

Peak Performance Strategies

Energy & Recovery

Achieving peak performance on a consistent basis despite changing competitive circumstances requires quality preparation (“finish-everything”), competitive determination (“play like a oriole”), and reaction to results (“get better everyday”). One key element of each of these three areas is **energy production & recovery**. Energy must be raised upon awakening, maintained and allowed to flow throughout the day, and recovered during breaks and sleep (“build, hold, recover and flow”). There are five basic strategies for creating enough energy for peak performance.

1. Sleep: The mind & body need high quality, continuous sleep to reset and reboot its energy systems. Ideally, players, coaches, and staff need 6-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep that shifts back and forth between its deep and dream stages. The following make quality sleep more likely: consistent awakening time & bedtime before midnight, relaxation & unwinding (see below), bedroom is cool and dark, use earplugs or white noise, turn the clock away, avoid long naps, avoid heavy alcohol, stimulants (caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines), prolonged pre-bedtime video gaming, TV watching, internet surfing (too much stimulation/blue light), and limit pre-sleep eating, fluid intake and exercise (2 hours before).

2. Awakening Routine: Much of the energy for the day is created in the first few hours after awakening which is ideally in the three hours after sunrise. The following awakening activities raise energy and performance: drink something cold or hot, refuel (fruit, energy bar, smoothie), go outside (find the sun & breath fresh air), get your heart rate up (2-3 sixty second cardio sets, rapid nasal breathing), try caffeine (100-400 mg max), hot or cold shower, activating music.

3. Nutrition & Hydration: The mind and body require regular resupply intervals (every 3-4 hours) of fuel (carbs, proteins and fats), water, and electrolytes (sodium primarily) to maintain the sustained intense activity of practice & competition. High achieving athletes must regularly eat breakfast, lunch and dinner and immediately restore lost carbs, fluids, and electrolytes after intense activity.

4. Recovery Breaks: Short breaks (seconds to minutes) after intense or prolonged activity allows for energy recovery and are necessary to keep energy up and flowing. **Examples** include: **clearing breaths** after lifting, running, drills, or plays (full smooth lung fill through the nose and slow out through the mouth-in four out eight), **refueling/rehydration** (on and off the field), **stretch breaks** (use gravity and clearing breathing to enhance each 3 minute stretch-total time = 20-25 minutes), **power naps** (in chair, or on couch or floor-15-25 minutes max).

4. Unwinding: After a long day or intense competition the mind must be cleared of clutter and the body’s built-up tension must be released for recovery, relaxation, and sleep to be possible. Some sensible approaches are: rest or a short nap, evening meal, socializing, low lighting and reading/study, additional gravity stretch and visualization, listening to music, watching a movie or TV, or family time.