

Finally Revealed...

The 125 Top Performance Secrets of the World's Best Softball Players

By

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World's Best Softball Players to anyone it will help!**

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Mindset and Attitude Secrets

1. Dream about what you want to become, achieve and accomplish. Without dreams, you can't hope for much. Dreams are what allow us to achieve extraordinary things and that ignite the passion within. Don't just dream big, dream huge. With dreams and passion, you can become unstoppable!
2. Commit to a mission. Once you know why you play softball, what character traits you want to possess and what you want to accomplish, commit to this. Make it the #1 priority in your life.
3. Face your weaknesses. What has held you back from reaching your goals? Identify the stumbling blocks will move you a long way toward resolving them. What can you do to get better? Develop a plan to get rid of them. Facing our weaknesses is rarely fun but it is a necessary step toward becoming all you can be. You must attack your weaknesses relentlessly!
4. Write your goals down and re-read them often. Passion-driven goals are the best. Writing your goals makes them more real and tangible and represents a form of commitment to them. They go from being wishes to true goals. Re-read them often. Post them where you can see them daily so you stay focus on what is the most important thing to you.
5. Have a plan for every workout or practice – the saying goes: “if you fail to prepare, prepare to fail”. One of the common traits of the most successful people in the world is that they have a plan. They know where they are going. Identify where you want to go, the obstacles you will face to get there and lay down a plan to get overcome the obstacles and get to your final destination as quickly as possible.
6. Keep a log or a journal. Writing down what your experience and what you do will keep you focus. It will allow you to revisit on a daily basis what has been going well and what needs work. This daily reflection exercise will go a long way in helping you stay focus and get better. Remember, you are running a marathon,

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not a sprint and every step you take toward your final destination gets you a step closer to your dreams.

7. Build a success portfolio. Build a portfolio where you will collect all of the evidence of success you have achieved in the past and that you will achieve in the future. This will be a strong reminder of how exceptional and amazing you are when you feel a little down. Even more important, you will build the habit of focusing on the positives rather than the negatives. Focusing on the positives is a powerful confidence builder!
8. Build a supportive social network. People that we hang out and live with have a great influence on ourselves. Surrounding yourself with supportive people is crucial. Don't let any negative influence come around you. Only let in people who are positive, believe in you and most importantly, support you.
9. Have a lifestyle that supports your goals. Trying to become an elite athlete requires some sacrifices. Going out, drinking and partying excessively is not very compatible with the lifestyle of an elite softball player. It's perfectly fine to have fun and enjoy yourself but as you know, it should be in moderation. Always ask yourself, is what I am doing right now bringing me closer to my dreams?
10. Quality before quantity. Working hard is important, there is no question there. Most people think that the harder you work, the more successful you are. However, it is not necessarily the case. Working smart is much more important than working hard. It's better to have 2 excellent workouts or pitching sessions than 5 lousy ones; it's better to hit or pitch with a totally focused mind for 20 minutes than going through the motions for 60 minutes. Going through the motions is a sin for the best softball players in the world. They say perfect practice makes perfect, don't they?
11. Become highly self-disciplined. Self-discipline is the magic power that makes you virtually unstoppable. Self-discipline is one of the most common traits of the world's most successful people. Be your own coach and don't wait for anybody to tell you what to do. Don't let temptations or obstacles get in the way

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of what you have to do. Be relentless about doing what you have to do to achieve your goals.

12. Visualize success. Visualization (a.k.a. mental imagery) is one of the most powerful mental skills. If you can visualize yourself being successful and control the thoughts in your head, your confidence will skyrocket and your performance will be much more consistent. Just like any physical skill, visualization takes time to learn, refine, and master. It must be practiced.
13. Take control of your little voice. Negative self-talk can be very destructive. It will take time before you take total control of it but it is definitely worth the effort. Try to catch yourself when you have negative self-talk and replace it by positive self-talk. Being positive is a common characteristic of highly successful people.
14. Practice absolute punctuality. Some coaches tell their athletes that if they are on time, they are late. Make of not only showing up on time but early to all your meetings, training sessions, workouts and games. Punctuality is a sign of respect but also demonstrate tremendous self-discipline. The top athletes in the world are never late.
15. Spend time by yourself to relax. Elite softball players are passionate about softball. They sleep, breath and eat softball every day and that's that the way it has to be to achieve high level success. However, take time off once in a while to rejuvenate. Do something totally unrelated to softball and enjoy it. Something well-planned little breaks do wonders for elite athletes. They go back to training and competition totally re-energized and fully motivated.
16. Use your time wisely. There is only one thing in the world that everybody has the same amount of and it's time. What you do of your time has a direct link with how successful you are at anything you undertake. There are exactly 168 hours in a week. Make the best use of them. Don't waste any and you will get where you want to be faster.
17. Overcome fear of failure. Fear of failure might be what is holding you back. Dare to be great by taking risks, chances.

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Nobody has ever achieved greatness without facing hardship first. Failing is a good thing if you learn from it. Instead of seeing problems or obstacles, see challenges to overcome. The most successful people on the planet are risk-takers. You will never achieve anything by risking nothing.

18. Make no excuses and take full responsibility for all your failures and all your successes. The world's most successful people never make excuses and they hold themselves accountable. Achieving success and making excuses are mutually exclusive, wholly incompatible.
19. Accept the fact that you will fail, make a lot of mistakes and learn from them. Failing is a big part of the game. If you succeed only 30% of the time at the plate, it's excellent. That means that you will be failing more often than you succeed. Failing is part of life and sport in general. You actually learn more by failing than by succeeding. The key point is to look at mistakes and failures as learning opportunities. Ask yourself: "What didn't go well and how can I do things differently next time to be successful?"
20. Use music to energize your workouts. It is a powerful motivator. Get yourself a quality mp3 player or iPod and listen to your favorite music when you workout. Music is motivating and helps you stay focus by blocking outside distractions.
21. Focus on the solution more than the problem. Problems and obstacles are inevitable. They are just part of life. Things never go smoothly and there are always things that come up. True champions recognize problems and map out the solutions immediately.
22. Focus on the controllable. Realize that you can't control what happens around you, but you can control your response to it. You must be in control of yourself before you can control your performance. Don't waste your time on things that you have no control over, focus on the things that you can change or control.

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23. When you are unmotivated to exercise or practice, begin for 5 minutes, then decide. One of the big stumbling blocks to achieving success is staying motivated. There are days when we don't feel like working out or practicing. The hardest thing is often just to get started. So, when you don't feel like working out or practicing, just start doing it for 5 minutes and then decide whether or not you want to continue. You will see, most of the time, you will keep doing it.
24. Morning workouts are best. People that working out in the morning tend to be more successful. When you exercise in the morning, you will miss workouts less often and you day will be more productive.
25. Treat workouts and practices like important appointments. Be selfish about your training. If achieving your goals is your number one priority, why do you sometimes relegate it at the end of your to-do list? I suspect it's because you can't feel the damage done when we miss one workout or practice. Well, I assure you: your body is keeping score and someday, you'll have to pay for it. The more often you miss the longer it will take before you achieve your goals. Only miss a workout or a practice if you have absolutely no other choice.
26. Buddy up. Our moods, habits and levels of performance naturally gravitate to the people with whom we spend the most time. This is particularly true in elite sport. Cultivate a network of workout buddies who are positive and enjoy pushing themselves. You will work harder, have more fun, be more motivated and miss a lot less.
27. Be here, now. Play one pitch at a time, confident and focused on each pitch as it is played with disregard for past or future pitches. Ignore the emotional baggage of scores, innings, and pitch counts; just focus on the next pitch. Playing a full game in the present is to ultimate goal and the best way to ensure that you perform at your best.
28. Focus on the process rather than the outcomes. You have much more control over the process than the outcome. For example, when hitting, focus on having a good at bat (proper

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mental approach to the plate, selecting the right pitches, using your best swing, hitting a line drive, etc.) rather than focusing on getting a hit or not striking out.

29. Develop routines to help you get in the zone. The use of routine is one of the most widespread practices among elite softball players. They perform routines before games, between innings and between pitches at the plate and on the field. A routine integrates both the mental and the physical aspects. It is a specific way of doing things to stay focus, block distraction and put you in the ideal mindset. Routines are powerful and you should definitely use them.

Softball Secrets

30. Spend twice as much time on your hitting as you do on your defense. Hitting is a tough skill to learn, refine and master. It takes a lot of time to become a highly skilled hitter and ultimately, team selections are often made based on who can contribute offensively.
31. Select the heaviest bat you can swing without losing bat speed or developing faulty mechanics. This will give you maximum power.
32. Hold the bat with your fingers. You have considerably more strength and control with your fingers rather than your palms.
33. Adjust your placement in the box according to the type of pitcher you are facing. For example, move up in the box when facing dropball pitchers and move back in the box when facing riseball pitchers.
34. Don't change your swing right before the season or during the season. A new swing takes too much time to learn. You can make minor adjustments but no big changes. The best time to change your swing is right after the season.
35. Stay loose at the plate. Tensed muscles are slow muscles and to be successful at the plate, you need to be quick. Relaxed muscles fire more quickly.

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36. Make each swing count. You shouldn't be swinging just for the sake of swinging. Each swing should have a specific goal whether it is to work on a technical element, drive the ball in a specific location, or adjust to a specific pitch.
37. Don't focus on your batting average but on your on-base percentage. This is a much better indication of your overall performance at the plate. Reaching a base on an error or a walk is as good as getting a hit.
38. Go from soft to hard focus. Before a pitch, watch the whole pitcher and don't focus on a specific area (soft focus) and as the pitcher prepares to deliver, zero in to the point of release (hard focus) and try to pick up the rotation of the ball.
39. Learn to hit according to the location of the ball. If the ball is outside, go with it and drive in the opposite field. If it is down the middle, drive it right back at the pitcher. Finally, if the ball is inside, turn on it and drive it into your field.
40. Focus on hitting line drives. Line drives will get you a base hit 84% of the time vs. 42% for ground balls and 24% for fly balls.
41. Train your eyes. Improve your tracking ability by watching pitches from the hitter's perspective when pitchers are working on their different pitches.
42. Master the short game. Being able to sacrifice, drag or slap in addition of hitting away is a tremendous advantage. When you can hit away, slap or punt a bunt down, you literally become a triple threat and increase your chances of getting on base.
43. Be aggressive but selective. Assume that every pitch is your pitch. The key is to be ready to capitalize on any pitcher's mistake but yet to be able to hold on if the pitch is not right.
44. Hit behind the runner. The ability to hit the ball on the ground to the right side of the infield with runners on second or third is invaluable. When hitting behind the runner, you are trading an out for a run. To hit behind the runner, you must keep your

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hands inside the ball, delay the swing, and make sure that the bat head is above the flight of the pitch.

45. Spend time practicing the short game. Too many players don't put enough time practicing this fundamental part of softball. The world's best player can successfully put a bunt down on command.
46. Explode out of the box. The instant you hit the ball and release the bat, drive your right arm forward as you push off the left leg if you are a right-handed hitter. Lefties should drive the left arm and push off with the right leg. Keep your head up, your eyes forward, and your arms pumping. Your first steps out of the box should be short and choppy and on the balls of your feet; then lengthen your stride and spring as fast as you can toward first. Keep your body relaxed and loose to eliminate any tension (tensed muscles are slow muscles).
47. Be an aggressive baserunner and learn how to run the bases properly. A skilled baserunner with average speed is a lot more effective than a fast runner who doesn't run the bases well.
48. Practice sliding. Skilled sliding will save your butt more often than you can think. Master the various slides: bent leg, pop-up, back door, and head first.
49. Pick the right glove for your position and your size. Do not assume that the bigger the glove is the easier it will be for you to catch with it. Choose one that fits well and that does not feel too heavy for your hand to get the ball in and out of the glove quickly.
50. Take care of your glove. It should not be flat, look like a taco and open and close like a book. Whenever you are not using your glove, you should always leave a ball in it and wrap a shoe lace around it to make sure that its keeps its original shape. Make sure to keep it clean too.
51. Spend time refining your throwing mechanics and perfecting all of your throws. Good throwing mechanics will minimize your chance of developing arm or shoulder pain and will allow you to

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throw with more power with less effort. Perfecting your throws is crucial because in a 1-0 game, you can't afford to throw the ball away.

52. Know your primary position inside out. To be the best you can be, you have to know everything there is to know about playing your position. You should also familiarize yourself with at least one secondary position. Versatility is always an asset for a softball player.

Warm-up & Cool-Down Secrets

53. Take your warm-up seriously. The quality of your warm-up will often dictate the quality of your performance. It helps your prepare not only physically but mentally as well. Develop a specific warm-up routine for your workouts, your practices and your games. This will help you perform to your best!
54. Don't use static stretching as a mean to warm-up. Static stretching (a stretch where you hold a position without moving for a given amount of time) is not used much anymore in high performance sport because it has been shown to be ineffective in preventing injuries and it also decreases performance by turning off the nervous system. Studies have shown that you can lose power for up to an hour after performing static stretching.
55. Do a dynamic warm-up instead. A dynamic warm-up includes exercises that will challenge the nervous system and also increase the range of motion around the major joints. These exercises are often described as "dynamic flexibility exercises", "mobility exercises" or "movement preparation exercises". Consult with a good strength and conditioning coach to develop a good dynamic warm-up routine.
56. Take time to cool down. After each workout, practice and game, take a few minutes to cool down by doing a light jog for a few minutes followed by static stretching. Static stretching is very effective to help the body recover after exercise.

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Health Secrets

57. Make your health a priority. The body is an amazing machine and if you give your body a chance to become very healthy, you will benefit from it more than you can ever imagine. You will feel amazing, be full of energy and pretty much unstoppable. Treat your body like the most important thing in the world. If you take care of your body, he will take care of you. Make your health a priority will be reflected in your daily choices and actions (i.e. washing your hand, drinking water instead of soda, etc.) and this can make a big difference in your performance and your ability to achieve your dreams.
58. Commit to getting pain free once and for all. How on earth can you live your passion and perform as a human being if you're in pain? Pain is insidious because we are so skilled at adapting to and working around it. Don't live with pain; seek qualified therapists to help you get rid of it. The investment is often worthwhile. Also, many chronic injuries that develop over time can be prevented simply by listening to your body, which will send warning signals well in advance. Preventative therapies like chiropractic, deep-tissue massage, yoga and acupuncture are among the best ways to "tune in to" your body and create a more resilient physique.
59. Listen to your body. Don't ignore pain. Pain is the alarm system of your body. I know that elite softball players are suppose to be "tough" but ignoring pain is not being "tough", it's being stupid. It will affect your game if you don't look after it right away. Better to catch problems early thanffer from them later. Injuries take forever to go away. If don't want them, don't welcome them in the first place!
60. Build your "Performance Team". All of the world's best athletes have a group of specialists that looks after them. A performance team should be comprised of least your coaches (team coaches, pitching and/or hitting instructor), a physician and a physical therapist. Welcome additions to a performance team would be a sport psychologist, a strength and conditioning coach, a chiropractor and a massage therapist.

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61. Buy quality cleats and running shoes. You will be spending so much time in your cleats and in your running shoe training that you want to have quality. It's not time to try to save money here. Investing money in good cleats and good running shoes can really help preventing injuries. A lot of lower body injuries can be attributed to poor footwear.
62. Get your eyes checked. It is surprising how many people don't know they need glasses or corrective lenses until they actually try them on. If you can't see well, don't expect to hit well.
63. Take great care of your throwing arm. Arm or shoulder injuries are tricky, take a lot of time to heal and can really hinder your ability to perform. Warm-up properly, apply ice after heavy use, and stretch. At the first sign of pain, seek immediate treatments.
64. Ask a qualified therapist or training to complete a functional assessment on you and follow their recommendations. In a functional assessment, the therapist or the trainer will look at your posture and test your flexibility, your mobility and the strength of your stabilizers and postural muscles. Then, they should be able to give you specific exercises and stretches to do to help fix the problems. Every athlete has some form of weaknesses and correcting will help you prevent injuries and increase performance.

Energy Systems Secrets

65. Your goal is to build an endurance base, not to become an elite marathon runner. Do over do aerobics. Focus on building a solid base of aerobic endurance early in the off-season and later (2-3 months before the season), focus on building speed by doing sprints instead. Doing too much aerobic conditioning can be detrimental and hinder your ability to develop speed, strength and power.
66. Use the speed ladder. The speed ladder is a wonderful tool to do conditioning and develop foot quickness, speed, and agility.
67. Do intervals. When doing training your energy system, try to work by intervals instead of long, steady-state "cardio" sessions.

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Here is an example of interval work: 1 minute very hard followed by 1 minute easy repeated 10 times. Interval work takes less time and builds up your capacity to recover from more intense efforts.

68. If you need to lose weight, focus on aerobics a little more. Try working out in the morning. You should focus on losing weight during the off-season by doing extra aerobic work. It is not recommended to try to lose weight during the competitive season as you will often also lose strength, speed, and power.

Flexibility Secrets

69. Stretch for 45-60 seconds. It has been shown that you have to hold a stretch for at least 45-60 seconds to make real significant gains in flexibility. For very tight muscle, try repeating a stretch 2 or 3 times.
70. Stretch after every exercise session. Develop the habit of stretching on a regular basis; a better range of motion will help you prevent injuries and will also help increase your performance.
71. If you need a quick improvement in flexibility, use the PNF technique. The PNF technique is an advanced stretching protocol that helps athletes makes quick and impressing gains in flexibility. PNF stretching has to be done with a partner. Seek the assistance of a qualified therapist or trainer to show you how to do it.
72. Lifting by itself may increase your flexibility. If you focus on using the full range of motion, lifting may help you increase your flexibility. A good time to stretch is also between sets.
73. You don't need to warm-up to stretch. While a warm muscle is more compliant, you can stretch anytime anywhere. There is no limit to how much stretching you can do. Stretching is easy, effortless and makes you feel good.

Strength Secrets

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74. Develop a stable, strong and powerful core. The core is the musculature of the lower trunk which is comprised of all your abdominal, low back and hip muscles. The core is responsible for transferring power from the lower to the upper body by stabilizing the trunk and generating rotational power. To train your core properly, you must integrate into your routine exercises that will (a) involved many muscles of the core and (b) force the trunk to stabilize. The key is to target deeper abdominal muscles such as the transversus abdominis, a deep internal abdominal muscle that plays a key role in stabilizing the trunk and transferring power from the lower to the upper body.
- Stay away from leg raises or a floor-based crunches or sit-ups (or close variations of them) as they only focus on training one abdominal muscle (the "six-pack" muscle) and this muscle doesn't help in transferring power or generating rotational power. Any other core exercise is likely to benefit you, especially is the meet the two criteria mentioned above.
75. Focus on whole-body exercises that use lots of muscles and joints in coordinated action and use your muscles the way they're designed to work instead of those that are force muscles to work in isolation. Here are a few of the best strength training exercises that you can choose: squat, lunge, deadlift, bent-over row, BB and DB presses, dips, military press, pull-ups, etc.
76. Stay away from machines. Machine training is not sport-specific at all. It doesn't train the muscles the way they are used on the field. In other words, machine training doesn't prepare your body to perform on the field. Instead, focus on bodyweight, free weight and stability ball exercises. However, there are a few exceptions: the lat-pull down, the seated row and any cable exercises that involves more many muscles are good machine exercises.
77. Stay away from leg presses. People love the leg press because they can load it up with insane amount of weights and they feel strong and powerful. Many people think that it's a good machine because it involves most of your lower body muscles. However, it "isolates" the lower body and doesn't involve any muscles

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from the trunk or the upper body. You will be much better with squats, deadlifts, lunges, etc.

78. Don't abuse the bench press. The bench press is a good upper body strength builder. However, abuse and overuse of this exercise to produce a lot of shoulder injuries. If your shoulder is not healthy, your performance will greatly suffer. Do it mostly to build strength whenever you do sets of 1 to 8 repetitions.
79. Don't think that the Smith-machine replaces real squats. The Machine is a "standing" leg press. It's no substitute for real squats and it's certainly not better than the leg press. Even if it looks a lot like a squat, it doesn't force your body to stabilize because the machine doesn't do it for you. Stay away from it.
80. The weight or resistance has to be heavy enough to make strength gains. If it is too light, you will not make gains. Progressive overload is one of the basic principles of strength training. Make sure that you also keep increasing the resistance as you get stronger.
81. The goal of each workout is to get better. Try to set new records every workout. While it will not happen every time, it will force you to push yourself and work hard.
82. To build strength and power, you must train hard but less frequently, with plenty of recovery time between workouts. More is NOT better. Intense workouts with quality recovery are the key to building strength and power.
83. Control the speed of your lifting. To build strength, you must lift slowly. A general rule of thumb is to lift the weight in 1 to 2 seconds and lower it in 2 to 4 seconds. The only time where you want to lift quickly is when you are training power (explosive strength).
84. Vary your program every 4-6 weeks. The more conditioned you are, the faster your body adapts to any training program. After that, it reaches a plateau. Elite athletes usually change their program every 3-4 weeks to make sure to keep making gains. You can change the exercises, the number of sets and reps,

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the rest period, the speed of lifting, the order of the exercises, the training frequency, etc.

85. There is no magic system of exercises, sets, and reps. Everything works but nothing works forever. You have to change what you do frequently.
86. Build your body using a logical order. Use the following progression: 1) develop stability and muscular endurance using 2-3 sets of 12-20 repetitions, 2) develop general strength using 2-3 sets of 8-12 repetitions, 3) develop maximum strength using 3-4 sets of 4-8 repetitions, and build power by lifting explosively using Olympic lifts, medicine balls exercises or plyometrics. The number of sets and repetitions will vary depending on the type of training you will be doing.
87. Use Olympic lifting to build power. Most of the world's best softball players use some form of Olympic lifting in their training. Olympic lifting is the use of cleans, snatches, and all of their variations to build power. Olympic lifts are very technical so before you start using Olympic lifts, seek guidance from a qualified strength and conditioning coach.
88. You'll get better results by working your butt off on a bad program than you will loafing through a good program. There is no shortcut for hard work in the weight room.

Recovery Secrets

89. Take a few weeks off at the end of a season. It's important to give your body a couple of weeks off at the end of the season. If you don't, you'll pay the price later. This transition period is also the best time to heal any nagging injuries.
90. Take time off when needed. The human body undergoes significant changes each day: fluctuating moods, varying levels of hydration, and powerful hormonal shifts. We often feel those effects in our workouts and practices – you know those days when you feel lethargic and no energy. These days are normal; your body is telling you it's time to take it easy or rest. Listen to your body and whenever you feel tired and have no energy, it's

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perfectly acceptable to shorten up your workout or give yourself a day off to replenish and start over the next day especially considering that at that time the body is not receptive to training and exercising would be detrimental to your long-term progress.

91. Active rest is dynamic recovery. Active rest is an integral part of every successful athlete. To help your body recover faster, try to take an easy walk, a light jog, a calming bike ride or a relaxed swim. Anywhere between 5 to 30 minutes will be helpful. Moderate exercise has a great healing power and accelerates the recovery process.
92. Treat yourself to a massage. You can go for a relaxing and stress-relieving massage or a sport massage which involve more aggressive deep-tissue work. A massage will enhance your recovery by promoting the removal of metabolites, decreasing muscle soreness, decreasing muscle fatigue, and increasing metabolism.
93. Apply ice is to be used after every training session and every game. It should be applied in regions that have been submitted to hard work (i.e. arms, shoulders, legs, knees, etc.) or might have suffered light traumas. It is suggested to use cold therapy for about 15 to 20 minutes, depending on the desired tissue depth.
94. Use hot-cold therapy or contrast baths. Contrasts bath may help eliminating the toxins within the body ("flushing" theory) in addition to treating localized muscle spasm and providing pain relief. The theory is that contrast baths induce a pumping action within the muscle. Alternating vasoconstriction and vasodilatation penetrates muscle tissue to a superficial depth. The key is to immerse a specific body part or the whole body alternatively in hot and cold water for periods of 30 seconds to 2 minutes. Continue the procedure for a total duration of 10-15 minutes.

Stress Management Secrets

95. Manage your stress. Some stress is excellent but too much stress is highly detrimental. When you are stressed, the body

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released a hormone – cortisol – that will hinder the recovery process. Too much stress is often associated with lethargic period, lack of results in training and in competition and mild depression.

96. Breathe through your nose. Catch any top softball player right before the start of an important game and you will see three things: a total relaxed focus; a calm, loose body; and deep breathing in through the nose and out of the mouth. A simple way to deal with stress in one swift motion is breathing through your nose. Deep breathing is what elite athletes use to control pre-event tension, and this simple, effortless, highly effective skill will work for you in most stressful situations.

Nutrition Secrets

97. Drink a lot of water. You've heard that hundreds of times for a good reason: water does wonders to the body. You should always carry a bottle of water with you. As a rule of thumb, try to have at least 7-8 glasses of water a day.
98. Coffee increases alertness. Every sports nutritionist will tell you that coffee dehydrates and that it should be consumed in moderation. However, taken in moderation, coffee can help you increase performance because it increases your alertness. Sharp alertness is crucial to react quickly defensively or read the trajectory of a pitch and decide whether or not you want to swing at it when you are at the plate.
99. Don't over do energy drinks like Red Bull are quick fixes. Try not to become dependant. They are full of chemicals that your body doesn't like.
100. Go for Sports drinks like Gatorade and Powerade. They are designed for athletes and have been engineered not only to hydrate but also to provide real energy (carbohydrates) and replace electrolytes. You should definitely consider taking sports drinks especially if you are going to quite active for more than 90 minutes.

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101. Never go hungry! Softball requires mental sharpness, alertness and quick judgment to perform. Your brain lives off blood glucose exclusively. Blood glucose is sugar or carbohydrates circulating in your bloodstream. When you are hungry, your blood glucose is low which means that you have a low functioning brain and reduced mental sharpness, alertness and judgment. This is especially important when you play several games in a day. Make sure to feed yourself on a regular basis.
102. Coffee, sodas, juice and tea don't count! As you know, you need to keep yourself well-hydrated and these drinks won't do it as they more are likely to do the exact opposite: dehydrate you. To stay well-hydrated, rely on water and sports drinks.
103. Feed the machine with appropriate foods! Whatever you put in your mouth is what your body is going to use to repair itself. If you put cheap food in your mouth, your body is going to use cheap food to make new cells. You are literally what you eat! Your body is an amazing athletic machine and it requires high-quality food to function at a high level.
104. Eat to be healthy first; then eat to perform. There is no point at using advanced nutritional strategies if your foundation isn't right. Focus on eating healthy first by developing sound nutritional habits and only then, you can consider using advanced nutritional strategies to boost your performance.
105. Create a world-class shopping list. Here are the ten best foods taken from the grocery lists of the world's best softball players: tomatoes, flaxseed oil, red grapes, nuts, whole grains, salmon (and other fatty fish), blueberries, spinach, green tea, and broccoli.
106. Focus on natural whole food, organic if possible. These foods are what your body has been designed to eat and contain all of the essential nutrients that the body needs to grow, repair itself and stay healthy. Don't buy into the hype of food companies that claims to "engineer" superior food. You can't outsmart Mother Nature; nothing will ever beat natural, whole food!

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107. Avoid processed foods as much as possible. Your body is not designed to eat cheap, processed food loaded with chemicals. Processed food is low-quality food. It doesn't provide your body with all the nutrients it needs even though it's fast and usually inexpensive. Stay away from it as much as possible.
108. Eat a variety of food. You can only get all the nutrients you need by eating a variety of food. Humans are creature of habits and people tend to eat the same thing over and over again. In fact, the average person typically consumes only about 10-12 foods 90% of the time. Even if it's healthy food, this lack of variety can lead to deficiencies.
109. Fresh is best. Nothing can beat fresh food. The fresher it is, the healthier it is.
110. Replace coffee with green tea. Green tea – and we are talking about the authentic loose-leaf stuff – is one of the most powerful substances on the planet. It has one of the highest concentrations of antioxidants of any food or beverage. Green tea is a mainstay of the Japanese diet, which may account for their remarkably low incidence of cancer.
111. Juice up your performance. The simple act of juicing will take your physical performance to another level. Eight ounces of vegetable juice a day is the simplest, most cost-effective and powerful way to boost your health nutritionally. The best part is that even if you don't eat all your veggies every day, you can just drink them in five minutes!
112. Eat something right after you exercise. You should always eat something within 15-30 minutes of the end of your workouts, practices, and games. Doing so will accelerate your recovery because at that time, your body is starving for energy and nutrients to recover and regenerate itself. Choose high-quality foods. A mix of complex carbohydrates and protein is the ideal.
113. Focus on quality proteins. Eat at least one lean, quality protein per day: fish, egg whites, lean ground beef, tofu, or beans. If you do that while avoiding the "simple or refined" carbohydrates like white flour and sugars, your body will highly benefit from it.

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114. Eat enough. Most athletes don't eat enough to meet their energy needs. As an active person, you have much greater energy needs than a sedentary person. You have to provide your body with the required energy because if you don't, you will feel tired and lethargic, your performance will suffer and you are not likely to feel that you get anything out of your training session.
115. Eat 5-6 times a day. Eating often throughout the day increases your metabolism, helps build more strength and power, and increases the flow of energy throughout the day. Elite athletes eat small meals throughout the day. The key is not to overeat but to eat smaller meals more often.
116. Don't buy into the supplement hype. More than 90% of nutritional supplements don't work and are worthless. Quality nutrition will provide you with most, if not all the nutrients that you need to perform at your best. Some supplements might be useful to make-up for specific deficiencies such as calcium or iron. However, in most cases, nutritional supplements are not worth the money.
117. Scrutinize food labels before you buy. This is not a conspiracy, but doesn't it seem as though food manufacturers are trying to hide things from us? Learn how to read food label and decipher its meaning. Also, if reading the list of ingredients of a certain food requires contains words that you can't even pronounce, takes more than five minutes and a magnifying glass to read, something is wrong. Go for foods that are made simply.
118. Watch out for the suffix "ose". Anything with the suffix "ose" means sugars. Instead of writing sugar as an ingredient, food companies try to hide it by using more complex, technical terms to confuse you.
119. Minimize simple refined sugars. Simple refined sugars are usually found in processed foods like chocolate, white bread, fries, and so on. You want to focus on ingesting complex sugars which are typically found in fruits, vegetables and whole grain products.

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120. Use alcohol in moderation. Not only alcohol dehydrates you but it greatly interferes with the body's ability to perform at an optimal level.
121. Always pack healthy food when you go on the road. Sometimes, you will not have access to any healthy food. Your choices might be a hot dog, a bag of chips or a chocolate bar. Fruits, yogurt and granola are just a few examples of healthy food that you can pack up.

Sleep Secrets

122. Make a point of sleeping at least 7 hours, preferably 8 every night. Adequate sleep is the **most** important factor affecting recovery. Most athletes are chronically sleep deprived because of their busy schedule. Sleep is often the first that will be sacrificed in order to get things done. However, lack of sleep severely hinders your ability to perform
123. Be in bed by 10:00-10:30. Recent advances in the field of sleep has shown that your body is programmed (from millions of years of evolution) to do most of its physical repair between 10:30 pm and 2:30 am and most of its psychological repair between 2:30 and 6:30 am (when you have your most intense dreams). So, if you consistently go to bed too late, you are missing a lot of your physical repair time – which is essential for a physically active person. Unlike what you may think, going to bed late and getting up later will NOT shift this period. Make a commitment to be in bed by no later than 11:00 pm and you body will thank you for it.
124. Learn to catch 20-30 minute naps. Longer naps will make you drop into deeper sleep states which will disturb your alertness during the rest of the day, and may interfere with proper sleep at night. If you are really sleep deprived, then go for a 90-120 minutes nap – the length of time it takes to go through a full cycle of sleep.
125. Regular sleeping hours are very important. The top athletes in the world go to bed and get up pretty much at the same time every day. Your body needs that consistency to get high quality

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sleep. Constantly changing your sleeping hours will greatly affect the quality of your sleep.

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Also, feel free to forward this free e-book – The 125 Top Performance Secrets of the World's Best Softball Players - to anyone you feel it could help. In fact, the author would be grateful to you if you did!

About the Author

Marc O. Dagenais, MHK, CSCS, ChPC



Marc O. Dagenais is a sought-after peak performance coach and an expert at improving performance, developing talent and helping athletes and teams reach their full potential. He works with softball players to help them turn their athletic talent into extraordinary performances and he consults with coaches on how they can get more out of their players, turn their struggling team around or get an edge over their opponents.

Marc has an exceptional combination of softball coaching expertise and sports sciences knowledge – which a very rare combo in the world of softball. He has intimate knowledge of what

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it takes to develop and maintain a high level of performance in athletes.

Marc has worked with numerous elite amateur, college and professional athletes including hundreds of softball players. He has also been coaching women's competitive fastpitch softball for over 18 years and has coached at every level of the game from grassroots to the college and the international level. He has served three years as an Assistant Softball Coach at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, B.C and he presently works and coaches with the Canadian Women's Softball National Team Program.

In addition to having an extensive background as a softball coach, trainer, and consultant, Marc has advanced studies in sport sciences (high performance coaching, sports psychology, and strength and conditioning) and numerous high level certifications.

Also, in addition to being an expert strength and conditioning specialist and a high-level softball coach, he is also extremely well-versed in the areas of sports psychology, sports nutrition, and injury management.

- Ph.D. in Education (Sport Psychology, Sports Pedagogy), University of Sherbrooke (in progress)
- Masters of Human Kinetics (MHK), (Coaching Sciences), University of British Columbia
- Bachelor of Sciences, (Physical Education), University of Montreal
- Diploma in High Performance Coaching, National Coaching Institute - Vancouver, BC
- CPCA – Chartered Professional Coach (ChPC)

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- NSCA Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist (CSCS)
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- CWF - Level 1 Weightlifting Coach
- NCCP – Certified Level IV Softball Coach (missing only 2 modules for full level V)
- Red Cross – First Aid Instructor
- CPMDQ – Naturopath / Kinesiologist
- CAN-FIT-PRO – Personal Trainer Specialist (PTS) and PRO-Trainer

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