A Word From... is part of a series of monthly articles from Alaska Rush Soccer Club's Techinical Director and Directors of Coaching. Each week, a different Director will submit an article pertaining to Alaska Rush, Rush Soccer or even world football in general. It's an opportunity for our readership to gain more insight on the sport and understand further what Alaska Rush Soccer Club is about and what Rush Soccer offers it's Members.

A Word From... Director of Coaching Boys

In my over thirty years of coaching soccer, I've had very few players who've torn their ACL. This is because I believe thoroughly in physical preparation to play competitive soccer as much techincal and tactical development. But as a coach, I can't oversee players twenty-fours hours per day so I often remind all soccer players that they should be aware that they can dramatically reduce their risk for knee injury by working on balance, agility and strength at home. The following is a very simple easy to follow program that players can do at home with little space or equipment.

The key on any training program is to be consistent and not skip any workouts. Female players need to follow this program diligently as they have a much higher risk of knee injury than males.

ACL Injury Prevention Modified PEP program for at home.

Perform 2-3 days a week on days you do not train.

Warm-up: Warming up and cooling down are a crucial part of a training program. The purpose of the warm-up section is to allow the athlete to prepare for activity. By warming up your muscles first, you greatly reduce the risk of injury.

Jog in place

Shuttle Run (side to side)

Backward Running

If space is very limited then easy skipping rope is a great option.

The key is that you get your body to sweat and then you know that you are warm enough to train.

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Strength Exercises: As you get stronger, you may need to add additional repetitions to these exercise to continue the strengthening effect of the exercise.

A. Walking Lunges (3 sets x 10 reps)

B. Hamstrings (3 sets x 10 reps)

- Kneel on the ground with hands at your side.
- Have a partner hold firmly at your ankles.
- With a straight back, lean forward leading with your hips.
- Your knee, hip and shoulder should be in a straight line as you lean toward the ground.
- Do not bend at the waist.

C. Single Toe Raises (20 reps x 3 sets)

Plyometric Exercises: The most important element when considering performance technique during plyometric training is the landing -- it must be soft. When you land from a jump, you want to softly accept your weight on the balls of your feet slowly rolling back to the heel with a bent knee and a straight hip. These exercises are basic, however, it is critical to perform them correctly. Please take the time to ensure safe and correct completion of these exercises. Be careful not to snap your knee back to straighten it. You want to maintain a slight bend to the knee.

A. Lateral Hops over Cone or Ball (20 reps) each

1. single leg right
2. single leg left
3. double leg

B. Forward/Backward Hops over Cone or Ball (20 reps) each

1. single leg right
2. single leg left
3. double leg

C. Vertical Jumps (20 reps X 3 sets)

Stand forward with hands at your side. Slightly bend the knees and push off jumping straight up. Remember the proper landing technique; accept the weight on the ball of your foot with a slight bend to the knee.

Stretching: By doing the exercises outlined here, you can improve and maintain your range of motion, reduce stiffness in your joints, reduce post-exercise soreness, reduce the risk of injury and improve your overall mobility and performance.

- Don't bounce or jerk when you stretch. Gently stretch to a point of tension and hold.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds. Concentrate on lengthening the muscles when you're stretching.
- Breathe normally. Don't hold your breath.

A. Calf stretch (30 seconds x 2 reps)

Stand leading with your right leg. Bend forward at the waist and place your hands on the ground (V formation). Keep your right knee slightly bent and

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your left leg straight. Make sure your left foot is flat on the ground. Do not bounce during the stretch. Hold for 30 seconds. Switch sides and repeat.

B. Quadriceps stretch (30 seconds x 2 reps)

Place your left hand on your partner's left shoulder. Reach back with your right hand and grab the front of your right ankle. Bring your heel to buttock. Make sure your knee is pointed down toward the ground. Keep your right leg close to your left. Do not allow knee to wing out to the side and do not bend at the waist. Hold for 30 seconds and switch sides.

C. Figure Four Hamstring stretch (30 sec x 2 reps)

Sit on the ground with your right leg extended out in front of you. Bend your left knee and rest the bottom of your foot on your right inner thigh. With a straight back, try to bring your chest toward your knee. Do not round your back. If you can, reach down toward your toes and pull them up toward your head. Do not bounce. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat with the other leg.

D. Inner Thigh Stretch (20 sec x 3 reps)

Remain seated on the ground. Spread you legs evenly apart. Slowly lower yourself to the center with a straight back. You want to feel a stretch in the inner thigh. Now reach toward the right with the right arm. Bring your left arm overhead the stretch over to the right. Hold the stretch and repeat on the opposite side.

E. Hip Flexor Stretch - (30 sec x 2 reps)

Lunge forward leading with your right leg. Drop your left knee down to the ground. Placing your hands on top of your right thigh, lean forward with your hips. The hips should be square with your shoulders. If possible, maintain your balance and lift back for the left ankle and pull your heel to your buttocks. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat on the other side.

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