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JOURNAL ARTICLES

Recovery & Regeneration

An Interview with Carl Valle - USATF II, CSCS

Tyler Hass

How did you first become exposed to recovery and regeneration techniques?

My first focus on the recovery process was from my high school swim coach Peter Foley. He explained to us, the team, how to be a total athlete for 24 hours a day, not just 2. A total athlete was a person that organized their lifestyle to get a full night's sleep and not eat junk food. He understood the reality of the situation with student athletes not learning ways to juggle what I call the four S's. The four S's are Sleep, School, Sport, and Social. If you distribute the hours among priorities of needs over wants, you can have it all in life. This process worked for me and I transformed myself from a neophyte to a part of three state championship swim teams. By just learning how to construct a foundation of principles and guidelines on doing the basics and being consistent, I could expand the individual basics and become more precise and more aggressive with modalities later. Don't build on quicksand by rushing to get into supplementation and soft tissue therapy.

I was influenced in graduate school by Charlie Francis, one of the greatest speed coaches in the world. Speed Trap and Training for Speed opened my eyes to what methods of recovery could be enhanced through a regeneration specialist and through the pedagogical coaching side. Not only was recovery part of rest, it was

interlaced and monitored by the coach, athlete, and staff. Those two books accelerated my career and abilities by at least ten years. After learning about the modalities, I went into the trenches and did internships and employment with the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, University of South Florida, continued to coach Swimming and Track, and performance enhancements companies. I then had to learn the art of coaching by being creative and motivational to athletes in the real world.

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I would say my last advancement into the world of recovery and regeneration was forged by Travis Skaggs. Travis a brilliant soft tissue therapist in Tampa. Not only did he prove that his methods of massage and body work were the top in the world, but he could dive in to areas of recovery that others were not only not aware

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of, but do it with amazing success. Watching him work on athletes in the NFL, MLB, NHL, and Olympic track sprinters made me understand what my own training did on the athlete, a period of time that coaches usually don't invest in timewise. I needed to know if my intensities and volumes were too much for the athlete or if the postural changes being invested in were actually happening. Travis never failed to be fully honest about my training and helped me refine areas of training that helped athletes improve their training dramatically.

What types of benefits do your athletes see once they start taking an active role in their recovery?

Most clients I work with ask if the recovery methods I suggest or mandate will make them better athletes and the answer is most of the time a stern "no". Without the hard work on their sport, recovery would just be pampering or wasting time. Recovery maximizes one's training by making their next workout better by improving the ready state of the body. If recovery means improved performance, I would argue that, if the athlete was injured or over-trained, the methods used for rehabilitation were forced to restore the rehabilitation of a minor injury not fully addressed.

From Travis Skaggs I learned that there are three phases of training of sports massage that could improve an athlete's performance. The first is rehabilitation, the second is recovery, and the third is performance enhancement. Rehabilitation, or using massage to treat a common muscular injury, speeds up the repair process by removing any residual side effects of natural repairlike adhesions or localized tightness. When an athlete "pulls a muscle" this could reflect many faults in a program and a qualified sports massage professional can see what I call "Fractal Errors", or patterns of the mistakes that can be scaled at various levels or time periods. Many mistakes in training echo, like not resting

properly between sessions, between training cycles or seasons, or even between reps. Athletes that constantly have the same problems need to connect the dots and find the constants that are part of the losing formula of injury.

After the athlete is training consistently over a long period without injury or illness, a coach can employ bodywork, a general term of therapy that includes massage. Massage is a broad array of hands on techniques and is a primary method of improving recovery of the athlete's body to improve the recovery of muscle tone, skeletal alignment, and even the elasticity and the power of an athlete. This can only be done if general and frequent preventative work is done to keep athletes from being injured in the first place. After an athlete is what I call stable from consistent training and massage, they can use the soft tissue therapy to maximize the recovery time period, be it hours or days, so they can train with full intensity during the next workout. This level of therapy is what I call the recovery enhancement phase, a period of time between workouts and a state of refinement of the restoration of the athlete.

The final level of massage addresses actual performance enhancement of athletes through temporary change to their muscles and nervous systems. This level of therapy is done right before a game or competition and allows for a temporary state of tissue enhancement. The therapist will help lengthen the propulsive musculature, even out the texture of the tissue, and passively activate the nervous system.

Another effective tool is a stretch rope called the "Fraid Nots" (<http://www.tomdrum.com/nots.php>). It can maximize any basic stretch program. If an athlete focuses during a short 15–20 minute time period every day they can enhance their existing program greatly if they are not already utilizing flexibility training. A basic static stretching program can work wonders and

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the costs are virtually nothing for a team. I suggest all coaches, athletes, or trainers pick up a 'Fraid Not' kit. Each one is less than 10 dollars and includes a chart, book, rope, and door strap. Any efforts to try to save money by going to the Home Depot will be fruitless since the rope in the kit is the softest and most durable rope I have encountered. Athletes can see changes in their body from improvements in skeletal alignment, feel less restricted, and even see better performances.

Which modalities give the most bang for the buck? For an unsponsored athlete on a tight budget, which methods would you prioritize?

Let us first start off with a quote, "Limits are for those who have them, excuses are for those that need them." In life, I try to break the rules by thinking outside the box! No budget? Create one. A resourceful person will try to bargain with a massage school to get free therapy for their team of oneself because massage students need practice hours and why not take advantage.

The first start of prioritizing methods is ensuring that you are doing the free or very economical methods first, such as sleep and thermotherapy. Sleep should be worshiped since it costs nothing and obviously doesn't require training. Thermotherapy such as heat or cold use can greatly enhance the removal of soreness and sometimes help speed up muscle repair. Contrast showers have been theorized to create a beta response in the nervous system by leading authors in sports medicine, and any relaxation of the neuromuscular system is a plus. The nervous system must be quieted if one is to maximize speed and power. Most of these methods are virtually free because they are included in health club memberships or college facilities.

Do you use ice? If so, when is it best to apply it? What type of injuries respond best to icing and are there any situations in which to avoid cold therapy?

The use of ice is a trend with many performance centers across the country. While the use of therapeutic cold is limited in application, it's required by a large population of athletes. Just because you use it to cool off your drink doesn't mean that you are a master of water in solid form.

Ice has very specific qualities that must be respected. In fact some people have cold allergies and should never use cold baths or similar forms of therapeutic cold. Ice can be used for the treatment of many injuries and conditions from impact and collision sports, but one still must analyze why it is being used. If one has tendonitis of the knee and uses ice to mask pain, therapeutic cold is actually risking additional damage to the joint because they are treating a symptom of an underlying problem. In my experience cold can be used to control inflammation and reduce edema by preventing the swelling of the legs from intense training or competition. When large impact forces are encountered, muscle damage can be so severe it can cause swelling. Edema swelling can delay the regeneration of the legs and retard the improvement of a training program if it occurs frequently or at a time when the athlete needs to be a 100%. I feel that ice can basically help with pain and inflammation.

