



## RETURN TO SOCCER

**Goal:** To rehabilitate your knee while finally learning to *bend it*.

**Process:** INJURY = OPPORTUNITY: Coming back from an injury or surgery provides an opportunity for you to work on fundamental skills. Have a new ball waiting for you the day you come home from the hospital. Start rolling it under your feet and up the wall those first days post-op while doing co-contractions and leg raises with co-contractions (see Chapter 3). As you progress through the exercises and aerobic training, you should be spending time on simple, low stress skills with the ball. Push it around the house. Be the ball.

You can perform each Level of the “Return to Soccer” program 3-4 days per week alternating with “soft workouts” on the other days. You probably need to spend 2 weeks to perfect your technique at each Level (though it may seem painfully slow, this is not the time to rush). If you have pain or swelling: RICE and back down one level until the swelling resolves. “Quick step” run with the ball at first (see chapter 3) before progressing to a jog (see Return to Running earlier in this chapter).

While you watch games on TV and at the park, visualize yourself physically and mentally reacting to the flow of the game. Watch players moving without the ball. Think like Beckham. What would he see?

### LEVEL A:

<p><b>PURPOSE</b></p>	<p>Body balance and coordination. Ball skills.</p>	
<p><b>PROTOCOL</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Activity</b></p> <p>Warm-up on the bike or with a fast walk. ROM stretches.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b> Dribble while walking or easy jogging. Wall taps (light). Repeat 1 time</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Time</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">10 min 3 min 13 min <b>Total = 26 min</b></p>
<p><b>COMMENTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a lighter ball, if possible.</li> <li>• Use any open space for dribbling (must be flat, no obstacles). Avoid gardens and dogs.</li> <li>• Wall Taps: stay within 2 feet of the wall. Gently tap ball against the wall. Try to establish a rhythm with both feet.</li> <li>• Stretch the entire lower body and ice the knee after the workout.</li> </ul>	

**LEVEL B:**

<b>PURPOSE</b>	Forgetting which foot is dominant.	
<b>PROTOCOL</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Activity</b></p> <p>Warm-up on the bike.</p> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <p>Dribbling while easy jogging.</p> <p>Partner passing</p> <p>Wall taps (light).</p> <p>Repeat 1 time.</p> <p>You can do this drill 2 times/day but since this is more aggressive than it seems, start with once a day and see how your knee responds.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Time</b></p> <p>3 min</p> <p>10 min</p> <p>2 min</p> <p>15 min</p> <p><b>Total = 30 min</b></p>
<b>COMMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep using the lighter ball.</li> <li>• Stay slightly on toes while dribbling. Keep the ball close to your body.</li> <li>• Wall Taps: maintain a rhythm. Use both feet!</li> <li>• EASY passes with a friend.</li> <li>• Ice the knee and have a good stretch.</li> <li>• Try using a soft knee sleeve.</li> </ul>	

**LEVEL C:**

<b>PURPOSE</b>	World Cup prep. Channeling Pele.	
<b>PROTOCOL</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Activity</b></p> <p>Warm-up</p> <p><b>Skills:</b></p> <p>Partner passing.</p> <p>Partner juggling.</p> <p>Cone Dribbling: (6-8 cones). Up and back w/ ball, then up and back without the ball.</p> <p>Drop Kick to wall, 50-70% effort.</p> <p>Repeat one time.</p> <p>Start with once a day for this drill and can move to 2X a day if the knee is doing well.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Time</b></p> <p>5 min</p> <p>2 min</p> <p>10 min</p> <p>3 min</p> <p>20 min</p> <p><b>Total = 40 min</b></p>

<b>COMMENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Switch to a regulation ball.</li> <li>• More aggressive Partner Passing: stay on your toes, keep the ball close to your body.</li> <li>• Juggling: use your feet, knees, chest and head. Keep the ball close to your body.</li> <li>• Cone Dribbling: spread them out over 20 meters</li> <li>• Always perform exercises with both feet. (If nothing else this surgery should make you ambidextrous!)</li> <li>• Drop Kick = holding ball in hands, release and strike forward with proper kicking mechanics.</li> <li>• Use the rebounds from the wall as an opportunity for fast trapping and ball control work.</li> <li>• Cool down and ice!</li> </ul>
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### **Return to Competition**

- You should complete LEVEL C successfully.
- “2 on 2” or “3 on 3” games on a good surface are a great place to start game simulation training. No aggressive contact! Your teammates should apply passive defense until you are stronger and up to speed. Refuse to play with knuckleheads who can’t pull up on a tackle. Wear a red shirt or pinny to remind them you are rehabilitating.
- The “Return to Running” program is part of your “Return to Soccer” program- so review that section earlier in this chapter.
- Games: start with 10-15 minutes on the field per half and take advantage of halftime to stretch and ice. This can be advanced to 20 minutes per half, and increase from there. Do not play your first returning game in the mud!