

Fitness in Softball

Why is it important for players to stay fit during off-season?

For pitchers specifically, they need to be in shape so that they have the ability to pitch later on in the game and not run out of gas. The other thing that is important for pitchers to realize is that the more fit you are, the more efficient you are, and the more you are going to get out of your pitches. Nowadays pitchers also hit, so if you end up spending an inning moving around the bases and you are not sitting on the bench—you have to be able to recovery quickly.

It comes down to having enough energy to sustain your performance throughout the game but also the ability to recover quickly. Without a quick recovery you could find yourself in a deficit situation where in the second half of the inning you are giving up runs because you are too tired.

With fitness it is important to remember that a lot of times on the field we work on our fundamentals, we work on the technical aspect of the game but you work on your fitness off of the field. You have to make a commitment to do that.

What are some of the consequences of not staying fit and not eating properly during the off-season?

I think a lot of times it affects your ability to get to your peak level of performance as quick as possible. A lot of professional athletes these days say, “there is no off-season” and that’s how I ran my career. There was no off-season. When my playing season was over it was my time to become extremely fit.

Your diet is important because food is fuel for your body. It feeds your muscles, it feeds your ability to be motivated, and gives you energy to go out and train on and off the field. When you eat healthy your body and muscles are healthy, putting you in a

position where you are most likely to keep injury-free. If you are feeding yourself junk and don't work out regularly, you could become more prone to injury.

What type of fitness exercises should softball players be doing during the off-season and how often should they be exercising?

I'm a component of building a healthy lifestyle. You should be doing something everyday, taking one day off at most. The human body is meant to move, not to be sedentary. You should stay in shape by doing an activity you enjoy whether it be walking, jogging, running, doing sprints, ladders, cycling, etc. It all depends on your body style and what you are capable of.

I'm a huge cyclist now. I used to run a lot but then my hips started to bother me because pitching is high impact and running is also high impact. So, I started cycling to build fitness and to take some pressure off of my joints instead of running.

The key thing is to really get to know your body. Great athletes are very aware of their bodies. They know what feels good, what hurts, what is motivating, and what isn't. Some people love to run—well then you should go out and run. Some people hate to run. Well, don't do something that is miserable that you have to drag yourself out of bed because there is a good you are going to do it for a week and then you are going to stop. Find something you enjoy. It could be yoga, it could be a local class at the gym, it could be pick-up basketball. It should just be something so that you are moving.

Exercise and fitness come in many different forms, it doesn't have to come in misery.

Ending thoughts:

It really comes down to the fact that everybody is working hard on the field. What separates the good from great is what you are doing off the field to become better than your opponent, better than any other pitchers you are going to compete against or any other teams you are going to compete against.