

The Mind

Debunk Superstitions

Text **Robert Andrews, MA, LMFT, CSC**

Our pitcher insists on throwing 12 practice pitches before game time, even though he already warmed up. He says it's his lucky routine, but the coach is worried about overuse. What can I do?

In athletic competitions there are pre-game rituals or routines, and there are superstitions centered on some repeated pre-performance activity.

Pre-game routines are an important part of the process of getting ready to compete or perform. Each athlete has his/her own way of getting mentally and physically focused.

A superstition, on the other hand, is something the athlete has allowed to get into his/her head. Without the superstitious ritual, there is often a surge of anxiety that can lead to panic if the activity is not or cannot be performed.

In this case the athlete has clearly set himself up for a problem created by the excessive number of pitches thrown before the game. This athlete has become convinced he can only perform at a high level if he throws the extra 12 pitches.

How Can I Help?

As an athletic trainer, work with the pitcher to understand the thought process he has gone through to come up with this routine, and face his fear about letting go of this superstition.

Ask him how he decided 12 extra pitches are necessary. What does he fear will happen if he doesn't throw them?

It is important the athlete face his fear about letting go of the pitch count routine. The athlete can stop "cold turkey" and work through the issues that might come up. Or, he can gradually work the pitch count down over the course of several games. With each drop in the number of pre-game pitches thrown the athlete will learn how to trust his mind and body to perform at the expected level.

Over time this athlete will move through the fear that has been created with this superstition and take back the power given to this unnecessary pitch count. He will learn to trust his mind and body again.

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Have a question you'd like to see addressed in The Mind column? Send it to natanews@nata.org.



Workshop Packages are Budget-Friendly

Text **Pamela Rast, PhD, LAT, ATC**

Travel these days can be expensive (\$4 gas, anyone?). So the NATA Continuing Education Committee has developed the Workshop Package – friendly to all budgets, especially for employers with large athletic training staffs.

Academic institutions, clinics or individuals will be able to purchase a packaged workshop developed and implemented by the CEC. Workshop hosts need not have BOC provider numbers because these packages are based on the best of the NATA One-Day and Weekend Workshops – so CEU credit for each workshop has already been approved by the BOC.

Each package includes the speaker's expenses (honoraria, travel, lodging and meals) and the printing and shipping of course materials. All the host institution need provide is adequate space for lecture and lab, AV and multimedia equipment, and any laboratory supplies too large to be transported.

One or two speakers can be requested per workshop; however, to maintain the integrity of each educational experience, the host institution may invite a maximum of 20 attendees per speaker.

Each participant will receive a comprehensive notebook with outlines and illustrations, hands-on instruction from quality speakers who have received high scores on prior NATA course evaluations, and 8 category A BOC CEUs.

Workshop packages are a great way for programs to provide on-site continuing education to athletic training staff, faculty, certified graduate students and Approved Clinical Instructors.

Great Topics Ahead

Current planned packages include:

- Manual Therapy Techniques for the Shoulder
- Manual Therapy Techniques for the Lumbar Spine
- Muscle Energy Techniques for the Sacroiliac Joint
- PNF Techniques, Joint Mobilization Techniques for the Extremities
- Pilates for the Athletic Trainer

When Can We Get This?

The CEC expects to roll out its Workshop Packages this fall, but stay up-to-date at www.natacec.org.

Pam Rast is the NATA Continuing Education Committee's Workshop Package Chair. Contact Pam at prast@txwes.edu.