

RECOVERY ROCKET

Working in sport taught me the importance of proper recovery. A few summers back Australia was playing India and Sri Lanka in the VB One Day Series (now called the Commonwealth Bank series). Brett Lee had come off the back of a great test series, but he was starting to look a little tired and worn.

It was Friday 5 February, and Brett was smacked around for 22 runs. We sat down and discussed why he was feeling so flat and fatigued. The answer became plain and simple – recovery. Or more to the point, not enough of it and as a result his performance was slowly eroding. We mapped out a plan to get Brett back to his steaming best. Every day before a game we started with some natural sunlight, a good breakfast and an easy swim and stretch in the pool. Post-game we worked on recovery strategies and some additional rest days. Within ten days he was bowling up around 150+ km/hr again and scaring the daylights out of the opposition.

My work with Brett and other elite athletes led to the development of the Recovery Rocket. Grab your calendar for the next 12 months and make yourself accountable. Build in regular periods to recharge, revitalise and renew. The primary focus of building in a regular recovery plan is to ensure you sustain performance and avoid burning out.



RECOVERY ROCKET

1 - 3 - 30 - 300 - 365

The pyramid is broken down into five compartments represented by the numbers 1 – 3 – 30 – 300 – 365. How does this work?



“Every year you should take one proper holiday, plan a proper off-season!”



RECOVERY



It's easy:

- Every year you should take *one* proper holiday, or at least an off-season.
- Aim to get *three* mini-breaks throughout the year, preferably one mini-break every three months.
- For *thirty* weeks of the year, aim to get 100 recovery points.
- On *three-hundred* nights of the year aim to get a full, restorative night's sleep where you wake up the following morning feeling totally refreshed and recharged.
- And *365* days of the year (366 days every leap year) go SLOW for at least ten to fifteen minutes every day.

1 Holiday or Off-Season

A recent article in the Australian Financial Review reported a Tourism Australia survey highlighting the fact that the Australian workforce collectively has more than 70 million days of accrued annual leave. This equates to 14 million weeks or nearly \$11 billion. Close to 60 per cent of Australian workers do not use their full annual leave.

Remember, leisure time is time off work and holidays should include prolonged periods of relaxation, free from work. We know that it's imperative for elite athletes to take regular time out to recover and recharge, as this not only keeps them in the sport longer, but also dramatically decreases their risk of injury and burnout. So why do we try and play a five-day 'corporate' test match week in, week out? The key to performing at your peak is high-intensity effort interspersed with regular time-outs for recharging and renewing. Lock in a proper holiday at least once a year, preferably for 10 days to weeks.

3 Mini Breaks

Remember the movie Bridget Jones' Diary where Bridget and Darcy escape to the English countryside for a 'mini-break'? Well, I'd like you to try and lock in at least three of these during the year – with your partner – not Renee Zellweger!

I recently returned from a three-day mini-break with my wife. We travelled north of Sydney and stayed at Nelson Bay. We both took Friday off work and escaped the city early to avoid any traffic congestion on the way. No computers, no weekend working conversations on the mobile, no reading anything remotely related to work material. Just pure R&R. Back at work on the Monday, I received a phone call from Nina around 10 am. 'I feel so relaxed it's amazing. It feels like we've been away for weeks and weeks!' she glowed. And I felt exactly the same. That Monday morning, everything felt so much clearer, and I'd already worked out solutions to a few problems I'd been stuck on for the last few weeks.

Have you had a similar experience? I'm sure you have. Forcing yourself to have proper time out allows your body to slow down. You are effectively hitting the reset button.

Plan a mini-break in your diary every three or four months. The best way to do this is to lock the time in and stick to it. I'm always amazed that when I commit to having a break by locking it in my diary, it always happens.

30 weeks of 100 recovery points

David Misson introduced a recovery system with the Sydney Swans where players accumulate 100 points each week to ensure they are recovering properly for the upcoming game. An ice bath or a massage might be 20 points, yoga scores 25 points, an easy stretch 10 points and so on. During the pointy end of the season, Misso gets the players to double their weekly targets and aims for 200 recovery points each week.

IDEAS FOR MINI-BREAKS:

- book a place on the coast
- head to the snow
- stay in the mountains
- buy three new books and housesit for a friend
- travel to the country
- book an old-style B&B (and have huge, relaxed breakfasts!)
- go to the zoo and stay nearby (definitely not in the zoo!)
- hire a houseboat
- tour the wineries
- book into a day-spa

RECOVERY

The Corporate Recovery Toolbox is based on a format similar combining both indoor and outdoor activities, with the total goal being 100 points a week. For the sake of this exercise, only count each activity once in the scoring system. I'd like you to accumulate points from a range of activities. You'll notice these activities are predominantly 'slow' tasks. Fitness enthusiasts often feel ripped off when they first see this scale. Fitness junkies do everything hard and fast – but the simple fact is that going to the gym and belting out a Pump Class, or riding your bike up a mountain for four hours, while great for strength and cardiovascular fitness, doesn't really help you recover and press the 're' button.

For thirty weeks of the year I want you to make sure you focus on recovering properly. Each week your goal is to get 100 recovery points. Why not buy a notebook and fill out your recovery points every week so you ensure that you make it up to your goal of 100 points, thirty weeks a year? Set yourself a four week period and see how your scores add up.

| Indoor Recovery | | Outdoor Recovery | |
|-----------------|----|------------------|----|
| Massage | 50 | Relaxing Swim | 25 |
| Stretch/Yoga | 40 | BBQ/Picnic | 25 |
| Meditation | 40 | Golf | 25 |
| Social Catch-up | 25 | Gardening | 20 |
| Dancing | 25 | Easy Cycle | 20 |
| Sex | 25 | Slow Walk | 20 |
| Warm Bath | 15 | Sightseeing | 20 |
| Relaxing Music | 15 | Festival | 20 |
| Read Fiction | 15 | Fishin' | 20 |
| Movie/Theatre | 15 | Amusement Park | 15 |
| TV | 5 | Shopping | 15 |

The Corporate Recovery Toolbox

300 nights of quality recharging sleep

The plan is to get 300 nights every year, or six nights each week, of quality sleep. Switching on to restorative quality sleep is one of the major keys to maintaining and improving performance. Research has shown human motor performance and cognition reduce exponentially with lack of sleep. Reducing your average sleep by just one hour per night over a week-long period will result in a 20 per cent reduction in daily alertness and ability to perform.

The key to maximising the benefits of sleep is to ensure you are getting quality restorative sleep. What that means is that you need to have an adequate amount of time asleep (usually 7–8 hours), and that sleep needs to be deep, uninterrupted sleep.

SLOW ACTIVITIES:

- walking at a gentle pace
- relaxing bath
- listening to quiet music (sorry ... ACDC, Wolfmother and Metallica don't count!)
- relaxing in the outdoors
- meditation
- sitting in a chair closing your eyes and relaxing
- gentle stretching, or
- floating in the ocean.

365 days a year – go SLOW

Every day of the year I want you to spend at least ten or fifteen minutes taking it easy, going slow. Going slow is all about stimulating the relaxation response, the exact opposite of the stress response.

Andrew May