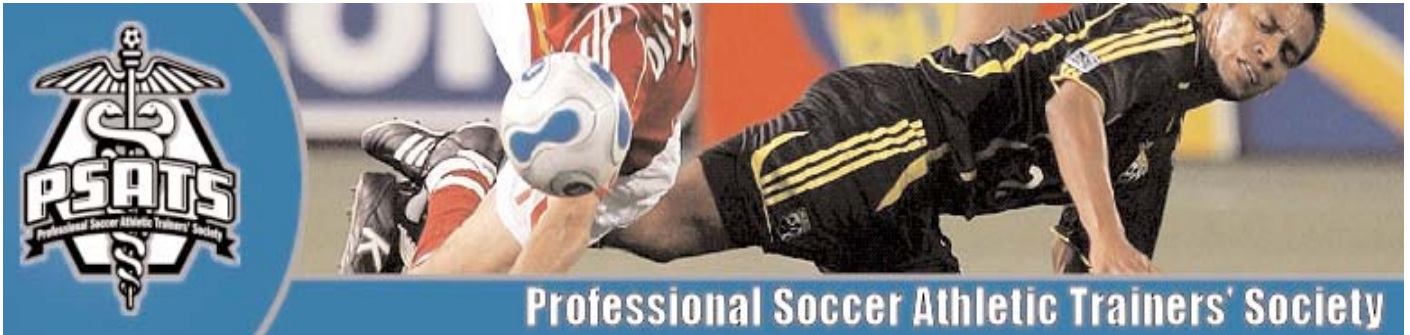




PERFORMANCE SOCCER CONDITIONING

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Soccer Injury Prevention Strategies Massage for Team Injury Prevention



Carmelo LoBue, Head Athletic Trainer, Toronto FC

We welcome a new regular contributor the Professional Soccer Athletic Trainers Society (PSATS) to Performance Conditioning Soccer. Each submission will provide coaches, parents and athletes with the latest strategies in prevention injury and maintaining a healthy soccer lifestyle. The mission of the Professional Soccer Athletic Trainers Society (PSATS) is to serve as an educational resource for the Major League Soccer athletic trainers. PSATS serves its members by providing for the continuing education of the athletic trainer as it relates to the profession thereby improving the athletic trainers understanding of sports medicine as it relates to soccer. PSATS strives to improve the education of its members so that they may better serve Major League Soccer, their organizations, and the professional soccer players under their care. PSATS also serves as an educational resource for those outside of the professional soccer communi-



Carmelo LoBue

ty to better educate them on the role of the athletic trainer within the sports medicine team. Thank you PSATS!
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Carmelo Lobue joined Toronto FC in January 2007. Prior to entering the MLS he spent five seasons as an Assistant Athletic Therapist with the Toronto Argonauts Football Club of the Canadian Football League, and was a member of the 2004 Toronto Argonauts Grey Cup Champions.

Lobue earned a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology, and Certificate in Athletic Therapy in 2002 from York University (Toronto). He has experience working with varsity level athletes, as well as professional CFL, NFL, and NHL athletes.

Injury Prevention Practices: Post-Game Recovery Sessions

Recovery is an important part of preventing injury. At Toronto FC it is our philosophy to start the recovery process as soon as the game ends. Our post-game recovery lasts approximately 45 minutes. This involves not only physical recovery but also the mental rest that is necessary. By doing it right after the game, we are able to give the athletes the next day off, which in my opinion has a huge mental benefit. There are exceptions, as in the case of a mid-week match, when we come in for a training session the following day. Our post-game recovery sessions are done under the guidelines of strength and conditioning coach Paul Winsper. We have found that the methods listed below have proven to be very beneficial in the recovery process. This practice is not done universally because of various situations that require the athletes' time and attention after a game, such



as media commitments. We make the media wait because of the importance we place on recovery and its benefits to the athletes.

How It's Done

As the players walk off the field they are handed a recovery drink. We use Vitargo, a high molecular, low osmolality carbohydrate recovery drink, which in practical terms gets into the digestive track almost twice as fast as other carbohydrate drinks thus replenishing glycogen stores more quickly. It should be noted we give this drink to players at half time as well. Added to the Vitargo is a protein supplement to also aid recovery. We try to carefully monitor what our athletes eat in pre- and post-game meals.

Once off the field, a cold hydrotherapy whirlpool session is done for about 10 to 12 minutes. You can imagine some athletes don't enjoy this part, so we have to communicate to them the importance of this step. For the newer athletes this can be a hard sell but once they do it, they tell me how much better they feel the next day. We do this to prevent the onset of delayed muscle soreness, reduce trauma in the connective tissues of the joint and reduce heart rate. All these things aid in the recovery process.

The next step is an active recovery session performed in the gym, which we are fortunate to have on site. During this step, each athlete spends fifteen to twenty minutes on an exercise bike. This is

done to reduce the onset of delayed muscle soreness by helping eliminate lactic acid faster.

Applications to Younger Athletes

The picture we just painted is for professional athletes who can utilize the resources provided by an MLS team. This might not be practical for club athletes but there are some things they can do to help in post-match recovery without all the advantages that come with a professional team and facility. Beyond good nutrition, it is important to emphasize to parents and coaches the importance of rest and sleep, especially in the adolescent years. This is a factor that tends to be neglected by younger athletes. If they are playing three or four games in a week, they often don't get enough rest to adequately recover. Using their home bathtub for cold therapy can be just as effective as the upscale tubs found in sports facilities. A final consideration is proper hydration practices, which is important at all levels of play and cannot be overstated. It may be the most important aspect of recovery for young athletes. Without proper hydration athletes will fatigue more quickly thus opening themselves up to potential injury. All of these recovery suggestions for the younger athlete are issues that coaches and parents can control without any financial burden. ●

More Information Please! Contact Carmelo at clobue@torontofc.ca