

# THE BFS 1-2-3-4 FLEXIBILITY PROGRAM

Part 12  
in a Series

## The Warm-Up

By Glen Fairclough

It's time for our daily workout. We do a few stretching exercises to limber up and our warm-up is complete. We can now safely move on to our workout, right?

**WRONG!**

Coach Bob Rowbotham of Bigger Faster Stronger reminds us that there is an important difference between flexibility training and the warm-up.

"Don't confuse flexibility training with the warm-up," he said. "Each must be worked on separately. Both must receive attention and be worked on hard. There is a big difference between warm-up and flexibility training. The purpose of a warm-up is to raise the body temperature before undergoing the main physical activity or training program. Flexibility training should be a workout within itself to increase the mobility of each joint area."

To be effective, flexibility training must be done *after* the body temperature has been increased. Therefore, if an athlete does flexibility training simply as a pre-workout warm-up, he has defeated the entire purpose of doing it at all.

In an ideal workout, the warm-up is completed before the flexibility training and followed by the exercise routine. That is followed by another flexibility training session and, finally, the cool-down period.

What is a good warm-up?

Any activity which raises the body temperature is fine. Coach Rowbotham said, "Nothing real hard. Keep it simple. It doesn't take long—about five minutes. You can jog in place or do calisthenics, like jumping jacks or sit-ups. It's simple. When the blood flows, you're more flexible," Coach Rowbotham explained.

Jumping rope is another excellent way to warm up.

If time is critical, however, Coach Rowbotham suggests postponing the flexibility training until after the main workout. This allows an athlete to receive the maximum benefit because when the body temperature is at a peak, the range of motion possible at each joint is also at it's best.

There is another benefit to doing flexibility training following the main workout. Including it prior to the cool-down helps reduce the amount of soreness and stiffness the following day.

The basic BFS 1-2-3-4 flexibility program may be used as part of the overall workout routine during a group practice session, or done individually before or

after the workout. "The package will work if you do it," Coach Rowbotham said. "You should work on flexibility for 10 to 15 minutes, six or seven days a week, particularly if you're an athlete. An athlete has no excuse not to do flexibility training daily. If you're going to be an upper-limit person, you need to do it every day. Stick to the program!"

Proper flexibility training is ignored or overlooked by most coaches, possibly because progress isn't as evident or as easily measured, as it can be in a workout. But Coach Rowbotham encourages athletes to get better at it. "Flexibility is easy to work on individually, but it's most neglected because you don't see the results. Try to get better. Move beyond what you've been able to do. Doing the 1-2-3-4 program twice would be advanced. If you can touch your head to your knees doing the hurdler's stretch, try to touch your chin to your knees. And when you can do that, try to touch your chest to your knees.

"Everyone can get better. Even the best like [Olympic medalist] Carl Lewis work on flexibility to improve."

Coach Rowbotham also reminds us that we become less flexible with time. "Age restricts your range of motion. If you don't use the full range, you'll eventually lose it," he said.

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