



COACHING FOR PERFORMANCE

SLEEP AND RECOVERY: THE COMPETITIVE EDGE MOST ATHLETES OVERLOOK

As athletes, we obsess over training plans, nutrition, and technique. But there's one performance enhancer that costs nothing and delivers massive returns: sleep and recovery.

Why Sleep Matters for Performance

Sleep isn't just downtime—it's where the magic happens. During deep sleep, your body repairs muscle tissue, restores energy, and releases growth hormone. Miss out on quality sleep, and you're not just tired—you're limiting strength gains, slowing reaction times, and increasing injury risk.

Elite athletes often aim for 8–10 hours of sleep per night. Consistency matters as much as duration: same bedtime, same wake time, every day.

Understanding HRV: Your Recovery Dashboard

Heart Rate Variability (HRV) measures the variation between heartbeats. A higher HRV generally means your body is well-recovered and ready to perform. A lower HRV can signal stress, fatigue, or overtraining.

Think of HRV as your internal readiness score. It's influenced by sleep quality, hydration, stress, and training load. Tracking HRV helps you decide: push hard today or dial it back?

Waking vs. Resting Heart Rate

Your resting heart rate (RHR) is a baseline indicator of fitness and recovery. A sudden spike in RHR can mean fatigue or illness.

Your waking heart rate—measured first thing in the morning—offers a similar insight. If it's consistently higher than normal, your body might need more recovery.

Athlete-Specific Sleep & Recovery Strategies

Prioritize Sleep: Aim for 8–10 hours, especially during heavy training blocks.

Create a Sleep-Friendly Environment: Cool, dark, and quiet.

Use Naps Wisely: 20–30 minutes can boost alertness and recovery.

Listen to Your Data: Combine HRV, HR, and subjective feelings to guide training.

The Bottom Line

Training breaks you down. Recovery builds you back stronger. Sleep is the foundation of that process. If you're serious about performance, treat sleep and recovery like your next big training block.

FEEDBACK

I'm always learning—from my own experience, from others, and through books, blogs, videos, and more. That means there may be errors or omissions in what I share, or I might have misunderstood something. Science and best practices also evolve over time.

I welcome comments, contributions, corrections, and clarifications—especially those that help me improve as an athlete or provide useful insights for anyone reading. The goal is to keep information accurate and helpful so people can make the best decisions for their training and goals.



If you have suggestions, questions, challenges, or corrections, please feel free to reach out. Your input is always appreciated.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tim Rogers is a former Commonwealth Games Triathlete, 3 x Ironman and 4 x GB Gold Medallist at Coastal Rowing. He is also a Level 2 Coach. Also MBA Management Consultant | AMPG Change Practitioner | ICF Trained Coach | Mediation Practitioner | First Aid for Mental Health | Certificate in Applied Therapeutic Skills