



# INSTRUCTOR'S PROGRAM NEWS

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## INSTRUCTOR'S INSURANCE

In this very litigious society, it is extremely important that all instructors and coaches take every precaution to protect oneself. Although USAR-IP provides the most updated and complete instructor information available (which is required for certification) every instructor needs additional insurance for personal protection. Many of our master instructors pay up to \$700 extra each year, just to purchase additional coverage to protect their businesses, but EACH USAR-IP instructor is covered by—5 million per event aggregate, 2 million per occurrence and \$1 million for sexual abuse/harassment —THE MOST COMPLETE COVERAGE IN THE SPORT!



# INFORMATION FOR NEW HIGH SCHOOL COACHES

## TEAM PRACTICES

- Find a club close to the school and contact them about costs and times available for your team to practice.
- Schedule at least one practice a week and consider doing at least two practices a week before the season starts.
- If you are limiting the size of your team or trying to arrange your players, you may want to consider using a Challenge Ladder to determine your final roster and seeding.
- Use the practices as an opportunity to teach the kids how to referee as well as play. Take Referee Certification tests provided through USA Racquetball and check the 'Rulebook' link on [usaracquetball.com](http://usaracquetball.com).

## TEAMS

- If you are new to coaching a team, don't set the expectations too high your first year. You want the kids to have a positive/competitive experience.
- Avoid making cuts and get as many kids as possible into the program. Recruit both middle school and high school players and engage/include as many kids as possible.

## COMMUNICATION

- Establish contacts at the school to get messages to the kids.
- Attend 'Activities Nights' and try to get the matches mentioned in the school announcements. Support from the school helps immensely when organizing a team. Formalize the format and make it an official club team.
- Utilize e-mail as much as is possible to communicate with the players and/or their parents. Engage the parents as they can be a great resource and they, too, can get hooked on racquetball.

## FEES

- Determine the cost to compete (if you are using league and tournament formats) and practice time. Also factor in costs of team uniforms or t-shirts. Combine all of your costs and divide by the number of kids on your team. Collecting all of your fees and forms from the kids at once is much easier than requesting payments at several different points in the season.

## FORMS

- Collect parent releases/emergency contact forms, coaching ethics form, SafeSport Certifications, and necessary background check submissions.

## TOURNAMENTS

- Promote area tournaments to your kids. These events are just as important as the league matches and are great team-bonding opportunities. The weekend competition is great experience for the kids and the events really get the players excited about racquetball.

## MATCHES

- Organize some form of leave player whether it's interschool or intramural competition. A league or a ladder or an area tournament. When competing against other schools, chat with the coaches and share best practices. See how they work with their team. Don't be afraid to ask them for ideas on how you can do things with your team. Sharing ideas is the best way to make everyone better.

This information is taken from the Missouri High School League website and was edited for others to use. Check out their website at [WWW.MOHSRBALL.COM](http://WWW.MOHSRBALL.COM) If you have questions or would like additional information on how to start programs/teams do not hesitate to contact Dan Whitley at [dwhitley@vettasports.com](mailto:dwhitley@vettasports.com)



# COACHING A TEAM

**BY FRAN DAVIS** USAR-IP MASTER PROFESSIONAL

## **"Together Everyone Accomplishes More"**

I have coached the USA Team in 1989-1996, 2000, & 2001, and my Junior Championship Team in 2012-2018. My newest team is Team Zurek and have been coaching them since the beginning of 2021.

In my experience the most important element to coaching a successful team is the relationship. It is a relationship you are building and developing over time and requires:

- Trust
- Respect
- Working towards a shared goal
- Believing in yourself and your team

Once they trust that you have their back and you believe in them, you are in.

Once they respect you on and off the court...your coaching style, your coaching knowledge, your beliefs, and how you carry yourself, you are in.

Once they are aligned on a shared goal and begin working together towards that goal, you are in.

Once they see you believe in them individually and the team and you encourage them and their dreams, you are in.

To me these are the most important aspects of building a strong solid team. The physical skills/conditioning are easier to teach and work on, but the relationship you establish to develop a connection is earned over time. With this the desired results will come.



# MAKE YOUR TEAM A FAMILY

**BY JIM WINTERTON**

Coaching scholastic racquetball is hard work at times, but fun and rewarding especially if you have a great group of kids. I suggest building a family atmosphere.

## **Activity**

Have a team meeting but select your Alpha Bob or Barbie to run the meeting. Go over the agenda with that leader and let them take over. Be sure to impart the “Everyone is equal” rules for your team. It works! Nobody gets preferential treatment, from coaches, managers, to the best player to the worst—all are equal. To put it another way, we all have a job to do and we need the help and support of everyone to achieve success.

## **Set Goals**

Have a team discussion of realistic goals for the year. Then build your practices around those goals.

## **Practice suggestions**

Remember the joy of playing your first games? The smiles and laughs are amazing and these kids love to play! Take advantage of that by teaching objective games to your kids. For example, court one is ceiling balls only court, court two is lob serve only court etc. Make games up and be creative!

## **Limited courts?**

Utilize hall space with racquet drills. Swing forehands across mats, use the agility ladder, and make up your activities to maximize court usage and skill improvement.

## **Team Attitude**

Build a “family” type atmosphere and encourage the team to watch each other’s matches. This can lead to over-achievement by team members as they will not want to let the team down. The team atmosphere is great. When successful you will have teams pulling for each other and cheering teammates on.

## **One more thing**

Get to know your kids. Our students are amazing multi-tasking maniacs. The athletes are studying aero-space, nuclear engineering, medicine, and other disciplines, doing field work, interning, and practicing at the wee hours of the morning! What is not to love?

Oh and, Did I mention another generation of racquetball players who love our game?

Anyone who has a chance should work with college, junior, or high school racquetball! (or juniors for that matter) It is the difference of folks my age living in the senior citizen housing vs getting out there with the kids!



# HYDRATION & NUTRITION

## FROM “IMPROVE ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE WITH OPTIMAL HYDRATION AND NUTRITION” BY RICK ANSORGE (UC HEALTH)

Optimal hydration and nutrition is essential for everybody's health.

But it's especially critical for competitive athletes, according to Dr. Jack Spittler, a Family Medicine and Sports Medicine specialist based at the UHealth A.F. Williams Family Medicine Clinic – Central Park.

That's because intense physical activity depletes water and electrolytes through perspiration and burns a large number of stored calories. To stay competitive, athletes need to consume considerably more fluids and food than most people.

But that's easier said than done. “A lot of people have different philosophies about hydration and nutrition,” Spittler said.

When it comes to hydration, for example, some experts advise athletes to rely on thirst. Others recommend drinking a certain amount of fluid at certain time intervals, whether or not the athlete is thirsty.

Nutritional advice is also wide-ranging, conflicting and often controversial. Some experts favor a high-protein Atkins diet while others say a high-fat keto diet is best.

Debate also rages about the risks and benefits of dietary supplements.

### **No one-size-fits-all hydration and nutrition strategy**

Instead of recommending a specific formula, Spittler prefers a more laissez- faire approach toward hydration and nutrition.

“Everyone's body is so different that there's not a one-size-fits-all strategy,” he said. “It's best to have a personalized plan and stick with it.”

For most athletes, that usually involves a goodly amount of trial and error. “If you experiment with hydration and nutrition during your training, and you find the right balance, it's going to set you up for success,” Spittler said.

“I wish there was a better way, such as advising people to drink eight ounces of an electrolyte beverage every 30 minutes,” he added. “But there are so many variables that it's tough to recommend any hard and fast numbers.”

But one thing is certain, he said: “Changing your routine before big events is not going to help your performance. It can actually make it worse.”

A classic example is a usually diet-savvy athlete who travels to a distant stadium and fuels up on greasy concession-stand food just before an important game.

That will almost certainly set up the athlete for failure, Spittler said.

Another poor choice is to engage in intense physical activity when you're already feeling parched.

“You don't want to be thirsty before starting exercise,” Spittler said. “Otherwise, you may be playing catch-up, which can impair your performance.”

### **How to check your hydration status**

A good way to determine your hydration status is to check the color of your urine. If it's pale yellow, you're probably adequately hydrated. If

it's dark yellow or brown, that's a sign of moderate or even severe dehydration.

On the flip side, colorless urine suggests that you may be drinking so much water that you're overhydrated. "If your pee is clear and you need to go to the bathroom every 30 minutes, that's a sign that you need to back off on the beverages," Spittler said.

Over-hydration is often seen in marathon runners who chug water at every water station along their 26-mile route. "You might think you're doing the right thing by drinking a lot of water," he said. "But you can actually dilute sodium, potassium and other electrolytes in your blood down to dangerous levels."

### **Over-hydration can be serious**

In rare cases, over-hydration can be fatal. More commonly, it leads to cramping, light-headedness and other problems that impair performance.

During competitions, Spittler recommends sticking with the same hydration strategy that proved effective during training workouts. Drinking higher or lower amounts of water than usual is likely to throw athletes off their stride.

Although everyone perspires during heavy exercise, they all perspire differently. Some athletes – so-called "salty sweaters" – perspire in a way that can drastically affect their electrolytes.

"When you've finished exercising and can see a visible layer of salt on your skin and clothes, that means you're losing a lot more electrolytes," Spittler said.

Salty sweaters should experiment with different beverages and mixes that contain high levels of electrolytes to find one that improves their hydration and performance, he said.

### **Drink water before, during and after exercise**

Although everyone should drink some water before, during, and after exercise, it's usually unnecessary to consume sports drinks containing electrolytes and carbohydrates if the exercise session is an hour or less.

For longer exercise sessions, you should consider adding more electrolytes and sugar to your drinks, Spittler said.

Be aware, however, that classic sports drinks such as Gatorade and Powerade may contain more sugar than you need. "There are a lot of alternatives now that contain electrolytes and either have no sugar or very low amounts of sugar," he said. "That actually may be better for your overall health."

Word of caution: don't confuse sports drinks with "energy" drinks such as Red Bull, which are loaded with caffeine and other stimulants.

No matter which sports drink you try, note how it affects your body and athletic

performance. When the weather turns hot and humid, you'll probably need to up your sports drink intake to compensate for increased perspiration. Dr. Jack Spittler, a UCHealth Family Medicine and Sports Medicine specialist, discusses hydration and nutrition for competitive athletes.

Also keep in mind that you can become dehydrated from vigorous exercise in cold and dry weather.

For example, a day of downhill or cross-country skiing in the Colorado mountains can drastically deplete your water stores and electrolytes. "When you ski, you're exerting yourself and sweating and losing fluids, but you may not realize it," Spittler said.

Dehydration can magnify the effects of high altitude and altitude sickness, which can impair your performance and increase the risk of accidents. So even in sub-freezing temperatures, it's important to stay hydrated on the slopes, he said.

### **Talk to your doctor about hydration and nutrition**

If you're new to vigorous exercise, it's important to ask your doctor about appropriate hydration, especially if you have chronic conditions such as heart or kidney disease. Since many prescription medications can affect your electrolyte levels, you may need to adjust your fluid intake to compensate.

When it comes to nutrition, expert advice is even more variable than advice on hydration, Spittler said.

"Again, experiment with certain foods and see what works well with your body," he said. "But in general, a well-balanced diet with lean proteins and complex carbohydrates is a good strategy for athletes. That's going to give you sustained energy."

Healthy sources of protein include chicken, turkey, fish, lean red meats, peanut butter, whole eggs, nuts, legumes, Greek yogurt, milk, and string cheese.

Healthy sources of complex carbohydrates include whole-grain bread, crackers, and pasta, oatmeal and other high-fiber non-sugary cereals, fruit, starchy vegetables (sweet/white potatoes, squash), non-starchy vegetables (broccoli, leafy greens), quinoa, and brown or wild rice.

Healthy fats are also an important component of a well-balanced diet. These include avocados, peanut butter, nuts and seeds, olive or canola oil, and coconut oil.

Talk to your doctor if you're considering a newer diet that maximizes one certain macronutrient – such as protein, carbohydrates or fat – while minimizing the others.

Because vigorous exercise breaks down muscle tissue, many experts advise consuming some lean protein within 20-60 minutes after a training session or competition.

"Within that time window, you're giving your body some of the amino acids it needs to rebuild muscle," Spittler said.

His favorite post-exercise recovery potion is an old stand-by: chocolate milk. He prefers a brand that contains no lactose, which allows the product to contain more milk protein.

### **Carb loading doesn't improve athletic performance**

Spittler advises against carb loading, a traditional strategy still employed by many athletes. "We used to do that when I was in high school," he said. "We'd have this massive pasta dinner the night before a game."

Carb loading is unlikely to improve performance, but it is likely to cause an upset stomach. Like an abrupt change in a hydration strategy, an abrupt change in diet is almost always counter-productive,

"Don't do something really outside the box," he said. "If you have a strategy that works well during practices, mimic that the night before and the day of a competition."

In recent decades, the marketplace has been flooded with dietary supplements that promise to improve athletic performance. Because such products aren't regulated by the FDA and can contain hidden and potentially hazardous ingredients, Spittler advises his patients to steer clear.

"Be very careful about dietary supplements," he said.

At Spittler's clinic, a pharmacy team can assess dietary supplements that patients would like to try.

"So working with a physician or pharmacist can be a strategy for athletes who are unsure if a dietary supplement is safe for them," he said.

Many athletes rely on caffeine to improve their performance. In small amounts, caffeine can help athletes, especially endurance athletes, to maintain their focus, Spittler said.

But high amounts of caffeine can cause electrolyte imbalances, especially in younger athletes. It also can lead to cardiac issues such as heart palpitations.

One or two cups of coffee in the morning is unlikely to cause problems. But if that's followed by an energy drink or two prior to a competition, the amount of caffeine in your system can quickly increase to dangerous levels.

"Some of these energy drinks have 200 milligrams or more of caffeine," Spittler said. "Before you know it, those two Monster energy drinks you had before exercise can cause heart palpitations, dizziness, and a lot of other issues. Too much caffeine before exercise also can increase the risk of dehydration."



# ATHLETE BURNOUT

## FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS PARENT

### BY JIM THOMPSON

**Quitting Time?** Your son is not enjoying his chosen sport any more. He has played for years and excels at it. But now he appears burned out and has even mentioned he wants to quit. As a Second-Goal Parent, what should you do?

Peter Benson, author of *Sparks*, a landmark book on teen motivation, says: “Sparks illuminate a young person’s life and give it energy and purpose.” Helping teens find their spark and encouraging it is an important role for parents, which may be hard if you are emotionally attached to your son competing in his sport, while it no longer sparks him.

Try to disengage yourself from your hopes and dreams for your son as an athlete. This is about what’s best for him, and if he feels he needs to please you, it will be much harder for him to figure out what is best for him.

Juliet Thompson Hochman, a member of the 1988 U.S. Olympic Rowing Team, shared a conversation she had with her father the summer after her first year at Harvard. She was away from family, teammates, and coaches working out but feeling lonely and discouraged. She talked to her father who reminded her that she could quit rowing if that’s what she wanted.

Juliet might have been expecting her dad to pressure her, to talk her into sticking with her workouts. Instead, he reminded her that she could change her situation. She thought about what she wanted to do and realized that she wanted to excel in rowing for herself, not to please her father or anyone else. She rededicated herself, made the U.S. national team the following year, and competed in the Olympics in Seoul.

Whether to quit or not may seem like a “forever” decision to your son, but it doesn’t have to be. He can decide to take a break, even skip a season of competition, without that meaning that he is quitting the sport for good. If he takes some time off, he may find he misses it, or he may feel relieved to be away. He won’t know unless he does take a break.

So, take some of the pressure off the decision. Decisions made under pressure are often not as good as those where we give ourselves time to figure out the best course of action.

Here are some questions you might ask to get a conversation going:

- Is this a recent feeling, or have you felt this way for a while?
- Does this feel like temporary burnout or something deeper?
- Do you think taking some time off would help?
- What is it about playing your sport that feels different now?
- If you do quit, are there other activities that you’d like to get involved with?

Then listen carefully to what he says.

At some point it may be useful to help frame the decision with what I call the Five-Year Question. “How do you think you will feel five years from now if you keep playing? If you take a break? If you quit?”

It also may help for your son to “live with” each decision for a while. For a week he could live with the idea that he will gut it

out and keep playing. When he gets up in the morning and he realizes that he is going to keep playing, how does he feel? Then a week living with the decision to quit playing the sport. Again, how does he feel? Doing this for several days at a time may clarify what the best decision is for him.

Ask him to consider the idea of “responsible quitting.” If your son quits in mid-season, how will that impact his teammates and coach? What could he do to honor his commitment to the team while also taking care of his own needs? What would it mean for him to quit in a responsible way? Often this means giving notice, so the coach, for example, could develop another player to take over your son’s role on the team.

Also note that burnout with a sport can accompany other more serious problems, such as stress, depression, social problems, or eating disorders. Your conversations with your son around his sport may lead to important information about whether this is part of a bigger problem, which might not have surfaced otherwise.

I grew up with the idea that it was not okay to quit something I had started. I even felt that I should finish any book I started reading, regardless of how bad it was. But I now see how foolish this was. Time spent with a bad book is time I can’t spend reading a great book. If your son continues with a sport that is not rewarding to him, this is time he is not able to spend doing something rewarding, or exploring other potentially meaningful things he can do with his time.



# HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR FLEXIBILITY

- 1) Work hard to get rid of all injuries, including tears, sprains, strains, and especially aches, pains and sore spots.**
- 2) Loosen up the joint and surrounding tissues first with gentle mobilization and joint manipulation before stretching**
- 3) Work on strength as well as flexibility. As the strength of your muscles improve, especially at the end ranges of motion, so will your flexibility**
- 4) Long hold static stretching and PNF stretching are the most effective forms of stretching for improving your flexibility quickly and permanently**
- 5) Don't do the same old boring stretches all the time, include a variety for all your muscles groups**
- 6) Do most of your flexibility training about 2 hours after your work outs, or late in the evening. This will help to improve your flexibility on a permanent or longer lasting basis**
- 7) Your general health and well-being are vital to your fitness and flexibility, keep hydrated eat healthy and get adequate sleep**

To read more about stretching and receive more information about the above go to: [Stretchcoach.com](http://Stretchcoach.com) and look for the article "How to Increase your Flexibility and Range of Motion"



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## FIRST AID & NFHS

There may be no more critical element in the ability of interscholastic students to participate in activities than their health and safety. This is why the NFHS has partnered with the American Red Cross to bring you First Aid, Health and Safety. This online course is designed as an overview of first aid, including best practices for many situations requiring medical attention.

The skills taught in this course do not replace the expertise of a medical professional but they do offer guidelines and techniques for temporary assistance until medical experts arrive on the scene. And because accidents or injuries can happen anywhere, not all of the knowledge and skills you will learn in this course are strictly for athletic injuries. They may also be used to aid officials, fellow coaches, and spectators who become injured or fall ill.

## REQUEST FOR ARTICLES

We are looking for stories from USAR-IP instructors. Stories of your successful students and why they are successful, stories of special instructional classes you have held or interesting programs you have created ect.

**Please send them to [hiserj@me.com](mailto:hiserj@me.com) and we will include in our next newsletter**

**THANKS, AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

SINCERELY,  
**JIM WINTERTON,  
FRAN DAVIS &  
JAMES HISER**