



# ***Playoff Survival Guide***

**How To Get Through The Playoffs As Safely and  
Successfully As Possible.**

# The playoffs are here.

## Can you feel your stress levels rising?

In the last weeks of the season, the level of competition and your game schedule become **much more intense**.

And after a long season of playing, practicing & traveling, players run the risk of becoming **worn-out & stressed out**.

**But it doesn't have to be that way.**

You can get through the playoffs safely and successfully if you **have a plan in place** that helps you:

- **Manage your physical energy effectively so that you aren't running on empty.**
- **Stay focused on the task at hand and keeps distractions from creeping in.**

**With only a few weeks left in the season...**

Your **PHYSICAL RECOVERY** and **MENTAL PREPARATION** are more important than ever.

This ***Playoff Survival Guide*** will address these **2 Key Components of Playoff Performance:**

- **Mental Preparation:** How To Increase Your Focus & Confidence (and Decrease Stress) Before The Big Game
- **Physical Recovery:** How To Recover Effectively After a Tough Game

## MENTAL PREPARATION

### Get Focused, Stay Focused & Re-Focus

Avoiding distractions and staying focused on your game is really tough during the playoffs - especially when you are playing the same team a few days in a row.

**Get Focused:** We tend to focus on the outcome (winning the game), instead of the process of how we are going to win the game. Instead of focusing on “having to win”, focus on “what it takes to win”. Give yourself action-oriented key words to focus on: “Keep feet moving”, “Battle for pucks”, “Head on a swivel”, “One shot at a time (goalies)”. You need to stay focused on the things you have control over, instead of the outcome of the game.

**Stay Focused:** This is easier said than done with all the potential distractions on and off the ice. You can easily become overly focused on the other team’s players and plays, as well as the what the refs, coaches and fans are doing. All of these are external factors that you have absolutely no control over. Use the action-oriented key words you identified before the game to keep you focused on what you need to do to perform your best. The key to success is playing your game and not theirs.

**Re-Focusing:** One great way to help the entire team stay focused on their goals is to create a playoff theme. You and your team can choose a slogan like, “Whatever It Takes”, “Seize The Opportunity”, “This Is Our Time”. I know it sounds “cheesy”, but having an easy to remember, inspirational theme can really help to refocus the group when times get tough.

#### ***A Quick Note About Confidence:***

Playoffs usually mean changes in playing time. Certain players are going to play more than others in the “do or die” situations. It is important that coaches are up front about this with the team and that players and parents try not to take it personally. This is easier said than done. Most players want to be out on the ice when it really counts and it is inevitable that someone’s feelings are going to get hurt and their self-confidence might take a hit. I can tell you all about how there is “no “I” in team”, but that’s not going to take the sting out of sitting on the bench. It is really hard to stay positive and focused on what you can do to help the team achieve their ultimate goal when you are angry about a lack of playing time.

**Players:** No one expects you to be happy about sitting on the bench, but there is still an expectation that you are going to help your team in any way you can. How you react in this type of situation says a lot about your true character: are you a team player or are you an individual? You may be frustrated, but there will come a time when you are out there in the last minute of overtime and you will want your teammates to support you out there. To be blunt, showing your frustration and disrespecting your teammates and coaches isn’t going to help your chances of getting your shot out on the ice.

## PHYSICAL RECOVERY

### Drink, Jog, Stretch

Depending on your playoff schedule, you may have to play games on back-to-back nights or even three days in a row. A player's ability to physically recover between games can be the difference between winning and losing. When players say that their "legs feel heavy" or they "have nothing left in the tank" what they are really saying is that they did not take the time to recover properly after their last game.

**Here are 3 keys to recovering quickly after playoff games:**

#### Drink

It is common for players to "forget" to drink water during a playoff game because they are so focused on what's going on out on the ice. It is especially important for players to stay adequately hydrated to maximize their performance in every playoff game. Ideally, players would drink an entire water bottle during the game and follow that up with another bottle after getting off the ice. The exact amount will differ depending on the length of your games and the size of the player, but the bottom line is that most players are not drinking enough water. And if you really want to get your energy stores back up to full and have your muscles recover quickly, you need to get some sugar and protein into your body within 30 minutes of getting off the ice. Your best choice? Chocolate milk. It has all the sugar and protein you need to recover.

#### Cool-Down

Going for a post-game jog may not be a priority during the season, but it is essential during the playoffs. Late in the season, the cool-down becomes as important as the warm-up prior to the game. Your body needs to 'come down' from a training session or game in the same way that your body needs to 'ramp up' to prepare for activity. Taking 5 minutes to go for an easy jog immediately after the game will keep the blood from pooling in your legs and will start moving the lactic acid out of the muscles. This short cool-down will dramatically reduce muscles stiffness, and when combined with proper stretching, will decreasing the likelihood of injuries.

#### Stretch

Post-game stretching is like the post-game jog - most players never give it a second thought until their legs start to feel sore and tired. Ideally, you would stretch immediately after your cool-down jog to restore flexibility and mobility in the muscles and joints. Even if you just stretch your hip flexors, glutes, and groin for 5 minutes immediately after the game, and save your more complete stretching routine for when you get home, you will see a HUGE difference in the way you felt the next day.

**TAKING THE TIME TO RECOVER is the  
#1 Secret To Post-Season Success.**

# YOUR 3 STEP POST-GAME RECOVERY PLAN

## Starts Immediately After Getting Off The Ice



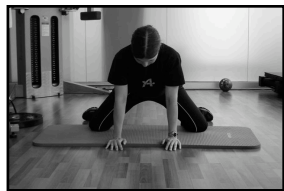
### **HIP FLEXORS:** Kneeling Reach

Start out in a kneeling position with both knees at a 90 degree angle. Pull your arms straight up overhead, squeezing your biceps by your ears. Lean your weight forward slightly on your front leg and pull your hands up towards the ceiling to increase the stretch through the front of the back leg. Make sure you don't lean back but think about making yourself as tall as possible. Hold for 1 minute on each side.



### **GLUTES:** Kneeling Figure 4

Start out in a kneeling position and use your hand to pull one leg into the bent position with the outside of your knee touching the floor. Straighten out your back leg behind you. If you are unable to position your front leg at 90 degrees, you can move your front heel closer to your hips. Make sure you don't roll onto the side of the front leg and your hips are even relative to the floor. Hold for 1 minute on each side.



### **GROIN:** Knees Wide Kneeling

Start out on your hands and knees. Slowly move your knees as wide apart as possible while keeping your toes pointing out to the side. Use your hands to support yourself in this position and push your body back towards your feet slightly to increase the stretch. If this bothers your knees, bring your feet closer together. Hold for 1 minute.

**Step 1:** Drink your recovery drink (& water).



**Step 2:** Do your 5 minutes of easy jogging (at 30-50% of maximum intensity).



**Step 3:** Do these 3 stretches for 5 minutes.

Feel free to share this guide with your teammates, daughters and coaches.

Good luck in the playoffs and please let me know about all of your post-season success stories.

Helping you have a safe and successful playoff run,

~ *Kim*

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**PS - You can find more tips on how to get through the playoff grind at: [www.totalfemalehockeyclub.com](http://www.totalfemalehockeyclub.com).**