

Photo provided by Austin Boltz

STORY BY LAURA CANIDA  
NEWS EDITOR

Whether you're an athlete or a spectator, you are probably aware of the fact that some athletes observe special game day rituals. If you search online, you will find numerous stories about professional athletes across all sports that subscribe to pregame rituals — some of these rituals are familiar and some are so odd it will have you scratching your head.

Michael Jordan, former NBA star, would wear two pairs of basketball shorts. He would wear his white or red Bulls shorts and underneath he would also wear University of North Carolina shorts from his college ball days.

Mercedes Pesina, a sophomore on the track and field team, said, "I never wear my jersey on the way there, I have to put it on at the meet.

I have to tie my shoes a certain way each time I throw and put on my glove (for hammer) a certain way. Another thing I do is always bring a blue Gatorade. But don't drink it till after I throw an event. Once I get started with season I'll be really specific with how I warm up and when I warm up."

Keoni McHone, the college's track and field coach, gave us some insight into what he does with the athletes he works with. "We do our's (pregame rituals) the day before since we get separated out at track meets. We do mental imagery the day before. It gives them the opportunity to feel the adrenaline and control their emotions," he said.

"One thing I have seen is having mistake rituals. That is doing something after a mistake during a match or game to acknowledge it but let it go and move on. It helps the negative emotion showing. The ones that come to mind comes from volleyball, where they come together as a team after each point, whether they made it or the other team did. I have seen where a teammate on a basketball team will give a low 5 to a teammate after their teammate made a mistake to help them shake it off."

Kishaun Gervais, Portland Winterhawks left wing said, "I get the same order from Starbucks every game day at home, and I don't let my stick touch the ground after I tape it, and I throw four of our warmups pucks at a specific time. I also do my warmup routine the same way every game. Then when I get dressed I always put everything on from the left side to the right side. I usually have a pregame nap and eat at the same time to prepare myself as well as listen to some pump-up music to get me fired up. Besides training, I've seen some weird rituals such as players letting their stick freeze on the ice before games."

Laura Canida works as a volunteer booster and board member for the Portland Winterhawks

*"My best friend Connor Bowie always has a chocolate chip muffin and a green Powerade right before the game."*

*-Ilijah Colina*

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Photo provided by Ilijah Colina



# GAME DAY RITUALS

Far left: Olivia Tyson, #13: Jahlett Talalemotu-Tofi, #7: Josie Carlson, #9 Sami Tardiff, back right: Erika Mosley, far right: Grace Higginbotham

Center for the Prince George Cougars and a former Portland Winterhawks player Ilijah Colina said one ritual he has stuck to is eating a pregame breakfast of eggs, sausages and potatoes right before he leaves for the rink. When he arrives at the rink, his equipment manager always has chocolate or candy waiting for him. He always eats this before he changes out of his dress clothes.

Colina said, "My best friend Connor Bowie always has a chocolate chip muffin and a green Powerade right before the game. Right before we are about to go out and play you will see Connor devouring the muffin and chugging the Powerade. Immediately after, he rushes to the washroom to put his contacts in, all in the matter of two minutes. I used to get a good laugh out of it, but it's all normal now."

Sami Tardiff, a freshman DS/Libero on the volleyball team said, "My game day ritual typically consists of waking up, making a good, big breakfast, watching some game film and studying the opposing team. Then I like to drink an energy drink and go into our athletic trainer to get treatment before the game. But most importantly I like to make sure my energy is up all the way up until game time that way it keeps me pumped to play! I typically listen to music throughout the day as well, so I can focus."

Paige Downer, CCC women's basketball guard, said she has to listen to music before games, otherwise she doesn't feel prepared. "Before the game starts, we always put our hands in kind of like making a three, we say Cougar mentality. Dani gets in the circle and dances," Downer said. Dani Lyons, forward for the women's basketball team, said, "They make me dance even though I'm not that good of a dancer."

Aside from pregame rituals, athletes can have a signature move, something he or she must do before they serve the ball, take a shot and even dive into the pool. Have you ever seen a baseball player adjust his gloves and tap his bat to the base before taking his stance, or a basketball player bounce the ball a specific number of times before taking a shot?

Superstitions or rituals may seem irrelevant to some players or spectators, but to some athletes, superstition is key that helps ground them in the moment, and prepare to perform their best. Regardless of what they are and whether or not we're aware of them, we hope they keep at it and keep working so our favorite players can continue to succeed.

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*-Mercedes Pesina*

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