In this very litigious society, it is extremely important that all instructors and coaches take every precaution to protect oneself. Although USAR-IP provides the most updated and complete instructor information available (which is required for certification) every instructor needs additional insurance for personal protection. Many of our master instructors pay up to $700 extra each year, just to purchase additional coverage to protect their businesses, but EACH USAR-IP instructor is covered by—5 million per event aggregate, 2 million per occurrence and $1 million for sexual abuse/harassment—THE MOST COMPLETE COVERAGE IN THE SPORT!!!
CONTINUING EDUCATION AND RECERTIFICATION

ALL LEVEL ONE INSTRUCTORS NEED TO RECERTIFY EVERY THREE YEARS

Recertification is required every three years. The fee is $100 but $75 will go towards your yearly USAR-IP membership, or towards an additional year membership.

The PROCESS - Please contact the Master Professional of your choice. The Master Professional will then explain what is required and monitor the entire process.

Each student will be required to have a valid CPR certification, updated safe sport certification and a current background check.

All instructors are encouraged to review the online courses and additional educational information. New material is continually added to the USAR-IP site in an effort to keep instructors updated with the most recent information on training and instruction.

WHY REQUIRE RECERTIFICATION?

Recertification is a process that enables you to become not only more competitive, but more proficient in your chosen career. It builds upon your expertise through a wide range of continuing education and work experience. Recertification also provides you with the opportunity to reaffirm your commitment to the sport by staying updated with the most recent information available.
KEEPING YOUR KIDS SAFE ONLINE DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many of our lives to a screeching halt, particularly in the sports community. It is important to acknowledge that there are many of us, athletes included, that continue to work and life is more difficult.

As many of you already know, online communication poses unique safety risks. Youth and people with disabilities already experience high rates of abuse¹, and increased time online may heighten these risks.

The U.S. Center for SafeSport recommends all adults keep these guidelines in mind:

- Get parent/guardian permission for each type of online communication you use with athletes, including team apps, video sharing, and virtual training sessions.
- Should you need to communicate with an individual athlete, always copy the athlete’s parent/guardian or another adult. This includes notifying them with dates, times, and links to individual virtual sessions.
- Just like in-person meetings, one-on-one virtual interactions must be observable and interruptible and require written consent.
- Include the entire team in communications whenever possible and appropriate.
- Be transparent and professional in all communication with athletes and parents/guardians.

Remember, abusive behavior is prohibited under the SafeSport Code whether it happens in person or online. Child abuse, sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, physical misconduct, bullying, hazing, and harassment that happen online should be reported just like it would if it happened in person.

REPORT A SAFESPORT CONCERN

¹Approximately 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys are likely victims of sexual abuse (source: David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire). A child is bullied every 7 minutes, and 90% of LGBTQ students experienced harassment at school and online (source: StompOutBullying.org). People with disabilities experience rape and sexual assault at more than twice the rate of those without a disability (source: 2009 Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report on Crime Against People with Disabilities).
COVID FOR COACHES

(COVID SAFE SPORT CONT)

Keep your communication professional, even when checking in on your athletes’ mental health. Ask open-ended questions (“How are you feeling about not being able to practice with your teammates in person?” or “How are you feeling about having to stay at home?”), then listen to what they say and validate their feelings (“It is OK to feel disappointed or angry.”). If necessary, support them in coming up with a plan to feel better (like regular check-in times with friends and teammates).

Ensure links to virtual meetings, hangouts, and other gatherings are not shared publicly and are password protected. Remind athletes not to forward the links to anyone outside of the team without your permission. Adjust settings to ensure you initiate the meeting before athletes can join.

Be mindful that any video sharing, live streaming, and chat sites you use are secure and have privacy settings to limit who can post and view content. Make sure you are following the program’s security guidelines and are using the most up-to-date version. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has a library of internet safety resources for adults and children.

Restate team expectations about respectful communication and online behaviors. Remind athletes not to engage in abusive behaviors like sexual misconduct, emotional misconduct, cyberbullying, hazing, and harassment. And if they do, remind them you’ll report that behavior to the Center.

Keep physical safety in mind when suggesting home workouts or training routines. Make sure workouts are appropriate for the athlete’s level and don’t require spotters or resources the athlete doesn’t have at home. Remind athletes to take regular safety precautions like proper hydration and breaks. Teach them how to create a safe workout space so that they don’t injure themselves on walls or furniture. Pay attention to workout safety for athletes with disabilities.

Share physical and online safety tips for virtual classes/training with athletes (and parents/guardians when applicable).

School and sports may have been the only safe places for some athletes – look for warning signs of violence and abuse. Provide emotional support and report any suspected or known child abuse. Visit the Child Welfare Information Gateway or the U.S. Center for SafeSport for more information on reporting child abuse.

Special considerations for working with minor athletes

Use your webcam in common areas of your home (like a living room or dining room), instead of private areas (like bedrooms and bathrooms). Ask athletes to do the same. This sets a good example for appropriate online behavior.

Copy another adult (like another coach or parent/guardian) if you send technique or training videos to athletes. If you request athletes send videos to you, make sure they copy another adult as well.

Virtual lessons or live stream videos must be observable and interruptible by another adult, such as another coach or parent/guardian. Keep doors open and wear appropriate clothing. Get
SUMMARY OF LEVELS, REQUIREMENTS AND FEES

LEVEL ONE

**COST**- free for test but must belong to USAR-IP

**REQUIREMENTS**- take and pass the ten online benchmark courses
  - be USOC Safe Sport certified
  - be CPR certified
  - pass USAR Background check

**VALID**- for three (3) years

**RENEWAL**- updated Safe Sport certification.
  - CPR and Background check
  - renewal cost is 3 years for $150 or $75 per year

LEVEL TWO.

**COST**- $275 for clinic and test- must be USAR-IP member

**REQUIREMENTS**- be Level One certified
  - take and pass a clinic with USAR-IP master professional
  - mentor under your master professional for two years

**VALID**- for 5 years after completion of the two years mentoring

**RENEWAL**- $300 for 5 years or $75 per year
  - must have all certifications current

LEVEL THREE

**COST**- $100 for video analysis test -must be USAR-IP member

**REQUIREMENTS**- complete Level Two Certification
  - pass video analysis test with master professional
  - continue mentoring as master professional directs
  - experience nationally and/or internationally with national teams

**VALID** – for 5 years

**RENEWAL**- $300 or $75 per year
  - must have all certifications current
What is a Warm-Up and How to Warm Up Properly?
Warm up properly and reduce the risk of racquetball injury with these warm-up exercises and stretches.

by Brad Walker | First Published November 22, 2001 | Updated April 5, 2020/ revised for racquetball 5/1/20

The warm-up exercises are crucial to any sports but especially racquetball. The importance of a structured warm up routine should not be underestimated when it comes to preventing sports injury.

A proper warm up has a number of very important key components. These components, or parts, should all work together to prepare the racquetball player for peak performance and minimize the likelihood of sports injury from physical activity.

What is a Warm-Up?
A warm-up (as it relates to physical activity and exercise) is any activity, either physical or mental, that helps to prepare an individual for the demands of racquetball or exercise.

Why Warm Up?
Warming up prior to racquetball does a number of beneficial things, but the main purpose of the warm-up is to prepare the body and mind for the strenuous demands of racquetball.

- One of the ways it achieves this is by increasing the body’s core temperature, while also increasing the body’s muscle temperature. By increasing muscle temperature you’re helping to make the muscles loose, supple and pliable.
- An effective warm up also has the effect of increasing both your heart rate and your respiratory rate. This increases blood flow, which in turn increases the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the working muscles.

All this helps to prepare the muscles, tendons and joints for more strenuous activity.

Warm Up Stretching Guidelines
As with most activities there are rules and guidelines to ensure that they are safe; stretching and the warm-up is no exception. Stretching can be extremely dangerous and harmful if done incorrectly.
The Greatest Misconception
Confusion about what stretching accomplishes, as part of the warm-up, is causing many to abandon stretching altogether. The key to understanding the role stretching plays can be found in the previous sentence. But, you have to read it carefully.

*Stretching, as part of the warm-up! Stretching is a critical part of the warm-up, but stretching is not THE warm-up. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that doing a few stretches constitutes a warm-up.*

An effective warm-up has a number of very important key components, which work together to minimize the likelihood of sports injury and prepare the individual for physical activity.

How to Structure Your Warm-Up?
It’s important to start with the easiest and most gentle activity first, building upon each part with more energetic activities, until the body is at a physical and mental peak. This is the state in which the body is most prepared for the game to come, and where the likelihood of injury has been minimized as much as possible. So, how should you structure your warm-up to achieve these goals?

There are four key components, or parts, which should be included to ensure an effective and complete warm up. They are:

1. The general warm up;
2. Static stretching;
3. The sports specific warm up; and
4. Dynamic stretching.

*Important:* All four parts are equally important, and any one part should not be neglected or thought of as not necessary. All four components work together to bring the body and mind to a physical peak, ensuring the athlete is prepared for the activity to come. This process will help ensure the athlete has a minimal risk of sports injury.

The 4 Key Components of a Warm-Up
Identifying the components of an effective and safe warm-up, and executing them in the correct order is critical. Remember, stretching is only one part of an effective warm up and its’ place in the warm-up routine is specific and dependent on the other components.

The four key components that should be included to ensure an effective and complete warm up are:
1. General warm up
The general warm up should consist of a light physical activity, like walking, jogging, easy swimming, stationary bike riding, skipping or easy aerobics. Both the intensity and duration of the general warm up (or how hard and how long), should be governed by the fitness level of the participating athlete. Although a **correct general warm up for the average person should take about five to ten minutes and result in a light sweat.** The aim of the general warm up is simply to elevate the heart rate and respiratory rate. This in turn increases the blood flow and helps with the transportation of oxygen and nutrients to the working muscles. This also helps to increase the muscle temperature, allowing for a more effective static stretch. Which brings us to part two.

2. Static stretching
Yes, Static stretching! (Short-hold static stretching of 10 – 15 seconds) This is a very safe and effective form of basic stretching. There is a limited threat of injury and it is extremely beneficial for overall flexibility. During this part of the warm-up, static stretching should include all the major muscle groups, and this entire part should last for about five to ten minutes.
There’s quite a bit of controversy about whether static stretching should be included in the warm-up, and recent studies have shown that static stretching may have an adverse effect on muscle contraction speed and therefore impair performance of athletes involved in sports requiring high levels of power and speed. It is for this reason that **static stretching is conducted early in the warm-up procedure and is always followed by sports specific drills and dynamic stretching.**
This part of the warm-up is extremely important, as it helps to lengthen both the muscles and tendons, which in turn allows your limbs a greater range of movement. This is very important in the prevention of muscle and tendon injuries (see related articles below). The above two components form the basis, or foundation for a complete and effective warm up. It is extremely important that these two components be completed properly before moving onto the next two components. The proper completion of components one and two, will now allow for the more specific and vigorous activities necessary for components three and four.
“…no significant differences in either performance variable were evident when the skill-based warm-up was preceded by static stretching or a dynamic warm-up routine. This suggests that the practice of a subsequent high-intensity skill-based warm-up restored the differences between the two warm-up interventions. Hence, if static stretching is to be included in the warm-up period, it is recommended that a period of high-intensity sport-specific skills-based activity is included prior to the on-court/field performance.”
3. Sport specific warm up
With the first two parts of the warm-up carried out thoroughly and correctly, it is now safe to move onto the third part of an effective warm up. In this part, the athlete is specifically preparing their body for the demands of their particular sport. During this part of the warm-up, more vigorous activity should be employed. Activities should reflect the type of movements and actions that will be required during the sporting event, including sports specific drills (ask master professionals) and technical drills.

4. Dynamic stretching
Finally, a correct warm up should finish with a series of dynamic stretches. However, this form of stretching carries with it an increased risk of injury if used incorrectly. Dynamic stretching is most effective after a moderate to high level of general flexibility has been established.
Dynamic stretching involves a controlled, soft bounce or swinging motion to move a particular body part to the limit of its range of movement. The force of the bounce or swing is gradually increased but should never become radical or uncontrolled. If you've never done any dynamic stretching before, please seek instruction and guidance from a professional sports coach or trainer before attempting dynamic stretching (see related articles below).
During this final part of an effective warm up it is also important to keep the dynamic stretches specific to racquetball. This is the final part of the warm-up and should result in the athlete reaching a physical and mental peak. At this point the athlete is most prepared for the rigors of racquetball.

How Long Should I Warm Up for?
The above information forms the basis of a complete and effective warm up. However, I am well aware that this entire process is somewhat of an ‘ideal’ or ‘perfect’ warm up. I am also well aware that this is not always possible or convenient in the real world. Therefore, the individual athlete must become responsible for assessing their own goals and adjusting their warm-up accordingly.
For instance, the time you commit to your warm-up should be relative to your level of involvement in racquetball. So, for people just looking to increase their general level of health and fitness, a minimum of five to ten minutes would be enough. However, if you are involved in high level competitive racquetball you need to dedicate adequate time and effort to a complete warm up.
Most Common Racquetball Injuries

Racquetball can lead to traumatic injuries when players quickly change direction to react to a ball or when they fall, striking the hard-court surface. Chronic injuries can result from the repetitive swinging motion. Injuries to the shoulder and upper extremities are common. The common injuries experienced by a player include:

- Muscle and tendon strains;
- Separated shoulder and AC joint injury;
- Rotator cuff tendinitis and tears;
- Tennis elbow (lateral epicondylitis);
- Lower back pain;
- Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) sprain;
- Meniscus tear; and
- Ankle sprains.

Keely vs Hilecher (photo courtesy of ART SHAY)
Injury Prevention Strategies

Proper training, adequate rest between training or competitions, and good nutrition are all essential for peak performance in squash. The following tips can also help avoid injury:

- Always **warm-up** thoroughly prior to training and especially competition.
- Allow adequate time for a complete **cool-down** after training and competition.
- **Strength training** for the muscles of the shoulder girdle will protect the shoulder joint. A solid overall strengthening program will protect all of the joints and prevent muscle strains and tendon issues.
- A good **cardiovascular conditioning** program will help prevent the early onset of fatigue that can lead to injury.
- **Stretching**, as a regular regimen and after intense play, will keep the muscles flexible and ready to perform at their peak when called into action. Good flexibility reduces the incidence of many sports injuries.
- Using **proper equipment** and courts designed for the game will also prevent many acute and chronic injuries.
The 3 Best Racquetball Stretches

Racquetball stretches are one of the most under-utilized techniques for improving athletic performance, preventing sports injury and properly rehabilitating sprain and strain injury. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that something as simple as stretching won’t be effective.

Below are 3 of the best stretches for racquetball; obviously there are a lot more, but these are a great place to start. Please make special note of the instructions with each stretch, and if you currently have any chronic or recurring muscle or joint pain please take extra care when performing the stretches or consult with your physician or physical therapist before performing any of the following stretches.

Instructions: Slowly move into the stretch position until you feel a tension of about 7 out of 10. If you feel pain or discomfort you’ve pushed the stretch too far; back out of the stretch immediately. Hold the stretch position for 20 to 30 seconds while relaxing and breathing deeply. Come out of the stretch carefully and perform the stretch on the opposite side if necessary. Repeat 2 or 3 times.
Assisted Reverse Chest and Shoulder Stretch: Stand upright with your back towards a table or bench and place your hands on the edge. Bend your arms and slowly lower your entire body.
**Squatting Leg-out Adductor and groin Stretch**: Stand with your feet wide apart. Keep one leg straight and your toes pointing forward while bending the other leg and turning your toes out to the side. Lower your groin towards the ground and rest your hands on your bent knee or the ground.

**Kneeling Heel-down Achilles and Calf Stretch**: Kneel on one foot and place your body weight over your knee. Keep your heel on the ground and lean forward.
Want more Racquetball Stretches?

Check out the numerous exercises listed on the USAR-IP website under training manuals “Physiology, strength and nutrition”. Examples below:

**GLUTE STRETCH**

1. Lay on back. Pull one knee toward chest.
2. Stretch arm of bent knee out to side.
3. Put opposite hand on knee and pull toward chest and slightly across body.

**PSOAS HIP FLEXOR STRETCH**

1. Kneel on one knee.
3. Tighten glute of back leg to help open hip flexors.
4. Hold for 30 seconds and switch legs.
While the recommendations on these pages are a good place to start, you'll get a lot more benefit when you add the right stretches to your training program. With the Ultimate Guide to Stretching & Flexibility you'll...

- Do away with stiff, tight muscles and joints;
- Improve your freedom of movement;
- Get rid of injuries, aches and pains;
- Improve your sporting performance; and
- Take your flexibility to the next level.

You'll get 135 clear photographs and 44 video demonstrations of unique stretches for every major muscle group in your body. Plus, the DVD includes 3 customized sets of stretches (8 minutes each) for the Upper Body; the Lower Body; and the Neck, Back & Core. And the Handbook will show you, step-by-step, how to perform each stretch correctly and safely. Plus, you'll also learn the 7 critical rules for safe stretching; the benefits of flexibility; and how to stretch properly.

If you want to improve your flexibility and loosen up stiff, tight muscles fast, check out the Ultimate Guide to Stretching & Flexibility for yourself.

Research and References
Merritt Clubs Towson Youth Racquetball Program

Coach: Leon Thomas

Location: Towson, Maryland (near Baltimore

Number of Courts: 2

We have 19 kids in our program. (ages 3-15) Those under 5 start with a large light weight beach ball, use a small tennis racquet, and have shorter lessons. Then they progress to a regulation racquet, a large racquetball, and eventually play with a regulation racquetball. Their lessons progress from 20 minutes to 60 minutes.

Our club has allowed me to introduce racquetball to populations that would typically not be served by private clubs by offering free lessons to 5 kids from a Baltimore mentoring program called Project Pneuma. These kids LOVE racquetball.

Racquetball is impacting the lives of players. For many of the 19 kids, racquetball is the only sport they participate in. For some, racquetball was the first sport they played.

One of the youth players has autism. His mother often shares how important racquetball is for her son. He gets coached and supported like everyone else. His mother and I agree that autism is not a reason to have low expectations. This young man is rockin’ it on the court. Actually, he helps sharpen my coaching skills.

Some parents have commented on how their children’s overall confidence off the court have improved since their child started playing racquetball. One parent uses racquetball as the “carrot” to get her son to do his schoolwork. She knows how much he enjoys playing racquetball and reports that all she has to do is say “Do you want to play racquetball” to get anything done!

In the last year we’ve held 4 youth tournaments. Our first junior (ages 5-8) demonstration/skills day was held earlier this year. That is when players invite family and friends to come watch them participate in many drills, and contest.
Our club has 78 total players (combined racquetball and handball) (59 adults/19 kids). The 59 adults play a minimum of 1 time per week (one 1-hour match). 14 of the kids receive private lessons (1 hour, 30 minutes or 20 minutes depending on age) and 5 kids receive group lessons.

The thing we’re most proud of is we’ve been able to do all this with only 2 courts. 80% of all players at our club are on the court at least 3X per week or take lessons. Court scheduling, communication, and comradery are the keys to making things run smoothly.

And to think all of this started in December of 2017 when a 6 year-old wanted to learn to play. This player’s mother used to take group fitness classes at our club. Her son would sit on the benches outside the court and watch the adults play. One day his mother asked if anyone could teach her son how to play racquetball. Our first official lessons were in April of 2018. We've grown from 1 kid to 19 since then.

Considering many sports can’t be played safely (with regards to social distancing and contact) combined with the research on youth sport concussions; parents will consider alternative sports like racquetball as an option for their children. Therefore, when we re-open, I expect many inquiries about youth racquetball and for our youth racquetball program to continue to grow.

Other stats on our club:

43 adults (73% of adult players) average playing at least 3 times per week. Players in this subset usually play a minimum of 2 hours per visit.

43 adults and 19 kids (79.4%) play at least 3 times per week or take lessons on a weekly basis.

Our racquetball community spans many age demographics

18 & under=19 (24.35%)
19-35=7 (8.97%)
36-50=9 (11.53%)
51-62=24 (30.76%)
62+=19 (24.35%)

17 of the 59 adults (29%) and 100% (19) of the youth players started playing since I became the Racquetball Coach/Ambassador at the club in November of 2018. Nearly half (46%) of all participants started playing within the last 18 months.
HISTORY

Can you identify all the players?
(photo courtesy of Art Shay)
LEACH TEAM CAMP HELD IN STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Front Row: Steve Keeley, Rich Wagner, Charlie Brumbaugh, Marty Hogan, Steve Serton, Craig Mclay (dog-bart)
John Weaver

Left to Right: Back Row: Charlie Drake, Jay Jones, Ben Koltun, Ron Strom, John Lynch, Steve Chase, Mark Morrow, Ron Rubenstein
Master Instructor’s Article

Written by Jim Winterton with additions from Fran Davis

20 rules for team coaching. Editor’s note: I was asked to create these rules for high school and college but we followed these same rules during the years I coached the USA teams, as well as other international teams. This is not all encompassing, but it is a good starting point!

1. Students are in school for academics first. In college, and sometimes high school, that may mean missed practices due to labs, interviews, and group meetings for classes. Never put racquetball ahead of school.

2. Athletes like to be challenged. Challenge them but build gradually in conditioning!

3. The practice environment has to be harder than the matches. Prepare challenging practices with skills and conditioning, drill and play situational games for example:
   a) you won the first game and lost the second—how do you play the tiebreaker?
   b) you are up 8-2 in the tiebreaker – keep your foot on the gas!!!
   c) you are down 8-2 in the tiebreaker – play one point at a time.

4. If necessary, get good help (USAR-IP Certified) to teach the fundamentals, but learn from those experts.

5. Watch for things the athletes do right and compliment them.

6. Watch for things athletes do incorrectly and talk to them in private as much as possible or in small groups.

7. Every child has parents or guardians and these people can affect your coaching if they do not understand what you are doing or if they do not like you. As much as possible open the lines of communication with these individuals. (Especially applicable to high school coaching—but college also!)

8. Use your leaders, they are valuable! These players will reinforce what you are saying and since they can beat everyone, they will make your team stronger.

9. Discipline athletes who do not part of the team. Strive to build an atmosphere of ”I need the team” not ”the team needs me”. T.E.A.M. Together Everyone Accomplishes More. There is no ’I” in team.

10. Bring in local talent to play the kids. Use senior athletes, open players, women and men of all ages who know the game and can set examples for the athletes.

11. Build an escalating schedule—from the beginning of the school year to peak time in February (high school) or March/April (College). Hold the players accountable for goals, etc.

12. Hold meetings with each player to set realistic goals.
13. Very important to build an atmosphere at practice for players to improve, not to win games in practice. Practice to improve theory.

14. That said, build competitive time in, but save the bulk of practice for just that; practice!

16. Be sure to look for the not so obvious issues amongst kids. The teams I have been involved with over the years have had several kids referred for counseling. You are not a counselor so make sure you follow your institution’s procedures.

17. Make sure you have gone through your school’s training and USA Racquetball training for Safe Sport, CPR, and first aid.

18. Make sure you know where the ice is, where the trainer on duty is, where to find the first aid and CPR equipment and what emergency procedures you may need if required.

19. Have a team handbook with expectations, rules and penalties. Often the athletic department or intramural department has such a book so make sure the students (and coaches) are aware of the rules. Try to be active in planning for rule enforcement, not reactive!

20. Have the final word, if necessary, in such decision making!

21 (additional point) Teach the athletes how to warmup with dynamic stretching and to cool down with static stretching. (Please refer to stretching section in this newsletter)

Each institution and situation is different. Each year a new team is different so I always advise my coaches to prepare for the worst and what you may have to do for your team. No one player is more important than the team. Strive to instill that attitude with your players!

Good luck and happy killshots!

Go get’em!!