

Next season's **SUCCESS**



Photos by Michael Caples/MiHockey

BY **RYAN ZUKE**

starts right now

ARE YOU LOOKING TO TAKE YOUR GAME TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

Nutrition, stretching, strength and conditioning are crucial in maintaining a healthy fitness level this offseason.

MiHockey has compiled a list of drills and tips to help you gain that extra edge for next season.

Remember, it is imperative to properly warm up before any workout. Performing repetitive dynamic warm-up movements will allow your muscles to stretch and increase tendon flexibility which regular static stretching does not.

EFFICIENT WARM-UPS INCLUDE:

KNEES TO CHEST— While walking, pull one knee into your chest while holding your knee, or around your knee, with both hands. Step, and repeat with your other leg until you perform between 5-10 repetitions with each leg.

FORWARD LUNGES WITH TWIST— Lunge forward as far as you can without allowing your front knee to pass over your toe. While in a deep lunge, twist your back as far as you can in one direction, and repeat twist in the other direction, keeping the same lunge. Step forward with the opposite foot and complete 5-10 repetitions with each leg.

HIGH KNEES— Use short quick steps and emphasize your stride frequency. This will help develop muscles needed for a fast stride and also improve flexibility in the hamstrings.

BUTT KICKS— Use quick and smooth movements while generating movement at the knee joint. This will help you develop quadriceps flexibility.

DRILLS TO IMPROVE AGILITY:

5-10-5 DRILL— Mark three lines, five yards apart. Start in a two-point stance at the middle line. Sprint to either your left or right and touch the outside line with your hand. Quickly make a turn and sprint across the middle line to the far line and touch it with your hand. Make another quick turn and sprint back to the middle line. Try to improve your time with every run.

FIGURE-8 CONE DRILL— Space two cones about ten yards apart. Start in a two-point stance and run a figure-8 around the cones, placing your inside hand on the cone while you make the turn. Once again, try and improve your time every set.

DRILLS TO IMPROVE SPEED AND POWER:

GEARS— Space five cones ten yards apart. Vary your running speeds between cones; it will teach you to accelerate and shift between various speeds. You can use more cones if you wish for a longer conditioning workout.

FORWARD/BACKWARD SPRINTS— Place two cones 30 yards apart. Sprint forward, concentrating on acceleration to the cone. When you reach the cone, quickly start to backpedal while keeping your shoulders and bodyweight forward and low.

PLYOMETRIC EXERCISES:

LATERAL CONE HOPS— Space out three to five cones based on your ability. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart at one end of the cones. Jump sideways down the line of cones, landing as softly as possible on both feet. After clearing the last cone, land on the outside foot and push off to change direction.

SQUAT JUMPS— Using a 6-pound medicine ball, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and the ball on your shoulders. Squat to a parallel position and then explode vertically. Perform between 10-15 repetitions.

BOX JUMPS— Use a box between 12 and 30 inches high, based on your ability. Stand facing the box with both your feet shoulder-width apart and hands behind your head. Jump up and land with both feet on the box and step back down. Repeat between 20-40 seconds.

DRILLS TO IMPROVE YOUR CORE:

Your core is critical while on the ice. Having a strong core allows you to maintain a stable base while skating and helps absorb impact from checks. It is also provides rotational power during activities such as shooting and passing. Here are some key core training exercises:

STANDARD PLANKS— Keep your core tight and do not allow your back to sag or arch. Keep your elbows and hands below your shoulders to minimize stress on the shoulders. Hold for as long as you can until your back begins to sag/arch. There are also other variations such as the shoulder touch plank, leg lift plank, up and down plank and walking plank.

TOE TOUCHES— While lying down, raise your legs so they are straight up. Hold the medicine ball with straight arms

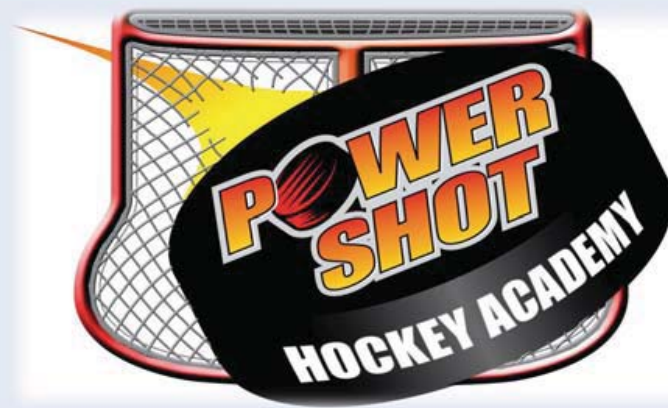
above your head and slowly raise the ball up until it touches your toes.

MED BALL SLAMS— Raise the medicine ball above your head with straight arms as high as you can, and then tighten your core and slam the medicine ball to the ground as you exhale. Make sure not to arch your back excessively when raising the medicine ball.

Finally, these workouts are only fully sufficient with proper nutrition. As an athlete, your body needs proper nutrients for growth and muscle recovery. Not every hockey player's diet should not be the same, but each should take into account important factors when determining your fitness goals. Remember, the quality of the food you consume is just as important as the quantity.



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