Dehydration is one of the most common performance depleting mistakes. It is also the most preventable. Use the following guidelines to help you optimize your performance and stay hydrated.

- Avoid relying on thirst. Research demonstrates that athletes that rely on thirst do not match their fluid losses. Practice drinking on a schedule. Experiment during training to identify the amount of fluid that feels comfortable to you.

- Begin training sessions well hydrated by drinking during the day and before practice. Aim for ~1 oz for every 10 pounds of body weight 2 to 3 hours before practice and ~0.5 oz for every 10 pounds of body weight about 30 minutes before practice.

- During practice, drink every 10 to 20 minutes.

- For workouts less than 60 minutes, water is a good beverage choice.

- Consume sports drinks (6 to 8% carbohydrate solutions) or carbohydrate rich snacks (30 to 60 grams of carbohydrate per hour) during moderate to high intensity activity longer than 60 minutes. Sodium intake during exercise stimulates thirst, promotes rehydration, decreases the risk of hyponatremia and decreases the risk of muscle cramps. Carbohydrate intake during exercise allows athletes to exercise longer and improves performance.

- If you are prone to cramping, eat salty foods in the pre-exercise meal or consume a higher sodium sports drink, such as Gatorade Endurance.

- Rehydrate after exercise to replace weight lost from fluid. For every pound lost during activity, consume 16 to 24 oz of fluid after exercise.

- For tournaments or multiple games on the same day, choose snacks and meals that include salt to augment hydration.

- Signs of dehydrate include fatigue, dark urine, decreased frequency of urination, low urine volume, headache, lightheadedness, dry mouth and an elevated heart rate. Monitor your urine color to ensure good hydration. Pale yellow to clear is optimal.

- Hot or humid days require a more aggressive fluid replacement plan.

- Alcohol is dehydrating. Avoid alcohol within 72 hours before and after training.