

6 WEEK PRE-SEASON GUIDANCE

BOUNCE BACK TO GAME READY

BACKGROUND

We know that once the body has an extended time away from training there has to be a graded return into playing the sport/returning to the gym. Research told us that after the NFL Lockout in 2011 the serious injury rate (achilles tendon ruptures) in relation to the whole of the previous season jumped by 240% **IN JUST THE FIRST MONTH** after players returned to their clubs. It is widely accepted that if we are to have time off, the return to sport should be seen on a 1:1 rest:return ratio. For example, if we have 3 months off from playing basketball, we will require 3 months to return back to the condition we were prior to the time away. This does assume that you don't do anything in the rest period, however most players will have done something during this time off, therefore we are suggesting every club and member considers a 6-8 week return to basketball for their health. A slow steady return to all aspects of playing the sport will reduce injury risk, markedly, and would also allow coaches and players to prepare for the season ahead.

At Basketball England we have produced a 8-Week Athletic Development Programme [[hyperlink](#)] for all members to follow to aid them to get improvements in their physical performance and prepare them for returning to basketball. However once we are given the 'green light' to train and play again we wanted to outline what a certain type of pre-season may look like.

PRE-SEASON

The aim of pre-season is to physically prepare your athletes for the demands of the game but also get them to play well as a collective unit. Below is an example of returning to basketball league over the course of a 6 week pre-season. We would ideally recommend longer but this may not be possible. Should you have the time to lengthen the programme, taking a slower steadier return to all aspects of the performance of the team would be ideal.



EXAMPLE RETURN TO THE LEAGUE FOR NATIONAL LEAGUE TEAMS:

	STRENGTHENING	CARDIO	COURT BASED	BUBBLE SIZE
WEEK 1	Body weight – Possibly attempt 2 sessions a week.	Low level cardio – Max sprint 80%, short distance.	Emphasis on basics and fun – No sprinting or high volume jumping.	Up to 6 players 25% contact
WEEK 2	Body weight – Return to gym environment and light jumping.	Interval sessions, max sprint 90%, commence turning drills.	Increased detail for game format – No sprinting or high volume jumping.	Up to 6 players 25% contact
WEEK 3	Weighted work in the gym, increased jump work including 1 set of max jumps (height or distance).	Reduced long distance running but shorter sharper movements. Commence time limited full sprints (intervals). Change of direction work could be incorporated into court based training.	Full court activities – full basketball. Avoid drills with increased contact time – boxing out, posting drills. Small amount of time in 5 v 5 format.	Up to 6 players 50% contact
WEEK 4	Returning to normal gym routine.	Sprint and change of direction intervals.	Full basketball training.	Up to 12 players 50% contact
WEEK 5	Normal gym routine.	Sprint and change of direction intervals.	Full basketball training.	Up to 12 players
WEEK 6	Week before competition – Full gym but considering game at the end of the week.	Game week training.	Game week training.	Full squad

*If haven't completed BE Athletic Development Programme

We estimate if you have been able to complete the full **BE Athletic Development Programme**, you should be in a robust position to start to complete training as normal however we suggest you still build into it. Please be aware that whilst the programme is excellent for preparing you for basketball, it does not replace playing basketball as a way to prepare the body for the rigors of competition. Coaches – you need to be aware of those who have or have not completed much training in the off-season. Those who have not, you run the risk of injury if you push too hard at the level of those who have completed the Athletic Development Programme.

We are advocating the use of 'Bubbles' as we return to the sport. This should help to reduce the spread of COVID and manage the people within the training sessions. Above outlines the sizes of the bubbles. Increasing those sizes should enable different training drills and increased games scenarios. The bubbles should stay together over the course of the weeks, ideally being together for the entire pre-season would be great. Schools and other sports are adopting this model. As the bubbles grow, so should the amount of contact that the players are exposed to. This not only will reduce COVID transmission risks but also reduce injury risk. We have stated a guide to this in our pre-season planning table.

REASONING

TIMING

Increasing the time to return to play would be best to reduce the risk of injury. However we accept that increased length of pre-season can increase boredom in the players. We would recommend that the coaches take a steady ramp up approach to all training sessions. Hitting the first session of pre-season with a load of sprints, a timed suicide running test and then 2 hours of full court training is likely to bring about injury.

MUSCLES AND TENDONS

These are known in the medical world as contractile tissue and overloading of these after a period of inactivity will often lead to a muscle 'pull' or 'tendon strain'. Both these issues will take time to recover from and would impact your season. We also know that a history of a contractile tissue issue now may affect you later that season or in subsequent seasons. Contractile tissue will take a while to get used to the higher impact forces that basketball puts on them therefore time needs to be taken to get them used to the game.

STABILITY

Our nerves tell our brain where we are in space (proprioception). This effectively means your brain is getting hundreds of messages from our foot, ankle, knee, hip etc when we balance on one leg for instance. Well when we take a jump shot and land on one leg we also rely on this messaging service to be in top working order. However, if we do not use the messaging service very often (such as when not playing basketball) we need time to get that messaging service back up and running again. Balance exercises, steady increasing our jumping and playing on court will do this. Go too 'hard' into training and we run the risk of not having our messaging service running as it should and therefore we risk further injury.

RUNNING

All tissue, contractile and non-contractile (ligaments, bones), will have to get used to running. Interestingly, if you haven't sprinted in a number of weeks, your risk of pulling a hamstring increases hugely which is why we suggest

no full out sprinting for a couple of weeks. We also know that the groin or adductor muscles get similar pressures due to the twisting and turning nature of the sport. Slowly increasing the pace of all drills will reduce the risk of injury.

JUMPING

Our achilles and knees take time to get used to jumping. Without slowly building up the amount of 'load' through these elements (and the rest of the body) there is increased risk of injury to these parts. Our tendons (parts of the contractile tissue) often take longer than other parts of the body to get used to jumping. Slowly increasing the intensity of the jumping will aid them to adapt slow and steadily.

AGE

The older the player, often the longer it may take for the body to adapt to the different demands that basketball puts on your body. You can reduce this by not stopping entirely and continuing to do some basketball related activity throughout the year.

GENDER

Both males and females need to be aware of all of these issues and attempt to address them.

PLANNING

All coaching staff should plan in detail their own pre-season. There is no one size fits all scenario and much of the planning will depend on the amount of work the players put in in the off-season. We would recommend keeping close contact with them at the moment so that you are able to advise on conditioning for those players prior to the first training session.



THINGS THAT CAN HELP

All players and coaching staff can optimise the return to basketball training by utilising some simple elements:

- Have adequate recovery time between training sessions and gym sessions
- Sleep well
- Eat a healthy nutritious diet
- Stay well hydrated
- Reduce external stresses
- Complete excellent warm-ups and cool downs
- Add further mobility or foam rolling into the day

Ultimately, the more you are able to do physically prior to the pre-season, the better you will be for the season ahead. Remember we know one injury may only keep you out for a couple of weeks, but the knock-on effect on the rest of the body and potentially in the future can be profound.

Put the effort in now, and you will reap the rewards throughout your season.