



# Flagstaff Revolution Player Conditioning

---

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	1
Who is Responsible .....	1
Overall Philosophy.....	1
Small Sided Games .....	1
Other Types of Training .....	2
Common Pitfalls and Misconceptions .....	3

## Who is Responsible

There are three parties responsible for player conditioning within Flagstaff Revolution. First is the players themselves, second is the coach, and third is the parent. Even if coaches and parents are supportive and provide ample opportunity for physical conditioning, it will all be in vain if the players are not committed to putting forth the required effort to improve. Players must give total effort while training to ensure that they are fit for play.

Coaches are responsible for helping to guide players in their physical conditioning and to help motivate them. While not every coach may have the requisite knowledge to build a comprehensive exercise program, they can rely on this guide and the other resources provided by the club to provide adequate training to their players.

Parents must be supportive of their player’s efforts to improve and look for ways to help however possible. Parents can use this guide as a resource to see what other areas of training may be appropriate for their child to conduct at home.

## Overall Philosophy

Flagstaff Revolution utilizes a club-wide approach to physical conditioning to ensure that all players receive proper training. All coaches are expected to adhere to the following philosophical principles: utilize small-sided soccer games as often as possible to maximize game-like conditioning and player enjoyment, while using dynamic warm-ups and targeted exercises to train skills that small sided games do not.

## Small Sided Games

Especially at younger ages, coaches should primarily focus on utilizing small-sided games as a conditioning tool. These games are effective at mimicking the actual intensity, movement patterns, and physical demands of actual matches and have been shown to be effective training tools. Given the limited amount of time coaches have to work on the fundamental skills of soccer each week, it is counterproductive for players to spend



excessive amounts of time running or conducting other physical exercises without a ball at their feet.

### **Other Types of Training**

While small-sided soccer games are both fun and effective, they do not provide the athlete with all the necessary skills for optimized performance. Players must also improve their flexibility, core strength, balance, speed/agility/quickness (SAQ) to ensure top performance. These training areas require specialized training, some of which can be performed as part of a warm-up routine prior to practice while others must be trained individually.

#### **Flexibility, Core Strength, Balance**

These three training areas are key to optimized performance as well as injury prevention. Players with deficiencies in these areas are more likely to experience overuse injuries and a lack of proprioception (body awareness). While this training may seem unrelated to soccer, research has shown that simple balance training leads to improved kicking power and accuracy in both the dominant and non-dominant feet (Ce et al., 2018).

All three of these areas can be trained through the use of the FIFA 11+ exercises as part of a dynamic warmup prior to practices and matches. The FIFA 11+ Kids program has been shown to improve physical performance and reduce injuries (Pomares-Noguera et al., 2018). See Appendix A for more information on the FIFA 11+ and FIFA 11+ Kids programs. Parents are also encouraged to help their kids stretch and use myofascial release (foam rolling) at home to increase their flexibility.

#### **Speed, Agility, and Quickness**

This type of training helps athletes not only move faster and in more dynamic ways but also to react to what is happening on the field more quickly. In a sport of constant movement and change like soccer, the need for these skills is readily apparent. While small-sided games provide good results in terms of cardiovascular conditioning and soccer-specific skills, SAQ is better served with specific training methods. Milanovic et al. (2014) found that SAQ training was more effective at improving sprinting speeds over 5m and 10m than traditional soccer training—suggesting that supplemental training is necessary to maximize the speed of athletes who play soccer.

Examples of SAQ training are assisted/resisted sprinting, agility ladder training, and reaction drills. See Appendix B for suggestions on different types of exercises to use for SAQ training.



## Common Pitfalls and Misconceptions

### **Prioritizing Conditioning Over Soccer-Specific Training**

Soccer requires so much training to develop a soft touch, effective passing, team building, etc. that spending valuable practice time on running and/or conditioning is not advised. Utilize small-sided games and activities that incorporate both soccer training and conditioning.

### **Prioritizing Endurance Training Over All Else**

Often times people think long-distance running (5k or more) when considering how to train for soccer. While steady-state cardio is better than nothing and can help with soccer, interval and anaerobic training is also effective with a lower training volume.

### **Common Injuries in Young Players**

Youth players are prone to both overuse injuries and problems that arise from growth spurts. It is not uncommon for kids to develop Osgood-Schlatter disease or Sever's disease during the season. Parents must communicate these developments to their player's coach and should consider seeing a physical therapist to help rehabilitate their player.

### **Never Taking Time Off**

Club soccer is demanding and the season is long. It is perfectly acceptable that a player take the summer off or take a week to recharge during the season. This will help the player avoid both burnout and overuse injuries—both of which are detrimental to the player's long-term development and commitment.



# References

---

## References

- Cè, E., Longo, S., Paleari, E., Riboli, A., Limonta, E., Rampichini, S., Coratella, G., & Esposito, F. (2018). Evidence of balance training-induced improvement in soccer-specific skills in U11 soccer players. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 28(11), 2443-2456. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.13240>
- Milanović, Z., Sporiš, G., Trajković, N., Sekulić, D., James, N., & Vučković, G. (2014). Does SAQ training improve the speed and flexibility of young soccer players? A randomized controlled trial. *Human Movement Science*, 38, 197-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.humov.2014.09.005>
- Pomares-Noguera, C., Ayala, F., Robles-Palazón, F. J., Alomoto-Burneo, J. F., López-Valenciano, A., Elvira, J. L., Hernández-Sánchez, S., & De Ste Croix, M. (2018). Training effects of the FIFA 11+ kids on physical performance in youth football players: A randomized control trial. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2018.00040>



**EXERCISE 1  
JOG & LOOK AT THE COACH (TO STOP)**

- Do 3 stop commands
- Do 2 stop commands
- Do 3 stop commands
- Do 2 stop commands
- Do 3 stop commands

Listen to the command    Watch for the command    Keep the ball in the hands and listen to the command    Keep the ball in the hands and watch for the command    Juggle the ball and listen to the command

**EXERCISE 2  
SKATING HOP**

- Do 10 hops (5 on each leg)

Practice how to land on one leg    Keep the ball in the hands    Balance the ball on one hand    Touch the ground with the ball    Balance and stretch forward with the ball

**EXERCISE 3  
ONE LEG STANCE**

- Do right/left and 5 passes per player
- Do right/left for us, 30 seconds

Throw the ball    Circle the ball around the leg & throw it    Pass the ball    Turn the ball & play it back    Challenge your balance

**EXERCISE 4  
PUSH UP**

- Do, until each ball rolls to the ball (over, 8 balls)
- Do 3 15 seconds

Make a tunnel & roll the ball underneath    In a plank position & roll the over legs on the ball    Keep position & roll the ball between hands    Keep position & roll the ball between hands and feet    Hands on the ball & challenge your position

**EXERCISE 5  
ONE LEG HOPS**

- Do, 5 hops on right leg and 5 hops on left leg
- Do, 5 hops on right leg and 5 hops on left leg
- Do, 5 hops on right leg and 5 hops on left leg
- Do, 5 hops on right leg and 5 hops on left leg
- Do, 5 hops on right leg and 5 hops on left leg

Hop forwards    Hop forwards & backwards    Hop sideways    Follow the command & hop    Follow the command & hop while holding the ball in the hands

**EXERCISE 6  
SPIDERMAN**

- Do 3 15 seconds
- Do 3 15 seconds
- Do over 5-10 meters
- Do over 5-10 meters
- Do over 5-7 meters

Touch the ball with alternating feet    Stretch out the position    Crawling    Crawling & move the ball between the feet    Crawling with the hands & move the ball with the feet

**EXERCISE 7  
ROLL OVER**

- 5-7x per side

Crouch and roll over    From standing, slowly roll over    From standing, quickly roll over    Slow walk & roll over    Jog & roll over

**11+ KIDS**



## Appendix B: SAQ Drills

---

### **Speed**

Pushup sprints, assisted and resisted (or uphill and downhill sprinting at approximately 6 degree grade), A and B skips, supine heel pushes, towel pulls, resisted knee drives

### **Agility**

Agility ladder exercises: jumping jacks, ali shuffle, hopscotch, zig-zag, in-in-out-out, etc.; 5-10-5 cone drill, box drill (cones)

### **Quickness**

Partner mirror drill, agility ball drills, playing with a Kwik Goal reaction soccer ball