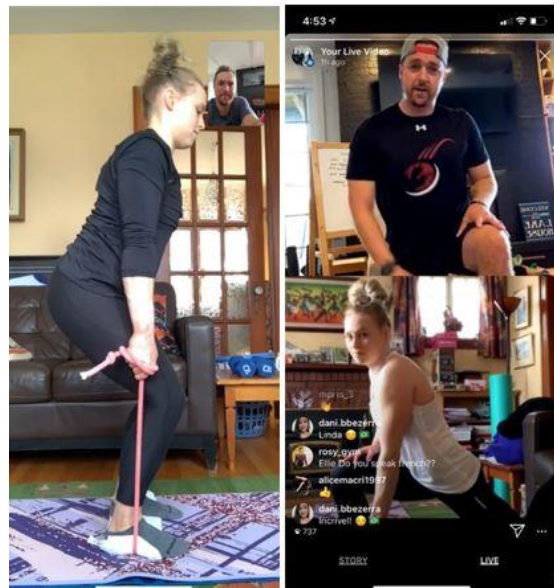


Tackling Obstacles One Game Plan at a Time

Scott knew he'd work in sport since the first time his parents took him to Canada Olympic Park in Calgary where skiers flew in mid-air and bobsleds flashed by in a blink. He fondly remembers being glued to the tv to watch Donovan Bailey win gold at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta, and staying up late cheer on Team Canada in Nagano, Japan in 1998.

Today, Scott Willgress is the strength and conditioning lead with Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic. He is the physiologist for Softball Canada and Gymnastics Canada and strength coach for Canoe Kayak Canada's women's sprint kayak team. The dedication he idolized in athletes when he was a child, he still admires in his career. "Being on the scene to be able to look at their faces when they win a medal at a Pan-Am Games, world championship or qualify for Olympic Games is something that I cherish."

Today's pandemic hasn't stopped the drive and determination of Canadian athletes. With the longevity of the lockdown and the Olympics postponed, Scott and colleagues, have brought their minds together to develop game plans. "We started to look at the long-term losses we could experience with limited access to training. For many athletes, muscle mass and overall strengths are important determinants of performance." Access to equipment for at-home training was the first obstacle. Some athletes were able to borrow equipment while others gained creativity points with textbook filled backpacks and 4L milk jugs for weight training.



"A solid alternative to traditional weight training would be isometric training" says Scott. "Think trying to push a wall down. We started holding things like towels and ropes, pushing against walls, or simply holding positions for extended periods of time with the goal of maintaining muscle mass, strength, and connective tissue health."

In a post-pandemic world, there will undoubtedly be an eagerness to return to normal, but caution must not be left to the sidelines. Scott warns that quick rises in training increase the risk of soft tissue injury. "For most sports, a six to eight-week progressive increase in training load will likely be needed." If one thing's for certain, the patience and perseverance that our athletes have demonstrated during lockdown should be an indicator that Team Canada will rise together stronger than ever before.