



RETURN TO TRAIN TIPS FOR COACHES

Coaching Resources & Considerations

Clubs/Coaches need to realize the importance to take it slow. Your athletes are not returning from a 2-week summer vacation and getting back into it with the rest of their group. Everyone has had a significant de-training over the past 10-12 weeks. Your twirlers will want to come into the gym and begin to perform all the tricks they were doing in February. The coaches' biggest challenges will be to pace the return and keep the participants from advancing too quickly. Overuse injuries, new quickly progressing chronic injuries should be your biggest concern. Sore wrists, ankles, legs, knees, etc. could become your new reality and no one wants that. Remember, it is not a race to get back to what you think normal is. When your athletes return, it will be a transition phase in an annual athlete development plan.

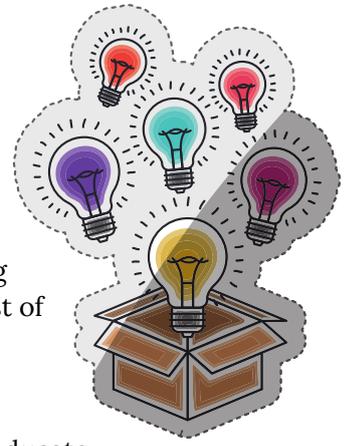
Over the course of the past few months, despite the best efforts of programs, coaches, and the twirlers themselves, a number of factors will have come into play. Without doubt twirlers will have 'lost' some level of specificity both for training and competition, from the standpoint of technique, energy systems, and even mindset. On the other hand, other elements may well have progressed, such as an overall general level of conditioning and physical work capacity. However, all of these changes should signal to coaches and twirlers the need to take a sensible and measured approach to training over the next few months, so as to build the strong launch pad referred to earlier. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to take a 'technique and endurance' approach to the first 3 months of a return to training. Improving technical execution and establishing a strong aerobic capacity will allow programs to gradually push into higher intensities of training more effectively.

In these uncertain times, coaches should make it clear that there is no penalty for missing practice and that if an athlete, or any member of their family does not feel well, they should stay at home. Staying healthy is the most important thing right now.

Clubs may want to consider the use, or continued use, of outdoor space for programming. With outdoor spaces being well ventilated, they can provide a better place for high intensity training. Being outdoors, you will still need to remain in your cohort, practice physical distancing and adhere to the Alberta Government Outdoor Recreation guidelines.

Finally, we likely need to remind ourselves that we are in the 'long game'; that is, we coach and train to compete when it really counts at some point in the future and, therefore, the distraction of short-term competition can obstruct our long-term goals. It is imperative that the next few months are seen as a golden opportunity to really build a training basis and launch pad for competition outcomes over the next 12-24 months.

IT'S TIME TO GET CREATIVE



If gym time is limited, there are many ways to create other relevant content that will contribute to an athlete's development. Below are a few examples of ways to create additional content and added value to your program. Adding additional content to a program often comes with additional time and effort. Starting small and gradually adding new programming elements is recommended. The list below should be considered a list of options and not a list of must do's.

Communication

- Have mass Zoom calls with parents to explain what's going on and why? Essential to educate them, keep them engaged now, so they come back when training begins.
- Host Zoom parent groups on specific topics.
- Create a YouTube channel and use all social media platforms to keep in touch and promote the club.

Physical capacities

- Hold group Zoom workouts, coach led – i.e. 20 min skipping/stretching/core, etc.
- Look at different sports to do cross-training and fill in some hours (gymnastic workout, track workout, etc.).
- Ask senior athletes to create a technique/workout practice.
- Asking the twirlers what equipment and space they have at home so you can cater the classes specific to the twirler.
- Teach and reinforce the basics.
- Some sort of online competition piece against other clubs.
- Rest and Regeneration – sleep and impact.

Competition and Recovery nutrition

- Technical/tactical/strategic competencies
- Use videos for technical demonstrations.
- Watch old competition videos to discuss strategies and tactics with twirlers in small groups.
- Show international competitions to illustrate strategies and for motivation, host online competition nights where you talk through famous competitions pointing out technique/ strategy etc.

Mental or psychological skills

- Zoom education sessions on doping, anatomy & physiology, etc.
- Guest speakers to come talk to the twirlers (doesn't have to be baton related, can just be life related).
- In person team bonding exercises outside of the gym that fit into the government guidelines.
- Set up an online log book for each twirler or collectively with a group.
- Sessions on goal setting.

Life Skills (cognitive, social, and emotional learning skills)

- Come up with a 12-week education series that the coach can run for the twirlers, the parents.
- Set daily tasks for the twirlers (Younger ones): Clean your room, etc.
- Hold Zoom interactive cooking (Healthy angle and slip in nutrition) – set a 12-week progression?
- Host a Zoom team quiz.
- Host Zoom socials.
- Team building exercises outside of sport as a way to connect to twirlers.
- Nutrition and hydration basics.