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## Lesson Companion

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Teaching this lesson? Here are some tips:

*Tight on time? Stick with the 3 Key Takeaways and The Basics. These will help your athletes learn the importance and how-tos of proper recovery after a game or competition.*

*Have more time? Share the TrueSport Talk with your athletes and discuss how an Olympic athlete can relate to this lesson.*

*Extra time? Continue on through Tips & Applications for more valuable information to share with your group.*

*Looking for more? Explore the Downloads & Additional Resources which offer additional conversation starters and fun physical activities to support each lesson.*



# Recovery



*Just like the exhale needs the inhale, our bodies need relaxation after exertion.*  
— Roisin McGettigan-Dumas, Olympic steeplechase runner

## 3 Key Takeaways

— 1 —

*Don't starve yourself of sleep. It's an essential part of recovery and as your muscles repair themselves, your body becomes stronger.*



— 2 —

*Refuel your body. A good plan for post-competition recovery includes proper nutrition and hydration.*



— 3 —

*Taking time away from your sport after a season or big competition for family, hobbies, or other sports will help you bring a fresh perspective next time you play.*



## The Basics

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.



A silver medalist in indoor volleyball at the 2004 Olympics in Beijing, Ogonna Nnamani knows as well as anyone how proper preparation and recovery can improve athletic performance.

Pre-game routines build confidence and increase opportunities for success, and Ogonna understood the importance of having a simple routine before serving at practice, competitions, and even the Olympics. Ogonna talks about being mindful of every repetition she takes in practice and thinking about how each will feel in a game. Her routine prior to serving included bouncing the ball three or four times, taking a deep breath, and lining up the seams before serving.

At the 2004 Olympics, Ogonna had an embarrassing moment in one match when she was serving: Instead of going through her routine, Ogonna went ahead and served the ball without even waiting for the whistle to indicate that play was live. Ogonna was pretty embarrassed, but once she calmed herself down, she stuck to her regular routine on sport's biggest stage and began to play her best. An important part of being the best athlete possible is believing in yourself and using visualization as a technique to prepare for athletic success.

Learning about recovery was also something Ogonna had to learn the hard way. After having numerous injuries, she realized that what she did off the court was incredibly important. Ogonna started taking the time to stretch and reflect about things she did well during practice, as well as things she wanted to work on. Because of the amount of serving and hitting in volleyball, Ogonna understood that taking care of her shoulder was important, so she began using resistance bands to strengthen her arms and taking ice baths to help her muscles recover quickly for the next day.



### TrueSport Talk Questions

1. *What was the main point you took away from the lesson?*
2. *Do you think Ogonna and her team would have medaled in the Olympics if they didn't have a good post-practice and post-game recovery routine? Why or why not?*
3. *Do you have a post-game routine that helps you recover better? If not, what are some ways you could integrate a basic one?*

### Sleep Hygiene

According to the National Sleep Foundation, teenagers need between 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night, and kids under twelve need between 9 and 11 hours. Between homework, sports, hanging out with friends and family, and simple downtime, getting in that much sleep can be challenging. Here are a few ways to maximize sleep time:

- Have a regular, soothing bedtime routine. Reading a book or having a calm conversation are both good choices. Intense studying, exercise, television shows, video games, or other screen time right before bed are too stimulating to promote relaxation.
- Avoid drinking caffeine in the afternoon.
- Keep screens, including your phone, out of your bedroom. Studies have shown that the blue light emitted by LED screens can disrupt sleep cycles.
- If you need to nap during the day, take a break in the early afternoon, and limit it to 20-30 minutes; going later or longer may delay the time you are able to fall asleep that evening.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, comfortable, dark, and cool. Around 65 degrees is ideal.
- Maintain the same bedtime and wake-up time on weekends that you do on weekdays. If that feels too ambitious, aim for a wake-up time no more than one hour after your normal weekday time.
- When you wake up, signal to your body that it's time to get up by opening your blinds or turning on your light.

Sources: American Academy of Sleep Medicine; National Sleep Foundation



### Post-Competition Recovery: The Body

Taking care of your body after a tough practice or competition is a very important part of recovery, especially when you are playing in a multi-game or -day tournament.

#### **NUTRITION + HYDRATION**

After an intense practice and/or game, consume a snack that is a mixture of protein, carbohydrates, and fats. Some examples could be a glass of chocolate milk, a banana or apple with peanut butter, or a fruit smoothie with made Greek yogurt.

The meal following your snack should be rich in nutrient-dense carbohydrates like multigrain bread, brown rice, vegetables and fruit, and also contain high-quality protein to help you rebuild muscles. This could be beef, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, or nuts and nut butters.

If you've been playing on a hot day or sweating excessively, add electrolytes to your water to replenish your sodium, magnesium, and potassium levels. Otherwise, drink water regularly. An easy way to tell if you are hydrated is to watch the color of your urine; if it is a pale yellow, you are drinking enough.

### **MUSCLES + TENDONS**

Be sure to stretch after training and competition. Note any areas that feel tight or achy; if anything feels unusual, talk to your coach or trainer.

Foam rolling is an affordable, effective way to work out any small kinks or issues in your muscles.

Although you may feel like sitting around after a tough practice or game, a brisk walk or other low-impact exercise for 20 minutes will deliver oxygen-rich blood to your muscles and speed up recovery.

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## Post-Season Recovery: The Mind

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When a season winds down, taking a break from your sport is essential so you can come back feeling fresh and excited about the next season. Whether your break is just two weeks or many months, take time to do the things you may not have been able to do when you were deep in competition. (For a good way to wrap up a season, fill out the worksheet in the handout section.)

These activities could include seeing movies, hanging out with friends, playing another sport (most top-level athletes were multi-sport athletes in high school), taking a class, picking up a hobby, or spending extra time on homework.

You can certainly still work on aspects of your training or skills that you'd like to improve—talk to your coach about what off-season drills and/or camps might be good for you—but don't let them dominate your free time. If you were injured during your season, be sure to rehab and strengthen that area to minimize the chances of reinjury.

***Be sure to check out these additional resources available for download:***

**Chalk Talk (PDF)**

*15-minute activity:* Reinforce the importance of proper recovery with this short guided discussion.

**Activities (PDF)**

*15 & 20-minute activities:* These activities will help your athletes wind down after a stressful gameday and teach them how to develop a strong nighttime routine.

**Post-Season Reflections (PDF)**

*Handout:* Use this handout to help your athletes recap and reflect after a season comes to an end.

**Sleep Quiz (PDF)**

*Worksheet:* See if your athletes know the basics of getting the best sleep possible with this simple quiz.

**TrueSport Certificate (PDF)**

*Lesson Certificate:* Celebrate your group's completion of the TrueSport Recovery lesson with this special certificate.