

## **Summer Training**

By Susan Ellis

Yep, it's been a long season and you've worked hard and are tired and want a break from training. That's great! Take a break. You really do need it!

But don't be a couch potato. The first few weeks after a long season is a good time to unwind and do some non-sport specific aerobic activities. These endurance activities can include hiking, jogging, swimming, lacrosse, soccer, racquetball, biking, etc. A few times a week should be enough to keep you in decent shape.

Your 'rest and regeneration' time depends on your age, level, goals, and experience. The more advanced you are, and the higher your goals, the shorter your rest.

National team level athletes take only a couple of weeks rest before heading back to training, whereas younger, aspiring athletes may take as long as a month to 2 months of reduced activity.

For more advance athletes the season's training should start with laying the strength base. Why strength? Because it is the foundation for endurance, at least the type of muscular endurance a speed skater needs. Without strength, it is hard to hold a good basic position for very long. And the stronger you are the less energy you need to spend holding yourself in that position and the more energy you can actually expend in the important part of the stride, that is the push.

Laying the strength base takes about 8-10 weeks, with 2-4 strength training sessions per week. During this time it is also important to really work hard on flexibility and balance. The more flexible you are, the easier the basic position becomes because you are not fighting the muscles to hold the position.

You are also doing longer aerobic work during this time to starting to lay the aerobic base.

The next phase of training is the General Preparation phase where you are still working on strength, but the emphasis is more towards aerobic endurance and aerobic power. This phase lasts from 10-16 weeks, depending on when your season starts. Activities during this phase include 2-3 strength sessions per week, 2-3 long aerobic sessions, and 1-3 aerobic power (interval) sessions.

Longer aerobic sessions should be a mixture of cycling and running. Long inline sessions are not great for short trackers and sprinters as the position is much higher and how you train is how you will skate. Inline should be saved for shorter sessions like interval training. Sessions are anywhere from 30 minutes to 2 hours.

Aerobic power training takes place on inlines, dryland imitations, slide board, ice, cycling or running intervals. Aerobic power intervals are generally 2-6 minutes for low

end aerobic power and take place at the beginning of this phase. High end aerobic power intervals take place later in the phase and consist of intervals of 15 seconds to 2 minutes. The early part of the phase is a great time to work on technique both on ice and off ice. Do it slow and do it right and save yourself the pain of having to make in-season corrections.

Highly aerobic sports such as soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey are great summer aerobic activities.

You can also include some sprint training either in warm ups or as a separate session during the General phase to work on speed and co-ordination.

The next phase of training is the Specific Phase and lasts from the end of the General Preparation phase to just prior to your first competition. In this phase you will be doing specific power strength, jumps (for more advanced athletes), shorter intervals, and sprints to work the anaerobic system. You will still need to maintain what you gained in endurance by doing a couple of aerobic and recovery sessions per week and also maintain flexibility and balance by making sure to do it in warm ups and warm downs.

Set your goals, talk to your coach, make your plan, and stick to it. You'll be so glad you did!