

'In shape' means more than six-pack abs

This month I bring a type of training advice that is unorthodox, yet extremely effective if followed. The small things are usually the difference in injury prevention, competitive edge and longevity of sport activity.

Potential clients and group class participants frequently say to me, "I want to be trained by you, but I need to get in shape first." Aside from that really not making sense, unless you are trying to commit to the self-accountability to starting a regular training routine, the meaning of "being in shape" has its obscurity. Is a man who climbs the Grand in the summer two times a week in shape and fit? How about the well-toned muscular women with a six-pack that everyone briefly glances at in the gym and ponders how she got that way, or that she must be in really good shape to look that way?

In contrast, is the 100-day-a-year skier or snowboarder who does aerial tricks yet cannot do a push-up without the lower back sagging in shape or not? It is all relative.

My definition of being "in shape" or "fit" is the ability to perform any

movement with the correct amounts of power, strength, flexibility, agility and balance to maintain or improve on the quality of movement in control and safety. In layman's terms, even though the activity is difficult, one can perform the movement in a safe effective manner and still have fun doing it.

For example, can a parent have the energy to play with his children and not be worn out? Can a teleskier lift weights the same day as skiing a hard day and not hurt herself due to muscular fatigue? Can someone perform land-based nonbike training and ride for the first time in a season and feel as if he never left the bike? Can a runner run for the first time outside in the spring and not have soreness? The answer is yes.

Do you exercise to play or play to exercise? Remember to train the whole body fully even if you only run and love to run. The upper body affects the lower body and vice versa. Always perform core exercise. Stretch. Stretching to training is like fiber is to eating healthy. If you do not get enough fiber, one runs the risk of potential health issues in the future. The results of stretching could be the difference of enjoying a year of deep

powder or catching up on your movie watching while rehabbing a certain injury. Remember to train your weak areas; strengths can be overworked and cause injuries that could put you out for a whole season. Train both sides of the body: left, right, top, bottom and front and back.

Training the front and back, in my opinion, is one of the most important aspects of training. Where do all our injuries tend to occur? Let me give you a rundown of injuries that prevent activity. Where is plantar fasciitis (inflammation of the sole of the foot) located? Heard of an Achilles, calf, hamstring pull? ACL tear? Seen a person with forward rounded shoulders? How about sciatica or low back pain? Or "my shoulders and back of my neck are tight and stiff." Where are all these injuries located? Your back side!

Ever hear of someone visiting the doctors or having surgery for his injured abs? "Hey Joe, heard about your injured quad. Are you going to have to have surgery or are you out for the season?" These happen but are rare in comparison.

We train what we see in the mirror. Think about this next question. Name as many quad and abdominal exercises you know. How many do you have? Next, match that total number with the number of upper back and hamstring exercises. Get the point?

Another area of training that is a rarity is the feet and the hands. Imagine living with one foot or no toes for that matter. How about no thumbs or only one hand. I am talking about the care of hands and feet and how we, as a society, take them for granted.

Some of us, due to dance, martial arts or gymnastics already take care of our feet but do you? Even right now, if you're reading this article, place the paper on a table, take off your shoes and rub, stretch, twist, and flex your feet, toes hands and fingers. The circulation is increased; the flexibility increases to help create better movements that require your feet. The results are not immediately or dramatic but it is something that never has to be a problem.

Just like we all know where every little penny goes for budget, Christmas gifts, and wants and needs, we need to cover all aspects of our training to be able to perform any movement with success and without injury. This will make you "in shape and fit" in my opinion. Train hard to be balanced in all that requires movement. Happy holidays from Augie and the Training to Balanced family!

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Training to be balanced

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