

Preparation & Recovery



3 Key Takeaways

— 1 —

A pre-game routine increases opportunities for success and builds confidence.



— 2 —

A plan for post-competition recovery includes rest, nutrition, and hydration.



— 3 —

Positive self-talk and mind-sets will often guarantee good results.



The Basics

Preparation

Preparation is not just laying out your uniform the night before a big competition. It begins months before, when you develop patterns that connect your mind and body and allow you to focus on training and competition. There are three main components to preparation, all of which give you the tools to stay focused, achieve the best possible outcome, and link the body and mind together.

1. A Pre-Game Routine

Prior to competition, you should have a consistent, reliable routine that gets you ready to focus and be in the moment. You should repeat it during practice so that you are almost on autopilot when game time comes. A pre-game routine can have multiple elements, ranging from smaller rituals like always putting your left shoe on before your right, to longer ones like breathing exercises, meditation, or eating a healthy meal. You can also use rituals during competition, like before a serve in tennis or a pitch in baseball.

2. Visualize the Outcome

This technique is an effective way to practice your sport without taxing your body. You run through a successful game/race/inning/shot in your mind, using your senses: How do you feel? What do you see? Hear? It's important that the visualization always ends with the desired outcome, and calling up the same positive images repeatedly actually enhances your physical skills.

3. Positive Self Talk

When you make a mistake in training or while competing, it's easy to immediately criticize yourself. Instead of letting your mindset turn negative, develop a mantra—a short phrase which you can repeat—that keeps you on task. It could be something inspirational like “Believe”; something personal like “I can do this”; or something technique-oriented like, “Stay steady and smooth.”

Recovery

Your training session or competition does not end when you step off the field. In fact, recovering properly after practice or a game is extremely important so that you have more energy, fresh muscles, and a focused mind next time you play. Recovery is split into three main categories:

1. Sleep

Getting enough rest on a daily basis is vital not just for physical recovery, but studies prove that sleep—or lack thereof—directly influences memory, creativity, weight maintenance, academic skills, stress, and depression.

2. Refuel

Eating the correct foods and properly hydrating after a hard game or practice—and eating healthy meals daily—will maximize recovery.

3. Get Perspective

Being able to step away from your sport for a break at the end of a season will rejuvenate your spirit and enthusiasm for the sport.



Gymnast Chellsie Memmel, a silver medalist in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, knows what it means to be an athlete with a demanding schedule. Throughout Chellsie's career, her recovery plan changed with her training locations and as she learned more about her body. Eventually, she learned the importance of having a plan for post-competition recovery and what her body needed to feel its best every week. Chellsie would go on walks or read books to give her body and mind a break, knowing that a rested mind and body often guaranteed good results. She learned her recovery plan needed to also include rest, nutrition, and hydration.

The habits Chellsie developed over time allowed her to recover and replenish her body, which in turn, helped her maximize her performance and feel more prepared in practice and competition. Feeling her best allowed her to increase her opportunities for success and built confidence. Chellsie believes that both preparation and recovery are crucial elements of athletic success. She knows from experience the habits take time to develop, but the benefits of practicing both are absolutely worth the investment.

TrueSport athletes understand the importance of preparing for competition, recovering their mind, and listening to their body before and after competition.

AMBASSADOR STORY QUESTIONS

- 1. What was the main point you took away from the ambassador story?*
- 2. What was interested about this story and how the athlete prepared for competition?*
- 3. How can you practice better preparation habits during your athletic season?*