

Off Season Soccer Training

Off season soccer training has two important objectives;

1. Physical recuperation and mental respite from a strenuous season
2. Minimize any losses in strength and conditioning built up over the year.

In fact one of the World's leading strength experts Tudor Bompas, suggests that "off season" is an inappropriate name. Instead he calls it the "transition phase" between two 12month programs. The worst thing you can do during this time is nothing - especially if you have worked hard to build up your strength and fitness levels over the season. Remember, maintaining 50-60% of your peak fitness level takes less effort than starting from scratch.

And if you do nothing for just 5-6 weeks you will be starting from scratch.

Just as detrimental as doing nothing is maintaining your routine through the closed season. You **MUST** give your body (and mind) a rest. Even if you feel fresh enough to continue through the off season months, do so and mid way into the following season you could feel completely burnt out.

An off season soccer training program should also focus on **rebalancing** the body. Chances are you have a predominant kicking foot. You've placed some muscles, tendons and joints under the same stresses time and time again. Now it's time to focus on stabilizing neglected muscle groups.

The off season soccer training phase should last between 4 and 6 weeks. Less is not enough time for adequate rest. More and you begin to lose significant amounts of the soccer-specific fitness gained from the previous year. The focus should be on light aerobic endurance exercise and, in some circumstances, some resistance training.

Aerobic Endurance Training

Try to avoid too much running - especially on tarmac. This is a good time to try your hand at different sports or activities. Swimming, tennis, cycling or equipment like rowing machines and cross trainers are all good choices.

Aim for 2-3 sessions of 20-40 minutes per week. If you can, monitor your heart rate and aim for 60-70% of your maximum (maximum heart rate is calculated by subtracting your age from 220).

Resistance Training

You can take rest from all forms of resistance training for 4 weeks or so if you wish. However, as maximum strength takes a while to develop it can be a good idea to perform some core stability and stabilizing work in the off season.

That way you can move straight into the maximal strength phase at the start of pre-season preparation.

Two sessions per week is ample. Three is a maximum. Keep them short too - half an hour is reasonable and certainly under 45 minutes. Focus on core stability exercises, hamstring/hip extensor exercises, lower back exercises and functional strength movements (i.e. using a fitness balls and stability boards if you have access to them).

Strength sessions during off season soccer training must also be lighter intensity. No lifting maximum loads or performing sets to fatigue or failure.

Sample Off Season Soccer Training Program

Sample Off Season Soccer Training Schedule	
MON	Functional strength, core training, stability exercises. Swimming 20 mins
TUE	Rest
WED	Badminton, tennis, squash (take it easy though!) 30-60 mins
THU	Rest
FRI	Functional strength, core training, stability exercises. swimming 20 mins
SAT	Rest
SUN	Rest

Before we wrap up, you should still maintain your flexibility during the off season soccer training phase. Perform 10 minutes of stretching after your workout days (3 days a week).