

Sports Performance Advantage eBooks

THE ATHLETE'S GUIDE TO EATING AND PERFORMING BETTER



BY ANTHONY LYNCH

Table Of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: Secret To Increasing Performance In Athletes

Chapter 2: Nutrition Tips For Athletes - Best Foods For Athletes

Chapter 3: How Athletes Can Stick to a Meal Plan

Chapter 4: The Role Of Coaches in The Athlete's Guide To Eating And Performing Better

Conclusion

Introduction

All athletes strive to be better than their competition, no matter which sport they play. To be in the best shape possible, athletes have to stick to a comprehensive eating and performance plan. Additionally, with these athletes suffering the risk of injuries, their meal choice will greatly affect their total fitness level, as well as how long it takes to recover after being injured.

In recent times, it has been argued that modern-day athletes are stronger, faster, and generally better performing than their predecessors. To further buttress this point, a TED Talk delivered by David Epstein clearly compared Usain Bolt's record-breaking performance to that of Jesse Owens in 1966. According to Epstein's findings, Jesse Owens – who at one point in his career held the record for 100 meters dash – would be 14 feet behind Bolt if they raced together today.

Pretty interesting, right?

We are living in a world where there's a more complex understanding of sports science, and this has greatly enhanced the overall performance level of athletes today. Today, athletes are applying different approaches to give themselves an edge in their sports.

In this ebook, we will discuss the successful athlete's guide to eating and performing better.

Chapter 1

Secrets To Increasing Performance In Athletes

From David Epstein's TED Talk, we highlighted a couple of secrets for increasing performance in athletes. In this chapter, we're going to take a deeper look at them.



1. Eating Right

Undoubtedly, food plays a significant role in the performance of every athlete out there. Athletes can't just eat anything that comes their way and expect to perform at their best. The daily meals of an athlete need to be cleaner than anything the average Joe or Jane eats.

The importance of nutritionists in the life of an athlete cannot be overemphasized,

after the coach, they could be referred to as the most important person in the life of an athlete who is serious about recording groundbreaking achievements in his/her sporting career. Nutritionists are responsible for creating meals for different functions, all contributing to the performance level of the athlete.

Picking the best breakfast daily as well as the right meal before a workout session is of great importance to the general performance of the athlete. These are the duties of a nutritionist. While carbohydrate is important, a good meal plan should include protein-filled foods that will help prevent metabolism during intense workout sessions or drills.

2. Taking the Right Supplements

For every athlete, there will be times when they cannot rely solely on the food they eat to get the nutrients they need to perform. Sometimes, they need to take in supplements with essential vitamins, micronutrients, and minerals.

Currently, the most basic supplement athletes can take is the vitamin supplement. By consuming supplements with vitamins, athletes can avoid eating excessive amounts of those foods that come with the needed vitamin requirements.

While there are a number of supplements out there, whey protein is one of the most popular pre- and post-workout supplements that athletes should take. This supplement is capable of replenishing protein in the body, giving the body plenty to draw on for muscle development and for a speedy recovery after injury.

Additionally, there are various fat supplements capable of preventing muscle metabolism and also increasing the metabolic rate in these athletes. Before settling for any of these supplements, it is important that you understand any possible side effects.

3. Functional Exercise

In addition to eating the right food and taking supplements, athletes also need to hone their physical abilities,

which is important if they want to remain at the top for any length of time. Isolation exercises time and again have proven not to be as effective as advertised, as they do not bring in enough muscle groups to mimic actual movement. This is exactly where functional exercises come into play.

Basically, functional exercise routines do mimic the various body movements in an athlete's most frequent activities.

The focus of this exercise routine not only involves improving the body movements, but also reducing the possibilities of the athlete suffering a major injury.

Chapter 2

Nutrition Tips For Athletes

The previous section emphasizes the need for athletes to eat right. Various sources claim the type of food that athletes consume will greatly affect how well they play in the field, even more so than how they train.

While most athletes aren't fully clear on how to put together an optimal meal, we will share some helpful tips on how to eat right as they train in order to boost performance.



1. Eat a Sufficient Amount of Protein

Generally, protein does not provide a sufficient amount of fuel for energy like most food classes.

However, proteins do help to maintain the muscles of athletes, which makes them very important to the athlete's diet.

On average, a typical man needs about 1.2 grams of protein per body weight daily. Athletes, on the other hand, need about 1.7 grams per body weight. While athletes do need more protein, it is not recommended that they consume more than what they actually needed, as this amount could greatly affect their kidney.

Instead of opting for protein supplements, athletes can get plenty of protein from high-quality meals that include foods like eggs, milk, lean meat, fish, and beans.

2. Increase Your Carbohydrate Intake

Athletes need carbs, because carbohydrates are the fuel for their energy consumption. After an intake of carbs, the body is able to convert them into glucose – a form of sugar – and have the energy stored as glycogen. During each exercise or workout routine, the body changes glycogen into usable energy, allowing athletes to remain strong even after hours of working out. Athletes that work out for much longer periods of time will need to apply a whole new strategy if they want the energy to perform at their best. Consuming carbohydrates for three or four days before participating in a sporting event can help to top up the glycogen stores in the body, which helps the athlete remain energetic for a longer time.

In addition, athletes can ensure that they have enough glycogen stored before any sporting event by following these strategies:

- They could decide to eat meals that contain over 70% of their total calories from carbohydrates. This includes pasta, bread, vegetables, cereals, and fruits.
- Before engaging in any sporting activity, they are advised to have their last meal about four hours before exercising, as this helps to give the stomach enough time to empty.
- After an intense workout session, you are advised to reload your carbohydrates. Since you are not ordinarily looking for instant energy, it is best that you opt for less refined carbohydrates, such as carrots and bagels.
- During long workout sessions, it is a good idea to replenish carbs, water, and minerals. Twenty minutes into every workout routine, athletes should consume refined carbohydrates foods, as these help to refuel working muscles. While most athletes prefer to consume various sports drinks, bars, and gels, fruit juices and fruits are also good for replenishing lost energy.
- Athletes engaging in routines that are both intense and long should avoid intake of sugary or starchy foods at least 30 minutes before starting the exercise. This is because sugar and starch are capable of speeding up the dehydration process.

3. Drink Fluids Often and On Time

If you regularly engage in intense or lengthy workout

sessions, especially during the summer, this will definitely leave you dehydrated. In turn, dehydration can greatly affect your overall performance, and in the most severe cases, can even threaten your life.

To prevent this from happening, it is important that you drink fluids often and early. You should not have to wait until you are thirsty because, by that time, you may already be far behind and would need too much fluid to make up for the deficit.

Athletes can monitor their dehydration levels by checking the color of their urine – dark urine or bright yellow signifies that you are not drinking as many fluids as your body needs, while a pale yellow urine color proves that you are getting the right amount of fluid.

Athletes that engage in endurance sporting activities like marathon runners and cyclists need to consume about 8 to 12 ounces of sporting fluids every fifteen minutes while participating in these activities. If possible, athletes should drink chilled fluids, as they are better absorbed than room temperature fluids.

4. Consume Less Fat

While the body turns to fat when carbohydrate sources run low during a sporting event, this does not necessarily mean that athletes should increase their fat intake. To get the fat they need to engage in endurance sporting events, athletes

should consume unsaturated fat found in foods like avocados, nuts, olives, and tuna.

With fatty foods capable of upsetting the stomach, athletes should avoid consuming these foods on a day when they are scheduled to participate in any sporting event.

5. Replenish Lost Electrolytes

Because sweating removes electrolytes and fluids from the body, it is essential that athletes replenish them during every sporting event or workout routine. One great way to do this is by consuming sports drinks. However, to get the perfect balance of electrolytes and fluids, athletes will need to dilute sports drinks with water. This mixture will help transmit nerve signals faster to the body, keeping you hydrated and energized to perform better.

Best Foods For Athletes

Salmon

Packed with lean protein, this oily fish contains muscle-building proteins as well as omega-3 fatty acids capable of reducing the inflammation that comes with regular athletic activity. In addition, salmon is a "natural artery cleanser" with the strength to prevent heart disease, which if left unattended to is capable of ruining the career of even the most active athlete. To make the most out of salmon, athletes can decide to get creative by pairing it with burgers, pasta, and salads.

Berries

Rich in antioxidants, berries like blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries are a few of the delicious choices athletes can turn to after an intensive workout routine. While berries are generally good for athletes, darker berries contain protective elements and phytochemicals that prevent oxidative stress from stressful activities. In addition, these particular berries are some of the best fruits for preserving muscle strength, making them perfect as a long term food for athletes.

Pasta

Contrary to what you may have heard, not all carbs are bad for consumption. In fact, they happen to be very important in the diet of any athlete. As the body burns fat and protein, it must convert them into carbohydrates first, which makes the body work a little harder than expected to derive energy. For an active person that engages in strenuous activities, straight carbs act as the raw fuel you need. While it is helpful to consume pasta at times, don't overdo it, as it contains fiber that could cause gastronomic stress. Grain pasta contains less sugar, making it the best choice for athletes.

Beans and Legumes

We cannot discuss an athlete's guide to eating and performing better without highlighting how beneficial beans are to athletes.

Meat eaters and vegetarians alike can get a lot out of beans and legumes. From pinto beans and black beans to lima beans and kidney beans, the list is endless. Unlike meat, beans and legumes do not contain fiber and saturated fat, which helps you remain full longer.

Nuts

Rich in healthy fats and protein, nuts have become a mainstay in the diet of any athletes who are trying to improve their performance level. To make the most out of this, athletes are advised to consume nuts with carbs, as they help to level out the sugar blood level and also sustain the carb for a longer period of time. Nuts are generally easier to digest and do not in any way upset your stomach as an athlete. In addition to this, Nuts contain fiber and are also rich in anti-inflammatory nutrients that have been identified to be great for the health of the bone.

Bananas

Low in calories, bananas contain natural electrolytes that athletes need to replace after a sporting event or intensive workout routine. Because they're rich in potassium, bananas are the perfect post-sporting event snack for athletes. Plus, since athletes generally tend to drink more water, just one banana is capable of regulating fluid intake at the same time, helping to protect muscles from cramps and spasms.

Milk

Loaded with a rich amount of protein and carbs, milk is one of the best post-workout drinks athletes can have.

Chocolate milk contains a little caffeine, which according to medical research dilates blood vessels. This helps athletes relax after exercising. Here's another fact most people don't realize: when protein and carbs are consumed together instead of separately, they are more effective at repairing muscle tissues.

Sweet Potatoes

Packed with antioxidants capable of lowering blood pressure, sweet potatoes are perfect for athletes participating in sporting events. Rich in mineral, vitamin, potassium, and iron, Sweet Potato helps to keep muscles healthy.

Cherries

Cherries contain antioxidants and help to prevent muscle pain after engaging in a stressful activity like running. In addition, cherries reduce inflammation, which helps to reduce the pain felt by athletes after running for a long period of time. Some athletes have found consuming cherry juice as the perfect way to lower muscle damage from intense exercise routines.

Oatmeal

High in fiber, oatmeal has long been identified as a great source of carbs for athletes, helping them remain full after a meal for a long time. As a whole grain food, oatmeal helps to lower the risk of heart disease. Plus, if you're an athlete who needs to get heavier or stronger, oatmeal is an essential food for the weight gain process. No matter your reason for consuming oatmeal as an athlete, you should choose steel-cut oats over instant oats.

Chapter 3

How Athletes Can Stick to a Meal Plan

While we have discussed nutrition tips, as well as the best foods athletes can eat to help them perform better during sporting events, it will take discipline to stick to a healthy meal plan. While some people are more disciplined than others, there are still steps you can take to help you stick to a meal plan and avoid eating the wrong food.



1. Have Healthy Food Around Always!

Over the years, proximity to food has been used as the barometer to judge an athlete's commitment to eating right. To help you eat the best diet for your performance, it is essential that you stock up on the foods you need.

Because athletes need carbohydrates to help them refuel, be sure you regularly load up your stock with carbohydrates and other essential foods.

Having healthy food around will not stop you entirely from eating foods that are not great for you, but it does make it easy to make a good decision – and it also gives you a chance to rethink before making that wrong decision.

2. Record What You Eat

To improve performance, athletes need to consume foods that are rich in carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, and vitamins. While you do this, you may feel that you are eating more than you should, as these foods can be filling. To prevent this train of thought, it is best that you keep a record of what you eat.

Currently, there are a number of food tracking applications you can download and use to keep track of how much food you are eating. Interestingly, most of these apps give you the opportunity to take a picture of your food. You can also keep a record of what you drink.

Keeping a record of your meal every day will help you determine if you're eating enough protein, vitamins, potassium, iron, and carbohydrate-filled foods. Since we tend to forget trivial matters like the food we eat, keeping a record is essential if you are keen on improving your eating routine, and in turn, your performance.

3. Be Committed

To show your commitment to your eating plan, it is important that you pack only healthy foods when you take a trip or even go to the gym or training sessions. As mentioned earlier, proximity to good food will give you a second choice to rethink your decision.

Chapter 4

The Role Of Coaches in The Athlete's Guide to Eating and Performing Better

While athletes are expected to stick to a healthy meal plan, coaches and the entire coaching crew all have parts to play to ensure that these athletes stick to these meal plans. While their parts are obviously not as direct as that of the athlete, it is equally important that they do what they can to contribute.



The roles to be played by coaches include:

- **Reinforcing the need for athletes to eat right.** While most athletes – especially rookies – may not really understand the importance of eating right, it is the coaching crew's job to continue reinforcing the need

for their athletes to eat right. In order to make this stick, coaches can cite examples of some of the best athlete that stick to a healthy meal plan.

- **Educating athletes.** Most athletes are in the dark about the type of food they need to boost their performance on and off the field. It is up to the coaching crew to educate them on the importance of consuming foods rich with carbohydrates, vitamins, protein, and potassium.
- **Emphasizing regular training and tasks.** To help athletes perform better, it is the coach's job to encourage regular training, as well as assigning individual tasks that will help hone their abilities.

Conclusion

The type of food athletes consume has a huge impact on their performance during sporting events. This athlete's guide to eating and performing better has discussed in detail what you as an athlete can do to ensure that you improve your performance on and off the field.

Best of luck!