



@lifeperformancehealth

Performance Playbook

Smarter Rehab, Stronger Training, Sharper Preseason

Life Performance Health – *From Elite to Everyday.*

Introduction

Sport is demanding. It challenges your body, your mind, and your resilience.

At Life Performance Health, we believe every athlete – from juniors to weekend warriors to competitive players – deserves the same tools the pros use to recover, train, and perform. This guide combines our best “performance pearls”: simple, practical, science-backed insights you can use straight away to get more out of your body and your sport.

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Chapter 1

Offseason Done Right



Chapter 1

The offseason is your chance to breathe, recover from the bumps and bruises, and reset mentally. But it's also the best window to set yourself up for a massive preseason — and an even bigger 2026. Here are some tips to make sure you come back to preseason in fine order!

1. Take Stock of the Season Both Mentally and Physically

- Touch base with your physiotherapist and have all the niggles of the season checked out
- Take a look at our ***Bulletproof*** injury prevention program at Life Performance health. We establish risk factors that may impact your next season on the injury front.
- Use these targets to set up your off season gym and fitness program.

Do you need more size? More speed? More resilience?



Chapter 1

2. Develop a Strength Training Program

- This is the time you can get DOMS (Delayed-Onset Muscle Soreness) so there's no need to worry about it affecting your sport.
- Focus on full body movement like squats, lunges and deadlifts to load the major moving muscles, then use your off season injury screening to help add smaller more targeted exercises to build your body up for success.
- Focus on higher repetitions in this phase of the year, as we are trying to develop underlying muscle size and get higher volumes of weight through your body!

3. Implement a Progressive Running Program

- Similar to the gym, focus on achieving larger, slower distances across this phase.
- Build the steps in the legs to find returning to training a breeze – not a struggle.
- Consider performing a time trial at the start and end of this block, to make sure you're progressing effectively.

4. Prioritise Recovery Strategies

- *Active Recovery Days:* Integrate low-impact activities like swimming or cycling to enhance recovery without stressing the same muscles you use day in day out in the season.
- *Adequate Sleep and Nutrition:* Ensure sufficient rest and a balanced diet to support muscle repair and overall recovery.

5. Maintain Sport-Specific Skills

- Increases in change of direction and kicking volumes are a big risk factor for early pre season injuries. Make sure you're maintaining an adequate level of these.
- Use this time to work on kicking technique for example, without the pressure of team selection or an opponent.

Chapter 1

6. Plan for Transition Back to Pre-Season

- Be ready for pre season loads that are lot higher than the running loads from the previous seasons final series.
- Make sure you've maintained a good level of conditioning so that this isn't a massive jump!
- *Communication with Coaches:* Regularly update coaches on progress and any concerns regarding injury, and get feedback on ways you can improve your performance.
- *Goal Setting:* set small achievable goals for the first month back of the year to make sure you do well in pre-season.

Start your preseason **prepared**, not playing catch-up.

Book a Performance Assessment and set your foundation for 2026.



Chapter 2

Why Seeing the Bigger Picture Matters in Injury Rehab

We see the big picture.

If you've recently suffered an injury—whether you're a weekend warrior, recreational runner, or competitive athlete—it's easy to zero in on short-term goals: relieve pain, get back to training, and hope for the best. **But successful injury rehab doesn't end when the pain disappears.**

At Life Performance, we take a **big-picture approach** to sports injury rehabilitation.

1. Structured Rehab Works Like a Training Program

Just like a good strength or conditioning program, effective rehab is periodised—meaning it follows structured phases designed to rebuild your body step by step.

It gradually increases load and complexity based on your tissue healing timeline, and each phase has measurable targets—strength, stability, agility, and control—that we regularly test to track your progress.



2. Rehab Must Go Beyond the Clinic Room

True recovery happens across multiple environments—because sport and life demand more than just basic movement. At Life Performance, your rehab may include home exercise programs, gym-based training, and field-based coaching.

Each setting targets a different part of your recovery, and we use data to measure readiness so you're not returning to sport based on guesswork.

3. Testing and Retesting: The Backbone of Rehab

We don't rely on guesswork. From strength and mobility assessments to running mechanics and hop tests, we collect the data to steer your return to performance. Testing tells us when you're ready to move forward—or when to hold back.

Pain-free is just the baseline.

You deserve structured rehab that restores strength, movement, and confidence.

Book a smarter comeback with us





Chapter 3

Mastering Change of Direction

Chapter 3

Have a think about how the Bont or Nick Daicos stands up in a tackle, fends off their opponent and says.... “Not today thank you!” *They make it look easy! But seriously, agility wins games.*

Whether you’re dodging an opponent, cutting into space, or accelerating onto the ball, your ability to change direction quickly and efficiently can make the difference between good and great. Here are the key factors that underpin **COD performance** — and how to train them:

1. Strength & Power

Strong legs = strong change of direction.

- Focus on squats, lunges, and step-ups in multiple planes to build leg drive.
- Example for AFL athletes: Barbell Step-Ups (3 × 6) and ¼ Split Squats (4 × 5).
- The more force you can put into the ground, the sharper and faster you’ll cut.

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2. Plyometric Training

Explosive tendons and reactive pathways mean faster cuts.

- Add drop jumps, hopping, and bounding in all directions.
- Example for basketballers: Drop Jumps (4 × 5), Single-Leg Depth Jumps (4 × 5), Lateral Bounds (2 × 4).

Plyometrics improve both physical force and neural “wiring” for COD.

3. Speed & Acceleration

You can't change direction fast unless you can accelerate fast.

- Include sled-resisted starts, sprint drills, and short accelerations.
- Sample session: Resisted starts (5 × 15m), Flying 50s (6 × 50m), Accelerations (10 × 60m).

Build the burst that sets you up for successful COD.

4. Technique & Footwork

Agility isn't just power — it's precision.

- Work on foot placement, hip position, and body lean.

Use drills with coaching feedback to identify and fix technical flaws that waste energy.

Chapter 3

5. Reaction Time

Sport is chaotic. Your brain drives your feet.

- Train decision-making with reaction games, partner tag, or mirror drills.
- Reaction-based COD prepares you for game-day unpredictability.
- Put this all together at the end of your training block, by completing some of these chaotic drills under heavy fatigue. I.e. at the end of an 8-10km session.

COD is a mix of power, speed, and smarts. Build all three and you'll dominate the contest.



Chapter 4

Niggle or Injury?

Don't gamble with your season.

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First few weeks back on the field or court? Expect sore muscles. But what if that tight calf or sore knee lingers? That's when a niggle might be more than "just soreness."

What's a Niggle?

A niggle is minor pain, tightness, or discomfort during or after sport. You can often keep playing, but ignoring it raises your risk of a proper injury. Research shows athletes with a niggle are **3.6–6.9 times more likely** to suffer a time-loss injury. That's not something to brush off.

Should You Push Through?

Not every ache means stop immediately. But if something isn't improving, don't tough it out. Here's how to manage niggles smartly:

1. Check in with your body daily

- Is the pain better the next morning?
- Worse after training?
- If symptoms linger, book in with your physio or podiatrist.

2. Manage your training load

- School cross-country + netball + weekend soccer? That's a lot of stress.
- Scale back where you can. *Prioritise recovery.*

Chapter 4

3. Nail the basics

- Sleep enough.
- Eat nutritious food.
- Stay hydrated.

These are the real MVPs of injury prevention.

4. When in doubt, get it checked out

- Unsure if it's a niggle or an injury? That's why we're here.
- *Early intervention means faster recovery and less risk of it escalating.*

Why Early Intervention Matters

Niggles left unchecked = sidelined longer. Whether you're a junior, weekend warrior, or competitive athlete, listening to your body is key to staying in the game.

Don't gamble with your season.

Book an assessment — smarter care today keeps you playing tomorrow.



Chapter 5

Your Next Step



Chapter 5

Your Next Step

Knowledge is step one. But knowledge is useless without **application!**

Action is step two. Use these pearls to recover smarter, train stronger, and avoid injury.

If you still have questions, or want professional guidance with your program, come and see us at **Life Performance Health**.

Book your Performance Assessment today.

Spots in our Offseason Program are limited — secure yours now.

At Life Performance Health, we've worked with athletes at every level — from juniors to community players to pros. What we've learned is simple: success comes from consistency, recovery, and preparation. Use these pearls as your starting point — then let us help you take the **next step**.

