



MOST OF US KNOW THAT warming up thoroughly before playing sport is a good thing to do. However, many of us don't bother and those that do often go through the motions rather than follow a structured, well thought out routine. For many squash players the warm-up consists of a bit of jogging on the spot, followed by a few cursory toe touches, with some swishes of the racket as a finale. This

shown muscle power and strength to actually reduce immediately following a stretch – definitely not a good thing prior to stepping on court. That is not to say that mobility work isn't an important part of the overall warm-up. It is a vital part, but current thinking proposes the integration of mobility work with more dynamic exercises that will stimulate the muscles and will also fire up the nervous system. This will achieve a balance between increasing body temperature,

optimising flexibility, stimulating the muscles and enhancing co-ordination.

So the principle of doing a warm-up gets a thumbs up from the sports scientists and

THE 10 MINUTE WARM-UP

Why 10 minutes? Well this is probably the shortest amount of time that it will take for most players to achieve the warm-up goals of:

- Increasing body temperature
- Dynamically stretching the major joints and muscles
- Firing up the major muscle groups
- Optimising co-ordination and practicing squash-specific movements.

I have also decided to go for the short warm-up option, as many club players don't turn up for their matches with much more than 10 minutes to spare! I have also been at major tournaments when transport problems have led to the late arrival of players and a lengthy warm-up hasn't been an option. In such fraught situations, having a condensed warm-up routine up your sleeve is definitely a good thing.

THE DYNAMIC WARM-UP



England Squash physio **Phil Newton** of **Lilleshall Sports Injury Rehab** explains why you should warm up, how you can do it in just 10 minutes in a small space, and why it should be dynamic.

hit and miss approach to warming up is in stark contrast to the way that the pros prepare themselves. Most professional players develop specific warm-up routines that they perform before each match. So should we take a leaf out of the pro's training manual and integrate a structured warm-up into our playing & training schedules. Let's consider a few pertinent questions and then decide.

DOES WARMING UP REDUCE THE RISK OF INJURY?

The weight of scientific evidence points to the fact that a structured warm up prior to exercise does reduce the risk of pulling muscles and spraining joints.

DOES WARMING UP IMPROVE YOUR STAMINA AND SPEED?

There is evidence to suggest that it does. However, the type and duration of the warm-up exercises is open to debate, as is the intensity that the exercises should be performed at.

SHOULD STRETCHING BE PART OF THE WARM UP?

As the name suggests, the main reason to perform a warm-up is to increase body temperature. Stretching exercises won't do this. Neither will they reduce the risk of getting injured. So the simple answer is no – there is no good reason to do lots of static stretching during the warm-up period. Another reason to limit static stretching prior to sport is that studies have

sports medics in terms of minimising the risk of injury and in getting the best out of the body during sport. Let's now look at what the warm-up should consist of and how long it should last.

WARM-UP ROUTINE

First it's worth stating the

obvious – the warm-up should warm your body immediately prior to playing. Another basic thing to consider is that your warm-up should be appropriate for the sport that you are about to participate in. This means that some of the warm-up exercises should mimic the kind of things that you are going to be doing during play and the intensity of some of the warm-up exercises should approach the intensity at which you will be playing. A well thought out and executed warm up should leave you with a light covering of sweat, breathing slightly harder than at rest and feeling warm. You should definitely not feel as though you need to grab a shower before collapsing in the bar in front of a cold beer.

EXERCISE	PURPOSE	TIME
1 Jogging	A gentle start to prepare the body for exercise.	1 minute
2 Side to side skipping	Fires up the inner and outer thigh muscles.	30 seconds
3 Crossover running	Improves agility.	30 seconds
4 High knee pick-up running	Dynamically stretches the buttock muscles and fires up the calves.	30 seconds
5 Heel to buttocks running	Dynamically stretches the front thigh muscles.	30 seconds
6 Hamstring stretch walking	Dynamically stretches the hamstrings.	30 seconds
7 Lunge walking with trunk twists	Dynamically stretches the thigh muscles / Fires up the major lower limb muscles / Promotes trunk mobility and stability.	30 seconds
8 Ghosting with gradually increasing effort up to 100%	Introduces the body to squash specific movements	3 minutes

Perform the above exercises in the following order:

1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8

This 10 minute warm-up can be expanded and added to as the need arises. For instance, it may take longer to get the body up to speed in the depths of winter at the back of a freezing court. Additional exercises and movements can also be added to address any particular physical issues that individual players may have.

Common sense and the findings of several scientific studies point to the benefits of performing a well structured warm-up before sport. With the promise of fewer injuries and better on-court performance – what are you waiting for?

Get warmed up!

TEN MINUTE WARM-UP ROUTINE

1. Jogging

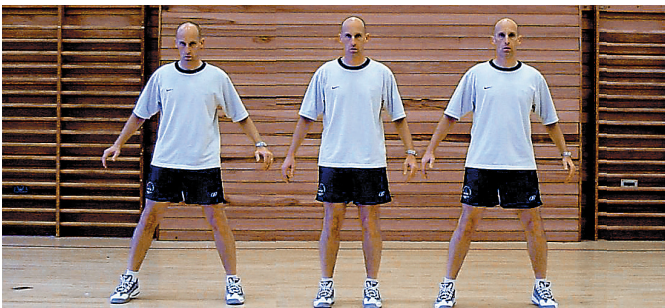
1 min



Simply run forwards and then backwards in a straight line over a short distance (5-10 paces). Slightly overemphasise your knee pick-up. After a few times travelling back and forth, put a little extra effort into the changes of direction.

2. Side To Side Skipping

30 secs



Initially move at jogging speed as you travel sideways leading with one leg and then skipping with the opposite foot to bring it alongside the leading foot.

When you repeat this exercise for the second time you can increase your stride length slightly. You can also move a little quicker and put a little more effort into the changes of direction.

3. Crossover Running

30 secs



Jog forwards, taking a short step with one foot (e.g. the left), and then cross the other foot (the right) behind the leading foot. Next take a step forward with the leading foot (left) followed by the other (right). Now step across behind the leading foot (this time the right) with the other foot (left).

Step forward alternating the leading foot and repeat the sequence of crossover steps.

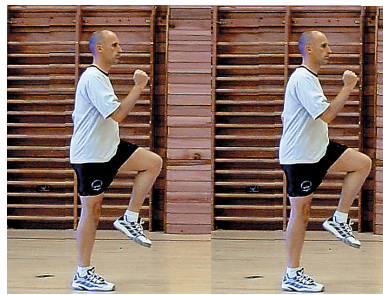
A slight variation is to twist the shoulders and trunk with each step. This helps to loosen the back and trunk muscles.

Perform the above exercises in the following order:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 : 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

4. High Knee Pick-up Running

30 secs



Run at jogging speed in a straight line and with each step lift the knee to hip height. Keep up on your toes.

This running action will fire up the calf muscles and will dynamically stretch the buttock muscles.

5. Heel To Butt Running

30 secs



Jog forwards and try to kick your backside with your heels. This will help to warm up the body and will dynamically stretch the front thigh muscles.

6. Hamstring Stretch Walking

30 secs



As you walk, lift each knee until your thigh is horizontal. As you do this reach forwards in the direction of your raised foot with the opposite hand. Stand tall and keep your back straight as you do this. You should feel a stretch down the back of the lifted leg. Perform this exercise slowly and smoothly rather than kicking the leg out quickly.

7. Lunge Twist

30 secs



Take a long stride and drop into a lunge. When you step forwards with the right leg, twist your body to the right and vice versa. This exercise will fire up the thigh and buttock muscles and will dynamically stretch the front of the hip and thigh whilst mobilising the trunk.

8. Ghosting

3 min

Starting from a ready position (as on the T) practise taking off and moving to a shot set-up position, making the stroke (turning the body and using transfer of weight) and then recovering. Practise a variety of movement and shot options, gradually building up the speed.'