

higher ground

with Bobby Simpson • **Establishing Your Personal Energy Policy**



Two of the key topics discussed in the 2008 presidential campaign were offshore drilling for oil and the need to develop alternate sources of fuel so that the United States would not be so dependent on foreign oil. Now, what in the world does that have to do with softball? It all relates to energy and that is not just a critical factor for a nation, but also a critical factor for success in softball.

I once heard a very talented, very caring high school teacher describe a student as sometimes being an **oxygen thief**. The teacher meant that the student was doing

little more in class than just simply breathing. Likewise, there are times that I have observed softball players being little more than **energy leaks** or **energy vampires**. It can last a short time or a much longer period. It can affect just that individual or it can cause a leak that affects the energy level of the entire team. It can even be a toxic vampire, vacuum cleaner sucking of energy that can almost totally deflate the passion of so many people that a team is doomed to disaster. Whatever the time or level, we need to deal with it, for success on the field partially rests on a foundation of energy and passion.

Olympic Gold Medal gymnast Mary Lou Retton once said, "Every great achievement is the story of a flaming heart...tremendous passion." A successful hitter must enter the box with that desire to attack

I once heard a very talented, very caring high school teacher describe a student as sometimes being an **oxygen thief**. The teacher meant that the student was doing little more in class than just simply breathing. Likewise, there are times that I have observed softball players being little more than **energy leaks** or **energy vampires**. It can last a short time or a much longer period. It can affect just that individual or it can cause a leak that affects the energy level of the entire team.

the ball, not just make contact. The swing should be a criminal act, an assault of the ball with a bat. The energy level of a pitcher must be extremely high as she seeks to dominate the hitter. A fielder must not just be expecting the ball, but energetically wanting the ball to be hit to her. This is the essence of excellence, an energy level that allows one to use all the skill that is in the body. As Allen Fox says in *The Winner's Mind*, "Real talent STARTS with energy..."

Okay, so hopefully I've made my point that energy is needed and that some people can be leaks and vampires. What can we do to energize, to stop the leaks, and drive stakes into the vampires? One of the best tips that I can give you is to employ movement. Do you remember how early softball Olympians Dot Richardson and Lisa Fernandez used to jump up and down between pitches at the plate or on the mound? This was their way to stay highly energized so that they could be explosive seconds later. This jumping up and down filled their internal tanks with high-octane fuel that allowed them to excel.

I used to use this concept when walking in the hall to teach a class after lunch. If I was sluggish, I would speed up my steps and, by the time I reached my class, I was pumped up and fired up, allowing me to do a much better job as a math instructor. Davy Jones, lead singer of an old band named the Monkees, told me once as we sat across an aisle on a flight, that he also used movement to energize. On the very rare occasions when he did not feel like doing a concert, he would jump up and down and run around a lot more than usual on the first song. He said it usually took less than a minute for him to get a much-needed energy boost.

Another use of the same concept would be to demand of yourself or your team that players run on and off the field. I see far too many players barely jog, or even walk on and off the field. They may think that

they are tired and need to conserve energy, but I'd suggest that a much more dynamic movement would inject and increase energy. Also, swinging the bat hard between pitches, throwing the ball harder during between-inning warmup, and definitely moving around between pitches can all be helpful. During one of our camps this summer, I saw a high school team that had each defensive player run to a nearby foul line or base between pitches. That was a new one for me, but that coach has won 18 state championships so it must not hurt anything.

Let's close with some mental tips. Be very careful what you say to yourself. Telling yourself how tired you are can actually lead to increased fatigue. The brain has difficulty determining reality from what you imagine. So, telling yourself that you are tired can be a very damaging energy leak. Use good positive self-talk and **tell it like it can be instead of telling it like you think it is**. Words are very powerful and proper use of them can definitely help you fill your energy tank. Likewise, be very careful what you see in your mind. Proper visualization was discussed in a recent article and can be an extremely solid source of fuel.

To close, let me encourage you to do what I call **externalize**. To help yourself refrain from being an energy leak and to help teammates from becoming energy vampires, have constant concern for others. I still have a very vivid memory of Erica Bol's action about ten years ago with the Dutch National

Team when they hosted a much stronger Australian National Team for a series of games in Holland. Facing dominant pitching, Bol, the captain of the Dutch Team, struck out her first five times at bat. After the fifth time, she went to the end of the dugout and immediately started encouraging the next hitter at the plate.

Not only was Erica's action a terrific example of solid teamwork, but it was also a tremendous method for energizing herself and her teammates. She refused to conduct a personal, energy sucking pity party. Instead, she replaced the oft-seen energy leak with an energy boost for her team. By externalizing and helping someone else, she also helped fill her own fuel tank with a powerful supply of energy.

Look wherever you can to find sources of energy, for real talent truly does begin with energy. Find it, use it, share it.

•Contact us at Higher Ground and join our FREE Higher Ground Club and get FREE instructional newsletters and special discounts. Check our Camp Video and much more at www.highergroundsoftball.com. Learn about our internationally acclaimed softball instructional services and products, including camps, clinics, online instructional DVD subscriptions, books, elite vision training, pitching machines, and Custom Clinics for your group. Attend our elite and advanced opportunities or bring us to you...we will help you Get Better Every Day. Email bsimpson@friendlycity.net or call 229-386-9770.