

# FOOTBALL ROM

by Ron Lelko

## The Importance of Warming Up and Flexibility

The importance of warming up and flexibility are well known throughout the sporting community, but are poorly implemented. When both of these components are implemented correctly, the performance of the athlete will improve dramatically. In this article I will discuss the importance of and misconceptions about warming up, flexibility, static vs. dynamic stretching, and where in the training program they should be placed.

What are the benefits to warming up? An effective warm-up will prepare the athlete for physical activity. It accomplishes this by elevating the temperature of the core at least one to two degrees Celsius, increasing heart rate and blood flow, activating the central nervous system, and increasing the suppleness of connective tissue. All of these elements will get the body ready. You should always do 5 to 10 minutes of sport specific dynamic range of motion as your warm-up.

## Examples: Lunges with Twist

This dynamic range of motion mimics wide receivers getting into the break down of a hitch, curl or out route.



Now that we know the importance of warming up, we have to look at the wide receiver position and the type of training and physical activity that they will be performing. As a wide receiver many of the movements in training and competition will be done in a high intensity, ballistic manner. Now that we have established this, we must take a look at the type of warm up and stretching that we perform to get ready for physical activity.

Many coaches and players know that warming up and stretching is essential to a good training program, but too often they fall short of implementing both aspects. One example of this is the typical start to a training session or competition, where the athlete or athletes jog a couple of laps and then go straight to static stretching. During the static stretching phase the body will cool down due to the lack of movement. The cooling down of the body can predispose to various injuries occurring at the start of training or competition. Therefore, static stretching does not effectively prepare the body for physical activity. It has also been proven that static stretching before a training session leads to tiredness and a decrease in speed, skill level, and coordination.

### Static vs. Dynamic

The National Strength and Conditioning Association defines static flexibility as, "the range of possible movement about a joint and its surrounding muscles during a passive movement" (sitting or standing). Basically static flexibility is considered a slow stretch, where speed of movement is not a factor and it is held for 20 to 30 seconds (example: standing hamstring stretch). This type of stretching will help improve joint range of motion, remove waste products from exercise, and promote recovery. It should be performed at the end of physical activity when the muscle and joint are completely warmed up and should not be a part of your warm up routine.

Dynamic flexibility is defined as, "the available range of motion during active movements, and therefore requires voluntary muscle actions. In simple terms, dynamic flexibility is using velocity to take your joints through a range of motion.

### Example: High Kick

You will kick your leg up contracting your quadriceps and hip flexor, while at the same time stretching the hamstring and gluteus. Then you will pull your leg back down contracting your hamstring and gluteus, while stretching your quadriceps and hip flexor.



To derive even more benefit, choose movements that are specific to the sport and position. Dynamic flexibility will prepare the muscle and connective tissues for physical activities and should be performed before your training session or competition.

Including a warm up which consists of sport specific dynamic range of motion movements for 5 to 10 minutes and a 5 to 10 minute minimum static stretch at the end of a training program or competition will only increase the performance of the athlete. Below you will find a partial example of dynamic range of motion program

suitable for a basic wide receiver warm-up:

1. Rope Work – 2 to 4 minutes
2. Crows Twist – 10 x
3. Incline Twist – 10 x
4. Knee Hugs – 10 yards
5. Butt Kickers – 10 yards
6. High Kicks – 10 Yards
7. Lunges with Torso Twist – 10 yards
8. Inch Worm – 10 yards

This entire program should only take 8 minutes tops. For details on how to perform each movement and a more comprehensive program, please refer to my Wide Receiver Dynamic Range of Motion program.

Preparing yourself for training and competition in the proper fashion will not only reduce your risk of injury but will also improve your athletic performance. As you can see from the definition and benefits of both static and dynamic flexibility, the timing in the training program is important. Dynamic flexibility is placed at the start of competition and training programs to get the muscle and connective tissue ready for physical activity. Static flexibility should be placed at the end of competition or training to help with recovery, promote joint range of motion, and waste removal.

“Train smarter, not harder”

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Ronald has had a successful career on the grid iron in high school and college. While at Phillipsburg High School, a football power in the state of New Jersey, he received All-State Honors, lead the conference in receiving, and broke the single season reception record. During his junior year at Bloomsburg University Ronald caught 99 balls for 1596 yards and 19 touchdowns all Bloomsburg single season and Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference records. Along with posting big numbers he helped the Huskies to the National Playoffs for the first time since 1986. The Associated Press named him a first team All-American wide receiver. Prior to his senior year the team bestowed upon him the highest honor by naming him team captain. After college he was invited to the Saints training camp and received individual tryout with the Cardinals and Dolphins.