A close-up of a logo

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Criteria to initiate program:

* Proper alignment and eccentric control with bilateral and unilateral closed chain movements.
* Complete 4 week return to jogging program to build aerobic base to prepare for more intense runs. Athlete should be able to jog for 10 consecutive minutes prior to starting program. Goal is not speed or distance when jogging 10 minutes but having a solid aerobic foundation to build upon.
* Single leg single hop test and single leg press >70% on Limb Symmetry Index.

Key notes:

* Perform program on every other day basis to allow for 24-48 hours recovery time.
* Athletes will progress at different rates through the program dependent upon confidence, degree of inflammation, severity of injury, age, and type of surgical intervention. Pain and swelling are the best guides to determining tolerance at each phase and whether an athlete should progress to the next step. Progression through the phases is combined evaluation and guidance of rehab provider and coach.
* Setbacks are common during return to sport progressions and sound judgment should be used regarding an extra rest day(s) or regressing back to prior phase if pain and swelling are problematic.
* Continue with strengthening exercises 2-3 times a week while progressing running program- strengthening exercises may overlap days of running program and be performed after running program; however, must have one complete rest day per week.
* Active warm-up to initiate each session with cooldown following. Ice for 10-15 minutes following session as pain and swelling dictate.

Active warm-up

Pre-running drills (15 yards down and back each): jogging, skipping, side shuffle, backpedal, high knees, butt kicks, grapevine

Dynamic stretching routine to upper extremity, trunk, and lower extremity (10 yards down and back each): single leg RDL, quad stretch, side lunge, forward lunge, reverse lunge, knee tucks, glute stretch, inchworms

Footwork drills: speed ladder or hurdles

Cool down

5-10 minutes global lower extremity stretching

Ice for 10-15 minutes as pain and swelling dictates

Phase I:

* Goal: initiate linear running drills with acceleration and deceleration
* Level 1:
  + 60 yards x 10 repetitions at 50% intensity (20 yards to accelerate/decelerate), walk back for full recovery between repetitions
    - Starting in 2 point start progressing to 3 or 4 point start
  + Backpedal 10 yards x 10 repetitions at 50% intensity
* Level 2:
  + 40 yards x 12 repetitions at 60% intensity (10-15 yards to accelerate/decelerate), walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + Backpedal 10 yards x 5 repetitions at 60-75% intensity
  + Transitions at 50% intensity (5 yards forward/5 yards backwards) x 5 repetitions
  + Transitions at 50% intensity (5 yards backwards/5 yards forwards) x 5 repetitions
  + Focus on planting on involved leg at the transition
* Level 3:
  + 60 yards x 10 repetitions at 60% intensity (10 yards to accelerate/decelerate), walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + Backpedal 10 yards x 10 repetitions at 60-75%
  + Sprint transitions (forward/backwards and backward/forwards each 5 yards) x 10 repetitions at 60-75%
  + “S-run” 20-30 yards x 5-10 repetitions at 50% intensity
  + Start with cones spaced large intervals and progress down to work on changing directions
  + Box drills at 50-60% intensity (forward, shuffle, backwards, shuffle)

Phase II:

* Goal: advanced linear acceleration, initiate change in direction with visual stimulus, build up to 75% multidirectional speed to progress to Phase III
* Level 1:
  + 75% intensity for 60 yards x 8 repetitions, 40 yards x 6 repetitions
    - All performed in 3 or 4 point start
    - Walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + Cone drills/cutting for 15-20 yards x 4 repetitions at 50% intensity
    - Focus on getting low and bending knees to change direction, plant with outside foot. Gradually move cones closer for a sharper angle cut.
  + Box drills at 60-75% intensity (forward, shuffle, backwards, shuffle)
* Level 2:
  + 75% intensity for 80 yards x 6 repetitions, 40 yards x 6 repetitions
    - All performed in 3 or 4 point start
    - Walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + Cone drills/cutting for 15-20 yards x 4 repetitions at 75% intensity, then perform 4 repetitions at sharper angle at 50% intensity
  + Backpedal cone drills for 15-20 yards x 4 repetitions at 50% intensity
* Level 3:
  + 75% intensity for 80 yards x 6 repetitions, 60 yards x 6 repetitions, 40 yards x 4 repetitions
    - All performed in 3 or 4 point start
    - Walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + Backpedal cone drills for 15-20 yards x 4 repetitions at 75% intensity
  + Backpedal cone into sprint with reacting to direction (lateral, forward, forward angle) at 50% intensity
  + 50% intensity for gasser 5yd-10yd-5yd x 4 repetitions
* Level 4:
  + 80% intensity for 80 yards x 6 repetitions, 40 yards x 6 repetitions
    - All performed in 3 or 4 point start
    - Walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + Backpedal cone into sprint with reacting to direction at 75% intensity
  + Backpedal into turn and run at 50% intensity
  + 60-75% intensity for gasser 5 yd-10yd-5d x 4 repetitions
  + Linear run at 50% into jump stop
    - Start with athlete chosen stop and progress to visual or verbal instruction to stop
* Level 5:
  + 80% intensity for 60 yards x 6, 40 yards x 6, 20 yards x 6, 10 yards x 6
    - All performed in 3 or 4 point start
    - Walk back for full recovery between repetitions
  + 75% intensity for gasser 15yd-10yd-5yd x 4
  + Backpedal into turn and run at 60-75% intensity
  + Linear run at 60-75% into jump stop
    - Start with athlete chose stop and progress to visual or verbal instruction to stop

Phase III:

* Goal: build repeated sprint ability, introduce sport-specific demands with participation in team drills (no team contact, may perform sled and bag contact when held by coach), change in direction with reactive or auditory stimulus, linear speed at 90-100% intensity, multidirectional speed at 75-85% intensity progressing to 100% intensity
* Options:
  + Gassers 5yd-10yd-15yd x 10 repetitions
  + 4 x 40 yard, 4 x 60 yard, 4 x 80 yard
  + 6 x 10 yard, 6 x 20 yard, 6 x 40 yard, 6 x 60 yard
  + 4 x 80 yard, 4 x 100 yard
  + Sprint transitions at 100% intensity

Position specifics:

QB: see Return to Football (Quarterback Position) program.

RB’s: hand-off exchange, pass protection, can run plays against air (no contact, no 1 on 1, no 7 on 7), footwork and cutting drills

OL: drops against air, run blocking/plays against air, one man sled driving straight, footwork and ladder drills

TE and WR: routes against air (no 1 on 1, no 7 on 7), pass protection, footwork and ladder drills

DB’s: emphasis on clean break without false steps, zone drops against air, work on reads, bag or sled tackling straight drive (stay on feet), no 1 on 1, no 7 on 7

LB’s and DE’s: footwork and ladder drills, work on reads, zone drops against air, pass rush against air, bag or sled tackling straight drive (stay on feet), no 1 on 1, no 7 on 7

DL: footwork and ladder drills, pass rush against air, bag or sled tackling straight drive (stay on feet), no 1 on 1, no 7 on 7

See Return to Football (Upper Extremity Contact Progression) for step-by-step information on returning to contact.

Phase IV:

* Full pads and cleats on
* Full participation in team conditioning

Position specifics:

* Participation in team drills with limited contact (contact with unmoving object or contact with expected force). See Return to Football (Upper Extremity Contact Progression) for step-by-step information.

Phase V:

* Full participation in team conditioning and practice
* Full contact in scrimmage situations with initial limited minutes progressing to unlimited playing time in preparation for game play