



RUNNING

I run on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for 30 to 40 minutes followed by 50m sprints to keep the legs ticking over a bit faster. I do two sets of six with 20 to 30 seconds of rest at the end of each one to keep my baseline speed up.



STRETCHING

It's really important to do a proper warm-up and keep stretching, especially when you're running and doing sprints. We train in the mornings at the club but when I'm away I train in the afternoon, around five or six o'clock at night. I just like running in the late afternoon better.

THAT'S TORN IT

Alpha's Lyn Walker on the road back from injury

When Alpha's picture editor blew out an old footy injury on the trampoline, it was diagnosed as a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). Though it probably won't mean the end of your footy career, it's a tough road back to full strength.



WHAT NEXT?

Surgery isn't mandatory but it's recommended if you want to play most sports and to reduce the chance of osteoarthritis later in life. The surgery involves taking a graft from the hamstring or patella tendon and replacing the torn ligament in the knee.

WEEK ONE – POST-SURGERY

GOALS Wound healing, reduce swelling.

EXERCISES Regain weight bearing, wean off crutches. The aim of the first week is to get as much movement as possible so the joint doesn't seize up. This is harder than it sounds, especially when the joint is three times its normal size. Pain pills with extra codeine help.

WEEK TWO

GOALS Full leg extension, gain control of leg muscles.

EXERCISES Calf and hamstring stretching and contracting. As the week progressed I could bend the knee joint a bit more. It's important to get to the physio for help regaining movement but plenty of rest is still needed.

WEEK THREE AND FOUR

GOALS Full range of motion, extension and contraction.

EXERCISES Closed chain exercises, squats, single leg lunges, calf raises, slowly riding a stationary bike. Once I could walk normally again it was easy to forget I'd just had surgery and break into a run (ouch!). I lost a lot of muscle mass but lunges are great to build up muscle bulk.

WEEK FIVE AND SIX

GOALS Hamstring loading, increase leg strength.

EXERCISES Bridges, balancing exercises, walking lunges, weight-bearing squats, single leg squats.



As soon as the physio said I could ride my bike I was straight on it. My kneecap wasn't tracking properly but my physio taped it down, which helped enormously. Ankle weights and leg raises will help get strength and control back into the hamstring.

WEEK SEVEN AND EIGHT

GOALS Jogging without pain and swelling, pain-free hop.

EXERCISES Build up to longer runs at increased speeds, include changes in direction. With the all clear from the surgeon I could jog again (slowly and carefully) but I experienced a mental block in the first few days – my brain still wanted to protect my knee. Take it slow and build up gradually to longer runs.

WEEK NINE AND 10 – BACK TO NORMAL (WELL, ALMOST)

You know you're doing OK when your twice-a-week physio says they don't need to see you for a while. I'm nearly back!

Lyn has recovered enough to coerce the Alpha team to enter the AROC Paddy Pallin Adventure Race in Canberra on February 14. www.arocsport.com.au

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