

### FITNESS FIRST

#### WE ADVISE YOU

**QUESTION** I'VE recently had cartilage removed from my knee and wish to resume playing. What exercises should I do to help my knee?  
*Peter James, Bristol*



#### ANSWER

Graduate the intensity of the exercises, starting with what you can cope with easily without causing pain. Step-ups, squats (above), balancing on a single leg, hamstring curls and rear lunges off a box are all good at building strength. You can introduce steep hill walking on the treadmill, use the cross-trainer and stepper, and cycle against high resistance rather than at speed on the stationary bike too. Ice is good if your knee is hot or swollen.  
*Darren Grewcock*

#### TRIED & TESTED

**RUGBYMAX** TAKEN daily within ten minutes of exercising, these chocolate-flavour shakes are designed to boost rugby players' performance and recovery. The shakes, made by mixing the powder with milk or water, contain glucosamine, magnesium and calcium, amongst other nutrients – but could taste better! One month's supply costs £46.99. For more info, visit [rugbymaxnutrition.com](http://rugbymaxnutrition.com)  
**RW RATING** ★★★★★



Setting the scene: training in the park is a great way to meet new people and stay fit

# Here comes the sun...

Joining an outdoor training club is a good way to stay fit in the off-season. Bea Asprey goes for a test run

**W**ITH THE season coming to an end, this is a good time to have a break from rugby. But that doesn't mean switching off from your training completely, and you don't have to lose your fitness to the summer. A great way to keep yourself ticking over is to join an outdoor training club. Group sessions taken by professional trainers are fun and motivational, and give you the opportunity to meet people while exercising outside. If you're not already a member of a gym, it can work out as a cheaper option

– and the diversity the training offers means it's easier to improve and sustain your all-round fitness. I recently took part in a Monday night hour-long session with One Element, a London-based club. The group of six consisted of two rugby players, a triathlete building fitness for her first event of the season, and three people simply wanting to maintain their fitness – showing that anyone can take part. The idea of the sessions is to mimic a rugby game. When playing you're never running flat out for 80 minutes, but stopping and starting suddenly. One

Element conduct a 12-week training programme, with three weekly sessions aimed at different aspects of fitness each week – resistance, speed and cardio for example. At the end of 12 weeks, members are tested to see how much their fitness has improved. The warm-up involved circuit training, carried out in pairs, including squats and lunges, running through a training ladder and jumping over steps.

Following this, the group was worked over a distance of 30 metres, with cones marking the halfway line. In your pair, you work at full intensity for the first 15 metres, and low intensity for the following 15, in sets of sprints, high knees and quick, short steps. Specific rugby exercises are also included, such as sprinting 15 metres at 100% from lying on the ground, as you could find yourself doing in a game.

You won't find yourself slacking off in the sessions, which proved to be demanding and enjoyable. I will definitely be back for more.

● For more information about One Element, call 020 8871 1295 or go to [one-element.co.uk](http://one-element.co.uk)

#### CHECK THAT YOUR CLUB...

- Employs professional trainers with an REP Level 3 qualification
- Has public liability insurance
- Will focus on rugby training. Not all clubs do, so look into their background before you sign up



Team spirit: working as a group is great for friendly competition and motivation



## FLEXIBILITY AND CORE STRENGTH

Busy schedules and sore limbs throughout the season mean we can often neglect developing our flexibility and core. Now's a good time to focus on these areas...



#### HAMSTRING AND GLUTES

As these two muscles are attached, it's important to link your stretches so your full range of movement can improve and allow better flexibility. Ensure you're warm so your muscles are 'pliable' before stretching. With both stretches (above), it's increasing the flexion between your lower torso and leg that increases the stretch, not lowering your chin! Don't 'bounce' into the stretches, but gently squeeze into each one

#### REPS AND SETS

STRETCH – 10 TO 12 SECONDS EACH SETS – TWO TO THREE  
REST – 20 TO 30 SECONDS TEMPO – SLOW, GENTLE



#### CALF STRETCH AND MASSAGE

Calves take a lot of punishment and respond well to care and attention. Massage is also very effective for your glutes, hamstrings and quads. There are two calf muscles: the gastrocnemius – higher, larger one – is the first and the soleus – lower down – the second. Stretch both. Keep a straight leg for the first (left) and knee bent for the second. It's great to get a full sports massage (right) whenever you can

#### REPS AND SETS

STRETCH – 10 TO 12 SECONDS EACH SETS – TWO TO THREE  
REST – 20 TO 30 SECONDS TEMPO – SLOW, GENTLE



#### MEDICINE BALL LAUNCH AND REVERSE CRUNCH

The key to effective abdominal work is not to do what seems easy. Every repetition should involve a maximal squeeze, regardless of the exercise. Launch the medicine ball halfway through the upwards motion (left) and catch it when you're at least halfway back down. Try not to use your legs for momentum with the reverse crunch (right). Maintain the squeeze and control with both the 'in' and 'out' moves

#### REPS AND SETS

REPS – 12 TO 15 SETS – FIVE  
REST – 60 SECONDS TEMPO – STEADY, CONTROLLED



#### TWISTING SIDE CRUNCH AND TRUNK ROTATION

An effective rep doesn't require an extensive range of movement. The quality goes into your control and the squeeze at the hardest point. For the side crunch (left), as you lift follow the motion of your ribcage with your head. The lower back stays in contact with the bench. For rotation (right), keep your chest lifted and a slight arch in the back. Ensure tight control of your knees. Work to fatigue, then swap sides

#### REPS AND SETS

REPS – 12 TO 15 SETS – FIVE  
REST – 20 TO 30 SECONDS TEMPO – SLOW, CONTROLLED

**REMEMBER** *Rugby World* recommends that all players seek guidance from a suitably qualified expert before taking any supplement. All players with queries should visit [www.rfu.com/antidoping](http://www.rfu.com/antidoping) or [www.irb.com/keeprugbyclean](http://www.irb.com/keeprugbyclean) to assess the need and risk of supplements. Anyone with an injury should take immediate medical advice. No rehab programme should ever be undertaken without medical supervision and the advice in these pages is designed to supplement a medically supervised rehab programme. Always consult your doctor before taking any exercise.



*Dylan Hartley's TOP TIP: In the gym, try doing your weighted squats bare-foot. I can balance a whole lot better this way and, as my technique has improved and I'm more controlled, it means I can lift heavier weights. Try it!*