



## 17. Upper Body Conditioning

By Brian Mackenzie  
British Athletic Federation (BAF) Senior Coach

### Introduction

One of the most common sites of injury is the lower back. Injury in this region can be as a result of muscular imbalance, weak or inflexible muscles or poor posture. It makes sense, therefore, to develop a session that will work all these areas and give the right level of conditioning for injury prevention.

### The exercises

Detailed below is a session of six exercises. The exercises are to be performed slowly and smoothly and at no time should you be out of breath.

#### Sit Ups (Lower Abdominals)

- Lie on your back with your legs bent, knees together and feet flat on the floor.
- Rest your hands on your thighs
- Sit up until the palms of your hands touch your knees
- Return to the starting position
- Perform the movements in a slow controlled fashion

#### Back Arches (Back)

- Lie on your front with your legs crossed at the ankles, keep your feet firmly anchored to the floor
- Hands and arms straight out in front of you
- Raise your upper body off the floor, keep your neck in line with your spine
- Hold for one second and then slowly lower to the floor

#### Speed Cramps (Upper Abdominals)

- Lying on your back, keep your legs together in the air, bent at the knees
- Rest your hands lightly on the side of your head (not the back of your neck)
- Raise your upper body to bring your elbows to your knees and go straight back down

#### Hip and Leg raise (Gluteals and hamstrings)

- Lie on your back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor
- Place your hands by your side

- Raise hips and straighten one leg and hold for a second before lowering
- Repeat with the other leg

#### Short sit ups (Hip flexors and Abdominals)

- Lie on your back with knees bent, feet flat on the floor
- Rest your hands lightly on the side of your head (not the back of your neck)
- Raise your body so that your upper body is at 30-40 degree angle with the floor
- Hold for one second before coming down slowly

#### Back Extensions (Back)

- Sit on the floor with legs bent, feet flat on the floor
- Position your hands on the floor behind you to take some of the weight
- Raise your body off the floor so that your body is parallel with the floor
- Hold for one second and slowly lower

### How Many and How Often?

Start at one set of 10 repetitions. Each week increase the number of repetitions by 2. When you reach 20 repetitions increase the number of sets by one and start again at 10 repetitions.

The exercises should be performed two or three times a week and be incorporated into your training schedule.

### Before You Start

Prior to starting any training program it is recommended that you have a medical examination to ensure it is safe for you to do so.