
**Sprint Training – Agility / Endurance**


[Rugby players](http://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/bbinfo.php?page=Rugby) of all positions require quicker reaction times, greater acceleration and a greater sustained top speed. Without the help of a sprint coach it is hard to decipher what specific coaching an individual player needs in order for them to improve their sprinting. Below are a few pointers that will improve overall speed without the help of a professional coach.

**Correct Technique** **There are four main points to follow when sprinting:**

1. A Relaxed Action - Movement is flowing and easy; hands are relaxed, shoulders are low. Try not to tense up when exerting maximum effort.
2. A Smooth Action - Concentration should be on a forward motion with a smooth, rhythmic leg action. A slight 5% forward lean helps create this smooth action.
3. A Tall Action - Body posture should be erect with foot contact restricted to the toes and not the heel as this creates a 'sitting' body posture.
4. A Drive Action - Concentrate on thrusting elbows back as opposed to forcing fists forward. Drive with opposite rear leg to high knee with extension of the driving leg as far as possible.

**Each of these can be improved by:**

* Seated Arm Action - While seated with back supported simulate sprinting arm action concentrating on thrusting the elbows back, keeping shoulders low, keeping hands loose and upper body relaxed. 5 X 30 second sets with 30 seconds rest between sets.
* High Skipping Action - Over 30 meters skip high and far with concentration on arm action and knee height. Do not rush this exercise; the higher and farther the skips the better as well as less time spent on the ground. 5 x 30 Meter sets with 30 seconds rest between sets.
* High Knee Power Sprints - Over 15 meters take small, powerful high knee steps concentrating on a slight lean forward, and leg extension and the top of the leg exercise. Walk 10 meters after each set and repeat 5 times. Once good technique is gained try this exercise holding a rugby ball in both hands to develop fluency with running with a ball in both hands.

**Greater Acceleration**
The phase of acceleration is from the initial response to the top speed of sprinting. Improving this aspect of your sprinting is considered to be the most important aspect in rugby. Being able to accelerate into gaps or move into cover defence positions can create/prevent many scoring opportunities. To generate faster acceleration short, powerful sprint drill work best, sometimes with added weight. Concentration on leaning forward and driving low and hard during these short drills. A 45-60% degree angle is desired with eyes focusing forward ahead of you, not at the floor!

1. Press Sprints - Complete 2 full press-ups and then sprint 15 meters. This helps to simulate game play where speed off the floor is essential. Maintain the low drive for about 10 meters at which time you should then move into full sprint mode. Walk back to the start and repeat. Try to complete 3 sets with 5 sprints per set; 3 minutes rest per set.
2. Flying Sprints - Walk/ jog 10 meters then sprint 20 meters. Walk back to the beginning and repeat. Complete 3 sets with 5 sprints per set; 3 minutes rest per set.
3. Start Stop Sprints - Walk 5 meters then sprint 10 meters, gradually slow down to 20% and then accelerate back up to 100% for 10 meters. Walk back to the start and repeat. 5 sprint sets with 2 minutes rest per sprint.
4. Side To Side Sprints - Side skip in between 5 meter cones and sprint away 15 meters. Walk back to the beginning. Complete 3 sets with 5 sprints per set; 3 minutes rest per set.


**Interval Training – Agility / Endurance**


The game of rugby can be broken down into many individual passages of play where both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems interchange throughout these intense scenarios. During the intense periods of play lactic acid builds up and an oxygen debt is created. Both of these factors greatly reduce performance. Therefore these waste products need to be oxidized and the oxygen debt needs to be restored.

During a game of rugby periods of total inactivity are few and far between, therefore the oxidation and oxygen restoration needs to be carried out during the aerobic parts of play e.g. jogging to a line-out or re-aligning for a scrum. The faster your body can manage these tasks the higher your physical performance will be. Improving on this oxidation/restoration can be carried out by regular interval training; whereby long periods of intense exercise are followed by small amounts of recovery jogging. After each session the recovery jogs are smaller causing your body to adapt with the increasing work demands. All interval training session should begin with an adequate warm up and end with an adequate cool down/stretch.

**1st Session**
Using a rugby field run the try line at 75% and jog up the touchline. Then repeat once you reach the other try line. This will complete one lap of the field. Try to complete 3 continuous laps.

**2nd Session/3rd Session**
Repeat the 1st session whist adding 1 extra lap each time.

**4th Session**
Still using the rugby field, run up the touchline at 75% and jog the try line. Try to complete 3 laps.

**5th Session/6th Session**
Repeat the 4th session whilst adding 1 extra lap each time.

**7th Session**
Run 75% diagonally across the filed from corner flag to corner flag, then jog the try line. Then run 75% diagonally in between the other two corner flags and then jog the other try line back to the start. This is one lap. Try to complete 3 continuous laps. These are called winders.

**8th session**
Still Using the rugby field, run 75% every horizontal line e.g. try line, 22-meter line, and jog the touchline that connects each horizontal line. For example; run the try line at 75% and then jog the touchline until it meets the 22-meter line. Then run 75% down the 22-meter line and jog up the touchline until it meets the 10-meter line … You will see by this pattern that you are slowly making you way up the whole pitch. At the end of the pitch rest 3-5 minutes and repeat back down the field. This is probably the worst interval training drill in the coach's handbook but probably the best as it provides good long runs with a short active recovery.

Once you feel comfortable running these sessions, up the % of the running speed 5% at each session so that after a while you reach 100% sprints.


**Strength – Core Stability**


The following eight exercises are designed to improve your core strength as well as coordination, balance and flexibility. They will also help stabilize your spine to prevent injury to the lower back and hips, a common problem among rugby players.

**Wall-Squat** -
Stand with your back about 3 feet from the wall, feet pointed forward about shoulder-width apart. Slowly lower yourself as you bend your hips and knees. Don't exceed a 90-degree bend at the knees. Return to the starting position.

**Abdominal Curls** -
Sit on the floor and place your toes against a wall, or secure them under a couch. Place your hands on your shoulders or behind your head. Curl your upper body forward in a crunch motion, then return. You can alternate left and right curls to target the side muscles (obliques). As you get stronger, challenge the obliques more by moving your feet closer together.

**Hand-Off** **– (Need a ball for this exercise. Any ball will work.)**Lie on your back on the floor with your knees bent at about 90 degrees and the ball resting between your feet. Extend your arms above your head. Squeeze the ball between your feet as you lift it while doing an abdominal crunch, reaching for the ball with extended arms. Take the ball in your hands and lie back flat with arms and ball above your head. Pause, and then reverse the motion by grabbing the ball with your legs

**Triple Move** -
Lie on your back on the floor with your knees bent and feet resting on the ball. Press your feet into the ball and lift your hips until your body is completely straight from head to foot. While balancing one foot on the top of the ball, bring the opposite knee toward your chest, then return. Bring the other knee toward your chest, then return. Finally, return to starting position on the floor.

**Pushups** -
Start with both arms extended to the floor. Keeping your body straight, bend your elbows to lower your chin to the floor. Pause and return by straightening your elbows.

-Work on increasing each week.

Example(s):

Week 1 – 2 sets of 10 push-ups. 1 minute rest in between.

Week 2 – 3-4 sets of 10 push-ups. 1 minute rest in between.

Week 3 – 2 sets of 15 push-ups. 30 seconds rest in between.

Week 4 – 2 sets of 20 push-ups. 15 seconds rest in between.

**Body Arch** -
Start in a deep squat against a wall. Slowly squat down the wall while keeping your arms above your head. Hold for 1 second in the down position, and then return slowly to the starting position. Repeat 10 times.


**Base Fitness – Endurance / Strength**


**Jogging**
This can be performed on a treadmill with a 1% incline at around the 10km/h pace or on grass with the same pace. At first running for 10 minutes maybe tiresome for some people; but greater endurance will build up over a period time. Each session aim to run 3-5 minutes more. When you can complete a 40-minute run at a 10km/h pace gradually increase the running speed, remembering to keep your heart rate within 150-160 bpm. Many rugby players suffer back and knee pain whilst running; this can be reduced with adequate running shoes and good running posture.

**Cycling (If possible, otherwise, jog)**
Cycling is a great way to train your base fitness, especially when you are coming back from injury. Always make sure that your seat is high enough for you to almost extend you legs fully when cycling. This prevents unnecessary back and hamstring trouble. Like jogging and rowing start off within your capabilities and gradually increase by 3-5 minutes at each session. Remember to keep your heart rate between 150-160 bpm. Once again aim for 40 minutes and then increase the pace while keeping your heart rate between 150-160 bpm.

**Swimming (If possible, otherwise, jog)**
Like cycling, swimming can provide great aerobic fitness when coming back from injury. As swimming pace is hard to gauge try to swim in lengths rather than by the clock. 5 lengths of a 25-meter pool is a good starting point for any beginner. Try to stick to breaststroke and freestyle as butterfly and backstroke are unnecessary. At each session try to increase the duration of the swim by 2 lengths. By the time you can manage 50 lengths of a 25-meter pool you will have a sound bass fitness.

**“You pay a price for getting stronger. You pay a price for getting faster. You pay a price for growth. But you pay a bigger price for staying just the same."**

* **H. Jackson Brown, "Life's little Instruction Book"**