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## **Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers Doing Their Part To Keep Spring Athletes In Top Form**

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While the professional baseball season can last upwards of seven months, youth, high school, and collegiate seasons are significantly shorter. A shoulder injury such as a rotator cuff strain or biceps tendinitis can cause a baseball player to be out of the lineup for a week or two. While this is a mere drop in the bucket to big leaguers, it can mean a significant period of time for a high school athlete in PA who has 3-5 games in a given week. For this reason, athletic trainers throughout the state are actively involved in helping develop off-season conditioning programs for baseball, softball, and lacrosse, all of which involve repetitive overhead motions that can cause the injuries mentioned above.



So why take time out of a busy winter schedule to work with athletes who are not even in season? That's a great question and summed up by the adage, An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Prevention and risk management are just a small part of what a licensed athletic trainer does. Florence Batten, athletic trainer at Fleetwood High School, Fleetwood, PA agrees, "In the past 2 years that we have offered off-season training and conditioning programs, this, I have noticed a decrease in shoulder injuries and also a decrease in the amount of athletes that I am seeing for overall shoulder soreness." She also notes that, "With the athletes utilizing the training program their bodies are more able to deal with the work load that comes on very quickly during that first week of spring practice."

Much of the off-season training and conditioning for these athletes is focused on rehabilitation exercises to combat chronic injuries as well as strengthen appropriate muscles that are vital to peak performance over the duration of the season. While it is true that in high school you have many athletes "staying in shape" by playing multiple sports, it is also important to remember that sports such as baseball, softball, lacrosse, and even swimming require repetitive use of certain upper extremity muscles that are not required in most other sports. This is why it is important that "Off-season conditioning for overhead sports should focus on core strength, scapular stabilizers and rotator cuff strengthening," says Dr. Thomas Kohl, Director of Sports Medicine Services for the Reading Health System and member of the PIAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee.

Simple exercises to increase strength and endurance in shoulders:

All exercises should be done 3 sets of 6-8 repetitions

1. Lateral Raises – Place a dumbbell in your hand at your side (3-5 lbs to start) and raise your arm out to the side to perpendicular to your body. Do not go above 90 degrees. Alternate arms after each set.
2. Empty Can – Place a dumbbell in your hand with your arm at your side (3-5 lbs to start) and raise it in front of you making sure to keep your thumb pointed down. Do not go above 90 degrees. Alternate arms after each set
3. No money – Using an elastic exercise band, grab it with both hands so that it's taut in front of you with your elbows bent to 90 degrees. Rotate one forearm out while the other stays in place. Alternate arms after each set.
4. Diamond push-ups – Assume a push-up position with your thumbs and index fingers touching to form a diamond. Keep your body in a straight line with your core tight, and arms straight. Lower your body so that only your shoulder blades come together, then return to starting position. Movement is minimal, but results are maximal.

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The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society offers many resources and recommendations for employers and unique workplace settings who might recognize immediate benefits and cost containment through preventing workplace injuries and early treatment or referral for employee personal injuries by hiring a Licensed Athletic Trainer.

For more information regarding this topic or to schedule an interview contact either PATS President Yvette Ingram, PhD, LAT, ATC, or Scott Kimbel LAT, ATC at [southcentral@gopats.org](mailto:southcentral@gopats.org).

The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society, Inc. is a progressive organization of licensed health care professionals who work under the direction of a licensed physician. Our society continues to increase public awareness and education regarding Athletic Trainers and the Athletic Training profession while serving as the premier source of information for public safety, injury and illness prevention, early intervention, patient care, and healthcare delivery for the physically active in the Commonwealth.

"The Keystone to a Healthy and Physically Active Life"

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