

# recovery for the tennis player

By Machar Reid (ITF Development Assistant Research Officer), Miguel Crespo (ITF Development Research Officer) & Angela Calder (Recovery and Performance Consultant, Australian Institute of Sport)

## Introduction

Alfie Smith has just finished his seventh relatively intense on court training session in four days. During the session he found his concentration levels wavering and his legs feeling heavy and hitting arm tired. While recognizing he wasn't getting the most out of the session, he continued diligently, determined to finish the session. He was beat and couldn't wait to get off the court!

The above vignette illustrates a common training scenario: a player sacrificing training quality for training quantity. Alfie was going through the motions. Was he training smart? The answer is probably a rather large NO.

The injured, stale or overworked athlete is not uncommon to modern sport. Within tennis circles, although there is an intensifying awareness of the need to periodise a player's training program, without the provision of appropriate recovery, overtraining risks are as specific to the developing player as they are to the touring professional. While off court strength and conditioning programs along with cross training initiatives play an important and necessary role in optimal athlete preparation, additional recovery initiatives should also be considered.

Recovery, as it relates to the healthy, functioning tennis player, simply refers to the adaptation to training stressors. This adaptation can either be physical or psychological in nature and the recovery processes involved are commonly referred to as restoration and regeneration. The scheduling of recovery sessions is thus designed to



promote adaptation to training loads or a particular training stimulus, and in the process minimise the prospect of players encountering a non-adaptive or maladaptive (overtraining, overuse or burnout) training response.

By understanding the principles and processes of recovery, coaches can better appreciate that the implementation of recovery regimens are as important for development as are skill acquisition, strength, flexibility and mental skills protocols. Clearly when on court training is isolated and provided as the sole training stimulus, a player's progress is likely to be stagnated and monotonous. And yet, while coaches may recognise that it is essential for players to take to every training session absent of any neural, psychological or physical fatigue likely to hinder training performance, in general few measures are taken to ensure this is achieved. Calder (1994) then highlights that the challenge that lays ahead for coaches is to integrate recovery programs effectively into planned training in order to promote the most effective and efficient development of athletes.

The series of articles to follow in ITF Coaching & Sport Science Review will

elaborate on the use of appropriate recovery techniques, specific to the demands of tennis, and will hopefully better assist you incorporate effective recovery methods into your player's training and competitive schedules. Methods will include:

- Stretching
- Self massage
- Active recovery
- Hydrotherapy
- Cross Training
- Meditation
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Visualisation
- Floation
- Yoga

## Conclusion

Within the tennis coaching fraternity, most coaches appreciate the importance of developing the complete player. The dynamicity of the modern game along with the increasingly large expectations placed on the developing player has emphasised the need for coaches to assist players acquire the skills to cope with this growing number of demands. As part of this process, it is also the coach's role to educate players as to how to plan training more carefully to provide time for their bodies to grow, recover and adapt. Recovery techniques that provide for adaptation to training stressors are an important means through which this can be achieved and thus form an essential component of optimal tennis player preparation.

## References

Calder, A. (1994). Recovery Programs. Australia Coaching Council, Canberra, Australia.