

**THE PROBLEM WITH NUTRITION AND SPORTS PERFORMANCE IS THAT THERE IS A WHOLE WORLD OF UNKNOWN, THE GREY AREAS, THE 'IT DEPENDS'.**

**We as coaches and educators advising you, the keen reader and learner, are often making our best guess. The research might indicate something, but in practice we see different. The research might also show something, but in an application that isn't relevant to our scenario.**

**Thus us coaches are always making a best guess, with the knowledge that we have and the understanding of the human body we make assumptions based on what you might need to do.**

## PERFORMANCE NUTRITION

# THE JUNK FOOD ATHLETE

**T**his is the perfect way to look at this topic, junk food and sports performance. There are many people that are high performing on what is viewed as a junk food diet. And I always ask myself the question, what if their diet was better, 'cleaner', more nourishing, what could they achieve then? See when you eat junk food there is a whole world of unknown, there are additives, preservatives, rancid fats, and little man made monsters that we just have no idea what they are doing to the human body long term. Many of these compounds are proven as safe short term, but not many compounds or additives have been tested long term on humans. Most know short term they are fine, we don't keel over and die after a Big Mac

of flavored crisps, or some cookies, what effect could that have on our mitochondria and its optimal function? See the mitochondria power energy in our bodies, they are the powerhouses, and need a combination of carbohydrates and fat to make energy, make us work optimally. Can we argue that efficiency and quality of nutrients will affect its performance ability with the quality of food that we eat?

Perhaps the biggest component of the above example is foods effect on our blood sugar levels. Simple carbohydrates not managed in meals effectively will feel like they affect your sports performance in a big way, if your blood glucose level raises quickly due to junk or simple



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washed down with a McFlurry, so why should we be worried?

Despite us hitting what we might need in terms of our calorie and macronutrient requirements to fuel recovery and performance, what else is coming along for the ride? Well, we don't know, this is where we are guessing as coaches. We are making the assumption that whole natural foods that don't contain additives and preservatives could be better for our performance. They don't contain chemicals, which we could argue, despite amounts being known as safe at this point in time, will allow the body to work in a more optimal state.

Think of carbohydrates. If we compared a portion of brown rice to a portion of processed carbohydrates, so a packet

carbohydrates then it will fall quickly, thus if you exercise 2-3 hours after that meal you are going to be training as your blood glucose is taking a nose dive, that is going to make you feel like there is nothing in the tank. This is why more complete and balanced G.I. carbohydrates are often recommended, we can get a better energy release that makes us feel higher performing. And we've all been there feeling tired going into training not knowing why, and our answer is just to reach for a cup of coffee or a pre-workout drink as a solution. Except the problem was in your pre-workout meal, the carbs may have been too simple, there may have been too many carbs, so getting the balance is key. Work out what the ideal ratio of carbs, fats and protein is needed for you to perform optimally in training or on the pitch. Its trial and error, but its worth it, cause performing optimally is important, or it should be.

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