



Wickenheiser's Training Tips



One of the questions I get asked most often by young players is, “what do you do for off-ice training?”

Well, after 13 seasons with the National Women's Team, gone are the days when you could start a few weeks before training camp, skate a bit and roll into camp ready to go. Training at the elite level is an 11-months-of-the-year job for players on the National Women's Team.

Jason Poole, our strength and conditioning coach, and Mel Davidson, our head coach and GM both expect us to fill out daily log books which include HR, diet, training program and general comments. We do physical testing three times per year as well as periodic drug testing.

There are many theories on off-ice training for hockey. Hockey is a global game now, and I am a big believer in taking a look at how other countries develop their athletes and combining that with the knowledge we have here in Canada.

I have been lucky enough to experience unique training activities around the world like running through the forests of the Czech Republic, jumping over hurdles and into cold lakes in Finland, attending two Philadelphia Flyers rookie camps, and playing softball in the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney. These experiences have given me great perspective and knowledge about how to prepare for games.

I also believe in varying your off-ice training and having as versatile a program as possible. The past few years, I have been fortunate to train with excellent trainers like James Gattinger and most recently, Jungle Jim Hunter, the former Crazy Canuck skier.

Training for me is rarely ever boring and always challenging. For example, this year we did a week-long bike trip of about 150 to 250 km per day to start off the season. We incorporate gymnastics, balance, and core into almost every workout. I train outdoors 90 per cent of the time and don't have fancy gyms or equipment.

At this point in my career, the focus is on becoming a better athlete but specifically a better hockey player. Everything we do relates to the game.

Through my experiences as an athlete and a mom, I have developed a bit of a personal philosophy about summer training for hockey that applies to any age:

1. The best athletes make the best hockey players. I am not a big fan of summer hockey at all. A week or two of hockey school is OK, but kids should be exposed to many different sports to avoid burnout. Playing other sports develops coordination and body awareness that is invaluable to being a great hockey player.
2. Be creative. Although it can be helpful, you don't need access to the best trainers or gyms to get better. Some of my best training has been throwing bails and doing chin ups off the horse trailer on our family farm in Saskatchewan. Don't be afraid to add different things to your summer training. Do activities that take you out of your comfort zone and raise the bar to new levels.



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3. Training isn't just physical. Jim Hunter has really taught me a lot about this recently. Make sure to take care of the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of training. I added things like Yoga and meditation to my training program and they have helped me tremendously. Take the time to visualize yourself lifting that goal weight or performing a dryland skill. You can also play games with yourself to help you through the hardest of workouts. For example, during hard bike or running intervals, work on your focus by counting backwards from 100 by 3. You can sharpen your mind and your body at the same time.

4. Work on your skills in the off-season. Just like when I was a kid, I still shoot a lot of pucks in my garage in the summers. I also like to get on the ice in early June to work on skills and skating technique. This isn't hard skating drills, rather a focus on improving hands and coordination at a low intensity level. I always feel much better when it comes time to really skate if I have spent a few months refining my skills and trying new moves.

5. There is no shortcut to success – work hard. Nowadays, we hear about the next great machine or Program that will take us to the next level. There are many great programs and trainers out there, but if you truly work hard and smart and are committed to almost any program, you will see results.

6. Fuel for gold. I have learned a lot about diet over the years. Today, I look at Diet as one of the most important pieces of the puzzle as a hockey player. I see many athletes who train and work hard, only to eat it all away at their next meal full of junk and high fat foods. Take the time to educate yourself on eating properly. For me, this means eating 4-5 smaller meals per day, organic fruits and produce, whole grains, lean protein, lots of water and definitely the odd treat.

7. Rest is a weapon: Rest is something I am not very good at. I would rather go all the time, but a top NHL player once said this to me and it makes sense the older I get: in order to be able to work hard, we need to rest hard too. True rest doesn't mean hanging out at the mall. It means taking the down time to truly let your body recover, so you are ready to make gains at your next training session.

The longer the hockey season, the shorter the off-season. The off-season is where you can truly make your best gains. The more you commit to improving in the off-season, the more successful your hockey season will be. Have fun and work hard.