



RETURN TO SPORT PROGRESSION: FOOTBALL

1. The athlete must pass all functional tests and/or be cleared by sports medicine medical provider before beginning Return to Football Protocol.
2. Recommend pursuing Transitional Therapy for return to sport activities during this phase Transitional Therapy is a strength and conditioning program that is led by medical professionals with a sports medicine background with the goal of transitioning from therapy back to sport.
3. The athlete may progress through the phases as tolerated. Cross-training can be performed on off days. (Cross training can be done by performing non sport specific activities i.e. swimming, biking, yoga, and/or PT home exercises, see attached instructions).
4. The home exercises and training activities in each phase are a comprehensive guideline, it is not necessary to complete every activity and/or exercise on the day you are training. The athlete should pick 1-2 activities or exercises per section to avoid over training.
5. Each phase should be performed 2-3 times with **one rest day between each session**, the athlete should progress to the next phase once he/she is able to complete the current phase without pain, swelling, decreased range of motion or difficulty.
6. If the athlete experiences pain, swelling, decreased range of motion or difficulty during a phase, he/she should take a day off and go back to the prior phase where they were not experiencing pain and or difficulty completing activities. Do not keep moving through phases if you are having pain or difficulty. Seek medical attention if necessary.
7. The athlete should ice the affected area for 15-20 minutes following the activity.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Begin on field running/ throwing drills	•	•	•	•	•
Progress running and football drills (Non-contact)		•	•	•	•
Team practice (Light contact)			•	•	•
Team scrimmage (Contact)				•	•
Games					•
Playing time	Begin with playing 10-15 minutes at a time during team scrimmage. Progressively increase your playing time as you tolerate.				

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Warm Up to be performed before each session:

- **Foam rolling:** large lower extremity and upper extremity muscle groups or specific areas of focus as instructed by Physical Therapist.
- **Dynamic Warm up:** Walking quadriceps stretch, walking hamstring stretch, inchworm walkouts, ½ kneel ankle rocking, forward lunges to 20 yard line, lateral lunge to 20 yard line, high knees, power skips, lateral shuffles to 20 yard line
- **Upper body warm up:** see PT home exercises for upper extremity
- **Phase 1 – Begin on field running and football drills:**
 - **Running:** (without pads)
 - Jog to 50 yd line and back
 - ¾ speed sprint to 50 yd line, down and back
 - Line touches at ¾ speed (10 yd, 30 yd, 50 yd)
 - Complete all running drills forward and backwards (position specific)
 - **Agility/ Jumping/ landing:**
 - Diagonal forward leaps, 20 yd line and back
 - Agility cone drills & ladder drills at ¾ speed
 - Figure 8, X-Lane Drill, M Drill, ZigZag, and T Drill
 - *See attached sheet for agility drills descriptions
 - **Throwing:** *begin at 50% effort throwing*
 - Warm up with tossing football with coach or team mate, complete 5 warm up throws after each rest period
 - Step 1- 10 yds 10x, REST 5 min, 10 yds 10x
Step 2- 10 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 10 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 10 yds 15x
- **Phase 2 – Progression of running and football drills (non-contact)**
 - **Running:** (with pads)
 - Jog full field and back 2x
 - ¾ speed sprint full field, down and back 2x
 - Full speed sprint full field, down and back 2x
 - Line touches at full speed (10 yds, 30 yds, 50 yds, full field)
 - Begin on field route running drills
 - **Agility/ jumping/ landing:**
 - Diagonal forward leaps, 20 yd line and back
 - Perform PT home exercise jumping/ landing drills with trainer or coach
 - Agility cone drills & ladder drills at ¾ speed
 - Figure 8, X-Lane Drill, M Drill, Zig Zag, and T Drill
 - **Throwing:** *progress to throwing 75% effort*
 - Warm up with tosses with coach or teammate, complete 5 warm up throws after every rest period
 - Step 1- 20 yds 10x, REST 5 min, 20 yds 10x

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- Step 2- 20 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 20 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 20 yds 15x
- Step 3- 30 yds 10x, REST 5 min, 30 yds 10x
- **Phase 3 – Conditioning and return to contact (Light Contact)**
 - **Running:** (with pads)
 - Begin interval training (jog for 1 minute, then sprint for 30 seconds)
 - Jog full field and back 2x
 - Jogging high knees to 50 yd line and back 2x
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ speed followed by full speed sprints full field, down and back 2x
 - Line touches at full speed (10 yds, 30 yds, 50 yds, full field) 2x
 - **Agility/ Jumping:**
 - Diagonal, forward, and lateral leaps, 50 yd line and back
 - Agility cone drills & ladder drills at full speed
 - Figure 8, X-Lane Drill, M Drill, ZigZag Drill, T Drills
 - **Throwing:** *progress to throwing at 100% effort*
 - Warm up with tosses with coach or teammate, complete 5 warm up throws after every rest period
 - Step 1- 40 yds 10x, REST 5 min, 40 yds 10x
 - Step 2- 40 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 40 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 40 yds 15x
 - Step 3- 50 yds 10x, REST 5 min, 50 yds 10x
 - **Practice with team**
 - Step 1: Warm up, running, practice form tackling drills, no scrimmage
 - Form blocking using sled → blocking
 - Step 2: Full practice including team scrimmage at end of practice
- **Phase 4 – Progression to practice (Contact)**
 - Continue with Phase 3 Running, Agility/ Jumping, Throwing exercises
 - Continue with conditioning for up to 60 minutes
 - Continue with PT home exercises for strength, power, balance, and proprioception
 - **Throwing:** return to prior level of throwing with appropriate warm up and cool down for upper extremity
 - Slowly progress deep route throwing
 - Step 1- 50 yds 15x, REST 5 min, 50 yds 15x
 - Step 2- Deep route (DR) 10x, REST 5 min, Deep route (DR) 10x
 - Step 3- DR 10x, REST 5 min, DR 10x, REST 5 min, DR 10x
 - **Team Practice:** drills, tackling, tactical schemes
 - Step 1: Full practice including team scrimmage at end of practice
 - Step 2: Continue building confidence in team practice, no games
 - Step 3: Begin to have conversation with coach about starting to play partial games
 - Contact practice for at least 1 full week without any complications or setbacks to progress to Phase 5



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- **Phase 5 – Progression back to game**
 - Continue with Phase 3 Running, Agility/ Jumping, Throwing exercises
 - Continue with conditioning for up to 60 minutes
 - Continue with PT home exercises for strength, power, balance, and proprioception
 - Playing in game with team:
 - Step 1: Warm up, drills, running/ sprinting, **playing half of game**
 - Begin with playing first quarter, and third quarter
 - Progress to playing longer during each half
 - Step 2: Progress to **full games and prior level of competition**

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Lower Extremity PT Exercises for Home:

<i>Disclaimer: the athlete should pick 1-2 exercises from each section to avoid over training.</i>				
	Exercises	Sets	Repetitions	Comments/ Modifications:
	Jumping/ Landing:			
	• Double/single leg toe drop			
	• Double leg jump prep			
	Power:			
	• Squat jump			
	• Broad jump			
	• Box jump			
	• Forward leaps			
	• Bounding			
	• Scissor jumps			
	• Hurdle hops			
	Strength:			
	Core			
	• Quad hover			
	• Plank			
	• Side plank			
	• Bear crawls			
	Hip/ Glutes			
	• Bridge			
	• Clamshells			
	• Band walks			
	• Squats			
	• Lateral lunge			
	Quadriceps			
	• Squats			
	• Split squats			
	• Lunges			
	• Leg Press			
	Hamstrings			
	• Bridge walkouts			
	• Nordic Hamstring exercise			
	• RDL			
	Balance/ Proprioception			
	Double leg (DL), Single leg (SL)			
	Eyes open (EO), Eyes closed (EC)			
	• DL squat EO/EC			
	• DL squat to SL hold EO/EC			
	• SL balance EO/EC			
	• SL balance 3 way cone reach			

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PT Exercises for Home:

Upper Extremity

Warm Up:

- **Muscle release/ Ball Rolling:** shoulder blade muscles ball against wall as needed
- **Stretches:** Shoulder stretches as needed
 - Kneeling Latissimus Doris stretch on box
 - Wall cross body stretch
 - Side lying sleeper stretch

Disclaimer: the athlete should pick 1-2 exercises from each section to avoid over training.

Exercises	Sets	Repetitions	Comments/ Modifications:
Power:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Med Ball slams • Med Ball wall throws • Rope slams 			
Push up progression: elevated push-ups on box → push up on the floor → plyo push ups			
Bench press progression: 1 Arm dumbbell floor press → 2 Arm dumbbell floor press → incline dumbbell bench press → flat dumbbell press → barbell bench press			
Core Strength:			
Core			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quad hover • Plank • Side plank • Bear crawls 			
Scapular Strength:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prone I, T, W • ½ kneel "gators" 			
Row progression: Standing row → Inverted row → progressively lowering bar → assisted band pull ups → full pull ups from bar			
Shoulder Strength:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thera Band ER/ IR • Arm Bar exercise • Farmers carry • Rack carry 			



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Agility Drills:

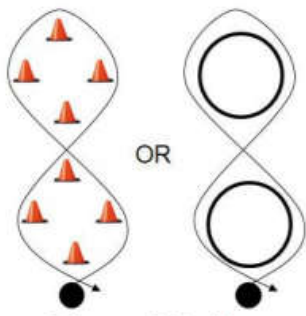
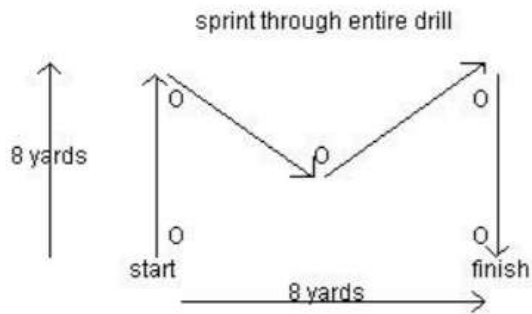
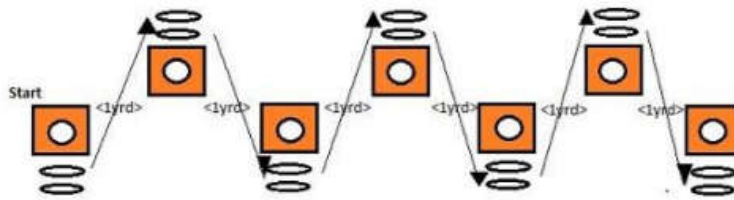


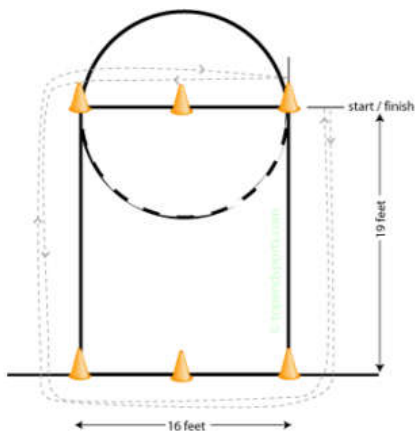
Figure 8 Drill



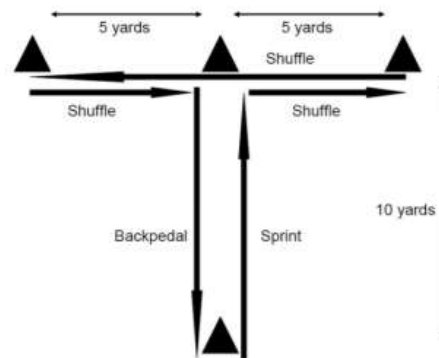
M Drill



Zig Zag Drill



X Lane Drill: Sprint, side shuffle, back pedal, side shuffle



T Drill