

Importance of a Dynamic Warm-Up for Soccer

The warm up method used by many soccer teams usually includes an initial jog around the field, followed by 5–10 minutes of static stretching (athletes sitting down and holding stretches for roughly 10 seconds). After a few technical drills, the athletes then begin their practice or game. A closer analysis reveals major limitations with this method of preparing a soccer player for the strenuous activity that follows.

The physiological benefits for a “dynamic” (movement-based) warm up include:

- To increase core temperature
- To increase heart rate and blood flow to skeletal tissues, and removal and breakdown of anaerobic byproducts (lactate)
- To increase the activation of the Central Nervous System (therefore increasing co-ordination, skill accuracy and reaction time)
- To increase the rate and force of muscle contraction and contractile mechanical efficiency (muscles must produce fast contractions for most soccer movements)
- To increase the elasticity of connective tissue (resulting in less incidence of muscular or tendon injuries)

The result of the above responses lead to an athlete's increased ability to do physical work, which is extremely important for sports like soccer that requires high intensity bursts such as sprinting and change of direction movement.

The major criticism against the "TYPICAL WARM UP" (jog and static stretch) is that it does not adequately prepare the athletes for the demands placed upon them in the ensuing session. Generally the initial jog is at a pace that has a minimal effect upon body temperature, and usually consists of jogging forwards, and in a straight line.

The stretching performed is usually that of static stretching, with most stretches performed slowly and with the athletes either standing still or sitting on the ground. This method of stretching has been shown to be beneficial for the increase in limb range of motion, but aims to relax the muscles. **Conversely, this type of stretching does not prepare the muscle and connective tissue for the fast acting “contraction – relaxation” process that will occur with any running, jumping or kicking movements as required in soccer.**

Example Dynamic Warm Up for Soccer

I. MOVEMENT SERIES 1 (MOVING FROM CONE 1-3)

Cone 1 (start)	Cone 2 (20 yards)	Cone 3 (20 yards)
Jog	Transition to Back Pedal	Repeat
Side Shuffle	Face opposite direction	Jog to cone 1
Carioca	Face opposite direction	3/4 sprint to cone 1

II. DYNAMIC STRETCH SERIES

Knee hug to chest	Walking Quad stretch	Standing Leg Swing
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III. TECHNICAL – BALL SERIES

Coaches option (2–5 minutes)

IV. MOVEMENT SERIES 2

<u>Cone 1</u>	<u>Cone 2</u>	<u>Cone 3</u>
3/4 Sprint	Transition to High Knees	Full Sprint to cone 1
Butt Kicks	Full Sprint	Ankle Walks to cone 1

Ready to play! Now your athletes will both physically and mentally ready for their practice or game.