

New Spring Collegiate Soccer Curriculum

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Introduction

When I began the journey into my collegiate soccer career I thought I would be well prepared for the demand of the game, as I was always active in the game since I was 5 years old. I felt that after playing at some of the most elite club levels and Olympic Development levels, the transition would be fairly easy. I soon began to realize part way through my freshman year, while playing at Cal State Los Angeles, that the collegiate soccer season was a different beast. The collegiate schedule consists of four trainings and two 90-minute games, within six days, week in and week out, for two to three months depending on if teams make it out of their league and to the NCAA tournament. The college game is different, the season is a sprint, rather than a marathon. Growing up there was a natural progression to every season, there were summer tournaments that led to fall league and that all built to the most important tournament for all club teams State Cup, which is where all the teams in that region competed to see who was the top team. The collegiate season, on the other hand, starts with only a week of preseason and jumps directly into competitive matches only two weeks in; within two months, regular season is over and the NCAA tournament begins. I do not plan on making a difference to the overall structure and schedule (yet!). I do plan on influencing the collegiate soccer game by providing a new Spring Collegiate Soccer Curriculum that will help student-athletes with injury prevention/overall health, provide soccer specific training, promote knowledge of the game, and provide life readiness.

Personal Journey

These four main outcomes originate from my personal journey as a collegiate athlete, as well as, what I saw happen to other teammates that went through the collegiate game. If an

athlete can make it through their four years of eligibility in college soccer with no injuries and a degree, then they are very lucky. Unfortunately, this was not the case for me. Part way through my freshman season I picked up an overuse injury to my quadricep and had to sit out two weeks in the middle of our league season. The following year I was nagged at the start of the season with an iliotibial band inflammation that made me have a slower start to the season than anticipated. After transferring to Sonoma State in 2014 and trying to recover from numerous injuries, which spilled over in to my 2015 season, I slowly found stretches and strengthening techniques to keep me healthy and last the season. I began to figure out what exercises and stretches would keep me healthy and prepare my body correctly for the season. I came in to my last Spring game of 2016, as fit as ever. With no more than 25 minutes left in the match I stretched for a ball and heard the loudest pop that sent me to the ground crying and in shock. I could not believe after all my work that I literally had to start from the beginning. I had to relearn how to walk, skip, cut, shuffle, and run. Little did I know this ACL injury, the hardest part of my career, would spur a deeper appreciation of the game, a deeper appreciation of preparation for the game, and an active role in finding out ways to stay healthy for my final season, as well as, an active role to keep those athletes I coach healthy and playing every day.

What should have been a four-season long career, in the end became a six-season journey of battling to stay healthy, with four seasons of participation and two seasons of recovery. From every injury I incurred throughout my collegiate career, I learned new stretches and new techniques to help prevent injuries. I learned how to take care of myself better each year and prepare myself mentally to get through these injuries. However, I do not want my student-athletes learning how to take care of themselves after the fact and miss out on their

seasons or end their career. I want them to stay healthy and fit for life. I want them to not only have knowledge for the sport but how to train specifically for the sport. I want to prepare them for life after their career is done.

Purpose

The purpose of this cognate is to help student-athletes with four main outcomes: injury prevention/overall health, soccer specific training, knowledge of the game, and life readiness. Injury prevention/overall health promotes players to have proper warm-up and cool-down techniques, along with different recovery trainings all centered around body awareness, such as, yoga, meditation, foam rolling and stretching routines. Student-athletes will also be given proper strength training activities that will help reduce the chance of injuries and promote self-care. Injury prevention/overall health will help players prepare for the college season, as well as, promote a drive for a healthy lifestyle. The soccer specific training outcome promotes activities that relate directly to the game. This means all activities will pertain to the particular physical systems that are in use during the game. Knowledge of the game promotes players to actively think and evaluate game like situations during trainings and games. The idea here is to have players who actively analyze and reflect, as Alan November states it is “important for students to share in identifying the problem” (November, 2017). Coaches can give instructions and manipulate the players, like pieces on a chess board, but this means that the players are not actually thinking or taking control of their actions and decisions within the game. Knowledge of the game will create intuitive players who look to solve problems/situations together and self-reflect on ways to improve themselves. The last, most important, category is life readiness. Life readiness promotes student-athletes who are ready for life after their soccer

career is over. Players will organize their time, create goals, and balance priorities. Players will fill out Personal Development Plans, where they outline their strengths and areas of improvement as a player. Student-athletes will also write down the goals they want to achieve for both their academics and their playing career. The idea of life readiness is to have student-athletes follow a plan with their own goals that will lead them to graduation and prepare them for life after their soccer career and possibly even a career into the professional realm of soccer.

Rationale

In order to prepare student-athletes for the collegiate season there are obvious preparations regarding fitness. There is a combination of two systems at work, the aerobic (endurance-based system), and the anaerobic (short-lasting high-intensity system). As Meylan et. al. (2010) describes, soccer is a game “characterized by repetitive intermittent bursts of activities during which forceful and explosive actions, such as sprinting, jumping, tackling, turning and changing pace are occurring”. This quote illustrates the anaerobic system, which for soccer “anaerobic performance can be broken down into its various components that include muscle strength, speed, power, anaerobic capacity and ‘repeated sprint ability’” (Carling, 2009). The aerobic system is also prevalent within soccer, as soccer games run for 90 minutes in total; in the college game, if, at the end of 90 minutes, there is a tie there is sudden victory overtime, where teams compete to be the first to score within two 10-minute halves. This means there is a demand for a “high level of aerobic fitness that helps to sustain the work rates associated with team play, supporting teammates, running off the ball, and chasing opponents to regain possession” (Carling, 2009). The necessity to work both systems at once is hugely important

and relates to the need for soccer specific training because the game consists of these “periodic bouts of repeated high intensity runs (HIR) and sprints occur causing temporary fatigue and reduced performance, and may be crucial in the final minutes of soccer matches” (Bradley et. al. as cited by Nedrehagen and Saeterbakken, 2015).

Training both aerobic and anaerobic systems is hugely important in preparation for the collegiate season. Equally as important are the strength training and recovery programs that the players participate in. Strength training is essential for soccer as it can aid in both the aerobic and anaerobic systems. As Spiteri states “enhanced lower body strength has excellent transference to agility performance, vertical jump height, and the ability to accelerate”, which all relate to the anaerobic system (as cited in Swinnen, 2016). Strength training can also affect the aerobic system because “stronger players have also a greater ability to maintain a high level of force production and power output toward the final stages of the game due to the positive relation between strength and muscular endurance” (Silva as cited by Swinnen, 2016). As athletes train five days a week with conditioning, strength training, and field days, there is a necessity to incorporate recovery days. “Injuries to the 4 major muscle groups of the lower extremity – adductors, hamstrings, quadriceps, and calf – account for more than 90% of all muscle injuries in professional soccer”, while this study was on professional players, the relation can be equal to that of the collegiate level, especially since the season is condensed into such a short span (Häggglund et. al., 2013). The need for both strength and recovery programs is major as it can reduce the chance of an injury occurring and keep players in the game.

Curriculum

In order to achieve the outcomes of: injury prevention/overall health, soccer specific training, knowledge of the game, and life readiness; there needs to be a new curriculum in place that will help student-athletes on their journey. I plan on creating a new Spring Collegiate Soccer Curriculum. This curriculum will include six areas of emphasis: *Goal Setting, Strength Training, Conditioning Program, Field Training, Recovery Trainings, and Game Days*. The first area of emphasis, *Goal Setting*, will provide the student-athlete the opportunity to reflect and evaluate their current abilities as a student and athlete. Players will fill out a *Personal Development Plan* that highlights their personal view of their strengths and areas of improvement as a student and an athlete. From their own strengths and areas of improvement student-athletes will create their own short-term and long-term goals for the Spring Season, that relate to academic and soccer performance. Through the Personal Development Plan players will provide the foundation for their own development in the Spring Season. The second area of emphasis, *Strength Training*, will focus on proper exercises that key in on the main muscle groups for the player, as well as, provide a good balance throughout the entire body. The idea is to provide proper mechanics, stability, and strength that aid in injury prevention and lead to an improvement in the players athletic abilities.

The *Conditioning Program* will focus on the two key components outlined above, aerobic and anaerobic systems. The idea is to increase the overall endurance of players, while relating the conditioning to soccer specific needs of cutting, jumping, acceleration, and sprinting. The fourth area, *Field Trainings*, will provide proper trainings that teach technique and tactical awareness. This area will look to expand on players current knowledge of the game and will vary year by year, as the players performance in the previous Fall season will dictate

the trainings for the Spring Season. *Recovery Trainings* will provide necessary recovery techniques to aid in injury prevention. Players will engage in different body awareness activities, such as: yoga, meditation, foam rolling, stretching routines, pool workouts, etc. The last area of emphasis, *Game Days*, will provide a current assessment of the players improvement on their Personal Development Plan and an assessment on the trainings used in preparation for the games.

Rules

Since this curriculum is for the collegiate level there is the governing body, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which sets the particular laws that limit the activities and times that student-athletes can train. Being I assist with a Division II program, the rules that the new Spring Collegiate Soccer Curriculum will follow will be from the NCAA Division II Manual, 2018-2019. The NCAA tracks student-athlete participation in trainings by recording Countable Athletically Related Activities (CARA):

“Countable athletically related activities include any required activity with an athletics purpose, involving student-athletes and at the direction of, or supervised by, any member or members of an institution’s coaching staff (including strength and conditioning coaches) and must be counted within the weekly and daily limitations under Bylaws 17.1.6.1 and 17.1.6.3.”

(p.183)

The purpose for CARA is to track the hours the student-athletes participate in activities to help protect them from overtraining. This means that the areas of emphasis, that make up the new curriculum, must fit within the hour limitations and abide with the rules outlined below:

Out of Season/Weekly Hour Limitations

“In fall championship sports, from the beginning of the institution’s second term of the academic year (e.g., winter quarter, spring semester) through the day before the institution’s declared start date of the nonchampionship segment, a student-athlete’s participation in weight training, conditioning and/or team activities shall be limited to a maximum of eight hours per week, of which not more than two hours per week may be spent on team activities; *(Adopted: 1/15/11 effective 8/1/11, Revised: 1/17/15 effective 8/1/15, 9/12/17)*” (p. 206)

NonChampionship Season

Nonchampionship Segment Activities. During the segment in which the NCAA championship does not occur, student-athletes may participate in any practice or competition activity as permitted by other legislation provided such activity is restricted to a period of 45-consecutive calendar days, omitting vacation and examination days officially announced or on days that the institution is closed due to inclement weather, as long as no practice or competition occurs on such days. The 45-consecutive calendar days must be within the dates set forth in Bylaws 17.19.5 and 17.19.6. It is not permissible for an institution that declares fall as its championship segment and operates on the quarter system to engage in practice and competition from the time period of seven calendar days prior to the first date of the institution’s final examination period for the winter quarter

until the first day of classes of the spring quarter. The days during which practice and competition are prohibited may be exempted from the period of 45-consecutive calendar days. (See Bylaws 17.1.6.2 and 17.1.6.6 for daily and weekly hour limitations and required days off.) (*Adopted: 1/14/02 effective 8/1/02, Revised: 1/13/03, 1/9/06, 1/21/17 effective 8/1/17*) (p. 235)

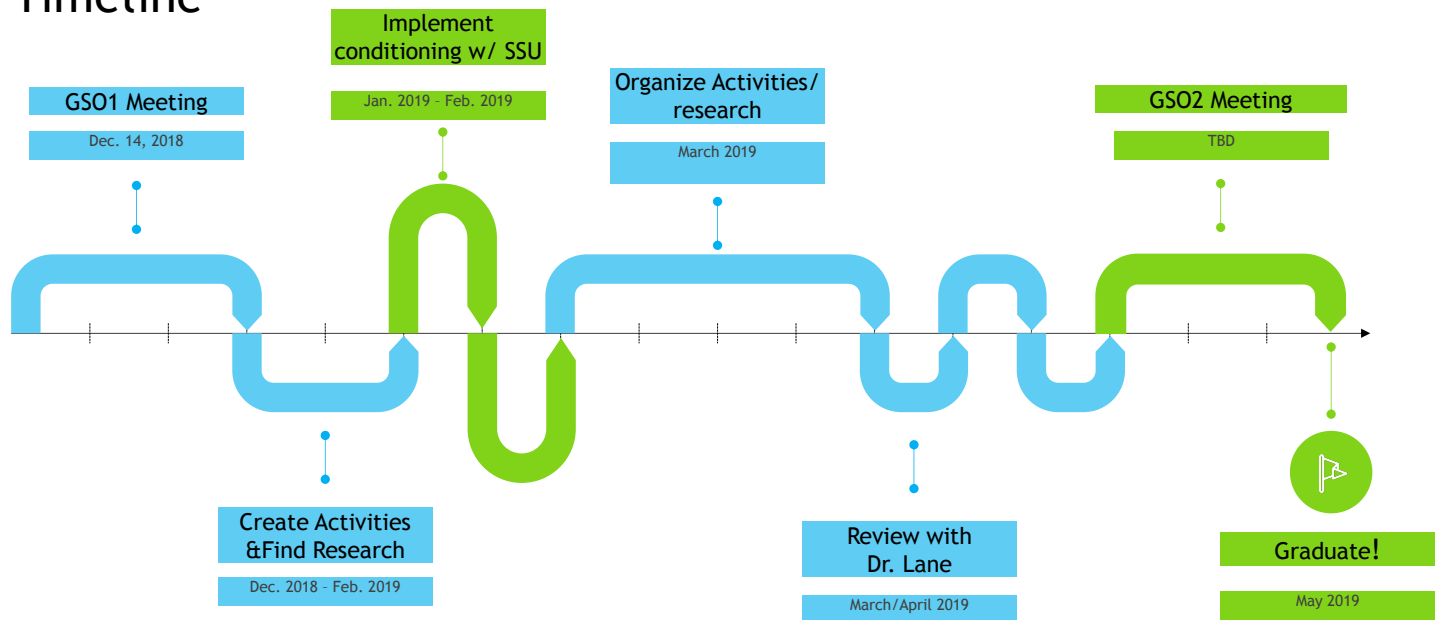
These two legislations break the Spring Season into two separate segments. The first segment, *Out of Season*, states that student-athletes are to only train up to a maximum of eight hours a week with only two hours spent training with a soccer ball. The *Out of Season* segment runs for the first seven weeks of the Spring Season and allows teams to do “Conditioning, Weight Training and/or Team Activities. Student-athletes may participate in conditioning, weight training and/or team activities in accordance with Bylaw 17.1.6.3; and (*Revised: 9/12/17*)” (2018-2019, NCAA Division II Manual). The conditioning rules are very specific as to what can and cannot be included: “Conditioning drills, as permitted in Bylaws 17.1.6.3.1 and 17.1.6.3.2, that simulate game activities are permissible, provided no offensive or defensive alignments are set up and no equipment related to the sport is used” (2018-2019, NCAA Division II Manual). After Spring Break the *Nonchampionship Season* begins; this segment consists of 45 consecutive days, where teams can train three days a week with soccer equipment and supplement the other one to two days with weight training, as well as, compete in scrimmages on the weekend. These legislations will guide the areas of emphasis within the new Spring Collegiate Soccer Curriculum.

NCAA Rules:	Explanation:
CARA	Any activity that student-athletes participate in with direction from a coach.
Out of Season/ Weekly Hour Limitations	Student-athletes are to only train up to a maximum of eight hours a week with only two hours spent training with a soccer ball.
Nonchampionship Season	Student-athletes can participate in any practice or athletic activity for 45 consecutive days.

Conclusion

Overall, the new Spring Collegiate Soccer Curriculum will provide injury prevention/overall health, Soccer Specific Training, Knowledge of the Game, and Life Readiness. While this is a very competitive level, where performance on the field is highly important, there is also a necessity to provide these student-athletes with the proper holistic approach that prepares them for life after their athletic career. Student-athletes will have proper preparation for their Fall Season, personal goals that improve their academic and athletic performance, and the preparation for lifelong learning and health.

Timeline



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