

# Conditioning key to off-season

The postseason championship track meets have begun. It is hard to believe that we are rapidly approaching the end of another outdoor track and field season.

This portion of the season is considered "prime time" for runners and field athletes competing at the division, conference and state championship meets. We anticipate that our opponents will all be strong and everyone will be competing at his or her best.

In addition to participating in year-end athletic events, some of our fellow athletes will be completing their high school athletic careers in the next few weeks. Many of us, however, will return to play sports in the fall.

Prior to the start of fall sports, all of us have the summer to reflect upon past seasons and analyze our respective performances. More importantly, the summer provides us with the opportunity to train for the upcoming year. Upon our return to school, our training during the off-season will help us become both physically and mentally stronger and give us the self-confidence to report for that first practice, motivated and ready to work. Our hard work will provide the means necessary to have a positive experience.

I cannot stress enough how important this preparation period is. I have seen athletes report to sports programs without proper physical conditioning. They experience greater aches and strains than those who have remained active throughout the off-season and subsequently are unable to compete at their

fullest potential.

People will often "go for the gold" at the first few practices and get injured within a relatively short period of time. Valuable time is then lost rehabilitating rather than competing. It is certainly demoralizing to have to sit on the sidelines wondering how successful you might have been, had you taken the initiative to train properly.

Our coaches and trainers have spent countless hours working with our teams, giving us the benefit of their knowledge, and teaching us what is necessary to build strength and agility. It is important that we utilize their expert advice wisely.

Jog, swim, bike or engage in some physical activity that you enjoy just enough to keep your body loose. This way, once those team practices start, you will be ready for them. Take advantage of the time you have now, give yourself an edge and focus on building stamina that will enable you to compete at your peak in future seasons.

There are no shortcuts for hard work; proper conditioning is the key to success. Remember, as the 1989 New York City Marathon winner Juma Ikangaa stated, "The will to win means nothing if you haven't the will to prepare."

Have a great summer!

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