



The Three Biggest In-season Training Mistakes

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Now that the holidays have come and gone, we're getting into the real teeth of the winter sports season. For hockey and basketball players, that means trying to maintain some level of fitness during dense competitive periods that already take a real toll on the body.

During this physically demanding time, it's essential to try and maintain the gains in strength, speed and power that you worked so hard to build all offseason. The trick is learning how to balance the scales so that whatever training you are doing is enough to keep you fit and injury free, without pushing you towards overtraining.

Below I've outlined a few of the biggest in-season training mistakes that athletes fall victim to. Take a look and see if you (or if you're a coach, the athletes that you work with) are guilty of any of the following.

1. **Overworking the same movement patterns:** With any sport, you're going to get a certain amount of repetitive movement. Whether it's a skating stride, the rotational torque of a slap shot, or the constant jumping and landing involved in shooting a basketball, there are certain movements that you'll be performing repeatedly over the course of multiple practices and games. And while it's important to maintain the strength and power necessary to execute these specific movement skills, attempting to replicate them in the weight room can be a mistake. In the case of hockey, doing exercises like hip bridges, hinges and reverse lunges to focus more on the posterior chain

(glutes, hamstrings and spinal erectors) can help balance the heavy emphasis on the hip flexors and groin area imposed by the skating stride. In other words, for in-season hockey players, think less Slideboard work and more unilateral (one leg at a time) exercises of the type mentioned above. When training the core, with all of the shooting players are doing on the ice, training time would be better spent working to maintain core stability (with planking variations, Pallof presses etc.) than doing a lot of explosive rotational work. For basketball players, with all of the jumping and landing they're already doing on the court, any in-season plyometric work should be very strictly monitored. Low rep strength training and moderate loading through three dimensional planes (multi-directional lunges with reaches) should comprise the bulk of the lower body training stimuli. For upper body work, because of the repetitive nature of shooting and the wear and tear it can place on the shoulders (see Kyrie Irving), the training focus should be on maintaining good overhead stability by strengthening the scapular stabilizers. Here we're talking exercises like various types of rows, reverse flies, and external rotations, as well as both overhead and horizontal pressing with a reaching component to promote good scapular mechanics.

2. **Not taking recovery seriously:** As important as it is to engage in the right type of in-season training, you also need to make sure you're able to adequately recover from the intense workload being placed on your body. This runs the gamut from the timing of workouts in your training schedule, to getting adequate sleep, to making sure your body is properly fueled and hydrated. Younger athletes in particular tend to fall victim to this trap. While many are now making the effort to fit training into their busy in-season schedule, the workouts are often ill-timed, or they fail to provide their bodies with the nutritional support to truly benefit from them. As important as it is to include some type of in-season training (see point #3 below), simply piling additional physical stress on a body that is already at

least somewhat compromised isn't the answer. For instance, an estimated 75% of young athletes age 8-18 show up to practice already partially dehydrated! According to the 2nd edition of Sport Nutrition by Juekendrup and Gleeson: Exercise performance is impaired when an individual is dehydrated by as little as 2% of body weight. Losses in excess of 5% of body weight can **decrease the capacity for work by about 30%**. Significant numbers to be sure; which are only amplified when accompanied by inadequate sleep, residual muscle soreness and poor nutritional habits.

3. **Failing to incorporate some type of in-season training!**: As much as you need to ensure that you're doing the *right kind* of training, the bottom line is that you need to be doing something. Perhaps the biggest mistakes I see athletes make is training hard all off-season, only to completely abandon their fitness efforts once the season starts. The more fit you are, the longer you'll hold onto your gains; but generally speaking, it'll only takes about 2-4 weeks for your strength, speed and power to regress back down to your pre-training levels. So, as hectic as schedules can get this time of year, making the time for a couple of quick, full body workouts is well worth doing. Strive to keep total training time in the 30-45 minute range, emphasizing strength, power and mobility. Don't worry too much about energy system work, as you're likely already getting plenty of conditioning in through practicing and playing. Unless you're either rehabbing from an injury, or just aren't getting that much playing time. In which case a little more conditioning may be warranted.

There you have it. Three strategies you can use to keep fit and ward off potential injury during the rigors of the competitive season. Make sure you're checking off these three boxes and you'll already have a distinct advantage over many of your competitors.