MERCER ISLAND FC — PARENT GUIDE

Home Recovery & Sleep Hygiene Blueprint

★ SUPPORTING YOUR ATHLETE AWAY FROM THE PITCH ★

Parents Hold the Real Advantage: While coaches manage training load on the pitch, recovery happens at home. Scientific studies in adolescent football show that chronically sleeping under 8 hours amplifies injury vulnerability up to fivefold in heavy-training weeks. Here are high-impact, actionable steps parents can take to safeguard their player's health, speed, and mental focus.

📋 PARENT SLEEP HYGIENE CHECKLIST

TARGET: AGES 6–12 (9–12 HRS) · AGES 12–16 (8–10 HRS)

❄️ 1. "THE CAVE" ENVIRONMENT

- [ ] **Cool Thermostat (65–68°F / 18°C):** Lower ambient temperature helps reduce core body temperature, triggering deep slow-wave repair.
- [ ] **Blackout Darkness:** Use blackout shades or eye masks; even faint outside streetlights suppress natural nighttime sleep hormones.
- [ ] **Bed is for Sleep Only:** Keep school desks, homework, and gaming consoles away from the bed so the brain pairs the mattress with rest.

📵 2. SCREEN & DIGITAL CURFEWS

- [ ] **Central Charging Station:** Charge phones, tablets, and laptops in the kitchen or hallway overnight—never on the bedside nightstand.
- [ ] **60-Minute Screen Cutoff:** Power down all video games and social media 1 hr prior to sleep to stop blue light from mimicking daylight.
- [ ] **Dim Overhead Lighting:** Switch to floor lamps or warm amber light after dinner to prompt natural melatonin production.

🥗 3. EVENING NUTRITION & TIMING

- [ ] **Afternoon Caffeine Curfew:** Avoid sodas, teas, and pre-workout energy drinks after 12:00–2:00 PM (caffeine has a 6-hour half-life).
- [ ] **Post-Training Protein Snack:** After late drills, opt for milk, Greek yogurt, or oats 45–60 min before bed instead of sugary cereals.
- [ ] **2-Hour Exercise Buffer:** Allow at least 90–120 minutes between high-intensity sprinting and lights-out to let body heat drop.

☀️ 4. CIRCADIAN ANCHORS & ROUTINE

- [ ] **Protect Weekend Wake Times:** Keep weekend wake-up times within 60 minutes of school days to prevent Monday "social jet lag."
- [ ] **Morning Sunlight (5–10 Mins):** Expose eyes to outdoor daylight within 30–60 mins of waking to set the circadian clock for the night.
- [ ] **The 20-Minute Rule:** If tossing and turning for over 20 min, have them read quietly under soft light until drowsy before trying again.

🌸 FEMALE ATHLETE RECOVERY & THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

For developing female athletes entering puberty, hormonal fluctuations naturally influence sleep patterns. Body temperature variations can cause mild restlessness or make drifting off take slightly longer during specific cycle phases. **Parent Action:** Avoid over-analyzing—encourage girls to listen to their bodies. If physical tiredness peaks during or right before menstruation, simply adjust bedtime **20 to 30 minutes earlier**, focus on hydration, and support restful recovery.

🧠 SCHOOL STRESS & MATCH ANXIETY

Cognitive strain from exams and match day nerves can cause bedtime rumination. **Parent Action:** Institute an evening *"Brain Dump"*—encourage players to write down homework checklists, kit bags, or worries on a notepad after dinner so their minds are clear when their head hits the pillow.

⚠️ WARNING SIGNS: WHEN UNDER-RECOVERY DEMANDS EXTRA REST

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Frequent Colds & Recurrent Illness	Dozing Off Instantly in the Car	Sluggish Feet & Slow Reactions	Intense High-Sugar Junk Food Cravings	Sudden Irritability & Mood Swings

A RESTED ATHLETE IS A RESILIENT ATHLETE. THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING YOUR PLAYER'S RECOVERY AT HOME!