2

# OPMTIMISING SLEEP IN THE ELITE ATHLETE

**Halson S**

Department of Physiology, Australian Institute of Sport, Canberra, Australia

Recovery from training and competition is complex, involves numerous factors and is typically dependant on the nature of the exercise performed and any other external stressors that the athlete may be exposed to. Recovery techniques range from rest and sleep, nutritional strategies, warming down and stretching, psychological recovery and hydrotherapies.
Although the function of sleep is not fully understood, it is generally accepted that it serves to recover from previous wakefulness and/or prepare for functioning in the subsequent wake period. Restricting sleep to less than 6 h per night for four or more consecutive nights has been shown to impair cognitive performance and mood, disturb glucose metabolism, appetite regulation and immune function. There is also emerging research on the effects of sleep deprivation on bone health. Results of recent AIS research examining the importance of sleep and sleep habits in elite athletes have demonstrated poor sleep quality and quantity in some elite athletes.
Athletes' sleep/wake patterns were monitored using wrist activity monitors and sleep diaries. On average, participants across all sports obtained a total sleep time of 6.8±1.1 h. Findings from this research reveal that elite athletes obtain less than the recommended 8 hours of sleep for the general population.
Reduced sleep quality and quantity may have effects on athletic performance and needs practical sleep strategies for athletes.