

Youth Warm-up from Lee Taft

Q: First off let me say, I love your stuff and I thank you for sharing and teaching us volunteer coaches, among others. I signed my 10yr old son up for this basketball program and the coach is great at teaching X's and O's and ball handling but knows little about warm-up design, conditioning and speed training. Thankfully when I offered to put a good warm-up design on some paper for him he asked me to lead the warm ups. One problem is he told me I could have ten minutes yet he is always trying to cut that short. I fear that this design is not adequate enough and the time constraints don't help because even though these kids play on AAU teams they have never even been taught how to do things like a lunge properly. Can you tell me if you think my warm ups are adequate enough and what if anything I could tell this coach to let me start teaching and training these kids?

For warm ups we form three lines on one side of the court and we go about 10yrds or so and then we walk to the other side and go 10 more yards. To start with a high knee jog, then butt kicks, then carioca, then high skips, and then we do bear crawls. Then we start our active stretching with a lunge with hands out to the sides and when we drop our back knee we reach with the opposite hand and touch our front foot, followed by sideways lunge, then toe kicks (toy soldiers), then this is where the coach starts stressing on time and 4 out of the 5 times I've done this I have scratched having the kids do dead lift walk and I move onto doing toe walks and heel walks.

With 20-30 kids it makes me nervous even though I'm sure this is better then the static stretch routine I saw the first time I walked in his gym I'm really not sure that it's enough to truly help prevent injury and have all the kids ready to perform to there max ability.

John R.

Lee: Thanks for the support and question John. As you will see with another question, issues with coaches not understanding the importance of proper training is not isolated.

First off- Congratulations on helping the kids.

What you are doing looks pretty good. Let me give you a few things to think about.

1. Don't worry too much about the amount of time the coach is giving you. Because you are working with such young kids you can do a great warm up in 5-8 minutes. The older the kids get, the more time they may need to warm their bodies up and deal with corrective issues.

2. Start your warm up with some basic "activation" exercises that turn on the muscles via waking up the nervous system. Activation exercises will help the muscles to stabilize the joints properly- real simple exercises:

- a. Start with basic bodyweight squats nice and controlled. The athletes should keep the heels on the ground and keep the knees in line with toes.
- b. You can also have them perform simple forward lunges



Disregard the equipment but pay attention to the form of the squat and lunge. Perform 6-10 of one or the other so the muscles get activated. This way when you start doing the dynamic running exercises they are activated and should be able to stabilize better.

c. You can have them perform some animal walks (bear crawls, crab walks, inch worms,...) These will activate the core, shoulders, and hips.

3. Go right into knee hugs, monster walks (toy soldier) and other movement exercises.

4. Next, you can begin to have them do some form running with great posture. Emphasize arm and leg action, as well as posture. Be sure to include some forward moving, sideways moving, and backward moving so the kids get body awareness training.

Now here is the kicker...you really want to make this seamless. I broke it down for you, but you can actually do many different kinds of exercises. Just keep them moving. Sport is about using strength, flexibility, quickness, balance, and speed all at the same time. So the warm up for young kids can be like that. I would do some basic activation like I explained to you at the beginning to start off with.

You could have the entire workout done in 5-8 minutes - perfect for young kids.