ABSTRACT

PAPER TITLE: An Examination of Pre-Activity and Post-Activity Stretching Practices of NCAA Women’s Track and Field Programs

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Static stretching, ballistic stretching, proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation stretching (PNF), and dynamic stretching are the specific types of stretching predominantly used by athletes, coaches, and athletic trainers in pre- or post-activity protocols. The purpose of this study is to determine if National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I, II, and III women’s track and field programs are in compliance with recommended stretching protocols during pre- and post-activity stretching. A 45-item survey instrument was developed to collect data regarding the warm-up and flexibility practices at the NCAA division I (n=320), division II (n=175), and division III (n=275) universities. A total of 101 surveys were completed for a 13.1% return rate. Descriptive statistics included frequency counts, means, and standard deviations were calculated for the demographic and educational background variables as appropriate. Results seemed to conflict with current suggested practices for pre-activity and post-activity stretching. Although research supports dynamic warm-up/stretching over other forms of pre-activity protocols, it appears that some track and field coaches are reluctant to completely discontinue traditional methods, such as pre-activity static stretching. The results of
this study suggest it is necessary for track and field coaches to re-evaluate their own practices, perhaps cross-checking them with the existing research. The results of this study indicate that coaching experience and knowledge acquisition may not influence how well research guidelines are followed. It appears that some track and field coaches are reluctant to part ways with certain traditional coaching methods regarding pre- and post-activity stretching. Further research is needed to delineate how these factors affect coaching decisions.

*KEY WORDS*: warm-up, cool-down, dynamic stretching, static stretching, flexibility