

SOUNDERS BEEP TEST



The club is back for preseason training and as with every year, the beep test was part of the process.

Like a high school gym class, Sounders FC players line up across the goal line at the Virginia Mason Athletic Center in Renton. At the sound of a recorded beep from a portable CD player, they run 22 yards to another cone, turn and run back to the goal line.

This repeats. And repeats. And repeats again.

Slowly players peel off until only one remains and the intervals become too small for them to complete the cycle.

This is the beep test and every year Sounders FC Manager of Performance and Sports Science Dave Tenney administers the test to measure the fitness levels of the team and Head Coach Sigi Schmid was happy with the results this year.

"I was happy in that the expectations were pretty much met," Schmid said. "There were some guys that need to add to their fitness, but in the two days so far that we've trained, those guys have worked hard and pushed themselves and that'll lead to them getting fit."

This year, the beep test was done with a slight modification, leaving a small rest at the goal line of each repetition. Tenney calls it the intermittent recovery test and noted that the team may undergo a more aerobic time trial test while the team works in Arizona beginning on Wednesday.

However, the thinking behind the change was to create a more repeatable test that wouldn't exhaust players and prevent them from partaking in a normal training session in addition to the testing.

"It was a little different. We wanted a test that we could, at times, apply during the season as well, so we wanted a shorter version of it," Schmid said. "It gives us an idea of where their fitness level is so we can do appropriate training as we move into Tucson."

Under Tenney's watchful eye, David Estrada completed the most sections of the test, while Andy Rose, Eriq Zavaleta, Dylan Remick and Aaron Kovar also impressed with their intervals.

"It's a vital part, coming in to preseason you want to come in fit," Rose said. "You want to show the coaches that you've been working hard in the offseason. It's not the funnest 10 minutes or so of your life, but you get it done and I feel pretty fit afterwards."

Those results aren't far from what has become typical in previous years, as Estrada and Rose have proven to be fitness machines while Remick is a former track standout. More important than who "won" the beep test are the overall results of the group.

"It was, for the most part, the results we expected," said Tenney. "We are trying to improve our ability to create profiles of guys a little bit better and target where guys have gaps."

Tenney works tirelessly to remain on the cutting edge of the field of sports science. This year, that has meant the addition of fatigue science to his arsenal of technologies and players can monitor their sleep patterns.

Wearing watches that track their circadian rhythm, players are given instant feedback to let them know how well-rested they are and how much more they can do on an individual basis to optimize performance.

"Now we've had guys for four or five or six years in this program and guys' lives change. Their lifestyles slowly change over time and sleep is one of those things that ... guys typically think they get enough sleep, but now they're getting feedback," Tenney said. "It's about creating awareness in the athletes that how well you slept three or four days ago is going to have an impact on how you perform today."

Sounders FC will undergo more fitness testing on Tuesday in one of two training sessions scheduled for the day, then leave for Arizona on Wednesday.