

Post-Season Fitness Module: (2 weeks rest/minimal activity, 18 weeks baseline fitness – total = 20 weeks)

Objective: Initially provides a transition from the fire-season program in order to allow time for rest and recuperation, and injury rehabilitation. After the initial 2 week rest/recovery phase, the program is designed to provide a transition to develop and maintain a baseline fitness level in preparation for the pre-season phase and optimal fitness.

The post-season module is also developed with flexibility in order to encourage cross-training and a diversity of activities that are fun and enjoyable. Initial concentration will be on identifying any injuries sustained during the fire season that need mitigation and/or rehabilitation. It will also allow for 2 weeks without training in order to allow the body to relax, physically and mentally. Once exercise is implemented, the primary focus will be on adhering to low impact cardiovascular activities, muscle balance, and good flexibility.

This is the phase to begin preparing the mind and body for the transition to the pre-season fitness module and eventually fire season. Mental fitness is critical to the success of a well balanced fitness program and includes focus and discipline.

Each exercise component will be broken down using the F.I.T. Principal. F = frequency, I = intensity, T = time.

- **Cardiovascular:** during the course of the module, cardiovascular capacity will increase slightly through the implementation of moderate and rigorous intensity conditioning (cross training) to minimize injuries. Cardiovascular training should be done 3-4 days a week (*frequency*) with a duration of 30-45 minutes of activity (*time*) at an intensity of 65-80% (*intensity*) of the established Target Heart Rate (THR), 1-2 days of rest is highly encouraged for maximum results. Those beginning the program should start at the minimal F.I.T. level of 3 days a week, 30 minutes at 65% THR.

A variety of activities are highly recommended for the cardiovascular conditioning phase of this module. This would allow for activities that are fun and enjoyable and applicable to the season. Examples include: cross country skiing, downhill skiing, snow shoeing, ice skating, and swimming!

- **Muscle Strength:** This module is designed for individuals that either need to slowly rehabilitate injuries or to promote muscle balance. Muscle strength exercises will be minimal to establish and maintain a baseline and prepare for the pre-season. Muscle strengthening exercises should be done a minimum of 2 days a week (*frequency*) initially (first 2 weeks for beginners) and increasing to 3 days a week later in the season. Each exercise should be done for 8-12 repetitions using 70-90% of maximum weight (*intensity*) for 1-3 sets (*time*) with a 1-2 minute rest interval between sets. **Be sure to allow for 48 hours between strength workouts to allow for recuperation of muscles.**

When doing muscle strength and muscle endurance exercises, it's very important to provide muscle balance by working the opposing muscle groups equally. This will help to mitigate injuries in the future. The post season phase should be used for this purpose.

- **Muscle Endurance:** Muscle endurance exercises are equally encouraged during the post-season phase and can be done in conjunction with the muscle strength exercises in order to provide diversity, muscle balance, and variety. Muscle endurance exercises should be done a minimum of 2 days a week (*frequency*) with 12-20 repetitions using 50-70% of maximum weight (*intensity*) for 1-3 sets (*time*) with 1 minute intervals between sets. Circuit training and calisthenics can also be considered for this phase.

During post-season phase, calisthenics (push ups, chin ups, tricep dips, abdominals, back extensions, calf raises) are recommended in conjunction with the muscle strength and endurance exercises as long as caution is taken as not to 'overuse' the muscle groups and still allow for adequate recovery time. Diversity and variety will be the key here. **Be sure to allow for 48 hours between strength workouts to allow for recuperation of muscles.**

- **Flexibility:** Stretching will always be one of the most important components of any exercise program. The post season phase should allow ample time to practice good stretching and always includes a good pre-exercise warm up and post exercise stretching regime and cool down. An appropriate warm up should consist of a slow activity such as jogging to warm up the muscles and large, limbering stretches to further prepare the muscles for activity. After the workout is complete, the body should slow and cool down allowing the heart rate to recover and end with slow, static stretches of each muscle group used during exercise. Each stretch should be held for 20-30 seconds using good breathing techniques and no bouncing.
- **Rest:** The body needs 2-3 days of rest during the Post-Season Module with light or no activity to be done other than something fun and enjoyable. This will allow the muscles to recuperate and help mitigate overuse injuries. This is especially important for those sustaining injuries needing special attention and rehabilitation.