The last three issues of the NSCAJ have examined the different periods of the year-round training program. First covered was the general preparatory period, in which the athlete develops all-round general physical qualities. This period is followed by the specialized preparatory stage which brings the athlete into competitive readiness. After the specialized training period, the athlete enters the competitive period, in which his trainings are devoted to higher and better results. At the end of the competitive period, the athlete goes into the transitional period, or, as it is commonly known, the post-competitive period.

The transitional period is a very important link in year-round multiyear training. The major purpose of this period is to prepare the athlete to begin training once again in the new year, fully rested, healed and recuperated from injuries and with the same level of physical qualities and technical skills as achieved in the immediate past year.

The term year, in this article, means a full sports year, not a calendar year. Divisions in the year are determined by the times of the major competitions. In some cases there may be two semi-yearly cycles in the year-round program. This occurs in sports that have more than one competitive season, as, for example, track and field. It has an indoor season and an outdoor season, although the outdoor season is the most important.

The transitional period usually lasts 20–30 days in the typical yearly program and 1–2 weeks in sports having 2 cycles in the year-round program. According to Matveyev (1), the transitional period is “...a period of active rest, the purpose of which is to prevent an ever-increasing cumulative effect of training and competition so that the athlete does not go into a state of overtraining.” This period, therefore, is used to assure active rest and full restoration after heavy training and competition.

The post-competitive period can be used for different kinds of training, depending upon the sport, level of preparation of the athletes, their age and the number of competitions in which they participated. However, in all cases it is necessary that the athletes maintain a certain training level in order to guarantee continuity between the ending of one year-round training program and the next one which will be beginning.

During this period of active rest it is impossible to maintain a maximum level of training, especially specialized or competitive type training. In this stage of training it is necessary only to maintain the achieved level of physical preparation (both general and to as great a degree as possible, specialized training). This is necessary to ensure that the athlete begins the new yearly training cycle on the level attained in the previous yearly training cycle. In other words, the athlete begins the new or next yearly training cycle at the high level of physical and technical development that he achieved in the just-concluded yearly training program. Only in this way can the athlete continually show improvement in his physical and technical qualities. Each year he begins at the level he attained in the previous year and gradually keeps increasing it from year to year. This is also the reason for active rest. If the rest were passive, the athlete would lose some of the physical and technical skills developed.

Athletes who experience heavy loads in training and who frequently competed during the course of the year should rest well from the previous sport season in the transitional sessions, decreasing the number of training sessions and switching to other and different forms of exercise. But, once again, the athletes cannot eliminate or stop the training sessions because this will bring about decreased coordination and work capacity. In other words, it will disrupt the achieved level of functioning of the major body systems. This is why it is necessary during restoration of these systems to give them plenty of time. Also, this is why lighter loads are used and why there should not be any passive rest.

In the transitional period, active rest provides for a major change in the entire workout picture. There is alternation of work regimes and types of exercises, a change in environmental conditions and inclusion of easy general physical training. These major changes are made to ensure acceleration of the restorative processes.

If the athlete did not participate in a great number of major and very stressful competitions, then he can continue training with the usual loads. Such loads are used as these athletes must increase their general and specialized physical preparation, master technique and resolve other problems which have been identified for working out in the general preparatory period of training. In doing this work, however, it is still necessary to bring in new forms of exercises which will not only serve as effective means of active rest but will also help increase interest in the training session.

If the athlete is extremely fatigued at the end of the competitive period, it may also be necessary to use various restorative measures. Included here would be heat baths (steam rooms and saunas), hydrotherapy, restorative massage, contrast baths, electrical stimulation of the muscles, pressure chambers and other forms of treatment. Use of such measures allow for faster recuperation and, most importantly, more complete restoration.

Almost all athletes should participate in different sports (from the one in which they specialize) during this period. However, the sports in which the athletes participate are those in which they can also do well. This is a very important concept. If the athletes participated in sports that they could not do well, it would not give them an adequate workout. To be most beneficial, the sports participation must call upon all of the athlete's physical capabilities. This can only happen during fairly high levels of play. This is the main reason why in the very early years of all-round preparation great stress is placed on learning different sports and not beginning specialization too soon. In every year of training the athletes then make very effective use of their developed proficiency in other sports in the transitional period and in the general, all-round preparatory period.

In addition to maintaining the physical qualities, participation in other sports helps to relax the central nervous system (CNS). To execute the training and competitive loads required in most
sports, it is necessary to "psyche-up." This places tremendous strain on the CNS since it is the controller of what the body does. Sports activities during active rest, however, force the mind to concentrate on something different. Such participation switches the thinking automatically, which, in turn, allows the mind (CNS) to relax even though it is still functioning in directing other activities. In so doing, it uses other nervous pathways and reflexes. Such relaxation does not always occur in passive rest.

During the transitional period, different workout sites are especially important. For example, if athletes are used to the city, it is advantageous to go to the mountains or to work out in a forest or at the seashore. Athletes can participate in some of the activities commonly done in these areas, such as mountain climbing, hiking and swimming. Such different environments and activities help maintain positive emotions and, in addition, the athlete can select and vary what he would like to do during the workouts so that they are more of a pleasure to him and not just something that he must do.

In general, it is important that no monotonous or repetitive kinds of activities are done at this time. This is why the activities and exercises should always be varied. The athlete should not become bored.

In cyclical sports, participation in repetitive activities depends upon the type of sport event. For example, in track and field, middle-, long-distance and ultra long-distance runners must continue running even though the loads are somewhat less. The same holds true with long-distance cyclists, skiers, skaters and other athletes who are involved in cyclical types. However, it is also possible to use other forms of activity instead of the actual competitive sport. For example, skiers use rollers, runners may use cross country skiing, cyclists may use running and so on.

According to Khomenkov (2), it is important that "... athletes do not increase their body weight by more than 2–5 lbs, especially if it is fat, in the transitional period." However, some athletes, because of their specialization, must increase their body weight, as, for example, hammer throwers, weightlifters, wrestlers and football linemen when additional weight is needed. In this case, it is best if the increases come about from increased muscle mass, not fat.

The transitional period has no distinct or clear-cut time limits, as is also true of the other training periods. The content of one period gradually flows into the next period, since it is necessary to have a smooth change in the training and competitive loads. To help ensure a smooth transition, some exercises from the next period are gradually introduced into the ending portion of the period in progress.

In conclusion, the transitional period is a very important period which gives continuity to each yearly training cycle. This period is needed to help the athlete recuperate and restore his capabilities from the previous competitive season. Active rest is used to help relax the athlete, while at the same time maintaining his physical and technical development. Varied activities and different sports are used to a great extent in this period along with general physical preparation type exercises.

To summarize all these articles, it is now clear how each period flows into the other, culminating in a very high level of conditioning after years of such training. The preparatory period is used for all-round general preparation, which then prepares the athlete to do specialized training, which, in turn, enables him to begin competition on a high level. After competition, the athlete needs a break, both physical and mental, which the transitional period provides through its various forms of active rest. At the end of the transitional period, the athlete is ready to begin the next yearly training cycle on the level he achieved in the previous year.

In constructing the yearly training program, keep in mind that the time limits between the different periods and stages can change, not only in relation to the environmental and physical conditions, but also in relation to the type of sport and the individual characteristics of the athlete. Usually the limits are established in relation to the major competitions within the yearly cycle. They may also be established in relation to preparation for ultra-important competition, as for example, the Olympic Games. In this case, it will be a 4-year preparatory cycle.

References


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