

Nutrition for Big Matches – Or “Garbage In, Garbage Out”

We’ve already had the MCT and we are about to enter the Districts in two weeks and we need to talk a bit about nutrition and the proper use of it. Sometimes I look in the stands and it amazes me what I see wrestlers eating only minutes away from a match. Cheeseburgers, hotdogs, candy, junk. What you are eating can do as much damage as poor conditioning and actually mimic it. Wrestling is a more demanding sport in that on top of the hard work many wrestlers impose dietary restrictions on themselves to lose weight. Then the day of the match, after weigh-ins, we sometimes mistakenly think we can eat “anything”. While it is time to take in some nutrition... “Anything” is not exactly what you want to do.

Here are a few common mistakes we make that hurt us:

Yo-yo dieting. By having cycles of fasting then eating (binging) your body will store more fat and it will be harder to lose weight. Even though you got a perfect score on your SAT’s, your body has a mind of it’s own.

Starvation/Fasting. When you fast or starve yourself your body uses muscle mass first and this isn’t exactly what a wrestler wants is it? It also causes your body to get better at storing fat in preparation for the next fast. Not good either.

Dehydration. Several negative effects none of which you want as a wrestler. Decreased muscular strength, decreased endurance, decreased blood flow, and an inability to regulate your body temperature. Sounds like a list of bad things to me.

Diet pills/Laxatives/Diuretics. Don’t even go there. Too many negatives to list.. heart rate problems, blood pressure issues, dehydration, kidney malfunction & permanent injury. Not even remotely worth it.

But lets say we are at weight by doing it properly and have just weighed in. Now what? Cheeseburger and Fries time? No. You want fuel that will get into your body in a hurry, not depend on lengthy digestion, and provide you with that burst of energy you as a wrestler need. Foods you want have what is called a High Glycemic Index and the higher the index the faster they effect a rise in your blood sugar. These foods boost your blood sugar and give you optimal energy. Examples of High Glycemic foods are *bagels, white bread, rice cakes, rice krispies, cheerios, potatoes, honey, lifesavers*. Examples of Moderate Glycemic foods are orange juice, Gatorade, oatmeal, wheat crackers, whole wheat bread, raisins, bananas, grapes. Examples of Low Glycemic foods are pasta, chick peas, beans, peanuts, oranges, yogurt, apples. The list isn’t all encompassing so experiment... at home and practice! Not the day of the match!

Lower Glycemic foods should be eaten an hour or more prior to a match. If you just weighed in and have an hour or less until you wrestle stick with the High Glycemic foods. Do the big plate of spaghetti or pasta hours before or the night before. Notice here that nowhere do you see a steak or meats. Low fat meats are good during training periods, not the day of or just before a match. Sorry, Chick Filet before the match doesn’t cut it.

Districts are coming up and here is your plan...plan ahead with your diet and get down so the night before you can eat a good pasta based meal. Then..go to bed and get a good nights sleep. Day of... if you can manage it and aren’t cutting a lot of

weight, eat a good light breakfast of fruit and cereals and a bagel. We always have bagels at the matches and you might want to bring some peanut butter or cream cheese to throw on one. Bring nuts, fruits, yogurt, and rather than doing a whole bottle of straight Gatorade or Powerade dilute it a bit 50/50 with water. Nothing rehydrates you as good as water. Your made of water, not a man made drink! This way you are eating a mix of High and Moderate Glycemic foods the day of the match. Who knows, perhaps your third period conditioning is better then you thought and it was energy from food you were missing! The photo shows that even the coach prepares for battle by eating right. And also below is a link to a good article on the subject! Read it, there will be a test!