

RAISING THE UNSUNG ATHLETE, TOURNAMENT DAY GUIDE

Fuel and reset for peak care & performance



@unsungathlete

Introduction

Welcome, athlete parents! This guide combines essential fueling strategies and a practical checklist to ensure your young athlete is prepared and recovers effectively during tournaments. Proper nutrition and recovery are crucial for performance, endurance, and overall well-being. Let's make tournament days successful and healthy!

Pre-Tournament Fueling

Optimal performance starts *days before* the tournament. Focus on complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and healthy fats to build energy stores.

Hydration is Key: Encourage consistent water intake leading up to the event.

Example Meals:

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal with berries and nuts; Whole-wheat toast with avocado and eggs.
- **Lunch:** Chicken or turkey breast salad on whole-grain bread; Quinoa bowl with roasted vegetables and chickpeas.
- **Dinner:** Baked salmon with sweet potato and steamed broccoli; Lean ground beef stir-fry with brown rice.

Tournament Day Fueling Strategies

Between Events:

- **Quick Energy:** Fruit (bananas, oranges), energy gels, or chews.
- **Hydration:** Water, sports drinks (in moderation).

Avoid:

- **High-Fat Foods:** Can cause sluggishness.
- **Sugary Drinks:** Lead to energy crashes.
- **Unfamiliar Foods:** Stick to what your athlete knows and tolerates well.

Maintaining stable energy levels is vital throughout the tournament. Small, frequent snacks are better than large meals.

Focus on:

- **Easily Digestible Carbs:** Provide quick energy.
- **Electrolytes:** Replenish those lost through sweat.
- **Hydration:** Continuous sipping to prevent dehydration.

Post-Tournament Reset: Recovery is Key

The post-tournament period is crucial for muscle recovery and glycogen replenishment.

Within 30-60 minutes:

- **Protein & Carbs:** Chocolate milk, protein shake with fruit, or a small sandwich.
- **Rehydrate:** Continue drinking water and electrolyte-rich fluids.

Later Meals:

- Focus on balanced meals with lean protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats to support long-term recovery.

Tournament Day Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure you're fully prepared for the tournament day, covering fueling and reset strategies.

Before the Tournament:

- **Pack a variety of snacks** (fruit, energy bars, nuts).
- **Pack a meal** (PB&J, turkey and cheese sandwich, pasta salad) - don't always rely on restaurant or concession options.
- **Prepare water bottles and electrolyte drinks** - it's ok if your drinks have some juice or a little natural sugar in them, your athlete needs quick carbs to refuel during the day.
- **Plan pre-tournament meals** - something well rounded and easily digestible that agrees with your athlete.

- [] **Ensure adequate sleep the night before** - consider a night-time tea, lemon balm or L-theanine if your athlete has a busy or worried mind before bed.

During the Tournament:

- [] **Remind your athlete to hydrate consistently** - consider bringing another backup water bottle or some all natural juice pouches as backups.
- [] **Make snacks readily available between events** - I always like to pack a separate bag for my athlete so that they can take it to their team area and they aren't relying on me the entire time.
- [] **Monitor energy levels and adjust fueling accordingly** - don't be afraid to step in and offer a juice pouch or some fruit if you see your athlete looking tired or starting to "space out".
- [] **Encourage positive self-talk and stress management** - athletes often replay game in their head, focusing on mistakes or they are already worrying about their next game - I like to remind my athlete that the past can not be changed, the future is yet to be, and the only thing they need to focus on is resting and fueling while they have a break... this really is the only thing within their control.

After the Tournament:

- [] **Offer a recovery meal/snack on the way home** - this is a fun tradition in our house to pick up a semi-healthy or hearty snack on the way home to reward all of that hard work - we try to stay away from fried food and heavy dairy as it can sit heavy and cause indigestion which is no fun for anyone!
- [] **Encourage rehydration** - not only that evening, yet to continue to drink extra amounts of fluids the next day to replenish lost electrolytes.
- [] **Facilitate rest and relaxation** - allow your athlete some quiet, alone time to read, nap, watch their favorite show, whatever your athlete does to recharge, let them have some extra time that evening or the following day.
- [] **Plan a balanced meal for later in the evening and the next morning** - our post-event meals consist of ample protein, complex carbs and lots of fruits and/or veggies - one of my athlete's favorites is sauteed chicken, roasted potatoes and Ceasar salad for dinner and a whole grain bagel breakfast sandwich for breakfast with turkey bacon, organic eggs and a drizzle of maple syrup.

Important Considerations

- **Individual Needs:** Every athlete is different. Pay attention to your athlete's preferences and tolerances. The best solution is the one you and your athlete can actually follow and will stick to.
- **Consult Professionals:** For personalized nutrition plans, consult with a registered dietitian or sports nutritionist.
- **Listen to the Body:** Encourage your athlete to communicate how they feel and adjust fueling strategies accordingly. As your athlete grows and matures, their needs may change, listen and adjust.

Summary

This refueling guide is just one approach to fueling and recovery for young athletes on tournament days. By implementing even a couple of these strategies and using the checklist, you can remove stress and chaos from your tournament prep process and help your athlete optimize their performance, maintain energy levels, and recover. Remember to individualize the plan based on your athlete's unique needs and preferences.

Good luck and keep grinding without excuse!



Shannon Rose

President, Mom, Athlete [@unsungathlete](https://www.instagram.com/unsungathlete)