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Six-Week Programme

This six-week plan is designed for players whose clubs do not lay on pre-season training themselves. Our experts at Lilleshall spell out the plan.

WEEK ONE

"In Week One you want to take it quite easy. The temptation is to really go for it after a long lay-off, but if you overdo it now you will injure yourself or burn yourself out."

Session One

"Find a football pitch, ideally somewhere that takes you five minutes to jog to for the perfect warm-up. Then, after a stretch, you need to do some intensive running work. There is a myth that you need to go on long, slow runs to get rid of fat and get fit. In fact, short bursts of intensive work are far better, and ideal for football. Fitness for football is basically all about being able to sprint in short bursts, recover, then sprint again."

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- Five three-quarter pace sprints from one touchline to the other and back, with 30-second recovery rests between each sprint
- Two-and-a-half minute recovery (jog on the spot or kick a football about)
- Repeat the above
- Five-minute jog home

"If possible try to find a training partner, it's great for motivation and you'll get much more out of the programme."

Session Two

One set of **press-up/squat circuit**.

"These circuits kill two birds with one stone. As well as working on your fitness, your heart and lungs, at the same time they strengthen the muscles that you specifically use for football."

WEEK TWO

Session One

"Now we can build up the work gradually. By repeating last week's running exercise but shortening the recovery time between sprints, you will see immediate progress."

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- Five three-quarter pace sprints from one touchline to the other and back, with 20-second recovery rests between each sprint
- Two-minute recovery
- Repeat the above
- Five-minute jog home

Session Two

- Two sets of the **press-up/lunge circuit**.

Session Three

"Again using the football pitch you will need a stopwatch for this one. Timing yourself is a great way to keep yourself motivated, especially if you are training on your own."

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- One lap of full-size football pitch
- One lap jog for recovery (kick a ball as you go)
- Repeat the fast and slow laps four more times, on each fast lap attempting to match the time of the first
- Five-minute jog home

"When you are training, you should be replacing fluids all the time. You need fluids so that you can sweat, and you need to sweat to cool the body down. If you start feeling thirsty while you train it's too late; it will take you 24 hours to re-hydrate properly.

"Most people will lose a minimum of a kilo when they are training, and for each kilo you lose you need to drink one and a half litres of fluid. Water is fine. Isotonic drinks are better, but expensive, although you can make your own with a mixture of half water, half orange juice and a pinch of salt."

WEEK THREE

"In weeks Three and Four we will really build it up, bringing the training to a peak before winding down in weeks Five and Six to allow the body to recover so that it is ready for the new season."

Session One

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- Five sprints across the pitch and back, with 30 seconds recovery between each.
- Two-and-a-half minutes rest
- Four sprints across the pitch and back, with 15 seconds recovery between each
- Two-and-a-half minutes rest
- Three timed sprints across the pitch and back, aiming for 30 seconds or less each time. The recovery time allowed between sprints depends on the time recorded (whatever is left out of the 30 seconds). So, a 24-second sprint earns six seconds recovery, a 30-second (or more) sprint earns no recovery.
- Two-and-a-half minutes rest
- Five minutes jog home

Session Two

- Three sets of **super circuit**.

Session Three

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- One fast lap of the pitch, timed (aim to improve the pace from the previous week)
- One lap of jogging for recovery (with ball)
- Repeat four more times, aiming on each fast lap to maintain the speed of the first
- Five-minute jog home

Session Four

- Three sets of either **press-up/squat** or **press-up/lunge circuits**.

"When you are training it is crucial to eat properly. Often, people try to combine this kind of work with losing weight that they have put on during the close-season; so they train more but eat less. This can leave them without enough energy for the work, and they can easily end up injuring themselves.

"During pre-season you should actually increase your portions of food. This applies especially to carbohydrates like pasta, rice and potatoes, which should make up half of what's on your plate."

WEEK FOUR

"Week Four should be a repetition of Week Three, although you can mix up the order of running and circuit training to suit your schedule."

Typical Week

Saturday - run
Sunday - circuit
Monday - rest
Tuesday - run
Wednesday - rest
Thursday - circuit
Friday - rest

"At this stage rest is crucial. You must allow your body to recuperate. If you carried on increasing the workload there would come a point where your body wouldn't be able to cope. Even in the professional game, over-training in pre-season is common.

"Listen to your body. If you start to stiffen up don't force it, take a couple of days off. If you don't you will pick up an injury, or over-stress the immune system and start picking up colds and viruses much more easily than you would do naturally."

WEEK FIVE

"With two weeks to go until the start of the season, now you need to bring your training down to a level which will leave you feeling fresh and ready to cope with the shock of the start of the season."

Session One

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- Five-minute run around the edge of a full size pitch. Jog along one touchline, then skip, side-step or zig-zag (any movement you would use in football) along the goal-line, sprint down the next touchline, and at the final goal-line repeat the movement you did previously but backwards.
- Repeat the laps, varying the goal-line movements, for five minutes.
- Two minutes recovery.
- Repeat as above, twice more
- Five-minute jog home

Session Two

- Three sets of **press-up/squat circuit**.

Session Three

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch
- Five timed sprints across the pitch and back, with 30 seconds allowed for each. Recovery time is whatever is left out of the 30 seconds after each sprint.
- Two-and-a-half minutes rest
- Repeat twice
- Five-minute jog home

WEEK SIX

Session One

- Three sets of **press-up/lunge circuit**.

Session Two

- Five-minute jog to park
- Stretch

- Five-minute run around the edge of a full size pitch. Jog along one touchline, then skip, side-step or zig-zag (any movement you would use in football) along the goal-line, sprint down the next touchline, and at the final goal-line repeat the movement you did previously but backwards.
- Repeat the laps, varying the goal-line movements, for five minutes.
- Two minutes recovery.
- Repeat as above, twice more
- Five-minute jog home

Session Three

- Three sets of **super circuit**.

"If you have completed this programme, you should now be able to sprint at a high intensity, recover and repeat it. Plus, by doing regular bodyweight circuits you have improved the strength and endurance of the specific muscles that you need for football."

Why not send this to others? Click the link below

If you are a club coach (or the nearest thing that your club has to one) who can't get your squad together for a proper pre-season regime, this six-week programme is something that you can email or print out and post to all your players, suggesting that they use it individually to get fit for the new season on their own.