



THIS IS *US*

PREP TO PLAY

COACHING MANUAL

**ENHANCE PERFORMANCE & REDUCE INJURY.
A PROGRAM FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO PLAY
COMMUNITY LEVEL AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL.**



In collaboration with



Sport and Exercise Medicine
Research Centre

ENHANCE PERFORMANCE AND REDUCE INJURY

- Information and content in Prep to Play was developed during a collaborative project between the AFL and La Trobe University
- Content is informed by best available evidence, as well as expert opinion from coaches, players and medical staff²⁸
- Prep to Play is designed to give structure, guidance, education and resources to assist clubs to further develop their existing programs

The PREP TO PLAY strategy is a program informed by previous research^{20,21,22,29} designed to reduce the risk of injuries and enhance performance.^{23,24,25}

Coaches should go to coach.afl/female-football to access video resources which complement this coaching manual.

THIS PROGRAM FOCUSES ON REDUCING SERIOUS KNEE AND HEAD INJURIES BY:

1 Improving player muscle function and movement quality during change of direction and landing activities.

2 Improving safe execution of ground balls, aerial contests, tackling and being tackled.



PREP TO PLAY WHY DO WOMEN AND GIRLS NEED TO PERFORM INJURY REDUCTION PROGRAMS?



In all sports, women have a 2-5x greater risk of serious knee injury compared to males.^{1,2,3,4} In the first 2 AFLW seasons, this rate was higher again.⁵

AFLW players had a

9.2x

Greater risk of sustaining an ACL injury compared to male players in the AFL.

Women also had double the risk of sustaining a concussion in the first two AFLW seasons.

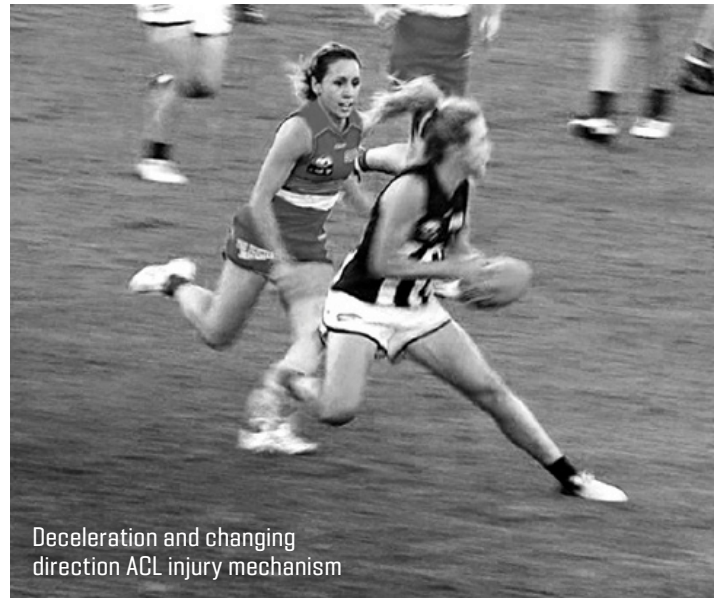
70-80%

of head injuries in AFLW occur during tackling (or being tackled), ground balls or aerial contests.

Despite limited injury surveillance data, serious knee and head injuries are a priority in community level football.²⁶

70-80%

of ACL injuries occur in non-contact positions when decelerating and changing direction, or landing on one leg.



Deceleration and changing direction ACL injury mechanism



Landing on one leg ACL injury mechanism

PREP TO PLAY BENEFITS



ENHANCE PERFORMANCE*

REDUCE INJURY BY UP TO 50%*

* Benefits based upon similar programs ^{20 21 22 23 24 25}

Increase athletic performance

Speed, vertical jump, agility, strength and coordination.



Increase player availability for games

Increase chance of winning games



INJURIES CAN BE REDUCED
But only when you stick with
THE PROGRAM!

Benefits are greater if the program is performed at every training and match.

PREP TO PLAY WHAT IS PREP TO PLAY?



EVERY TRAINING SESSION – Dynamic Warm Up, Football Skills, and Strength Exercises

MATCH DAY – Dynamic Warm Up Only (10 Minutes)

The activities for each component are provided on pages 6-19.

DYNAMIC WARM UP

10 minutes at the start of every training session and game

8 activities: jog and mobility, deceleration, change of direction, landing, landing with contact, sprints, contact skills, balance.

Warm-up exercises are provided on pages 6-7

FOOTBALL SKILLS

At least 5 minutes every training session

Practice these skills every training session:

- ➔ Tackling and receiving a tackle
- ➔ Aerial
- ➔ Ground balls

Example drills are provided on page 9-17

STRENGTH EXERCISES

5 to 10 minutes before, during, or after every training session

Perform 3 strength exercises:

1. Lower-limb
2. Hamstring and gluteal
3. Core and hip

Strengthening exercises are provided on page 18-19

EDUCATION

Dedicate at least 2x10 minute sessions to provide education when starting the program with your team.

Provide players, support staff, and parents with education about Prep to Play:

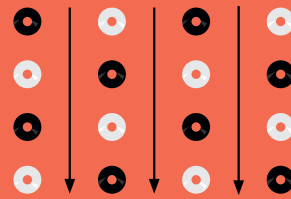
- ➔ Why, how, and when the program will be implemented
- ➔ Direct them to the posters and video resources
- ➔ Exercise technique (Page 23)
- ➔ General injury prevention principles (Page 22)

PREP TO PLAY DYNAMIC WARM UP PROGRAM

**DO ALL 8 ACTIVITIES –
THEY ARE ALL IMPORTANT!**

Choose A, B or C
for each activity

10 minutes every training
session and match




Players start here and
perform movements
through the cones

16 cones
(8 of each colour)

JOG AT LEAST 200M & AT LEAST 1 MOBILITY EXERCISE

1


A



HAMSTRING SWEEP
Get low, sweep fingers to the grass, alternate sides.

x5 EACH SIDE


B



LEG SWING
Swing leg forwards and backwards or side to side.

x5 EACH SIDE

C



OPEN/CLOSE GATE
Lift knee to hip height. Sweep hip out to open sweep in to close, alternate sides.

x5 EACH SIDE

DECELERATION

2

A



STUTTER STEP
At each cone decelerate & rapidly move your feet on the spot for 3 secs.

REPEAT x2

B



ONE LEG STOP
Get low & use short quick steps. Finish in athletic stance.

x1 EACH SIDE

C



FORWARD 2 BACKWARD 1
Accelerate forwards 2 cones, then backtrack 1 cone.


REPEAT x2



CHANGE OF DIRECTION

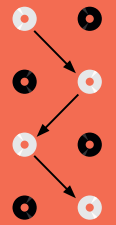
3

A



45 DEG ZIG ZAG CUTS
Using short quick steps, get low and use outside leg to plant & push off.

REPEAT x2



B



PARTNER ZIG ZAG - NO CONTACT
Start on cones next to each other. Zig-zag around cones avoiding contact with partner. Make it a race.

REPEAT x2

C



PARTNER ZIG ZAG - CONTACT
Zig-zag around cones racing a partner. You can bump each other as you move through. Compete for a ball at the end.

REPEAT x2

PREP TO PLAY

DYNAMIC WARM UP PROGRAM

JUMP AND LAND

4

A



DOT THE i
Jump forward and then jump up straight away. Land in athletic stance.

REPEAT x10

B



BOUNDING
Leap off right leg, landing on left leg, moving forward as you bound left to right.

REPEAT x10 EACH SIDE

C



HOPS
Hop forward as far as you can. Keep foot, knee, and hip in line.

REPEAT x10 EACH SIDE

JUMP AND LAND - CONTACT

5

A



PARTNER PUSH
From a standing double leg start, jump high and have a partner bump you in the air. Land in athletic stance.

x5 EACH SIDE


B



RUNNING PARTNER PUSH
Run, jump off 1 leg. Drive the knee closest to your partner up. Partner bumps you in the air. Land in athletic stance.

x5 EACH SIDE

C



RUNNING PARTNER PUSH & TWIST
Run, jump off 1 leg, and in the air turn the body 90 degrees. Partner bumps you in the air. Land in athletic stance.

x5 EACH SIDE

CONTACT

6

A



PARTNER BUMP/CHECK
Get low in athletic stance and bump your partner. (x5 each side) Or bump (check) your partner as they try to run to the end cone (1 turn each).

B



TACKLING BREAKDOWN
Chest on chest, chin to back. Get feet close, get low and drive legs. Swap sides until coach blows whistle - try to push partner over the line.

2x30s

C




FALLING/ROLLING
Tuck the right arm and head through, lower the body and roll onto the back on the right shoulder, diagonally across the back, landing on the left hip.

x3-5 EACH SIDE

SPRINTING

7



SPRINTS
Sprints of 30m. Build up to 80-90% of top speed.
Partner option: Race from a lying position.

REPEAT x2-3

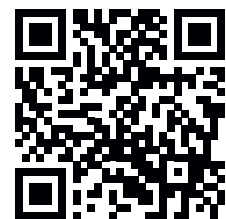
BALANCE

8



BALANCE
Balancing on one leg, handball with a partner.

1 MINUTE EACH SIDE



TO VIEW THE VIDEOS GO TO:
[COACH.AFL/FEMALE-FOOTBALL](https://coach.afl/female-football)

PREP TO PLAY WHICH EXERCISES SHOULD MY PLAYERS START WITH?



The Prep-to-Play dynamic warm up and strength exercises have options A, B and C. Most options increase in difficulty (A=easier, C=harder), but some options are there to target different muscles groups and movements or for variety.

Aim to get all players to Option C, and use Option A and B to provide variety, or for players who cannot perform Option C due to excessive soreness or ability.

If Level A exercises are too hard, or the player is complaining of soreness, modified warm-up exercises are provided below and on page 19 for the strength program.

PREP TO PLAY MODIFIED WARM UP

coach 

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If players are reporting knee soreness during jumping and landing exercises in the warm up they can perform these activities instead:

CALF EXERCISES



CALF RAISES

With shoulder width apart and knees straight, raise and lower your heel.

OR



POGO BOUNCES

Keep knees straight. Bounce forward in continuous motion keeping heels up.

LOWER IMPACT EXERCISES



DOUBLE LEG SQUAT

Keep knees in line with hips, bend hips & knees. Lower bottom to the ground like sitting on a low chair.

Harder: hands above head.

OR



ARABESQUE

Extend leg behind balancing on one leg. Aim to extend body and back leg parallel with ground.

REMEMBER! SOME SORENESS IS EXPECTED AFTER COMPLETING THE STRENGTH EXERCISES - PARTICULARLY 24-48 HOURS AFTER.

If the player is consistently complaining of soreness which is affecting their ability to participate, encourage them to see a physiotherapist.

For a list of Prep to Play endorsed providers go to: hersport.latrobe.edu.au

ARE YOU PRACTICING YOUR FOOTBALL FUNDAMENTALS?

Go to the CoachAFL Prep-to-Play section to view the posters and videos.
Practice these skills every training session.

1 - TACKLING



2 - RECEIVING A TACKLE



3 - AERIAL



4 - GROUND BALLS



MONTHLY COACHES SHED



Online drop-in with other coaches, facilitated by coach ambassadors, AFL Coaching team, or a La Trobe University research team member.



Share ideas, drills, or troubleshoot in a casual, safe and friendly environment.

RM COACH
EVOLVE THE GAME.

NEED INSPIRATION FOR YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS?

Login to RM Coach using your CoachAFL member login to access training activities, session plans and more... tailored for your team!

REDUCE HEAD, NECK & SHOULDER INJURIES



Winning contested ground balls will improve team performance.

Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educate players on how to perform the skill safely.

Coaching Tip →

"Putting your head over the ball" is an expression coaches may use. However, it's important coaches clearly interpret this for players & discourage them from leading with their head towards oncoming contact.



ACTIVE FEET & AWARENESS
Prepare for ball/opposition movement



GET LOW BEHIND BALL
Get nails dirty



OVERSTRIDE/FLAT-FOOTED
Reaching/squatting for ball



Coaching Tip →

Remind players its okay to make mistakes or fumble, especially when they are trying new skills.



PROTECTION
Front foot, round shoulders



STAY LOW
Drive legs towards target



STANDING UPRIGHT TOO EARLY
Easily tackled or fumble



KEEP EYES ON THE BALL
Until it is secured



LEADING WITH THE HEAD
High risk position for serious head/neck injury

Reinforce 2-3 teaching points prior to any drill.

Practice all directions and timing of contact.

Equipment required: Football, cones, 2 bump bags, and bibs for half your squad.



Football



Cones



Bibs



Bump bags

PREP TO PLAY GROUND BALL DRILLS

TECHNIQUE: Uncontested ground balls

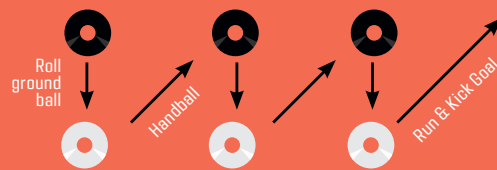
ACTIVITY 1
3-6 players
10 mins

Soccer Ball/ Medicine Ball

- Round balls - more predictable
- Medicine ball - forces players to focus on picking the ball up and engaging their core and leg muscles to drive through the ball



ACTIVITY 2
8-10 players
10 mins
10x10m area



Coaching Tip

Practice ground balls followed by execution of another skill (i.e. handball or kick)
E.g. one-up, one-down in lanes. Increase intensity by making it a competition.

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS: Contested ground balls

ACTIVITY 3
8-10 players
10 mins
10x10m area

Drill Variations
Rolling ball, vary direction of approach/contact



➤ Feeder rolls ball in



➤ Front inside foot protection



➤ Handball to receiver



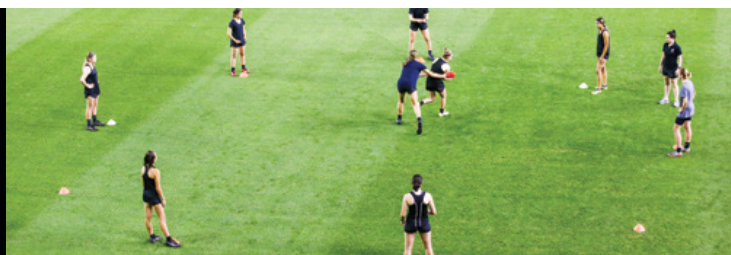
Progression

Replace bump bag with opponent and make it competitive

Small groups: At least 4 players in line, 1 feeder, 1 with bump bag, 1-2 receivers

ACTIVITY 4
8-15 players
5-10 mins
10-15m circle area

Drill Variations
Add a third number.
Smaller area favours tackler, more inside tackles



➤ Number players '1', '2'... etc.

➤ '1' and '6' compete



Progression

Circle of death 30 second repeat efforts:
2 players get ground balls off outside players whilst getting bumped by 2 players

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

ACTIVITY 5
14-30+ players
10min
5-8x5-8m area

Drill Variations
Larger area, less defenders favours ball carrier & opportunity for clean possession



➤ One up, one down grids



Coaching Tip

Get players to take turns feeding the balls.
Coaches - coach!

REDUCE HEAD, NECK, AND SHOULDER INJURIES



➔ Increase effective tackles



Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educating players on tackling technique.

COACHING POINTS: Inside tackle (Tackler close to ball-carrier)

Coaching Tip ➔

Provide immediate positive feedback on good execution of tackling.



GET LOW: Stay low
➔ Active feet. Drive legs

DRIVE LEGS
Use momentum

Upright
Flat footed



BODY ON BODY: Chin to back
➔ Pin elbows

DUTY OF CARE
Protect opponent
control their
body

ROLL & DROP
With control

REACHING
Tackling with hands

COACHING POINTS: Outside tackle (Tackler has to run to close space)



GET LOW
Quick steps & feet close
➔ Inside shoulder

CORRAL TOWARDS SIDELINE
Aim for inside shoulder
➔ Roll & drop, protect opponent, don't sling

OVERSTRIDE
Lunge & reach = ineffective tackles
➔ Higher risk position for serious knee injury

Coaching Tip →

Reinforce a maximum of 2-3 technique points prior to commencing any drill. Practice tackling from all angles. Use simple cues. E.g. "Hit and stick"

TECHNIQUE - Partner walk throughs

**ACTIVITY 1
INSIDE TACKLES**

3 Group size
5-10 mins, 5x5m area
Practice from front, side and behind. Standing next to partner

Progression

Separate 2-3m, Feed ground ball or handball and players increase speed on approach



→ Increase intensity when technique is sound and players feel comfortable

**ACTIVITY 2
OUTSIDE TACKLES**

3 Group size
5-10 mins, 5x5m area

Behind/Side

Tackler stands 5m behind Player 2. Player 3 feeds ground ball

Front

Tackler stands 5m in front of tackler. Player 3 feeds ground ball in front



→ Increase intensity when technique is sound and players feel comfortable

Coaching Tip →

Cue players to note how a tackle felt, or the sound it made. Good tackle = nice thud/connection sound

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS

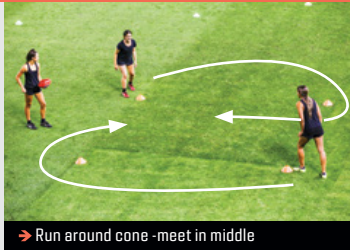
**ACTIVITY 3
TACKLING GATES**

6-10 Group size
5-10 mins
5-8x5-8m area

Drill Variations
Smaller area favours tackler

1v1, 2v2 or 3v3

- 2 lines stand diagonally opposite, 2 players run around cones to meet in the middle
- Player feeds handball/ground to nominated ball carrier
- Tacklers score points for stopping ball carrier get through their "gate"



→ Run around cone - meet in middle



Ball carrier aims to exit gates

→ Cueing: Corral, push ball carrier one way

**ACTIVITY 4
CIRCLE DRILL**

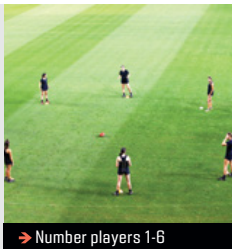
8-12 Group size
5-10 mins
10-15m circle

Drill Variations

Smaller area favours tackler, more inside tackles

Set up

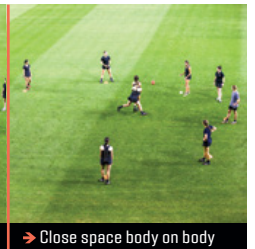
- Ball starts in middle (Progression: ball is rolled in). Call out 2 numbers. "1" is ball carrier. "6" is tackler
- Ball carrier aims to pick up ball and return to any player (Progression: to certain player or coach)



→ Number players 1-6



→ "1" and "6" compete



→ Close space body on body

Coaching Tip →

Get players to take turns kicking the balls. Coaches - coach!

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

**ACTIVITY 5
TACKLING GRIDS**

14-30+ Group size
10 mins
5-8x5-8m area

Drill Variations

More defenders = more tackles, Smaller area, favours tackler

Progressions

- After 4 handballs, work ball to Group 2, or a backs vs forwards situation suiting your needs (i.e. 3v2)



→ 4 attackers, 3 defenders in one grid



PREP TO PLAY RECEIVING, BREAKING, OR AVOIDING TACKLES

REDUCE HEAD, NECK & SHOULDER INJURIES



→ Increase a players ability to break free and reduce congestion



Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educate players on how to receive a tackle/contact in order to reduce injuries.

Coaching Tip →

Once a player is tackled, encourage them to get and stay low, keep their feet active, and drive their legs to try get out of the tackle.



GET LOW
Active feet and drive legs



STAY LOW



ENGAGE CORE



TOO UPRIGHT
Floppy in the tackle, not driving legs

Coaching Tip →

Reinforce these points with ground ball drills to make players cleaner below knees and avoid tackles.



SPATIAL AWARENESS
Knowing where contact is coming from



PROTECTION
Keep back shoulder away

DUTY OF CARE

Reinforce to players to take responsibility for how they attack the ball safely to protect themselves.



NO AWARENESS/LEADING WITH HEAD
High risk position for serious head/neck injury



ARMS FREE
Dispose of ball



CHOP ARMS or FEND OFF
To avoid approaching tackler



UPRIGHT
Flat footed not getting arms free

PREP TO PLAY

RECEIVING, BREAKING, OR AVOIDING TACKLES DRILLS

TECHNIQUE: Partner walk throughs

ACTIVITY 1
RECEIVING TACKLES
2-3 Group size
10 mins
5x5m area

Increase intensity

- ➔ When technique is sound, and players feel comfortable
- ➔ Pair practice helps increase confidence in accepting contact
- ➔ Cue players to keep ball secure



PROGRESSIVE DRILLS:

ACTIVITY 2
BREAKING AND AVOIDING TACKLES
5-6 Group size
10 mins
10x15m circle

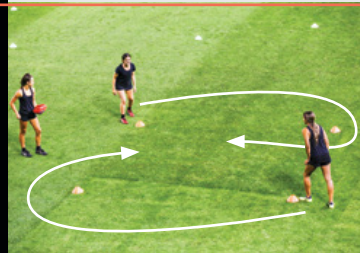
Drill Variations
Start players in different positions

- ➔ Groups of 5-6, one handballs to ball carrier, one tackler. Practice chopping arms or fending off and run into a shot on goal



ACTIVITY 3
TACKLING GATES
6-10 players
10 mins
5-8x5-8m area

Drill Variations
Larger = more outside tackles.
Smaller favours tackler



➔ Run around cone - meet in middle



➔ Ball carrier aims to exit gates



➔ Stay low, drive legs, arms free

- ➔ 2 lines stand diagonally opposite, 2 players run around cones to meet in the middle. Progression: 2v2, 3v3.
- ➔ Player feeds handball/ground to nominated ball carrier.
- ➔ Ball carrier aims to get through their "gate" or dispose of ball to receiver behind the gate.

Coaching Tip ➔

Get players to take turns feeding the balls. **Coaches - coach!**

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

ACTIVITY 4
14-30+ players
5-10 mins
5-8x5-8m area

Drill Variations
Larger area favours ball carrier



➔ 4 attackers, 3 defenders in one grid



➔ One up, one down grids



➔ Cue ball carriers: get arms free

- ➔ Progression: After 4 handballs, work ball to Group 2, or a backs vs forwards situation suiting your needs (i.e. 3v2)

PREP TO PLAY AERIAL CONTESTS

REDUCE LOWER LIMB, HEAD & FINGER INJURIES



→ Improve athleticism and football performance in contests

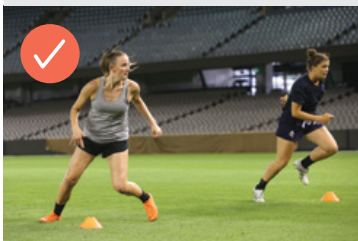


Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educate players on how to approach aerial contests.

COACHING POINTS: Preparing feet & body, and launching

Coaching Tip →

Coaching players how to prepare and position their body prior to, during and after an aerial contest is essential, to increase contested marks or spoils and player safety.



SPACIAL AWARENESS
Turn head & read cues of kicker



FOOTWORK - ACTIVE FEET
Run an arc to come forward at the ball



DUTY OF CARE
Educate players that they should not back pedal into a contest



LAUNCH OFF ONE LEG
Take at highest point



INSIDE LEG PROTECTION

Early to the contest?
Engage body and protect the drop zone

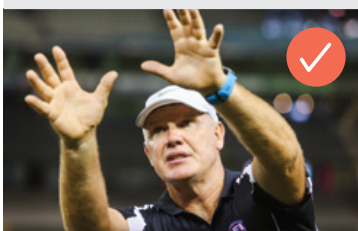


SITTING DUCK
Waiting under ball = vulnerable position and will get out-marked/spoiled

COACHING POINTS: Marking & landing

Coaching Tip →

Taking eyes off ball & moving head to the side = dropped marks & finger injuries.



EYES ON THE BALL
"W" hands



HEAD TO SIDE
Not looking at ball



LAND - ATHLETIC STANCE
Next play ready



STIFF LANDING
Unbalanced = High risk position for serious knee injury

PREP TO PLAY AERIAL CONTEST DRILLS

Coaching Tip →

Reinforce a maximum of 2-3 technique points prior to commencing any drill. Keep cues simple. Use analogies such as 'W' or 'Butterfly hands'.

TECHNIQUE

**ACTIVITY 1
STATIONARY MARKING**
2-3 group size
10 mins
10m area



→ Watch ball into hands

- Stationary throwing firm ball into hands 2-3m away
- Stationary kicking into hands with player on knees, then on feet
- Walking through ball - increase speed as able

**ACTIVITY 2
UNCONTESTED FOOTWORK AND LAUNCHING**

- Vary starting positions and flight of ball - players should adjust footwork if fumble, last one standing = winner



Noodle whack drill

- Players in lines run through for marks and one player whacks them with a foam noodle. Drop out if fumble, last one standing = winner

Coaching Tip →

Cue players to adjust footwork, and body work as needed depending on each contest.

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS

**ACTIVITY 3
TOKEN CONTACT**
6-8 group size
10 mins
10-20m area

Drill Variations
Vary starting locations and side of contact

- Use a token opponent with a bump bag to simulate contact
- Encourage players to protect their body with their inside/lead leg, and launch at the ball



→ Protect with inside knee



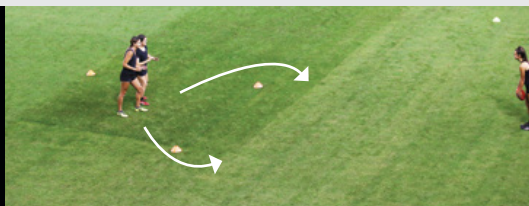
→ Practice both sides & new starting points

Coaching Tip →

Get players to take turns kicking the balls. **Coaches - coach!**

**ACTIVITY 4
1v1 CONTESTED MARKING**
6-8 group size
10 mins
10-20m area

Drill Variations
Larger square. Or designate starting points to force practice of particular situations



- 4 cones with 2 players starting in the middle. Instruct to run to the back (or front, or opposite to partner)



→ Launch at the ball



→ Engage body if early to contest

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

**ACTIVITY 5
MARKING GRIDS 4v3**
8-10 group size
10 mins
15-10m area

Drill Variations
Adjust number of players, size of grid, or ratio of defenders: attackers

Progressions

- Initially you have players stationary on the corner
- Attackers can move around
- Kicker at each end - defenders to communicate and come forward to find players at the front



PREP TO PLAY STRENGTH PROGRAM

coach 

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COMPLETE 3 ACTIVITIES

You can choose A, B or C
for each activity

10 minutes total (before, during
or after every training session)

TO VIEW THE VIDEOS GO TO:
COACH.AFL/FEMALE-FOOTBALL

1 - LOWER LIMB

A




LUNGES

Keep body straight, keep hips, knees and feet in line. Don't let the knee collapse inwards. Try to keep your upper body steady.

2x10 REPS EACH SIDE

B




CLOCKFACE

In a mini squat, lightly tap the opposite foot around an imaginary clock at 12, 3, 6 & 9 o'clock. Keep hip and knee in line.

Harder: make a larger clock.

x3 SETS EACH SIDE

C




REVERSE NORDICS

In upright kneeling, slowly lean your body backwards as far as you can control. Keep your hips straight. Hold for 1 second then slowly return your body upright.

2x5 REPS

2 - HAMSTRING / GLUTE

A




GLUTE BRIDGE

With one foot on the ground and the other in the air, lift your bottom off the ground as high as you can, pushing through your heels. Keep pelvis and thighs stable and in line.

Easier: hands on ground.

2x10 REPS EACH SIDE

B




HAMSTRING BRIDGE

With one leg on a bench/ball and the other leg in the air, lift your bottom off the ground as high as you can.

Alternate Option: Bridge off your partner's shoulder.

2x10 REPS EACH SIDE

C



NORDIC HAMSTRING LOWERS


With a partner holding your feet in kneeling, keep hips straight. Slowly lean forward as far as possible, then fall to ground landing in push up position.

Alternate option: Control to point you can control. Pause for 1 second and return to start.

2x5 REPS

3 - CORE / HIP

A



FRONT PLANK OR WHEELBARROW

Hold your body off the ground leaning on your elbows and feet. Keep your body straight and head tucked in.

Wheelbarrow: Partner 1, set up in push-up position. Partner 2, stand behind your partner's feet. Lift Partner 1 legs. Partner 1 walks their hands forward to under their shoulders. Hold this position.

2x30-60 SECONDS

B



SIDE PLANK

Lie on your side with legs on top of each other. Lean on your elbow and lift hips off the ground and hold. Create a straight line from ears to toes.

Easier option: on knees.

Harder option: lift leg and arm.

2x30-60 SECONDS

C



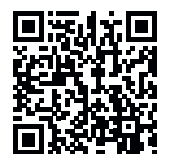
COPENHAGEN GROIN

Modified: Partner 2 holds at the knee while the partner 1 is in a side plank position. Bring bottom foot up to touch the top foot, and then return the foot towards the ground in a controlled manner.

Full: As above, but partner 2 holds partner 1 at the ankle.

2x10 REPS EACH SIDE

**NEED HELP? SCAN THE QR CODE FOR
A LIST OF YOUR LEAGUE'S SPORTS
MEDICINE PROVIDERS AND PREP TO
PLAY ENDORSED PHYSIOTHERAPISTS**



PREP TO PLAY MODIFIED STRENGTH PROGRAM

COMPLETE 3 ACTIVITIES

You can choose A, B or C for each activity

5-10 minutes (before, during or after every training session)

If players report soreness with any of the strength exercises or the activities are too hard, it is important they still complete strength exercises. Some easier modifications to the normal program are outlined below.

1 - LOWER LIMB

A



SINGLE LEG CALF RAISES
Using a partner for balance, stand on one leg keeping your knee straight. Raise and lower your heel.

2x10 REPS EACH SIDE

B



DOUBLE LEG SQUAT
Keep knees in line with hips, bend hips and knees. Lower bottom to the ground like sitting on a low chair.

2x10 REPS

C




HALF LUNGE OR LUNGE HOLD
Keeping feet shoulder width apart, stand in a splint stance. Lower back knee half way to ground, keeping front knee behind toes.

2x10 REPS

2 - HAMSTRING / GLUTE


A



MODIFIED GLUTE BRIDGE - DOUBLE LEG
Lift your bottom as high as you can, pushing through your heels.

2x10 REPS


B



MODIFIED HAMSTRING BRIDGE - DOUBLE LEG
With both feet on a bench (or partners hands), knees slightly bent, lift your bottom off the ground.

2x10 REPS

C



MODIFIED HAMSTRING - ARABESQUE
Extend leg behind balancing on one leg. Aim to extend body and back leg parallel with ground.

2x10 REPS EACH SIDE

3 - CORE / HIP

A



MODIFIED KNEE PLANK
Hold your body by leaning on your elbows and knees. Keep your body straight and head tucked in.

2x30-60 SECONDS

B



MODIFIED SIDE PLANK
Lie on your side with legs on top of each other. Lean on your elbow and knees. Lift hips off the ground and hold.

2x30-60 SECONDS

C



MODIFIED GROIN - BALL SQUEEZE
Lie on your back and squeeze the ball as hard as you can.

2x15 SECOND HOLDS

REMEMBER! SOME SORENESS IS EXPECTED AFTER COMPLETING THE STRENGTH EXERCISES - PARTICULARLY 24-48 HOURS AFTER.

If the player is consistently complaining of soreness which is affecting their ability to participate, encourage them to see a physiotherapist.

For a list of Prep to Play endorsed providers go to: hersport.latrobe.edu.au/prep2play

PREP TO PLAY EDUCATION CHECKLIST SESSION 1



IN THE FIRST THREE WEEKS OF STARTING TO USE PREP TO PLAY RUN TWO EDUCATION SESSIONS (≈10 MINUTES) WITH YOUR PLAYERS, SUPPORT STAFF, AND PARENTS

WHAT IS PREP TO PLAY?

4 elements - dynamic warm-up, football skills, strength exercises, education

- ➔ **Dynamic warm up** focusses on landing, deceleration, change of direction
- ➔ **Football skills** focusses on tackling, being tackled, aerial, and ground balls
- ➔ **Strength exercises** focusses on lower limb, hamstring/glutes, and core strength
- ➔ **Education** - program what, when, why, how

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS?

- ➔ Make you a better football player - don't get knocked off the ball
- ➔ Make you a better player - improve speed and agility, vertical jump
- ➔ Reduce your risk of injury - up to 50% reduction in other sports

WHEN WILL WE DO IT? WHO WILL LEAD IT?

- ➔ Dynamic warm-up - before every training and game 10 minutes
- ➔ Strength exercises - before, during or after training 5 to 10 minutes
- ➔ Football skills - during training with focus on the 4 skills

Players can lead the warm-up and strength exercises once they are familiar with the program.



Provide players with manuals to be kept at club and the link to the online posters and videos



PREP TO PLAY EDUCATION CHECKLIST SESSION 2



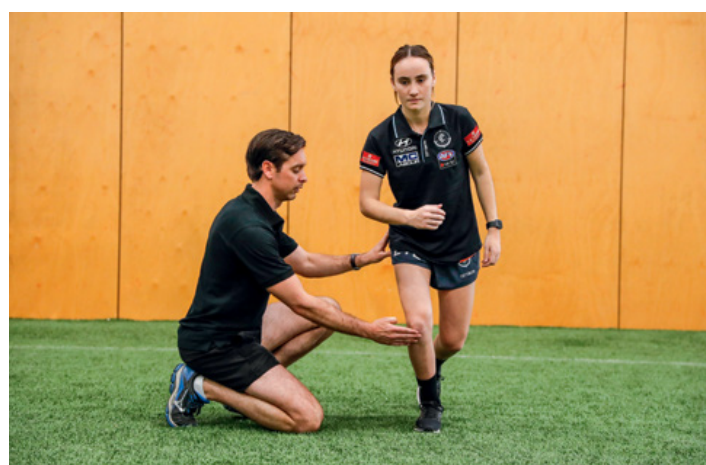
IN THE FIRST THREE WEEKS OF STARTING TO USE PREP TO PLAY RUN TWO EDUCATION SESSIONS (~10 MINUTES) WITH YOUR PLAYERS, SUPPORT STAFF, AND PARENTS.

WHAT IS GOOD TECHNIQUE?

- Squatting and landing
- Deceleration, change of direction
- Strength exercises technique
- Refer to Page 24 for details

GENERAL TIPS - IMPROVING PERFORMANCE & REDUCING INJURY

- Management of injuries and expectations
 - ➔ **If players are injured, encourage them to still come to training and games.** There is always things they can do to improve and be a part of the team
 - ➔ Ensure players **manage their injuries.** A link to a list of recommended sports medicine providers and endorsed Prep to Play physiotherapists is provided on Page 18
 - ➔ **Some soreness is expected** with the strength exercises
- Player **well-being and recovery**
 - ➔ Physical and mental health
 - ➔ Sleep, eat, hydrate
 - ➔ Active recovery
 - ➔ Rest and balance in their life
 - ➔ Refer to Page 23 for details



HAVE YOU PUT THE THREE PREP TO PLAY POSTERS UP AT THE CLUB?

Direct players to the Prep to Play player manual for further info



PREP TO PLAY

GENERAL PRINCIPLES TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE AND REDUCE INJURY RISK



Coaches play a vital role in providing general education to players about the various aspects that can reduce injury and enhance performance:

TOP 8 TIPS FOR ENHANCING PLAYER WELLBEING



Players should aim for 8 hours of sleep per night. Sleep is vital for preparing for and recovering from training and games.

1



Players should enjoy a balanced diet that limits added sugars and alcohol. This gives you optimum energy for training.

2



Players should ensure rehydration to restore fluid and electrolyte balance after training and games.

3



Players should report & manage injuries in conjunction with their coaches, physio's and/or doctor. Encourage players to seek advice if unwell or injured.

4



Encourage players to use active recovery techniques such as walking, swimming, or bike riding. Avoid long periods of sitting.

5



Choose recovery strategies that work best for you and make you feel good. This may include ice baths, hot/cold showers or pool mobility. Better muscle recovery = better performance.

6



Coaches and players should be aware the menstrual cycle and/or associated symptoms may affect wellbeing and performance. If players report symptoms such as severe cramping or irregular periods medical advice should be sought.

7



Players need to look after their mental wellbeing and have balance in their lives. This will be individual and might involve mindfulness training, meditation, yoga or any activities that promote relaxation and rest.

8

PREP TO PLAY

HOW DO I KNOW IF A PLAYER HAS GOOD TECHNIQUE?

Coaches play a vital role in providing feedback on movement technique. Access the videos on coach.afl for more details of good and poor technique.



GOOD TECHNIQUE

VS



POOR TECHNIQUE

JUMPING, LANDING, & SQUATTING



✓ Land in an athletic stance (bending at knees and hips). Keep knees in line with hips.



✗ Hip and knee collapse. Torso leaning to the side.

CHANGE OF DIRECTION



✓ Using short quick steps, get low and use outside leg to plant and push off.



✗ Over striding too upright, Foot too far outside base of support.

DECELERATION



✓ **Busy feet** with short quick steps on balls of feet. **Get low** by bending knees and hips.

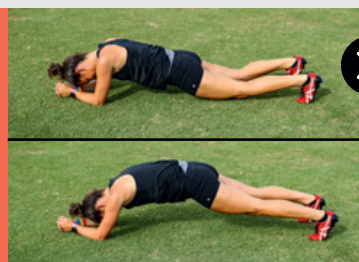


✗ Too upright, heavy steps. **Over striding** with large, long, heavy steps. **Upright posture.**

PLANK



✓ Create a straight line from ears to toes. Elbows under shoulders, head tucked in looking at the ground.









✗ Hips sagging too low. Hips bending too high. Don't round the shoulders or strain through the neck.

Contact is a hallmark of our game, and a reason many players love to play. However, the contact nature causes often causes players to lose their balance and tumble to the ground. It is crucial for players to be able to fall safely to avoid head, neck and upper limb injuries.



DO NOT BRACE FOR FALL WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS. THIS PUTS THE WRIST, ELBOW AND SHOULDER IN A VULNERABLE POSITION.

1		<p>In a squatted position tuck the head under. Look away from where from the direction you are going to roll.</p>
2		<p>Lower the body and use body weight momentum to roll. Lightly brush hands across the ground - they should not take the weight.</p>
3		<p>Roll onto the back on the right shoulder. Try to keep yourself in a tight ball.</p>
4		<p>Use the momentum to roll diagonally across the back.</p>
5		<p>Finish on the left hip. The momentum of the roll should take player to point 6.</p>
6		<p>Roll up to half kneeling. Reset. Repeat 3 rolls each side!</p>

PRACTICE BOTH SIDES!

Progress to starting from a standing, walking, then jogging position as players are competent and feel confident in their technique.

PREP TO PLAY HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK



STRATEGIES WHICH MAY MAXIMISE LEARNING OF FOOTBALL AND MOVEMENT SKILLS INCLUDE:¹⁶

- 1** External or goal-related cues:¹⁷ Use external cues such as “get low” rather than describing coordination of body parts such as “bend your hip and knee.”
- 2** Give positive feedback on correct technique to increase confidence and motivation. Prompt players to note how technique feels, or the output (e.g. higher jump or effective tackle). This will improve motor learning.
- 3** Teammate feedback: Once competency is established, get players to observe each other and provide feedback. This will increase competitiveness and motivation.¹⁹

Examples of technique and cue words are given for the dynamic warm up and football specific skills are provided on page 24, and page 9-17, respectively.



TIMING AND TYPE



Immediate verbal or visual feedback

Provide verbal feedback during or immediately after the activity. Combine with visual demonstration with the player/group.



Video Playback

Coaches may wish to film a player performing a skill to provide feedback, or utilise match footage if available.

OPTIMAL CHALLENGE POINT



COACHING TIP: WHERE POSSIBLE PROGRESS TASK DIFFICULTY USING THE PRINCIPLES BELOW

- 1** Start with simple activities, in controlled, uncontested, situations. Skills should be closed with minimal decision making. Progress difficulty if good technique is observed (see posters on pages 6-7 and 9-17)
- 2** Progress difficulty by
 - Increasing speed, intensity (e.g. jump higher/further) and amount of contact
 - Making activities less predictable (e.g. players change direction in response to coach hand signal or whistle)
 - Increasing attentional demands and decision making (e.g. whilst performing agility drills players call out the number of fingers the coach is holding up)
- 3**
 - **Ensure good technique during warm-up activities** (e.g. jumping and landing) is transferred into football specific activities (marking/spoiling)
 - **Ensure good technique of football skills** are transferred into small-sided games and match play

HOW LONG DOES PREP TO PLAY TAKE?

The warm-up and strength components together take between 15 and 20 minutes. Time spent on the specific Prep to Play football skills (e.g. tackling, aerial contests and ground balls) will vary and is up to the coach.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE UNTIL PREP TO PLAY HAS AN EFFECT?

Improvement in movement quality and skill can occur in 3 to 4 weeks. For muscle strength, this may take up to 6 to 8 weeks. These timelines are an estimate, and are based on 2 to 3 sessions per week.

WHEN CAN PLAYERS STOP PREP TO PLAY?

Players should continue using the Prep to Play or as long as they play football, as the effects of the program wear off when they stop performing the exercises.

HOW OLD DO PLAYERS HAVE TO BE FOR PREP TO PLAY?

The Prep to Play program is being evaluated (2021-2023) in players aged 14 and older. Therefore, the effects of Prep to Play are uncertain for all age groups. In other sports, programs (e.g. FIFA 11+) with similar exercises are effective at reducing injuries (with minimal negative side effects) in players 7 years and older.²²

DO PLAYERS HAVE TO WARM UP BEFORE PREP TO PLAY?

No, the "Prep to Play" is a complete warm-up program that replaces other such programs

WHAT TYPE OF FOOTWEAR IS RECOMMENDED FOR PREP TO PLAY? WHERE SHOULD IT BE PERFORMED?

Ideally, the exercises should be performed on grass with football boots. If access to the ground is limited, the exercises may be performed in the change room, or another available outdoor surface. Football boots should not be worn on surfaces other than grass.

CAN THE ORDER IN WHICH THE EXERCISES ARE PERFORMED BE CHANGED?

- ➔ The dynamic warm up should be performed before football training
- ➔ The football skills should be performed after the warm-up during training
- ➔ The strength exercises can be performed before, during or after training²⁷
- ➔ The education component should be delivered in the first three weeks of using the program. Players should be reminded regularly of the purpose and benefits of the program, technique cues, and general injury prevention principles.



IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PREP TO PLAY PROGRAM CONTACT THE RESEARCH TEAM

Email: prep2play@latrobe.edu.au **Phone:** 9479 1483

Website: <http://hersport.latrobe.edu.au/>

Latest research and community resources related to women's health, participation and performance in sport and exercise.

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PREP TO PLAY ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



The AFL acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge we play our great game on this land and respect the cultures of all First Peoples, their contribution to our nation and contribution to the game of Australian Rules Football.

The AFL and La Trobe University wish to thank the AFLW medical and high-performance staff, AFLW players, community coaches and players, AFLW coaches Jane Lange and Peta Searle, AFL coaches Brett Ratten and Aaron Hamill, for their contribution to the development of the Prep to Play program and associated resources.

The AFL wishes to acknowledge and pay tribute to the late Danny Frawley for his contribution to the football community and for providing his expertise to the Prep To Play program. Danny was passionate about coach education and female football and his work in the Prep to Play program and football at all levels will impact footballers for years to come. Danny's passion and energy will leave a lasting legacy for all involved in our great game.





THIS IS *US*



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Research Centre

This information was developed during a collaborative project between the AFL and La Trobe University and is informed by the best available evidence and expert opinion from coaches, players and staff.