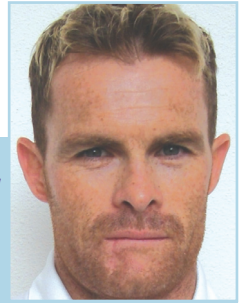


Is your programme periodised?

Allistair McCaw suggests ways of planning your training so as to achieve peak performance at the crucial moments



ALLISTAIR McCAW

is the founder of Athletes' Conditioning, which specializes in athletic performance enhancement through sport-specific conditioning.

He has worked with various world class athletes including top-ten tennis players Jelena Dokic and Dinara Safina. In squash he has trained one of the world's top female players, Natalie Grinham.

Allistair advises athletes at all levels and also contributes regular articles to Squashlife, Medicine & Tennis Journal and Australian Tennis Magazine.

Visit his homepage at www.AthletesConditioning.com

Periodisation is the process of dividing time into named blocks with relatively stable characteristics. In a sporting context, it is a progressive approach to training that involves cycling the various aspects of a training programme to achieve peak performance at particular times. Periodisation is based on the recognition that it is not possible to perform at 100% all the time, so training must be broken down into 'waves', 'cycles' or 'sub-programmes'.

I must admit that when I started working with squash players I was amazed at how much their tournament calendars varied from year to year. I had previously worked predominantly with professional tennis players, whose tournament calendar was 90% the same every year, the major, 'Grand Slam', tournaments always taking place in the same weeks and the same tournaments leading up to them. So for me, designing a periodisation plan for a tennis player was pretty simple.

Another thing I soon learned working with squash players was that a tournament could be added or

cancelled at short notice. You can have a train or air ticket booked and a hotel room confirmed only to be told that the tournament is no longer happening. Not only do you have to be flexible on the court, you must be even more flexible in your training and tournament planning – in other words, in your periodisation plan.

So how should you plan the periodisation of your season? Well, let me start by saying: I am not going to tell you exactly how to plan it because every player's schedule and allocated training time will be different, which makes it hard for me to be specific. I have been planning my own training for 20 seasons now, and not one single plan has ended up precisely the way I had foreseen it. Things like illness and

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injury can suddenly change everything, sometimes even making you miss your most important goal.

This happened to me three weeks before the World Duathlon Championships. I was hit by a car while riding my bike. However, after I had recovered, I was able to use the training I had built up over the previous

Table 1

Performance element Examples and key words

Core	Strengthening of the back and abdominals, including rotational, mobility and stability exercises Abdominal crunches, swiss ball exercises, bridge, rotational exercises with a medicine ball, etc.
Prehab	Stretching and dynamic flexibility exercises to protect the body from injury, usually to the overused areas specific to the chosen sport Exercises for squash would include the shoulders, knees, ankles and lower back, using elastic tubes, light dumbbells, stability mats, swiss ball etc.
Speed, agility & quickness (SAQ)	Sport-specific movement drills, e.g. sprints, cones, footwork drills, off-the mark acceleration, multidirectional drills, etc.
Strength	Exercises to make the body more powerful; developing muscle through resistance Free weight routines (exercises performed with plates, dumbbells, bars instead of machines) Exercises with equipment (medicine balls, dumbbells, etc.) to develop sport-specific strength (SSS)
X-training (X-T)	Complementary activities other than your chosen sport which can improve your fitness – also useful for avoiding boredom resulting from doing the same things repeatedly: keep it fun! Biking, running, rowing, swimming, skipping, circuits, soccer, etc.
Recuperation (recovery)	Usually performed after a training session or match or on a 'rest day', to speed up the regeneration phase so that the body can perform better in the next session or day. Foam rolling, stretching, massage, yoga, etc.