

Ski conditioning: Getting ready for the slopes

By Dr. Victor Gong
Special to the
Worcester County Times

OCEAN CITY — Skiing is my favorite sport, despite our temperate winters on the Delmarva Peninsula. So when the snow starts falling, do you dream of the powder runs on the slopes? The ski mountain resorts have reported great conditions. If you had the day(s) off and the snow fell on your favorite mountain, would you be ready to go skiing? I'll bet not. More than 90 percent of all skiing and riding accidents are related to skier ability. I see this first hand as a member of the Wisp Mountain ski patrol. Ability begins with prepared-

ness. If you are not in shape, you are not prepared. Here are some tips.

• **Run.** Try to run at least three times a week. Running strengthens your legs and cardiovascular system. Those two things are probably the most important attributes while on the mountain. You need leg strength to stay upright and a strong cardio will keep your endurance up. Don't you hate it when you're skiing with a first-timer for the season and after three runs they say, "Man, my legs burn, let's go get something to eat." Lesson: Don't be the guy who needs a break after three runs. That's the guy who will ski himself into a tree because he's out of shape, tired

and loses control.

• **Rollerblade.** This exercise works generally the same muscles that skiing does, not to mention putting your body in the right mindset.

• **Stretch.** Everyday. Flexibility will prevent many injuries. Think about it. What is a sprain? A muscle that has been torn due to a pull, twist, pushed or stretched beyond its limits. A strain? Same thing save for the muscle is not torn in a strain. If these muscles were more flexible, these injuries would be considerably less severe, if injuries at all. Go sit in on a good martial arts class that teaches joint locks. A smart instructor will usually spend about 20 to 30 minutes on stretching to avoid injuries. You should too.

• **Swim.** Swimming has been proven to be the safest and most effective form of exercise. Swimming uses virtually every muscle in the body, builds your cardiovascular system like no other, and yet does not yield the same amount of stress on your joints as running or other sports. If you have a gym membership with access to a pool, I highly suggest this one.

Now this is just a partial list. And, of course, you should always consult a physician or doctor before attempting any workout program. Remember to push yourself, but don't for-



AP photo

More than 90 percent of all skiing accidents are related to skiing ability, which begins with preparedness.

get to know when to draw the line. You won't be skiing or riding if you have a pulled hamstring or groin. Be careful while working out. Stretching should only feel good when you are done. Conversely, be sure that you are not injuring yourself while trying to prevent injury. Who'd want to waste a great ski season on the couch

when they could be turning tracks?

For more information on winter conditioning and other health issues, visit www.75thstmedical.com.

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