

# RETURNING TO PLAY AFTER PROLONGED TRAINING RESTRICTIONS IN PROFESSIONAL COLLISION SPORTS.

Practical recommendations for Rugby in response to the covid-19 pandemic quarantine

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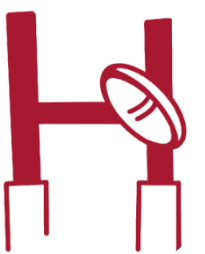
## PHYSICAL QUALITIES



- Plan training programmes, even during restriction
- Maintain exposure to high-speed running and sprinting, including changes of direction and rapid acceleration and deceleration
- Incorporate plyometric training
- Identify and correct weaknesses to improve performance and reduce injury risk
- When it is safe to do so, resume formal resistance training as soon as possible

## SKILL EXECUTION

- Use mental imagery and video-based observation to offset deterioration in skill execution
- On return to team training, include dedicated practice time for fundamental skills, including contact and collision skills
- Include specific focus on technical training of the tackle
- Progress all activities from predictable/planned to reactive drills and activities



## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING



- Ensure appropriate support networks are available for athletes to access to help manage any potential negative psychological experiences during and after any period of isolation
- Seek to maintain/nurture team processes (e.g., teamwork) through designated team tasks (e.g. opposition analysis) and social activities throughout
- Utilise the opportunity for 'reset' of physical and mental health away from the stress of formal training and competition

## NUTRITION

- If possible, assess changes in daily energy expenditure and make dietary changes accordingly if required (e.g., tracking body mass change)
- Consume a high protein diet rich in leucine, consuming protein regularly (every 4 hours) throughout the day
- Keep protein high aiming at 0.4 g·kg<sup>-1</sup> per meal regularly throughout the day
- Seek sunlight if possible and if not consider supplementing 1000-4000 iU per day vitamin D<sub>3</sub>
- Consider supplementing with 500-1000 mg vitamin C, as well as probiotics to aid with immune resistance and tolerance



## INJURY RISK MANAGEMENT

- Focus on training known weaknesses
- Maintain regular exposure to high speed running, accelerations and decelerations
- Use load monitoring tools (e.g., session RPE) to manage training
- Increase training load gradually and avoid spikes in load
- On return to formal training activities, a well-planned six-week block should be sufficient to prepare most players for competition

## SUSPECTED CASE MANAGEMENT

- Employ a risk stratification approach to the management of players and return to play. Undertake an individualised graded return to activity
- Where possible, assess and monitor physiological markers including resting, exercising and recovery heart rates, beat to beat variability, RPE and other indicators of reduced cardiopulmonary function
- All athletes with either confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection should be symptom free for 7 days and return to play no sooner than day 10 of the infection
- Medical practitioners should consider a cardiology assessment for previously symptomatic players with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 prior to returning to training
- Collect COVID-19 specific information in sports injury surveillance systems to aid best practice management

