

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Can my skater become “overdeveloped” or too big from working out?**

Answer: If the skater is pre-pubescent it is impossible to “over develop” due to the difference in hormones that cause the development. If the skater is working out in the correct training manner and properly supervised by qualified professionals this should not be a problem.

### **2. How can we add one more thing into an already hectic schedule? Is something better than nothing? Can my skater improve with only 1 day of off-ice conditioning?**

Answer: What is recommend and what is realistic to your lifestyle may be two separate things. Sometimes quality is better than quantity. If a skater has limited time for conditioning it is even more important that there is a trainer who can help make the most of that time. The key is to focus on specific goals.

### **3. My child never wants to take days off of skating. What is the recommended “time off” or rest time that we should be taking?**

Answer: That will depend on your skater and how intense he/she trains as well as how long their particular season is. This is where periodization can come into play. Sitting down with coach and trainer to set up each season and to work in rest days is important. In this manner the skater knows in advance that rest is equally important and required as any other component of the training schedule.

### **4. Will swimming before competition have negative effects on a skater?**

Answer: Not unless the skater is swimming to exhaustion. General fatigue is certainly not recommended before competition. But being in the water will not “mess up” the skating muscles. Swimming laps or sitting in the hot tub for an extended time may tire the skater. Common sense should be used here.

### **5. Should my skater lift heavy weights?**

Answer: The American Academy of Pediatric and American College of Sports Medicine and National Strength and Conditioning Association have each issued position statements regarding strength training for children. Each organization states that children should lift light to moderate weight for 8 to 15 repetitions. The most critical and important factor with children is learning exercise technique.

## **6. Is it better to perform off-ice activities before or after skating session?**

Answer: The best case is to perform off-ice strength and conditioning sessions after skating. You want the skater to be their freshest when they are on the ice. Also, safety issues arise when skating after off-ice sessions. Skaters do need to perform a good off-ice warm-up before skating.

## **7. My skater doesn't have time to warm-up before skating. So is it good to warm-up at home, and then drive 20 minutes or more to the rink?**

Answer: It is important to know that the body can totally cool-down within 15-minutes after exercise. Therefore, if the warm-up is performed at home and then the skater travels to the rink he or she can totally cool-down, and the warm-up process has to be repeated. So, if all possible allow extra time to warm-up at the rink.

## **8. What components of off-ice training should the "Novice" Level athlete be performing in off-ice training?**

Answer: 1. Warming-up/Cooling-down with Flexibility Stretching, 2. Strength, 3. Jump/Plyometric, 4. Endurance Conditioning Training are the components of off-ice training for the Novice Level skater as well as the higher levels of skating.

## **9. Where can my athlete find appropriate off-ice training instruction?**

Answer: Recommendations may be to call your local Universities, Community Colleges, High School Athletic Departments, Fitness Centers or Health Clubs, YMCA's, and Sports Medicine Clinics. Also, associations such as the National Strength & Conditioning Association (Colorado Springs, CO), and American College of Sports Medicine (Indianapolis, IN) may be of help. When researching for specifics concerning trainer qualifications to work with your skater, please refer to our handout "Appropriate Strength Training Instructor Guidelines".

## **10. What is the parents "role", with their skater as it relates to performing off-ice training?**

Answer: The parent can play a vital role in allowing their skater to perform off-ice training as well as assist with their on-ice training. It is the parent that is the main person in transporting the skater to the ice rink in time for off-ice warm-up prior to taking to the ice for practice. The recommendation is to allow 20 – 30 minutes for pre-practice warming-up and stretching. Additionally, the skater should perform post practice stretches. This stretch time or cool-down time will be around 15 minutes. The parent (in some situations) may be the main person to "find" off-ice training for their skater. In certain situations, the on-ice coach may be too busy to have the time to seek out off-ice training for their athletes. Skaters may have to travel long distances to fulfill their off-ice training times. Obviously, it is the parent that becomes the transporter allowing that skater to be able to participate in consistent off-ice training.

**11. Is Pilate's an appropriate type of training for my skater?**

Answer: Yes, for the skater who needs core body strength. However, it is not the only answer to becoming a better athlete. Ballet, strength training, power training, balance training, and cardiovascular conditioning still need to be included in the skaters' off-ice training regime.

**12. How often should my skater be doing off-ice training and what type of training?**

Answer: This depends on several factors: 1. the fitness level of the skater, 2. the time of the skating season, 3. the number of sessions the skater skates per day, 4. goals of the skater, 5. the competitive maturity level or degree to which the skater can take instruction. There is a general guideline, for what and how often, in the TEAM 2006 Training Manual that you should review with your skater, ice coach, and off-ice coach.

**13. My coach believes that my skater will get all the training he needs on the ice by skating.**

Answer: In the past skaters spent hours on the ice training school figures. They developed core body strength and a real "feel" for their center of gravity/balance. Today, skaters no longer spend these hours in those static positions; they are on the ice more doing more and more jumps and revolutions at a younger age. This activity puts heavy demands on the body. The best insurance policy that you can buy for your skater, for injury prevention, is to make off-ice training a priority, be sure his/her program is specific to his/her needs.

**14. Are sports medicine doctors, trainers, and physical therapists seeing any differences in the skaters since figures have been taken out of the sport?**

Answer: Yes, there have been more injuries. This can likely be attributed to the fact skaters are performing as greater number of repetitions and more revolutions at a younger ages. Their bodies are not strong enough to handle the stress that is being placed upon them.

**15. How important are core body strength and balance to performance? When is a good time to start?**

Answer: The best time to start core strength and balance training is as soon as the athlete starts skating. Both core strength and balance are crucial to all facets of skating. Everything the skater does on the ice technically for performance and injury prevention involves these two components.

## **16. What is plyometrics?**

Answer: Plyometrics is a form of training for powerful explosive movements. Strength and speed are combined for a plyometric movement. Plyometrics can be performed for the upper, middle, and lower body. Skaters need to be working with a qualified trainer when performing plyometrics.

## **17. Do I need to be concerned how many jumps my skater is doing per session, day, or week?**

Answer: Yes, speak with your skater's coach to see what the goal is for your skater your coach can then recommend how many and what specific jumps to do per session. Remember: Quality vs. Quantity.

## **18. How many jumps per day do you recommend for a skater?**

Answer: There are no guidelines set at this point in time. However, it is recommended to take into consideration the skater's age, physical size, strength and power base, injuries, specific jumps he/she is working on, and the date of the next competition. This is usually a coaching decision.

## **19. Is resistance training safe for female skaters?**

Answer: Yes, female athletes can benefit from resistance training as well as their male counterparts. In some instances, females can benefit to a greater level. While females' lower body strength is often comparable to males (when corrected for bodyweight differences), upper body strength is frequently significantly lower. Additionally, female athletes demonstrate decreased ability to convert high-speed energy into function. In other sports, female athletes are at significantly greater risk for injury to a major ligament of the knee. Specialized training has demonstrated a significant reduction in the incidence of these injuries.

## **20. At what age should resistance training begin?**

Answer: According to the National Strength and Conditioning Association (Youth Resistance Training: Position Statement and Literature Review, 12/96):

“In order to begin resistance training, a child must be mentally and emotionally ready to comply with coaching instructions and undergo the stress of a training program. In general, if a child is ready for participation in sports, he or she is ready for some type of resistance training.”

## **21. What does a skater need to do to jump higher?**

Answer: Initially a solid base of total body strength (lower body, core, upper body) must be established. Building on this base, explosive exercises including plyometrics and Olympic style lifts should be incorporated into the off-ice strength and conditioning program. Working with a qualified strength and conditioning professional, athletes should demonstrate full bodyweight control before progressing to more advanced training techniques (e.g. resisted jumping and depth jumps).

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