. This will fire up the calf muscles & dynamically stretch the glute muscles.

5. HEEL TO BUTT RUNNING - 30 SECONDS

Jog forwards & try to kick your backside with your heels. This will dynamically stretch the quadricep muscles.

6. HAMSTRING STRETCH WALKING - 30 SECONDS

Walk slowly & with good balance, lifting your knees until your thighs are horizontal in a controlled manner. As you do this, reach forward in the direction of your raised foot with the opposite hand, keeping your back straight & tall. You should feel a stretch down the back of the lifted leg.

7. LUNGE TWISTS - 30 SECONDS

Take a long stride & drop into a lunge on the right leg, twist your body to the right keeping the back straight & tall. Repeat with your left leg & so on. This will fire up the quadriceps & glute muscles & dynamically stretch the front of the hip & thigh whilst mobilizing the trunk.


8. GHOSTING - 2 MINS

Starting from the ready position as on the T, practice taking off & stepping into a shot making position, turning the body & transferring your weight & ghosting a shot, then recovering to the ready position. Practice a variety of movements in all directions & shots with good intensity. This will mimic what you are about to do when you step on the court.

IN SUMMARY

The goal of a structured warm up is to get you ready for action! It will increase your body temperature, fire up the major muscle groups, dynamically stretch the major muscles & joints & optimize coordination for squash specific movements.

The warm up is not set in stone. You can set up your own warm up routine with different exercises & if you have the time to arrive earlier for your match or practice, lengthen your warm up.



September 2023