

Chloe Sutton: Tips to surviving hard training weeks

By Chloe Sutton, Special to Universal Sports



This morning, my coach gathered the group together and said the words that now have me writing my blog from bed to conserve as much energy as possible.

He said "Alright guys, you're going to need to cancel all of your appointments for the week. We are going to have to pretend that we are overseas at an isolated training camp. This week is going to be very challenging. We are going to push limits and I need for you to be able to perform each time. The more rest you can get between each practice, the better. Get ready for our Max Distance Phase."

With Shanghai World Championships rapidly approaching, it is about that time for the World Championship Team to kick training into high gear. All of the last minute conditioning and strength training that you can get in before it's time to taper needs to be crammed in now. We've been training hard all season, but this last push will have us ready for the big one. Some people go to an Olympic Training Center or to altitude, but Coach Rose keeps us home and destroys us for a week or two. He calls it the Max Distance Phase and that means 100,000 meters a week coupled with really intense speed training.

After sending a few emails to cancel appointments, I am now strategizing my week so that I get enough rest, the right fuel, and in general, prepare myself for each workout. Here are my tips for surviving the hardest of the hard training weeks.

1. Rest and Recovery: I know it seems obvious, but just getting 8 hours a night during hard training might not be enough. The more rest that you can get, the better. That means napping as much as possible. When you're not napping, you should be lying and relaxing either on a couch or in bed. Conserve energy and stay relaxed. You're going to need the energy later. Cancel all your appointments so that you can maximize recovery time.

2. Ice Baths: There are several things that I do to heal my muscles after a killer workout. First, ice bath. Ice baths are amazing. They constrict blood vessels and reduce metabolic activity which reduces swelling and tissue breakdown. When you get out of the ice bath, your muscles warm up and blood returns faster which helps flush out harmful metabolic debris.

3. Compression Suit: I wear a compression suit while I sleep at swim meets and during hard training. This has similar results to an ice bath because it squeezes your muscles. I wake up feeling loose and relaxed and ready for another day.

4. Diet: For me, eating is a balancing act. I have to make sure I get enough calories and nutrients without gaining weight or eating foods that aren't going to fuel me. Protein is probably the most important thing that I eat. Protein builds muscles and getting stronger is everyone's goal. I eat lots of chicken. Carbohydrates and good fats are the things that are going to get me through the long workouts. They provide energy and lasting energy that kicks in at that 7k mark. Pineapple is a great recovery food. It contains Bromelain which actually reduces muscle soreness.

5. Mental: My challenge for this next phase of my training is going to be the mental aspect of it. I have to keep positive through the pain. I have to believe that everything I'm doing now is going to have a huge payoff very soon. Eyes on the prize, blinders on, and full speed ahead!