THE IMPORTANCE OF STRETCHING

Stretching is very important for young athletes. By forgoing stretching before or after exercise, young athletes and professional athletes run the risk of injuries and delayed recovery. A few minutes spent stretching both before and after exercising provides numerous benefits. Stretching before athletic activity helps prepare the muscles for exercise. Stretching after exercise has proven to be even more important for preventing injury.

**Seat Side Straddle**
Sit with legs spread, placing both hands on the same shin or ankle. Bring the chin toward the knee, keeping the leg straight. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three to six times. Repeat exercise on the opposite leg.

**Seat Stretch**
Sit with the legs together, feet flexed, and hands on the shins or ankles. Bring the chin toward the knees. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three to six times.

**Side Lunges**
Stand with legs apart, bending the left knee while leaning toward the left. Keep the back straight and the right leg straight. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three to six times. Repeat on opposite leg.

**Cross-Over**
Stand with legs crossed, keeping the feet close together and the legs straight. Try to touch the toes. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three to six times. Repeat with the opposite leg.

**Seat Straddle Lotus**
Sit down, placing the soles of the feet together and drop the knees toward floor. Place the forearms on the inside of the knees and push the knees toward the ground. Lean forward from the hips. Hold for five seconds. Repeat three to six times.