

Our players participate in a wide variety of athletic training throughout the week. On days when they are not involved in some sort of scheduled aerobic or strength training activity, they should make time to exercise on their own or with a buddy. Choose the activity based on attempting to meet the US Dept of Health and Human Services recommendations<sup>i</sup> (3 strength and 3 aerobic workouts per week), interest, time, resources, and the weather.

In addition to exercise, a day of rest for the body once a week is very beneficial to them. Athletes should also be maximizing the nutritional content of their food so that they have energy to compete with stamina when tournaments roll around. Besides a **day of rest** and **eating well**, **adequate sleep** tops the charts for tapping into their athletic potential. One of our former coaches has written and maintains a number of blogs that will be helpful to you and your athlete as you prepare for the physical demands of select softball. They are linked into our website at <http://www.texaspridefastpitch.com/training.html>.

As athletes performing in a select level sport, our players can greatly benefit from aerobic cross training using the suggestions below. Keep in mind that aerobic conditioning, like strength training, is challenging. An athlete has to learn to push through discomfort to see gains in speed, strength, and endurance. The body learns to do more, because the athlete makes the body work harder each time she trains. Use a watch and take notes. How long does it take? And then attempt to improve your time or your distance on the next outing. Don't just do the time. Work to improve and enjoy the positive changes along the way.

#### Some fun and beneficial options

- Run long distances to build endurance and improve stamina for 15 minutes or longer. When running for shorter amounts of time, challenge yourself by running at a faster pace. 3 miles a week (at once or spread out) is a good goal.
- Run speed intervals to make you faster and to learn to work through fatigue and muscle burn. If training on a track, sprint the straight-aways (100m) allowing yourself to become breathless and then walk the curves (100m) to allow the heart rate to recover. Ideally you should be able to breathe in and out of your nose 3 times without gasping for air before starting the next sprint interval. This is a challenging workout that will greatly improve the aerobic capacity of the heart. I would recommend beginning with 4 laps performed this way and working up from there.
- Jump roping, plyometric exercises, and /or athletic drills will help improve speed, dynamic power, and agility. For jump roping, you could jump 100 times with both feet down, rest 30sec, then double jump (bringing knees higher) 100 times. Keep in mind that at first you may not be able to reach 100 jumps. Plyometric exercises are high impact movements where both feet are off the floor and you land softly. Examples are plyo squats, plyo lunges, burpies, squat with direction changes, and side to side lunges (usually performed quickly with both arms moving). Agility drills can include running suicides, running laterally to touch cones, and quickly jumping back and forth over an imaginary line or rope. You can also visualize a ladder on the ground and run high knees through it or jump patterns through the ladder as if you are playing hopscotch.
- Cycle outdoors with a helmet. Vary your course and don't avoid those hills or the wind. You want to work up a good sweat. As you build endurance, you should be able to bike with periods of intensity for 25-60 minutes.
- Cycle indoors being sure to change up the resistance on your bike. Spin faster (without bouncing in your seat) to increase your speed and quickness in your muscles. Then increase the load, or resistance, so that the indoor bike feels like you are pedaling up a hill. Hills will increase the strength of your legs. Learn to pedal through that burn in your legs. 30 to 60 minutes is a great goal for cycling.

- Lap swimming- use a variety of strokes (free style, breast stroke, butterfly, and back stroke) to work out all the muscles in your body. As you improve, begin to minimize the time you spend with your feet down or hanging on the side of the pool. Start with 15 to 30 minutes and then work up from there.
- Most gyms allow members as young as 12 years old to join. If you belong to one, find the group fitness classes that fit in your schedule and jump in. Great cardio options are Spin, Step, and Kickboxing classes. Strength training classes and yoga classes should be checked out, too. ☺ Get your money's worth!

After aerobic exercise or strength training, an athlete should refuel her body so that her muscles can immediately absorb that energy. Ideally, the post workout food should contain a 4:1 carb to protein ratio. It doesn't need to be heavy in calories. 150 to 200 calories is good. This snack should be eaten within 45 minutes of ending exercise since the muscles become insulin resistant and will not absorb that energy after 45 minutes. If you want your muscles to have energy the next day, you have to refuel within that 45 minute window of opportunity.

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<sup>i</sup> The US Department of Health and Human Services in 2008 recommended that adolescents from the age of 6 to 17 get at least 1 hour of physical activity each day. Most of the 1 hour or more a day should be either moderate or vigorous intensity physical activity. They specifically suggested that at least 3 days should include strength conditioning, and 3 days per week should include aerobic activity.