

All Day Tournaments

As high school athletics become more intense and competitive, the off-season training demands also intensify in regard 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 the 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 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 body temperature (so your body loses water). To remain hydrated, it is recommended that an athlete consume 16 ounces of fluid, one to two hours before exercise, and four to eight ounces 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 to 8 percent carbohydrates) will help supply a source of carbohydrates and help sustain endurance.

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 to 300 grams 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 grams 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. See chart (below) for glycemic index.

Warm-up/Stretching

The more games an athlete plays during the day, the more chances for injury. Also, toward the end of a tournament day, physical, muscular and mental fatigue set in, putting an athlete at higher risk for injury. This makes stretching and warming up prior to play very important to minimize that risk. 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 of the major muscle groups for the upper and lower body. Each stretch should be held 10 to 30 seconds and be performed at least twice. Following these few simple tips should help keep an athlete playing at maximum performance as the tournament day moves on.

Glycemic Index for Common Food Sources:

HIGH		MODERATE		LOW	
Glucose	100	Corn	59	Apples	39
Carrots	92	Sucrose	59	Fish sticks	38
Honey	87	All-bran	51	Butter beans	36
Corn flakes	80	Potato chips	51	Navy beans	31
White rice	72	Peas	51	Kidney beans	29
New potatoes	70	White pasta	50	Lentils	29
White bread	69	Oatmeal	49	Sausage	28
Shredded wheat	67	Sweet potatoes	48	Fructose	20
Brown rice	66	Whole wheat pasta	42	Peanuts	13
Beets	64	Oranges	40		
Raisins	64				
Bananas	64				