

Your Off Season Determines Your On Season

If you've finished your competitive season for the year you deserve some rest and relaxation. But don't hang up your boots for too long.

In my career as an athlete trainer I've seen many athletes turn up to preseason training in awful physical condition. Some even still carry injuries through from the previous season. Others become injured in preseason training due to poor off season preparation. I've seen talented, poorly conditioned athletes perform badly in selection games at the start of the season effectively ruining their season.

The old model of off season that involves doing long slow distance work if your sport is aerobic, or gym work if your sport is strength based is limited. Here is a key exercise to help you make the most of your off season. Assess your physical performance below over your last season out of 10. Zero being not flash, 10 being excellent.

- Strength?
- Power?
- Speed?
- Technical skills?
- Aerobic fitness?
- Flexibility?



What are your key areas to improve for next season?

What area would have the biggest impact on your sport?

The off season is the best time of the season to make significant gains in your areas of weakness. One of my most important roles in an athletes' season is designing a highly structured off season programme to boost the areas of weakness before the next season. During the in season as a trainer I can usually "sharpen" athletes, but most physical gains are made in the off season training period.

If the beginning of your season involves trials for team selection I would highly recommend having a mini-peak for this time. This involves a 2-3 week period of more intense training followed by a taper directly before the trials.

Injury rehabilitation is also a priority in the off season. The athlete must be free from pain and injury AND conditioned to play their sport. The rehabilitation process isn't over when the pain stops. We need further conditioning to ensure that the injury doesn't reoccur when training resumes.

Well done on completing your season. Now it's time to get back to work and start preparing for next season by working on your key areas.