

Weight Loss For Soccer Players

By Taylor Tollison
Functional Soccer Training

It is important to approach this topic with an open mind. Most soccer athletes are lean but how you approach that small percentage of overweight players can have a big impact on their development. Before you stop reading because you feel this doesn't apply, ask yourself this question, would I recommend that overweight soccer players exercise 20+ minutes continuously to lose the weight? If that is your recommendation please keep reading. You very well could be affecting that soccer player in a couple of ways: 1. increased likelihood of injury 2. decreased performance.

Misconceptions about weight loss and soccer training throughout the years tend to exacerbate the situation. Traditional weight loss programs tell us that to lose weight you must get on the exercise bike, run or do the elliptical machine for 20+ minutes a day at least 3 times a week.

Through further analysis I hope that you will see why it is not recommended to lose weight via long drawn out sessions.

Performance could decrease

In the world of athletics few things matter more than running fast, cutting quickly and jumping high. Every day we hear of athletes that have 40 inch vertical leaps or can run the 40 yard dash in 4.3 sec. These are world class numbers that require both good genetics and the proper exercise regimen. Athletes that have such great numbers could literally have excelled at almost any speed sport with the proper practice growing up.

How can running 20 minutes continuously day after day affect the overweight soccer player's athleticism? Numerous studies and countless hours of experience by many have shown that continuous steady state exercise negatively affects power. Power provides the boosters to run fast and jump high which are driven by fast twitch fibers. Simply put, the more fast twitch fibers you have, the faster you will run.

By doing long drawn out runs you start to not only train your slow twitch fibers but also convert the properties of fast twitch fibers to slow. This makes you a slower athlete.

Increased likely hood of injury

The body is exposed to up to seven times its body weight on every step while running.(1) Exposing the body to repeated poundings when it is not able can eventually cause overuse injuries.

This is especially important to overweight athletes. Exposing a 180 pound athlete who is only adapted to handle 150 pounds to repeated trauma causes a huge weight bearing deficit for each step taken. If each step during a run causes seven times the bodies weight in pounding, that is 210 pounds more, in this example, than the body is used to on each step. That is the equivalent of almost one grown person riding on that athletes back during a 20 minute run. Over time how do you think this athlete will fair?

How to arrange a proper weight loss program for overweight soccer players

This is based on a player being untrained and with no injuries. You should start the initial stages on a bike or elliptical machine to decrease weight bearing. Continuous exercise in the initial stages is only for the body to adapt to the harder exercise to come. If the athlete progresses well enough and decreases a significant amount of weight, have them start running in the later stages of this plan. Start this athlete at the intro level then move them to novice and so on. This is only an example. I recommend you consult with a trainer in your area and a doctor before moving forward.

Intro level

Start out with longer steady runs to get the body adjusted to exercise. Keep the pace easy.

Week 1: 15 minutes continuous.

Week 2: 20 minutes continuous.

Week 3: 20 minutes continuous but pick up the pace a little so the athlete is now exercising at a higher intensity.

Novice

Here is where you are going to really pick up the pace. The athlete in this stage should be breathing hard.

Week 4: 3 minutes for 2 reps.

Week 5: 3 minutes for 3 reps.

Week 6: 4 minutes for 3 reps.

Week 7: 4 minutes for 4 reps.

The athlete should rest the same amount of time between reps as the exercise lasts. If the rep lasts 3 minutes then rest 3 minutes till you do the next 3 minute rep.

Intermediate

This level is very hard, close to maximum, but not quite.

Week 8: 30 seconds 3 times. Do this for 2 sets. That is a total of 6 reps.

Week 9: You will rest the athlete by cutting a few reps. 30 seconds 4 times.

Week 10: 45 seconds 3 times for 2 sets.

The athlete should rest two times the duration of the exercise and 3 minutes between sets. If the exercise lasts 30 seconds rest 1:00 min.

Advanced

This level is done at 100% intensity. You will rest 5 times the duration of the exercise between reps and about 3 minutes between sets.

Week 11: 15 seconds, 2 sets of 5 reps.

Week 12: 15 seconds, 2 sets of 6 reps.

Creating the best athletes as possible is important to the success of your soccer team. But implementing the correct exercise program for those athletes that need to drop some weight is key to their success. It does no good to get an athlete to lose weight by doing long continuous runs if they are injured all the time. Remember one of the primary goals of strength and conditioning is injury prevention.

1) Core Performance, Mark Vertegen.