

Return to Training and Competition – Associations and Clubs

With junior competition scheduled to resume before the end of the year, many associations and clubs are trying to plan for the remainder of 2020, as well as look forward to 2021.

For many of us, the easing of restrictions signals the return of things we have longed for – to see friends, return to school, play sport. But for some, this will be a difficult and challenging time. We should expect that it will take some time to find our way back and reconnect with life. It is important that we don't judge ourselves or others too harshly and that we give ourselves time to rebuild our physical and mental fitness.

Below is an outline of different phases which will help guide you and your players through a physical return to competition. These are just suggested phases, there is no need to complete one before moving on to the next. This information is a general guide that will help you to plan a gradual return for your players and ensure they have an enjoyable and safe return to training and competition.

Phases of Training

1. Participation

Focus on getting back into sport. This does not have to be netball specific, include fun drills and games aimed at getting players and their bodies back into the swing of things. Relays, obstacle courses, circuits, and team challenges are some ideas. As these last several months have affected people in different ways, it is important not to put any pressure on players to perform. The participation phase is all about having fun, reconnecting with teammates and getting active again.

2. Non-contested drills and games

Drills and games that do not have the complexity of active defenders or require uncertain or unexpected movements (e.g. change of direction to evade defender). Drills can introduce floating or passive defenders to get players to refine their decision making in a safer, less demanding environment.

3. Contested drills and games

Progress drills or games by adding a degree of complexity. This can include active defenders to simulate more game-like situations or increasing the intensity of drills.

4. Match play

Simulated match play putting all aspects of training into play. Start in short time periods and work on tactics and set plays. Teams can start with shorter matches (i.e. 5-10mins at the end of training) and work their way up to longer matches, possibly against other teams. Note this is still a training phase.

5. Return to competition

Full contact and contested competition.

Guiding Principles - Advanced

The below information was originally prepared by the staff at the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) to support the Victorian Netball League (VNL) Clubs with a reloading process leading into the 2020 Bupa VNL season. It has been adapted by Netball Victoria staff to provide grassroots associations, leagues and clubs with a guide on how to plan your return to training and competition for players following a prolonged period of reduced or no activity.

Recommencing sport will require a period of adjustment for players, coaches and officials. There is an increased risk of injury after a period of reduced or no activity, as well the reloading period moving back into full training and competition.

Below are some general training principles that are important to consider when returning to training and competition after this prolonged isolation period. It is important to continue to use common sense and your instinct when applying them to your individual situations.

Training Principles

1. Individual player consideration

Not all players will be returning to training having completed the same amount of activity over the break. Players will have different levels of fitness and skill. Coaches will need to accommodate this and tailor different components of training sessions to meet the needs of individual players. Check in with your players and ask them how they are coping with the training.

2. Increase one variable of training at a time

Frequency, duration, and intensity are all important variables for netball training. To see a steady increase in performance and reduce the risk of injury, increase only one variable at a time (i.e. increase the number of sessions, or increase the session duration, or increase the intensity of a session).

***Example:** Avoid going from a 45min basic, low intensity skills session one week to a 60min, high intensity, fitness and skills session the next. Instead, increase the session intensity over a few weeks by beginning to incorporate fitness components into the 45mins, before increasing the total session duration to 60mins.*

3. You cannot make up for lost time

Unfortunately, you cannot squeeze 6-months of lost training into two weeks. Increase your player's load and be mindful of the time you have available.

***Example:** Plan a training block before competition resumes. Be flexible with your players and avoid playing catch up by jumping straight into match play. Be mindful that the first few weeks of training will require players to get back into the swing of things, building their fitness, regaining skills and rebuilding their confidence.*

4. Revisit the basics for physical performance and injury prevention

Components such as jump and land, change of direction and balance are all very important. Players may not have practiced these skills for some time and focusing on these early in the training phase is vital to prevent injury.

Example: Apply components of the Netball – Knee program throughout each training session. Go back to basic movement and footwork patterns, and progress from there.

<https://knee.netball.com.au/junior/>

5. Non-contested before contested training

Exposing players to simpler, lower intensity drills and training situations early will allow for better skill development, performance, and reduce the risk of injury. Players should then be exposed to appropriate amounts of contested training in the later sessions.

Example: Progress drills by include defenders, adding complexity and game-like simulation. Progress your training sessions in a similar manner. Once players have exposed their bodies to the movements of netball, contested drills can be reintroduced.

Trials and Team Selections

A common question is ‘when do we hold trials?’ ‘how should they look?’ and ‘how do we select players when they have not had much training or match play in the past 6-months?’

Unfortunately, there is no exact answer. However, common sense should always apply. Players will have lost fitness, skills and game sense over the last several months and the usual process of selecting players based solely off 1 or 2 sessions of match play will not be the best approach.

Consider a different approach. Review your traditional timelines. Consult with your players and their families. Talk with other clubs or associations. Take your time. Be flexible.

Here are a few suggestions to think about:

- Run more sessions, over shorter periods of time.
- Incorporate a thorough and a facilitated warm-up into each session. Don’t expect players to complete their own warm-up.
- Incorporate basic skills and drills into the selection process. Spend the first part of your session completing skill-based drills before you introduce any match play. Allow players to prepare by practicing their skills building their confidence. Use small groups and coach players through the session.
- Plan a whole session of skills and drills and use that session to screen players. Then invite selected players back for match play in following sessions. Skills sessions can also be used to see how players respond to coaching cues and feedback.
- Hold open screening days and invite anyone to attend and join in.
- Keep your squads broad, nominate and group teams together.
- Trials may not be necessary for some clubs or associations. Instead well-structured training sessions could be held, and potential new players invited to join in. This is a great way to see if interested players will fit in with the current group, and for new players to gauge if your club is right for them.

At-Home Training Guides

There are things we can do at home to keep active, ensuring we are ready to hit the court when training can recommence. Prior to the first session back, we suggest you provide your players with some optional at home sessions.

At-home training guides are available for associations and clubs to pass onto their members. Players can complete these alone or in pairs at home, in their own time. Sessions include footwork and agility, ball work, and goaling sessions. Below is the list (and links) of training guides.

- [Ball Handling Skills](#)
- [Ball Work \(Pairs\)](#)
- [Ball Work \(Pairs\) #2](#)
- [Footwork & Agility](#)
- [Footwork & Agility \(Advanced\)](#)
- [Goaling Sessions](#)
- [Stationary Ball Work & Reaction Drills \(Pairs\)](#)

Remember...

The return to training and competition should always be at the individual's discretion. Some individuals may not be ready to return to community sport, or they be experiencing new barriers or hurdles that did not exist a couple of months ago.

Hey Sport, R U Ok?

Hey Sport, R U OK? is a resource designed to support the grassroots sporting community. Resources and tips will help coaches spot the signs that someone might be struggling and provide tips to guide them through what to say and do in the event one of their players is not OK.

<https://www.ruok.org.au/sport>

Good luck, stay healthy, and train and play well!

The NV Team!
#hereifyouneed
#playforthe love