



5 Tips for Off-Season Bliss...

Marshall Starkman – Director, Roger Neilson's Hockey

Off-season training has evolved in leaps and bounds over the last decade with the emergence of personal trainers, the trend towards sport-specific (hockey) exercise and the technological advancements available to this end. Summer hockey leagues, tournament teams and attending hockey camps have taken on great significance and an overall 'year-round' approach in the development of young hockey players has almost become the norm for those at the most competitive levels.

The fear for parents and players alike is that if you do not follow suit, you will be left behind. There is no doubt that taking advantage of the tremendous development opportunities available today can be of great benefit to aspiring hockey players. However, it is important to note that some good 'old-fashioned' ideals and techniques can have as much of an impact on the progression of young athletes. Here are 5 tips to consider when planning your upcoming summer:

1. Training through steady exercise and easily accessible means.

- ★ **Run, walk or roll.** Do it regularly and push yourself to the point of building up a sweat. That means you are working hard which will have a positive effect. Take it a step further and add sprint work to your routine. This can be accomplished on any flat area (such as a soccer field) where you run short distances with little rest between sets. Concentrate on explosive starts and quick footwork.
- ★ **Swimming, stair-training, push-ups, sit-ups.** These are classic exercises that require little equipment and work several parts of your body. Create your own routine, perhaps where you swim a few times per week, run stairs a few times weekly with a steady dose of push-ups and sit-ups daily.
- ★ **Establish a stretching routine.** Improving your flexibility and taking the time to learn about how your body works will improve your performance on the ice.

2. Enjoy other sports that maintain or improve your overall fitness level, build leadership and team attributes, and develop skills that translate to ice hockey. Soccer, lacrosse, baseball, tennis and other racket sports are all good examples. Additionally, all will benefit your cardiovascular level while improving your dexterity and hand-eye coordination.

3. Take a break, give your mind and body a chance to recharge. Wayne Gretzky is one of the strongest advocates of taking a break from the game and enjoying other sports to keep both your mind and body fresh. Too much hockey, without a break can lead to 'burn-out' and ultimately a loss of enjoyment.

4. **Become a student of the game.** Like any subject studied in school, the more you learn about hockey, the greater appreciation you will have for it, and the better you will be. Broaden your mind by reading books about the history of the game and its greatest contributors, watch specialty programming, game tapes and instructional videos. You can make significant improvements to your game without ever stepping on the ice or breaking a sweat.
5. **Have fun.** Enjoy the off-season and take advantage of the summer months. Be a kid or a teenager and spend time with friends and family. Be responsible and safe, but make the most of your vacation time. Lend a helping hand, volunteer some time and appreciate the world around you.

Wishing you the best for a safe and enjoyable off-season!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marshall Starkman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marshall" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Starkman".

Marshall Starkman is the Director of Roger Neilson's Hockey Camp and Roger Neilson's Coaches' Clinic as well as the Director of Hockey Operations for the Stouffville Spirit Junior 'A' Hockey Club.

Roger Neilson's Hockey Camp will celebrate its 30th summer this July and is now located at St. Andrew's College in Aurora, ON.

Roger Neilson's Coaches' Clinic will celebrate its 19th year in June and is located at the University of Windsor, ON.