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<http://www.fourfourtwo.com/performance/training/cold-defence#:K-xOiqu2XH1tEA>

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Deliver your hottest winter performance

Optimising your fluid intake and pre-match warm-up can make all the difference on a chilly day, says Hull City defender Curtis Davies

Don't forget to hydrate “You might not feel as thirsty in the winter, but you're still going to be sweating, so it's important you stay hydrated and don't cramp up. I'm a habitual water drinker, but if you don't feel like taking too much fluid on, try to get hold of some hydration sachets; they'll make the salt stay in your body, which is always a good thing.”

Warm up inside “You don't want to be hanging around in the cold so, if you can, get out there before a winter match and do a short, sharp warm-up, then come back inside and do dynamic stretches in the dressing room. That means that when you go out for kick-off it's just a case of getting everything loosened off when you're already warm.”

Keep the layers down “It's all very well having loads of layers on in winter, but what's the point if you're not going to be playing in them? I always wear the same for training or a match: shorts, T-shirt and a long-sleeved base layer, so as soon as I've warmed up, I'm ready.”

Watch the wind “You should always watch the first goalkeeper's kick carefully, to see how strong the wind is, which direction it's blowing and

how the ball is bouncing. It's the same for your passing – you might need to clip the ball rather than smash it. Check the weather and adapt.”

Man up, it's only a cold! “I never have and never will miss a game because of a cold – it just wouldn't do for a centre-half. Unless it's severe or you're highly contagious, you should be OK to play. You can't go wrong with a bit of rub on your chest, sweets for your throat and honey and lemon before you go to bed.”

From sub-zero to winter hero Whether it's wearing the right gear or shrugging off the January blues, FFT's essential guide to playing in Arctic conditions will ensure you deliver your hottest cold-weather performance yet

Cold defence

Stop your muscles from freezing up with expert advice from Bolton's head physio Andy Mitchell

So how exactly does the cold affect my body? “Muscles, tendons and joints lose a fraction of their mobility when it's cold, which causes them to feel tight and stiff. Once they are cold the elasticity of the tissue and movement in those structures are impaired, slowing down a player's ability to twist and turn, increasing the risk of injury. During a cold snap players usually strain muscles, twist knees and ankles, and aggravate existing injuries.”

How can I avoid injury? “Warm up for longer during the winter months. If you ask your body to perform dynamic movements in the cold it can put you at risk of straining a muscle. You need to do more to loosen them up and get the blood flowing so you have a full range of movement. In the summer, when temperatures are higher, players can warm up quicker and go into fast, dynamic work sooner.”

Am I A wimp if I wrap up? “No. A lot of heat is lost through the head and the neck area, so wearing a scarf or a snood is a great way to trap heat

and keep the body warm. Your feet and hands feel the cold first so extra socks and gloves are also a good idea. Base layer and leggings allow a full range of movement and provide warmth. Warm muscles contract more smoothly, increasing their elasticity.”

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The living room workout

So you’re stuck inside the house but you badly need a workout before Sunday’s big game: what do you do? Use your furniture, obviously! Personal trainer Ray Klerck shows you how to do it

Works: Tendons and ligaments in your ankle joints as well as muscles in your calves.

Good for: Balance, kicking power, injury prevention. *What to do:* Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and arms horizontally out to your sides. “Your hands should be in line with your shoulders,” says Klerck. “Lift your right foot so its heel is in line with the back of your left knee – use the wall for stability at first but aim to do this free-standing.” Close your eyes and count to 30, then switch legs and repeat. *Sets:* 5 minutes, switching legs every 30 seconds.

Shove off from the sofa

Works: Chest, triceps, abs.

Good for: Developing the power to unbalance your opponent. *What to do:* “Stand facing the back of the couch, first making sure it can’t move forward when you put pressure on it,” says Klerck. “Fall forward, putting

your hands in front of you to catch yourself. Bend your elbows to lower yourself until your chest touches the back of the sofa. Explosively push yourself back to the start so you finish up standing.” *Sets:* 5 sets of 5 reps; rest 2 minutes between bouts.

One-leg squats with a chair

Works: Glutes, core, hamstrings and quadriceps.

Good for: Increasing speed off the mark. *What to do:* “Stand, feet shoulder-width apart, with a chair or couch behind you,” Klerck advises. “Raise your left foot off the ground by bending your knee backwards. Keep your back straight and slowly squat down by bending your right knee until your glutes touch the chair, before straightening back up to the start position. To increase the difficulty, fold your arms across your chest.” *Sets:* 4 sets, 6 reps with each leg.

Single-leg raises

Works: Calves and core.

Good for: Improving your stationary jumps. *What to do:* Stand on your right leg with your left leg tucked behind your right knee. Keep your arms at your sides. Raise your body weight onto the ball of your foot by standing on your toes. Hold that position for three seconds, then take two seconds to lower your heel again. Klerck recommends: “To make this harder, hold a dead weight like a bag of wet washing in your right hand.” *Sets:* 4 sets of 5 reps on each leg, no rest between.

Figure-four double crunch

Works: Abs and obliques.

Good for: Improving balance and building strength. *What to do:* Lie flat on your back, hands behind your ears. Rest your right ankle on your left knee and raise your left foot a couple of inches off the floor. This is the

starting position. Slowly curl your head and torso forward while bringing your left knee towards you. Pause, lower yourself (keeping your left foot off the floor) and repeat. Switch so your left ankle lies across your right knee and repeat for another set. *Sets:* 3 sets of 20.

Duck walk across the living room

Works: Glutes, calves, front and back thighs.

Good for: Building lower body power so you stay strong on your feet. *What to do:* Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and crouch down so your glutes are below your knees. “Take a step forward with your right leg, letting its knee drop down to the ground,” advises Klerk. “Stay in the crouched position and slide the other leg forward.” Drop your left leg’s knee and repeat. Look forward and once you get in motion stay in motion. Execute the move quickly and forcefully. *Sets:* 3 sets, 10 steps on each leg, resting for 90 seconds between sets.

Pop-ups from the floor

Works: Legs, core, arms, chest.

Good for: Sharpness; improved jumping momentum. *What to do:* Get on your hands and knees, keeping your toes on the ground. Push up with your hands and balls of your feet. This will get you airborne. Bring your knees forward and hoist your upper body forwards and upwards. “You should land in a crouching position,” says Klerck. “You can also do this lying down, palms on the ground either side of your chest, forearms perpendicular to the floor.” *Sets:* 5 sets of 7 reps – rest for 45 seconds.

Prone skydiver on the floor

Works: Lower back and core.

Good for: A stronger and more flexible back to help you twist and

turn. *What to do:* Lie face down on your stomach with your arms behind your head and your fingers interlaced. Then, says Klerck, “slowly raise your chest off the floor as high as you comfortably can. Your feet should stay on the floor. Hold this position for 10 seconds, then lower your chest and head back down.” *Sets:* 3 sets of 10 seconds each