

RECOVERY.....

Recovery during cricket is probably one of the most important factors when it comes to sustained performance during a cricket season.

To me, recovery starts during your pre-season training. A couple of factors during your pre-season influencing your recovery during the season, could be as follows:

- Periodization
- Base training
- Sport specific training
- Rest and recovery
- Sufficient warm up games

If you do not manage the above five points well, you will either end up with a player that is under prepared, or a player already tired by the time the season comes around. This will grossly affect the recovery of such a player as he will either be too tired or too stiff and sore after a long hard day of training or a game.

And we all know that physical pain and discomfort affect the brain and the mental state of a player, which in return will definitely affect the results and outcome of such a player. Thus, my first point I would like to make here, will be that for me, the most important part of recovery starts before the season even starts. If you do not get this right, you will always be playing "catch-up cricket"!!!

When it comes to recovery during the season and on a day to day basis, it is very important to take the following factors into consideration.

- Loading
- Rest
- Hydration
- Nutrition
- Physical recovery
- Mental recovery

Let us briefly look at the different aspects...

Loading:

In modern day cricket, a lot of emphasis has been put on the time spent of cricketers bowling, batting, fielding, training and resting. We have the luxury of modern day technology, specialists employed to monitor players and a tremendous amount of research done by these specialists that will give us norms as to how much time must be spent training and resting. Make sure that it is noted that these are averages and norms and that every individual is unique. What you will however find, is that there will be patterns for every individual and that these must be taken to heart as to manage every player individually.

Rest:

This is a very "emotional" topic for a lot of people in South Africa. A lot of people still have the outlook of the more you do, the better you will be. What we as coaches, and especially coaches of juniors forget is that these kids do a wide variety of sport at school level and that they don't just do cricket. Every one of us would like them to excel at what we coach and push them to get to these results. Imagine a junior playing cricket, hockey and tennis. Each coach would demand at least seven hours a week from him/her, which adds up to just over four hours of training every day!!!! Madness if you think that this person needs to be doing academical work, study and then only rest. I am not saying that you must stop them from doing different types of sport, i am not saying that they should train less and become average sportsman... I am only saying that we need to train them smarter and not longer. This will allow for enough rest and recuperation.

We have now spoke quite a lot about rest... but what is rest and how do you rest and what do you do to optimize rest?

Hydration:

During physical activity, sportsmen use up a lot of body-fluids to help the body to optimally work. During a long day on the park, you will use up more than what you can put back into your body. So it is very important for you to replenish your body and make sure that you reload the body with the right fluids and the right amount as well.

Nutrition:

To eat the right food and the right amount of food is as important as having the right eating pattern. It is no use eating the right food, but starving yourself and eating one massive meal at night. Also, eating in the right patterns but eating the wrong foods is going to help you absolutely nothing. If you do not know what, when and how much to eat, make sure that you get to a specialist ASAP to help you out in this aspect. Remember that nutrition and hydration will take you a long way in helping with physical recovery.

Physical Recovery:

Physical recovery after a day's training or playing, comes in many different forms. I feel the key here would be to find out what works for you and what you feel doesn't. The main object will be to flush your system of all the lactic acid that built up in your body during the day. Lactic acid is the waste product of muscles burning fuel while they are working and this will build up throughout a day. In order for you to not be stiff the next day, you need to get rid of this. Now, what do we use to do this... static stretches is definitely one part of this. A lot of people believe in just ice baths, others believe in contrast baths where you combine ice baths with hot showers. The best advice would be for you to try them all out and eliminate what doesn't work for you.

Mental Recovery:

If you read the previous paragraph with the needed attention, you would have noticed that a lot of the physical recovery is pretty much a mental thing as well. You can go to a hundred professional sportsmen and ask them the same question and I will guarantee you that ninety-nine of them will give you the same answer. If you find something that feels good for you and that makes you feel that you have recovered well, you have basically won the recovery-battle. The mind is a very powerful thing and if you know that you have followed the right physical regime, that you have eating and drank the right things, you WILL have recovered sufficiently and you will feel good.