

Ian Jeffreys “The Warm-Up” Interview Transcript

The Warm-Up – Human Kinetics

Video clips from The Warm-Up – Human Kinetics

Q1: Why is warming up so critical?

Put simply, warm-up prepares our body for activity. When we are at rest, we simply aren't there. Energy systems aren't switched on, the force capacity of our muscles is low, and the speed capacity is just not there. We've always had this inkling that we need to do something to get us from where we are to where we need to go. We know it instinctively. If we're asked to do something in everyday life - run for a bus, run to get out of the rain - it hurts. It costs us an awful lot more than it would in a normal workout. That's because the body isn't ready. We've always known that we should warm-up. Even where you see old footballers or whatever it is, they always do something, some attempt to warm-up. But what we need to do is take that to a different level to have a look at. What are the best ways, but also what other benefits can we get from warming up?

Q2: Describe the RAMP system of warming up and how it enhances performance.

The RAMP system was a system I devised a number of years ago, and it came out of necessity to a large extent in that when I was working with some teams as a strength and conditioning coach, all I would get was the warm-up. In those instances, I kind of looked at what can I do to, yes, get athletes ready for the next bit of performance, but importantly, what can I do to move them forward as an athlete? How could each warm-up I did with that group actually have more longer-term benefits? And when I looked at the structures that people were currently using, they were using the terms “general” and “specific”, which wasn't necessarily a problem until you think of what those terms mean. A general warm-up, people just used anything just to get the temperature related effects. But I was thinking, even if we warm-up 10 minutes a day, two sessions a week, that's 20 minutes a week. Multiply that by the number of times we work out in a month, in a year, especially over an athletic career, and that's an awful lot of time. Was there a way I could use that time more beneficially? So, the RAMP system was very much trying to replace the “general/specific”. The raise

phase which is the first phase we had to get the temperature related effects but similarly, how could we develop skills during that time? The activation and mobilization were essentially the replacement of static stretching, trying to make it more efficient, trying to make it more effective, but also again leading to enhancing movement. Quite possibly the biggest change was in the potentiation phase because we had to build athletes up to high intensity if they were going to go in and play football, play rugby, basketball, whatever. They could be asked to do something intense right from the start, so the warm-up had to build them up. When I ask people about training such as speed and agility, the answer I would get was “We haven't got time”. So, what I did with that potentiation phase was put inputs that would develop key things like plyometric ability, speed development, agility development when they are fresh. But also, as a key to an effective warm-up.

Q3: Discuss the challenges of static stretching.

Rather than focus on static stretching, I want my warm-ups to be effective and efficient. One of the challenges of static stretching we have is this idea that it probably has the effect of reducing speed and power output. But, even if we take that aside, the fact that we focus on static stretching, typically on individual muscles, means that it takes a long time. Whether we use a bottom-up or a top-down takes some time. We tend during that time to lose a lot of the temperature related effects. Yet by focusing on movements such as squat patterns, lunge patterns, brace patterns, stepping patterns, we can actually mobilize most of the joints, but do it in a way that develops movement capacity. The potentiation phase then is a really powerful phase either as preparation for an oncoming session. So, if there's an offensive session coming up, what we try to do is develop skills such as direction change and acceleration that the athletes are going to use in the upcoming session. But just as importantly, we use it as a session in itself. It gives me a dedicated time that I can develop skills, such as acceleration and deceleration, that are critical to athletic performance, but often we don't get time to dedicate and those are the three phrases the fact that they and it's systematic. So, we go we can make intelligent choices at each point within the warm-up.

Q4: Describe the different phases of the warm-up (i.e. raise phase, activation and mobilization phase and potentiation phase) and how they differ.

It's a very short-term process in terms of getting used to the system in terms of developing the skills. The more global athletic skills, that takes a lot longer as with any skills. It's practice, it's consolidation, it's the fact that we need to do deliberate practice on it over an extended period of time so the structure can be implemented immediately and athletes can get very used to the structure. And what I always like to think is that if I've dedicated and structured my warm-up properly, there shouldn't be a clear delineation from where the warm-up ends and the session starts. So, I'd often ask athletes, "Are we warming up?" and if they could give me, "Well, I'm not really sure." then I've done my job.

Q5: How to structure your warm-up properly.

It's the fact that the warm-up gives us chances, chances every session to practice and learn and develop. Otherwise, in "general" is no logic behind what we do. Even the term "general" suggests we can do anything we want, as long as it achieves the initial aims. I want us to think differently to that. I want us to be able to justify every activity from the very start to the very end.

Q6: Why the warm-up must be considered an integral part of each training session and not just as preparation?

To me, skill is key. Movement skill and sport specific skills and how we get good at that is by practice. So why waste valuable practice time doing activities that aren't thought out that may be unrelated to athletic development? Why not dedicate that time to develop aspects of performance that we know will enhance athletic performance? And one of the challenges I think with athletic development is simply time. People will say, how do I do this? People warm-up. They warm-up every session. But just by thinking differently and looking at how warm-up contributes to performance, not just in the short-term but more importantly over the longer term. I think it's transformational in the way that we look at athletic performance. I don't think coaches would have any issue with saying, yes, we can dedicate part of our warm-up to this, but if I then go and ask for dedicated athletic development sessions of say, 20-30 minutes, we've got to find that, typically at the cost of something else. Efficiency is just making the best use of the resources we currently have. That's where I think the warm-up is a really powerful tool.