

Staying Conditioned Despite Cancelled Seasons

For thousands of student athletes across the country, the continuing pandemic has meant the cancelation of their sports camps and seasons.

Pontiac, Illinois native Lindsey Hunt is a rising freshman on the Lincoln Land Community College basketball team. She says shuttered gyms due to the pandemic made summer workouts tough, which concerned her for the season ahead.

“You have to stay in shape,” she said. “Otherwise you’re going to get so far back and it’s going to be a lot harder to get back to where you were.”

Hunt is now getting her workouts in through a program in Pontiac called Competitive Edge.

The program is run by OSF HealthCare Sports Outreach Coordinator Ryan Darko. Competitive Edge has been helping students stay active in the summer months for the past three years. Darko says his main goal is to keep kids in playing shape, no matter their sport of choice.

“The main purpose of this is to improve the kids’ sports performance, so we’re working on sprinting, running, weight lifting, footwork, balance. Anything sport-related, we’re kind of working on that trying to improve it for the kids,” explained Darko.

Now with sports seasons cancelled, postponed, or shortened for many school districts, Darko says extra conditioning is more important than ever. He recognizes that resources like Competitive Edge may not be available everywhere, so he recommends kids going online for support and guidance with their parents’ approval and oversight.

“Through social media there’s plenty of outlets kids can utilize. They can go to YouTube if they have any questions on anything,” suggested Darko. “Whether it be footwork drills, core exercises, body weight exercises, those are three things kids can just do at home even if they don’t have weights they can utilize just to make themselves better.”

Whether it’s at home or at a gym, Darko maintains putting in even a little effort will make a world of difference in an athlete’s ability to remain competitive when sports do start back up.

“If you’re able to take the initiative and just put a little bit of work in, it may not seem like much but at least you’re doing something. And if you’re not doing anything there’s going to be another kid that is, and they’re going to get better than you. So it’s always nice to stay active and keep on working,” said Darko.

It’s advice that Hunt and the other Competitive Edge participants take to heart while they wait for their favorite sports to safely start.

To learn more about sports medicine at OSF HealthCare Saint James-John W. Albrecht Medical Center in Pontiac, click [here](#).