

Preseason Conditioning Framework

A Six Week Plan for Team Sport Athletes

Preseason is where seasons are protected. This framework builds the aerobic base, sharpens repeat effort, and delivers a healthy roster to game day one. Less running, more intention.

Day One Testing

- Start with aerobic capacity. Use a Yo-Yo Intermittent Recovery Test or a timed 1.2 kilometer shuttle. Record time and peak heart rate.
- Test repeat effort next. Use five 40 meter sprints on 30 seconds, or the repeated sprint test your sport already trusts. Record total time and percent drop off.
- Record body mass on day one. Conditioning numbers without body mass are guesses.
- Test to measure, not to punish. Nobody gets fit on test day.
- The lowest score is your anchor. That athlete sets the floor for the whole group.

Block Structure: Six Weeks

- Weeks 1 and 2: Rebuild the Base. Longer intervals at submaximal speed, three sessions per week. Keep sport practice volume low.
- Weeks 3 and 4: Add Intensity. Shorter intervals, higher speeds, repeat sprint ability work. Two to three sessions per week.
- Weeks 5 and 6: Sharpen and Taper. Game-speed intervals once per week, plus practice conditioning. Volume drops, intensity stays high.
- If the group is flat in week three, cut volume and keep intensity. Adjust the plan. Never restart it.

The Minimum Effective Dose Principle

- Fitness comes from the smallest dose that still produces adaptation. Find it and stop there.
- Every conditioning session needs a written purpose. If you cannot name it, cancel the session.
- More running does not equal more fit. It equals more risk.
- The best preseason ends with the full roster healthy on game day one.

Three Rules for Protecting the Aerobic Base In Season

1. Keep one high-intensity interval session per week, even during heavy game weeks. Ten to fifteen minutes is enough.
2. Turn one practice drill per week into hidden conditioning. Design the drill so the work gets done without the athletes noticing.
3. Monitor with one number. A weekly submaximal heart rate check or a single repeat sprint set. When it drifts, intervene early.

How to Know It Worked

- Game day one: the full roster is available and repeat effort matches or beats day one testing.
- Week three: repeat sprint drop off is shrinking, not growing.
- In season: your aerobic marker holds within five percent of the preseason peak.

