

1.3.2: Training methods

Continuous training

Continuous methods of training include any training method that involves the athlete working at a similar level of intensity, without a break, for a minimum of 20 minutes. The usual level of intensity for this type of training is between 60-80% of the athlete's maximum heart rate. Continuous training focuses on the aerobic system, and is particularly well suited to the development of cardiovascular endurance and muscular endurance. Continuous training is particularly beneficial for athletes involved in sporting activities that last for a long period of time such as marathon running, long distance cycling, long distance swimming, triathlon or cross-country skiing. This type of training is also used by games players as part of their pre-season training programme as they build up their aerobic base before their competitive season starts.

Interval training

Interval training methods involve the athlete working at a high intensity for a short period of time and then resting before exercising again. The usual level of intensity for this type of training is above 80% of the athlete's maximum heart rate. Interval training focuses on the anaerobic system, with different types of interval training being particularly well suited to the development of speed, power, strength and flexibility. Examples are described below.

Weight training can be used to develop muscular strength, muscular endurance or power. The component of health and fitness developed by weight training depends on three factors:

- the number of repetitions and sets of repetitions completed during a training session
- the weights being lifted
- the speed that the muscle or muscle group contracts to lift the weight.

Circuit training is a very popular method of interval training as a circuit can be designed to be specific for any sporting activity or role within a sporting activity, or to develop any component of health or fitness. This training method involves athletes completing a number of different exercises or activities, called stations, for a set period of time with a period of rest between each one.

Plyometrics can be used to develop speed, co-ordination and power. Sessions involve athletes taking part in high intensity exercise, involving explosive movements for a short period of time. The working muscles will be lengthened and then shortened rapidly to develop power. Activities in a plyometric session might include hopping, box jumps and burpees.

Flexibility training involves the athlete holding a number of chosen stretches for 10-20 seconds at a time to develop their flexibility. The stretches chosen should be specific to the movements the athlete will carry out during their sporting performance.

Fartlek training involves the athlete completing periods of jogging, sprinting and walking. These intervals of different intensity can take place over different types of terrain and different inclines. The ratio between the types of exercise, along with the length of the session and the changes in terrain or incline, will dictate which components of health or fitness are being developed. This training method can be adapted to develop anaerobic or anaerobic fitness.