

Pre-Game Warm-Up Schedule for Punters and Kickers

After a thorough and productive week of training designed for your punters and kickers to be able to give a maximal performance on game day, you need to have a pre-game routine that is consistent with the training program, conducive to warming up and preparatory for a good performance.

Nothing can be more damaging to your punters and kickers psyche or mental approach than to have a bad warm-up and place doubt about his performance in his mind. To avoid this situation both the coach and the player must have a good understanding of why this period is called a "warm-up" .

The Term "Warm-up"

The warm-up period is used to prepare the muscles for extreme physical exertion by performing less stressful exertion prior to the contest. This will raise the temperature of the muscles facilitating their ability to exert maximal strength and power when needed while reducing pulls, tears, and strains of the muscles . This period is designed for muscle and body preparation not mental preparation or technique training. Any thought that a good warm-up results in a good performance or a bad warm-up results in a bad performance is totally erroneous.

Mental concentration and focus is important during the warm-up period but you and your punters and kickers must avoid the urge to judge how they will perform in the game from the warm-up period. As a coach, I feel this is an area where you must pay close attention to your athletes. Observe them during this period not for the purpose of giving them technique advice but to encourage and prevent them from getting in a bad mental state. Once a basic level of skill is

achieved the performance of the skill becomes more mental than physical. This is the most critical time in the mental contribution to performance. Coach it!

The punters and kickers performance is determined by how they practice and train during the week not in the warm-up. If it was not this way then we would all just forget the weekly practice, focus on having a great warm-up period and ensure ourselves of success. But this is not true. The old adage of "perfect practice makes perfect" still is the best rule to follow for predicting success.

Designing A Pre-game Warm-up Routine

A good pre-game warm-up routine places the punter and kicker in several game situations they may face, has them perform the correct number of repetitions to warm the legs but not fatigue them and allows for personal input.

Several game situations should be practiced in warm-ups by the punter and kicker. The kicker should kick from short, medium and long distances, from all hash marks, left, middle, and right and different types of kickoffs, long, squib and onside. The punter should punt basic field punts, out-of-the endzone punts, coffin corner punts and quick release punts. These situations are commonly encountered during any game.

The number of punts or kicks used in warm-ups must be sufficient to warm the leg muscles but then stop to prevent fatigue. While this number is for the most part personal for each punter and kicker it has to be consistent with their weekly training program. Never let them punt or kick until they feel good. This is a tragic mistake many young punters and kickers make. Know exactly how many repetitions your punters and kickers need and stay with that routine.

The leg is a muscle and should be trained using sound physiological training rules not feelings. For example, you would never send your athlete to the weight room and have them bench press until they feel good. Or send your quarterback over to throw until he feels good. If you did they would overtrain and breakdown the muscle to a point to diminishing returns or they would under train. In either case, a good performance is now a hit or miss event.

All punters and kickers do not need the same number of warm-up repetitions. Some like to use a lot of kicks to warm-up whereas someone else may need half that number of kicks. Neither of these is wrong. Talk to your punters and kickers and arrive at a good number for them and substitute that in this program. You can try the routine before a scrimmage or intrasquad game and adjust the number of kicks to fit their needs. Know how many repetitions your punters and kickers need to be warmed-up and stick to it. The routine for punters in Figure 2.1 and for kickers in Figure 2.2 calls for 25 repetitions for their warm-up.

The order you do the situations in is also an area where personal preference can be used. Your kicker may like to start with the mid-distance field goals, go to the long distance field goals then finish with the short distance field goals. Your punter may like to start in the endzone, progress to the field punts then finish with the coffin corner punts. Whatever the order is it is personal to the punter or kicker. Just make sure all situations are covered in the warm-up program.

Punters Pre-Game Warm-up Program

10 ball drops

10 leg swings

20 field punts (switch ends of the field after 10 punts; however, if there is wind
always punt all the repetitions into the wind)

5 bad snap punts

5 out-of-endzone punts

5 coffin corner punts

Figure 2.1

Kickers Pre-Game Warm-up Program

- 5 dry runs
- 5 extra points
- 4 field goals from 30 yards (2 middle, 2 right hash)
- 6 field goals from 35 yards (2 left hash, 2 middle, 2 right hash)
- 4 field goals from 40 yards (2 left hash, 2 middle)
- 4 field goals from 45 yards (2 middle, 2 right hash)
- 3 field goals from kickers maximum distance (all from the middle)
- 4 field goals from 25 yards (2 left hash, 2 middle)

Figure 2.2

**General Guidelines for the Pre-Game
Punting and Kicking Warm-up Routine**

- 1) Stretch 20 minutes before leaving for the field.

- 2) Take the field 1 hour and 5 minutes before your team must exit the field for the locker room. For example, if your team must be off the field for pre-game warm-ups at 7:05pm send your punters and kickers out to warm-up at 6:00pm.

- 3) Set aside thirty minutes for your punters, kickers, snappers, holders and return men prior to the team calcs or stretches. They need this amount of time for a proper warm-up.

- 4) Punters should punt their whole warm-up period into the wind if there is any wind. Kickers should try to kick at both ends of the field if it is windy. Getting out early allows you to do this before the other team arrives to use their end of the field to warm-up on.

Figure 2.3