



OVERTRAINING SYNDROME AND ATHLETIC INJURY

OVERTRAINING

Overtraining is when an athlete is exposed to cycles of training that exert their ability to productively balance training and recovery. In real settings, overtraining is when a program incorporates too many training sessions and not enough recovery time leading to no or decreased improvement in performance (Reider, 2017). Overtraining can develop both from coaches and athletes in that coaches do not properly balance the training schedule and/or athletes are not participating in recovery sessions whether it be skipping athletic training sessions or doing their own training on recovery days.

One of the more prominent outcomes of overtraining is a weakened immune system which can then lead to an athlete being more susceptible to illness, injury, and longer recovery spans.

EXTENSIVE TRAINING

Extensive training is when an athlete is conducting a high training volume in intensity that is not adding any positive results to their performance and is ultimately unnecessary. This type of training can often stem directly from athletes, as they are more willing to take on a heavier training load in order to improve their performance, so they think. Some athletes may feel that they need to take on more training in order to improve upon skill levels or increase their strength as they feel they are not as sufficient as their teammates and/or opponents.

Extensive training can lead to chronic fatigue, decreased performance, exhaustion, increased risk of injury, etc.

BURNOUT

Burnout is when an athlete experiences emotional and physical exhaustion, a reduced sense of accomplishment, and/or a decrease in the value of their given sport. Athletes experiencing burnout may show signs of a significant decrease in motivation or desire to train, and potentially withdrawn from all activities relating to training and performance. Many athletes who experienced burnout typically tend to end their participation in sport as they have either experienced overtraining or excessive training, a significant physical and/or psychological change, or experienced too early of specialization of sport (Reider, 2017) (Carlin et. al., 2021).

Burnout can result in the quitting of sport and potentially, if severe enough, chronic stress.

STALENESS

Staleness, on the other hand, is a difficulty in maintaining a training schedule as a result of overtraining and decreased motivation. Staleness can look like an athlete's inability to maintain focus during training as well as of lack of interest and desire to train or participate in sport in general. Some things that may lead to staleness are a repetitive training program or excessive short training cycles. For example, a practice program that is structured to complete the same five drills every day can cause athletes to lose interest as well as hinder their ability to challenge themselves, develop new skills, and keep their love of the game alive.

Staleness can result in a poor attitude towards training, a lack of motivation, a decreased ability to attain prior performance level, and potentially, if severe enough, depression.

RISKY BUSINESS

Overtraining can lead to at risk situations that can be avoidable, including early specialization, where the athletes are pressured to only participate in one sport at an early age limiting their ability to participate in other sports or activities.

Extensive training can be especially dangerous for youth programs as the athletes are still physically developing and do not have the proper muscles to protect their bodies as they become more fatigued (Corso, 2018).

In general, coaches who emphasize gamesmanship over sportsmanship can put the athletes at risk as they promote improper play that can potentially cause the athletes to engage in dangerous activities for the misleading purposes of win at all costs mentalities. This mindset instilled into athletes increases the risk of overtraining, extensive training, burnout, and staleness.

STRATEGIES

Some strategies that can be used for maintaining overtraining syndrome include...

- Ample recovery and break times within the training
- Incorporating fun, engaging skill development drills
- Checking in with athlete's mindsets
- Creating an environment that promotes athletes to practice proper sportsmanship
- Checking in with available athletic trainers to ensure the time used for athlete recovery is properly executed
- Altering training session intensity and frequency according to pre, during, and postseason

RESOURCES

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