

No Ice? No Problem – Maple Leafs Dryland 2007-2008

Shark Legs

The "Shark Legs" program can help hockey players develop the single-leg strength needed to succeed on the ice. Athletes should stay as low and well balanced as possible throughout the entire exercise.

One-leg squat and hold: Lower yourself into the "down" position of the one-leg squat and hold your balance in that position for five seconds. Return to the starting position and repeat on the other foot.

One-leg squat and stride out (skater's strides): Lower yourself into a one-leg squat and extend the raised leg laterally without changing your upper-body position. Hold for a five-count. Return to the starting position and repeat on the other foot.

One-leg squat and rotation: Lower yourself into a one-leg squat and rotate the raised knee out and back (like it is a gate swinging open) without changing your upper-body position. Hold for a five-count. Return to the starting position and repeat on the other foot.

One-leg squat and skater's circles: Lower yourself into a one-leg squat and make five giant circles with the toe of your raised leg, barely touching the floor.

One-leg squat and skater's kicks: Lower yourself into a one-leg squat and kick your raised foot forward and backward, full extending your leg five times in each direction.

Sidebar:

Traditional Traps

Traditions are a big part of what makes ice hockey great. But when it comes to training hockey players, some traditions are best left behind.

Chief among those are long-distance running, skating, and biking, which do little to help players get into hockey shape. Another long-time dry-land training favorite is wall sits (players simply stand with their backs against the wall and slide down until their thighs are parallel to the ground and hold that position for as long as possible). Wall sits make the legs burn, to be sure. But they create an "artificial" strength that does not transfer to the ice, in part because balance is taken out of the equation. As kinesiologist Roger Eischens explains, "You can't strengthen anything effectively while you are simultaneously supporting it."

A more recent addition to dry-land training would appear to be much more effective for training hockey players, but it has become greatly overused. In-line skating is similar

enough to ice skating that there's a temptation to view the two as the identical. But ice hockey is about starting, stopping, changing directions, and accelerating. In-line skating is about making good circles. If an ice hockey player is circling, he or she is taking the path of least resistance, and at the higher levels, that path usually leads to the bench.

In addition, many players like to go for long in-line skates, which do little to help skating strength since optimal skating posture breaks down after 20 or 30 seconds. In-line skating can be used, however, as a conditioning alternative, as long as it's confined to interval training using tight, high-speed turns from an always-improving, strong, hips-low posture. Players should always carry a hockey stick during their in-line intervals.

Table One: Sprint Intervals

The following is an example of extensive tempo sprint intervals. They should be performed at the specified pace, followed by an equal rest time. For example, an advanced-level athlete should run 50 yards and back in 18 seconds followed by an 18-second rest before continuing with the set. Have athletes rest two minutes between sets.

Distance (and back)	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
50 yards x 6	-----20 sec.	----19 sec.	-----18 sec.
40 yards x 8	-----17 sec.	----16 sec.	-----15 sec.
30 yards x 10	-----14 sec.	----13 sec.	-----12 sec.
20 yards x 12	-----11 sec.	----10 sec.	-----9 sec.

Table Two: Interval Sets

The following lists samples of different interval plans that can be used for a variety of exercises, including slide board, in-line skating, and jumping rope. When jumping rope, "fast" intervals can include tricks, double-jumps, lateral movements—anything to raise the physical and mental demand. Each plan should be preceded by a three-minute warm up at an easy pace. Plan D is best done in pairs, with one partner timing the other for a minute before switching roles.

Plan A

Fast -----Easy
10 sec. -----50 sec.
12 sec. -----48 sec.
15 sec. -----45 sec.
20 sec. -----40 sec.
30 sec. -----30 sec.
(Repeat 2-3 times)

Plan B

Fast -----Easy
20 sec. -----1:40
24 sec. -----1:36

30 sec. -----1:30
40 sec. -----1:20
60 sec. -----1:00
(Repeat 2 times)

Plan C

Fast -----Easy
30 sec. -----90 sec.
30 sec. -----60 sec.
30 sec. -----30 sec.
(Repeat 3-5 times)

Plan D

60 (sec.) easy
30 easy/30 fast
20 fast/20 easy/20 fast
15 easy/15 fast/15 easy/15 fast
10 easy/10 fast x 3 reps
5 easy/5 fast x 6 reps
15 easy/15 fast/15 easy/15 fast
30 easy/30 fast
60 fast
Skipping cool-down (easy, relaxed)