

# Three things you **MUST** know to be fit for finals

With the end of the winter sports season fast approaching, many of you will be preparing for a budding successful finals campaign on the charge for the premiership.

Entering finals can be a challenging time for most athletes – emotions run hot, expectations are high and there's a buzz in the air. Unfortunately though by this point of the season, we've often been nursing injuries and niggle's for the past couple of weeks, or potentially even months and one week off depending on your sport, is generally insufficient time to get back to 100%. The beauty is everyone else is feeling the same way!

So here are our **top three tips** to gain an advantage over your opponents, as we knock down the door for the final month of winter sport:

## 1. Recovery

Often talked about, rarely performed well. As our bodies sustain wear and tear from day to day work, training and then competition, it is essential that we give our bodies the right tools to recover. Sleep, nutrition and mobility in my opinion are the cornerstones of this.

- **Sleep:** avoid caffeinated drinks after lunch and limit screen time before bed. If you can't sleep, get up and move around! Laying there thinking about sleep often results in sleep anxiety which, in turn, is further disruptive.
- **Nutrition:** get an ample amount of fresh fruit and vegetables, unrefined carbohydrates and protein as well

as drinking enough water before, after and during training. Our body needs nutrition to fuel our performance – there are no Ferrari's scooting around with 91 in the tank.

- **Mobility:** A physiotherapist specialty. If you have a manual job or maybe your desk-bound, how your body moves or doesn't during the 8-10 hours you're at work will directly correlate to your performance come game day. (See below for some examples of everyday mobility work that everyone should be endeavouring to add into their regime). If you can feel your back starting to stiffen up, or your neck is getting sore hunched over a desk all day, get it seen to, get some advice, and optimise your performance on and off the field.

## 2. Sports Psychology

With finals comes excitement. But for some, comes the pressure of performance.

When you hear any elite athlete talk, they often say "it's 90% mental". Having your head in the game, so to speak, is one of the biggest factors when returning from an injury or when playing sore.

Confidence leads to natural movement, hesitation leads to unnatural movement and subsequent increased risk of injury, further decreasing performance.

Have a chat with someone senior at your club, your coach or a teammate that has been there before. And if you do have an injury – may be an old calf that's niggling or a shoulder that doesn't feel quite right – get it seen to so that you can put it to the back of your mind and you can once again solely focus on the sport at hand – stress-free.

### 3. Training load

Although you're fortunate enough to find yourself at the business end of the year, now is not the time to try and get fitter, stronger, and faster – that's for the preseason.

The goal now is to maintain and rest up. You won't lose any fitness doing three sets of ten on the bench press instead of your usual three sets of twelve!

Listen to your body. If you are unsure, come and have a chat with a Physiotherapist. Load management – particularly pertaining to muscle tears, growth plate related issues in our junior athletes (e.g. [Severs](#), [Osgood Schlatters](#), Sinding-Larsen-Johansson syndrome) and tendon pathology – are daily conditions for physiotherapists.

Our goal as physiotherapists is to get you, the athlete, back to 100% ASAP, and with the proper management leading into the next month and beyond we are confident everyone will reap the rewards of a long season ahead.

*By Daniel Browne, Physiotherapist*

For more information or to make an appointment, you can [BOOK ONLINE](#) or call your [local clinic](#).