

FASTPITCH

Softball

MAGAZINE



ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Aaron Weintraub

IS PITCHING FOR ME?

Abby Hanrahan

AVOIDING THE SLUMP: THREE C'S

Jen Croneberger

BONUS:

VIDEO OF THE MONTH: DEFENSE WITH CAROL BRUGGERMAN

produced by

Fastpitch.tv

AUGUST 2016

CONTENTS

COVER PHOTO

Defense with
Carol Bruggerman



Softball Academy

Doughnuts in the Dugout

By Mitch Alexander



Planning for Success

Planning for the Next Season

By Shannon McDougall



Bridging the Gap

Attitude with Gratitude

Aaron Weintraub



Recruiting in the Fastpitch Lane

What Type of Video is Right?

Robby Wilson



School of Strength

Combine Testing

By Michelle Diltz



Interview of the Month

Jennifer McFalls

By Gary Leland



Video of the Month

Defense

By Carol Bruggerman



The Pitching Link

Is Pitching for Me?

By Abby Hanrahan



Windmill Wisdom

Parameters at Stride Foot Contact

By Sherry L. Werner, PhD



These Five Words are Mine

Avoiding the Slump: Three C's

By Jen Croneberger



To Coach or Not to Coach

Playing Time

By Keri Casas



Fastpitch Book

Pitching with a Purpose

By Meagan Denny-White





SOFTBALL ACADEMY

with Mitch Alexander

Doughnuts in the Dugout

Have you ever seen this one? “Jenny, here’s a box of munchkins for the team. Hand them out before the game starts!” Or maybe, “Here’s a big bag of M&M’s, make sure everyone eats some, the team is really lacking energy today!” Maybe you’re guilty of something similar? If you’ve been involved in youth sports long enough, I’ll bet you’ve seen this happen during tournaments. This typically happens in the younger age groups as hopefully the older players are more careful with what they eat. Is this a problem or is there something to passing out sugar-laden snacks before or during a game?

Snacks high in sugar usually provide a fast rush of energy. However, the surge of energy doesn’t last very long, and it’s usually followed by a crash or feeling of sluggishness. Two related things happen in the body after eating a high glycemic snack or meal. The first is that the body releases large amounts of insulin to counteract the sudden rise in blood sugar. Sugary snacks can almost instantly increase blood sugar as starches and other simple sugars start to break down in the mouth as they react with saliva and are quickly absorbed. The body keeps on releasing insulin to counter the sudden rise in blood glucose level. Once the sugary snack is digested (at least the glycemic part), the blood sugar level starts dropping



and dropping and often it drops below normal – for anywhere from a few minutes to tens of minutes. This state of low blood sugar causes many people to feel drowsy and sluggish. A second related process that occurs in the body in response to eating a sugary snack is that the brain releases a chemical called serotonin that helps people fall asleep at night. Having the brain release chemicals that make players sleepy simultaneously with a drop in blood sugar are not ways to improve a player's performance, attitude, or alertness.

A great food to eat in the dugout are plums. According to Blythman and Sykes from "The Guardian," plums are very sweet, but they have a low glycemic index. This means they won't cause a giant unhealthy spike in blood sugar. They also are high in vitamin C which improves the absorption of iron from other foods. Iron helps make energy available by breaking down glucose and fats. Plums also contain phenolic compounds, which are known to have anti-inflammatory properties which may reduce sports-associated pain, and the swelling of joints, allowing athletes to play longer and recover more quickly.

Another long used food by athletes are pickles. Pickles? Really? Yes - pickles which are typically high in sodium are a good way to replace lost electrolytes while playing in a tournament. Pro football players are now using pickle juice on the sidelines. One issue that athletes who are engaged in a sport for 90 minutes or more face (especially on a hot day) are muscle cramps. Although, the mechanism isn't exactly known, a study in 2010 by Miller, Mack, Knight, et al found that the vinegar used in the pickling process is thought to act as an anti-cramping agent and triggers the brain to relax the body's muscles within 35 seconds. Pickles also help with glycogen



replenishment during intense activity. Vinegar which is actually acetic acid helps the body metabolize carbohydrates and fat to make energy available to the cells of the body. Pickles are also an anti-inflammatory and contain iron. Want a special treat for your player on a hot day? Give them a frozen pickle! For a sustained boost of energy combine the pickle with a complex carbohydrate like a granola bar.

Another great recovery food are bananas. Marathon runners have long turned to bananas after races. They are loaded with potassium and other electrolytes. They are rich in pectin which help to maintain low blood sugar levels and contain vitamin B6, which is another anti-inflammatory. They taste great and most kids love them. Potassium may also help to reduce muscle cramping.

Remember the catch phrase, "Milk does a body good"? Well guess what? It actually does. It's a great drink in between games. Milk is high in carbohydrates and proteins and when the two are consumed together, the body can repair muscle tissue faster, making a cold cup of milk an excellent recovery drink. Put a cup or two of your player's favorite milk in a resealable container and drop it in their drink cooler or ice chest. Before making milk a recovery staple for your player, try it out at the end of a tournament first. Some players may experience gastrointestinal issues consuming dairy products after exercising. Also, dairy products can increase phlegm production in certain players.

Many parents fill their players' coolers with bottles of Gatorade or other sports drinks. Have you ever looked at the list of ingredients on the label of these drinks? A 12 ounce serving of Gatorade's Thirst Quencher contains 21 grams of sugar. Well that's not terrible



right? Well actually it isn't very good since the typical bottle players consume is 32 ounces, which translates to 56 grams of sugar consumed. Many sports drinks also contain high fructose corn syrup, which is not a preferred source of energy. These drinks also provide electrolytes that players sweat out as they play softball. The electrolytes are often provided by strong salts and monopotassium phosphate. While sports drinks help players stay hydrated and nourished with adequate electrolytes, high salt and high sugar sports drinks can cause stomach cramping especially in youth athletes. These drinks are formulated for adult endurance athletes and are typically overkill for youth softball players. If your player still wants to drink them, dilute them with water in a 50-50 mix.

Players should not be encouraged or allowed to drink energy drinks. I've seen parents on competing teams "loading" their players up before a tournament with energy drinks! Most energy drinks are also high in sugar. Therefore, the previous discussion applies to these drinks as well. However, energy drinks are actually drugs whose key active ingredient is caffeine which is a strong stimulant. Caffeine overdoses are not uncommon, and can cause cardiac arrest. There are many recent studies showing a link between the consumption of energy drinks and cardiac events in teens and children. A study published in 2013 by Seifert, Schaechter, Bronstein, et al concluded that energy drinks should not be consumed before or during sporting activities or exercise. One of the key risks of consuming energy drinks is that they can cause abnormal heart rhythms. The largest segment of people that consume energy drinks are teenagers! On a hot day where players normally drink a lot of cold beverages to rehydrate themselves, it is possible that players could drink a few or more of these energy drinks, which is very dangerous to their health.



Players need to learn to better hydrate themselves when playing, especially in warm weather, and especially pitchers and catchers who are the most active players on the field. According to the Youth Sports program at the State University of New York, players should consume 8 ounces of water about 15 minutes before a game starts and 4-8 ounces every 15 minutes during a game, and 16-32 ounces after the games are over. An effective hydration plan for softball players is as follows: drink half a typical pre-packaged bottle of water after warmups are over and before the ground rules meeting at home plate. Then drink one quarter to one half of a bottle of water in between innings. Then finally drink a whole bottle after the game is over to rehydrate. For a typical 7 inning game in hot weather, each player should consume at least three and a half to four bottles of water! On tournament Saturday, each player should be equipped with at least 10-12 bottles of water.

Players who eat candy, doughnuts, sweetened drinks, or other high glycemic snacks may have an initial boost in energy, but after a short time, usually about half way through the game, their energy will drop and they will become sleepy and sluggish. Do you have a parent on your team that likes to bring sweet snacks for the team to munch on in the dugout? Print this article out and give them a copy. They most likely don't realize the effects of what they believe is a good deed. As parents and coaches (whether athletic or life coaches), let's make sure that our student athletes are taught about proper nutrition in the dugout. It can make a big difference in both their athletic and academic performance. Substitute candy, cookies, doughnuts and sports drinks with plums, pickles, bananas, and lots of cool clean water.



Mitch Alexander is the creator of www.varsityfastpitch.com, a new web site to help students play softball in college. His area of focus is on youth sports and college recruiting. His wife Marie was one of the first female student athletes in the country to play Little League softball after Title IX was passed and played in the first Little League World Series. Over the years, both have managed and coached Little League and select/travel teams at all levels and helped spark a love for softball in their student athletes. Mitch can be reached at Fastpitch2001@varsityfastpitch.com.

**For all the latest
in Softball News
Subscribe to:**

Fastpitch.tv
Newsletter



Click here to subscribe

