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Tournament Recovery

Adequate recovery (or restoration) can help athletes overcome training barriers, performance plateaus and enhance the mental and physical state, or - if used incorrectly could lead to fatigue, performance inconsistencies, or injury. There are several different types of recovery to consider when preparing for, or recovering after major tournaments.

- **On-Going Recovery** (takes place during activity)
- **Rapid Recovery** (occurs immediately after exercise, leading to removal of metabolic by-products, and replenishment of depleted energy resources)
- **Delayed Recovery** (where you will see noticeable gains in fitness and strength levels as long as the training loads and volumes were not to excessive)

With each type of recovery we will need to focus on a different strategy. For instance, On-Going Recovery is enhanced through conditioning programs and is what allows you to last longer, go stronger, or perform at a high level throughout the course of a game. Delayed Recovery is really a product of periodization and is not noticeable day to day, but if structured correctly, will enhance your fitness or strength levels over the course of a training program. For the purpose of this article we will focus our attention on Rapid Recovery, which has to do with how well you have prepared your body, and what you do between games.

Game to Game Restoration and Recovery:

Due to the fact that fatigue and stress (meaning both physical and mental stress), can negatively impact reaction time, concentration and alertness, motor control, heart rate, and postural factors, we want to incorporate restoration strategies as soon as possible to return the mind and body to its peak level. Failure to do so could result in inconsistent play and/ injuries. Here are some restoration strategies that you could employ between games.

Nutrition:

Right after a game the body is most likely dehydrated and has depleted most, if not all of its stored energy. Hydrate and get something to eat within 30 minutes post game. You want to get a high carbohydrate snack so that your body can recharge and have the energy to start the repair and regeneration process. Here are some great sources:

- **Sports Drinks**
- **Honey (one of the best – fastest – known recovery sources)**
- **Bagels, oatmeal, cereal, etc**
- **High Carb Bars**



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About 1 to 2 hours later you want to eat a good meal with about equal concentrations of carbs, protein and fat (40%:30%:30% respectively). This could come in the form of a protein shake with a carb source added, or better yet a good pasta meal with chicken! This will be the fuel you will be running on tomorrow, so eat up!

Physical Recovery:

You want to get the body moving so it can start the removal process of the metabolic waste products and to get blood flowing to the tissues. This can be done several hours afterwards or the morning of an evening game. This could consist of a long walk (12 minutes or so), keeping the heart rate at an even pace (100-120 bpm). This steady heart rate will keep a steady flow of blood pumping out the bad and pumping in the good. Follow this up with some static stretching (not too aggressive) that should return muscle fibers to a relaxed and normal state.

After a night or late afternoon game, you might want to try a technique that has worked well for us. Find an area where you can set up a cold tub and a warm shower (or better yet hot tub or sauna) and spend a few minutes in the cold tub, get out and jump in the warm shower. Repeat this several times ending on the cold tub. After this you should feel great (but tired). Get off your feet for the rest of the day, resting your legs. Try to maintain your normal rhythms of sleep and eating patterns so as not to disrupt the normal body processes of recovery.

Mental Recovery:

Try and get away from the intense atmosphere. Relax, and enjoy yourself, but don't get too wound up in the games. You want to be fresh the next day, not burnt out and mentally drained from too much emotion.

These are some very basic tips that should lead to fresh energetic legs and minds the next day. Try out some techniques of your own and come up with a combination that works well for you. Remember these specifics though when you go through this process:

- **Refuel**
- **Recharge**
- **Recover**