Surviving All-Day Tournaments

As high school athletics become more intense and competitive, the off-season training demands also intensify in regards to out-of-season leagues and tournaments. It is not uncommon for an athlete to spend an entire weekend playing in a tournament, which is very demanding on a body. While there is no great solution for maintaining peak performance, there are a few key tips to help a player stay as fresh as possible and to avoid injury.

Fluid Intake
Preventing dehydration is definitely a must during all-day tournaments. Water is necessary for controlling body temperature to prevent overheating. The body will produce sweat to help reduce the body temperature (=loss of water). To remain hydrated, it is recommended that an athlete consume 16 oz. of fluid, one to two hours before exercise, and four to eight oz. every 15 minutes during exercise. Water or sports drinks are acceptable, but since tournaments generally last more than 90 minutes, a sports drink is preferable. The sports drink (which is 6 - 8 percent carbohydrates) will help supply a source of carbohydrates and help sustain endurance performance.

Food Intake
Glycogen (energy) reserves are being steadily depleted during all-day tournaments. Thus, what an athlete is eating or not eating is very important. As a rule, food high in fat and protein should be avoided on game days because they digest slowly. Ideally, a pre-competition meal should be consumed three hours before the game and consist of 150-300 g of carbohydrates. These carbohydrates should have a low glycemic index (complex carbs) to allow a steady supply of "slow- release" glucose during prolonged exercise. Then, during the competition, the athlete should consume 60 g of liquid or solid carbohydrates each hour during exercise (between games). These carbohydrates should have a moderate to high glycemic index (simple carbs) because they replenish glycogen quicker.

Warm up/Stretching
The more games an athlete plays during the day, the more chances for injury there are. Also, towards the end of a tournament day, physical, muscular and mental fatigue set in, putting an athlete at a higher risk for injury. This makes stretching and warming up prior to play very important to minimize these risks. A general warm up prior to stretching is preferred to loosen up the muscles and start increasing blood flow to the muscles. A five-minute warm up of jogging, shuffling or any gentle sport-specific activity is fine. This should be followed by static stretching for the major muscle groups for the upper and lower body. Each stretch should be held 10-30 seconds and be performed at least twice.

Following these few simple tips should help keep an athlete playing at maximum performances as the tournament day moves on.

Thank you, the Director

Glycemic Index for Common Food Sources

High Glycemic
Glucose 100
Carrots 92
Honey 87
Corn flakes 80
Whole meal bread 72
White rice 72
New potatoes 70
White bread 69
Shredded wheat 67
Brown rice 66
Beets 64
Raisins 64
Bananas 64

Moderate glycemic
Corn 59
Sucrose 59
All-bran 51
Potato chips 51
Peas 51
White pasta 50
Oatmeal 49
Sweet potatoes 48
Whole wheat pasta 42
Oranges 40

Low glycemic
Apples 39
Fish sticks 38
Butter beans 36
Navy beans 31
Kidney beans 29
Lentils 29
Sausage 28
Fructose 20
Peanuts 13