

WINNING STATE

WRESTLING

4th
Edition

*THE ATHLETE'S GUIDE
TO COMPETING
MENTALLY TOUGH*

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WinningSTATE

The Mental Toughness Company

COMPETE MENTALLY TOUGH



3 FUEL

POWER YOUR PERFORMANCE

When you think of food what comes to mind, taste or energy? Don't be a taste junky! Break free of sugar and convenience. *WinningSTATE* athletes intelligently adapt their food choices to fuel their dream, rather than just lazily pleasing their taste buds. Power your decision-making machine.

Eat to win! Become skilled at *fueling* for competition.

If we can't make *FUEL* choices that power our performance, we run out of gas late in the match. *WinningSTATE* athletes don't focus entirely on taste; they also focus on food choices that provide max energy for quick recovery and on-target decision-making.

Fueling is critical! Other than crushing apprehension and eliminating distractions, I don't know of any other aspect of competing that has greater significance. Bulletproof concentration, excellent decision-making, and crisp execution throughout an entire tournament are what it takes to medal. Letting down mentally for one second can alter future opportunities. Why risk a mental error because of an empty gas tank? Don't we want max energy for rock-solid performances? Of course we do. The challenge in this junk-food-heavy environment is seeing food through the winning lens, not just the taste lens.

- *Point: getting our runs in is important for quick recovery, but high-octane fueling is just as important.*

**“Deliberately fuel to compete.
Choose fresh, high-octane carbs
and fats over taste.”**

Update your thinking. Think of food as fuel. Educate yourself. Put in some effort and adapt your food habits. Eliminate sugar!

Food Is Fuel

Check out the *Food Court* illustration on pages 44 and 45. The food imposters on the left page may taste good and are easy to grab 'n go, but those choices offer very little “gas.” The examples shown on the right page don't taste bad, they just haven't been flavor enhanced. Those fresh, clean, high-energy food choices are the best power source for quick recovery and crisp decision-making match after match.

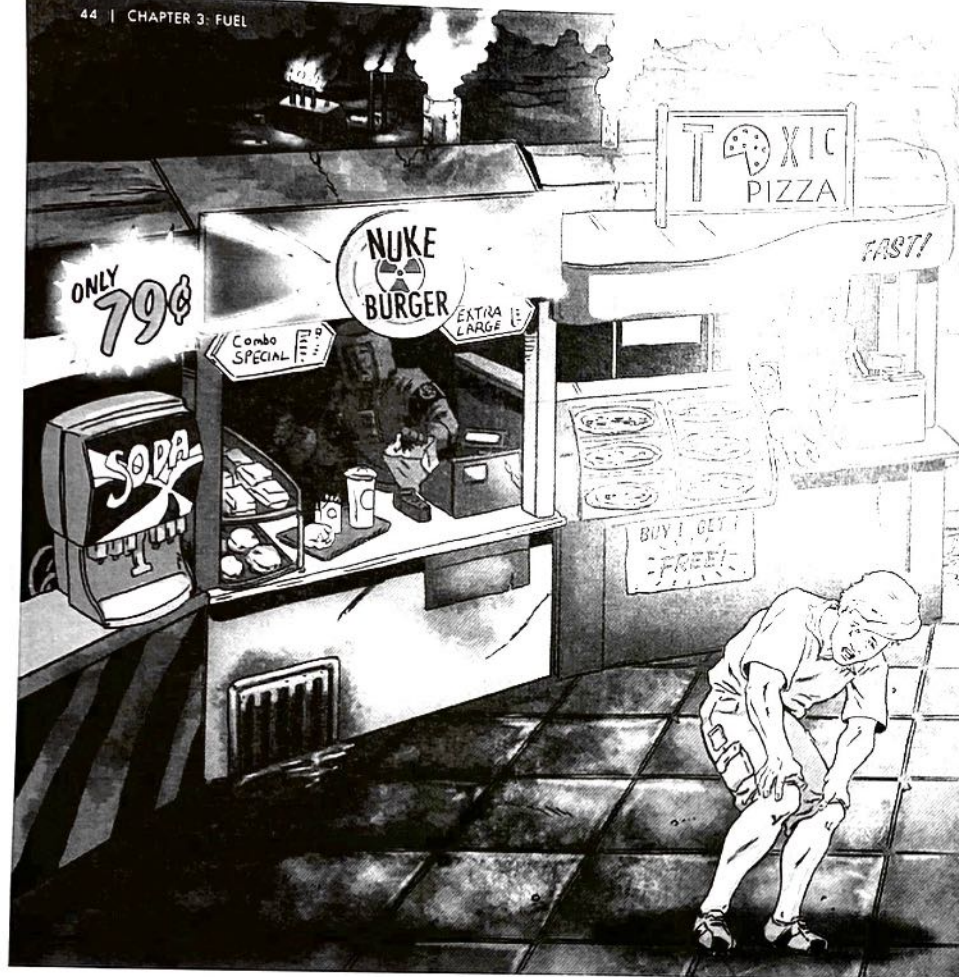
Think of food more functionally (what you need) than emotionally (what you want), especially for tournaments. Focus on what your mind and body need to attack and defend for three periods (let alone overtime), to quickly recover, and to be ready for the next match, rather than flavor preferences. Make flavor a second priority. Since food is literally competition fuel, choose rocketfuel over poser food.

This isn't that complicated. We don't have to become nutritionists to understand the basic differences between high-octane rocketfuel and no-octane poser food. Stay with me here. Think of food as types and sources. Types: carbs, fats, and proteins. Sources: fresh or processed. Blending carbs and fats from fresh sources is high-octane rocketfuel. Processed junk food is no-octane poser food. It's pretty simple.

Another way to think of food is to link it to building an internal competitive bonfire, one that will roar for hours.

Building A Blazing Bonfire

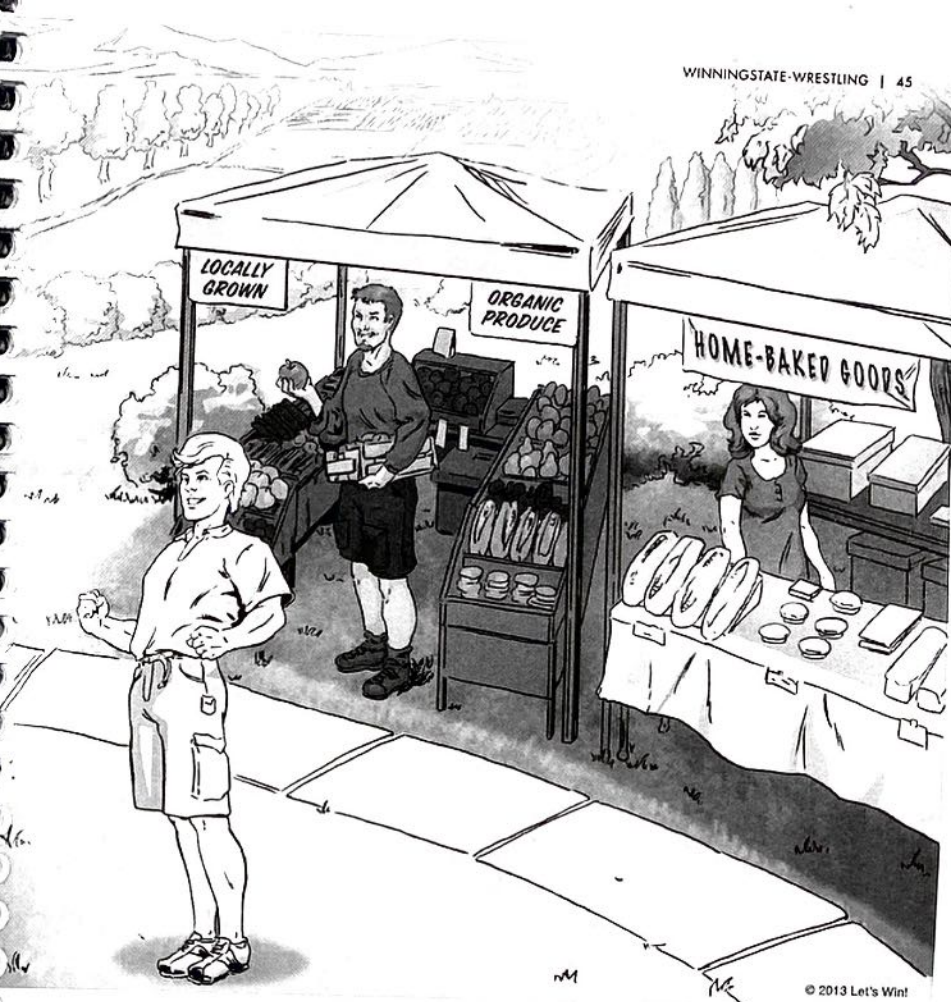
This “bonfire” metaphor helps us get our mind around the fuel vs. taste conflict. Picture a blazing, open-pit bonfire. See the dancing flames. Smell the smoke. Hear the pops and the crackles. Feel the intense heat from



THE FOOD COURT

The Food Court illustrates the drastic differences between toxic low-energy fuel imposters and fresh high-octane rocketfuel. Choose energy first, flavor second. Eat to win!

several feet away. Now think of the materials we'd gather to not only build our blazing bonfire, but also to keep it roaring for hours. We'd gather clean paper or dry grass, various sizes of dry twigs, and armfuls of extra dry logs. Now make the connection that fresh carbs and good fats are exactly like the paper, twigs, and dry logs. Simple carbs are the paper or grass, because simple carbs burn quickly and easily. Complex carbs are the twigs,



because complex carbs are denser and burn a little slower. Fats are the dry logs, because fats have twice the energy as carbs. Fats are the coals that our four-match tournament bonfire is built on. Once we get our bonfire going, we throw both types of carbs on top of the coals, and then more logs to keep the coals from dying out. (Low-fat anything should be avoided.) Proteins are like wet, green wood that just lies there smoldering.

• *Point: make food choices to fuel your competitive bonfire instead of thinking only about flavor.*

Are you seeing it? Imagine we're on a camping trip with friends and it's time to start a campfire. Are we lazily going to try to start our

campfire by lighting green logs with a match? Don't think so. We'd be cold and hungry in no time. Make the connection that fueling for high performance requires choosing the right materials to build an internal competitive bonfire—a roaring bonfire that constantly fuels our decision-making machine and replenishes our physical strength and endurance. Keep this bonfire metaphor in mind throughout this chapter. I explain the best types of paper, twigs, and logs to use on tournament day to get the most out of ourselves when it counts.

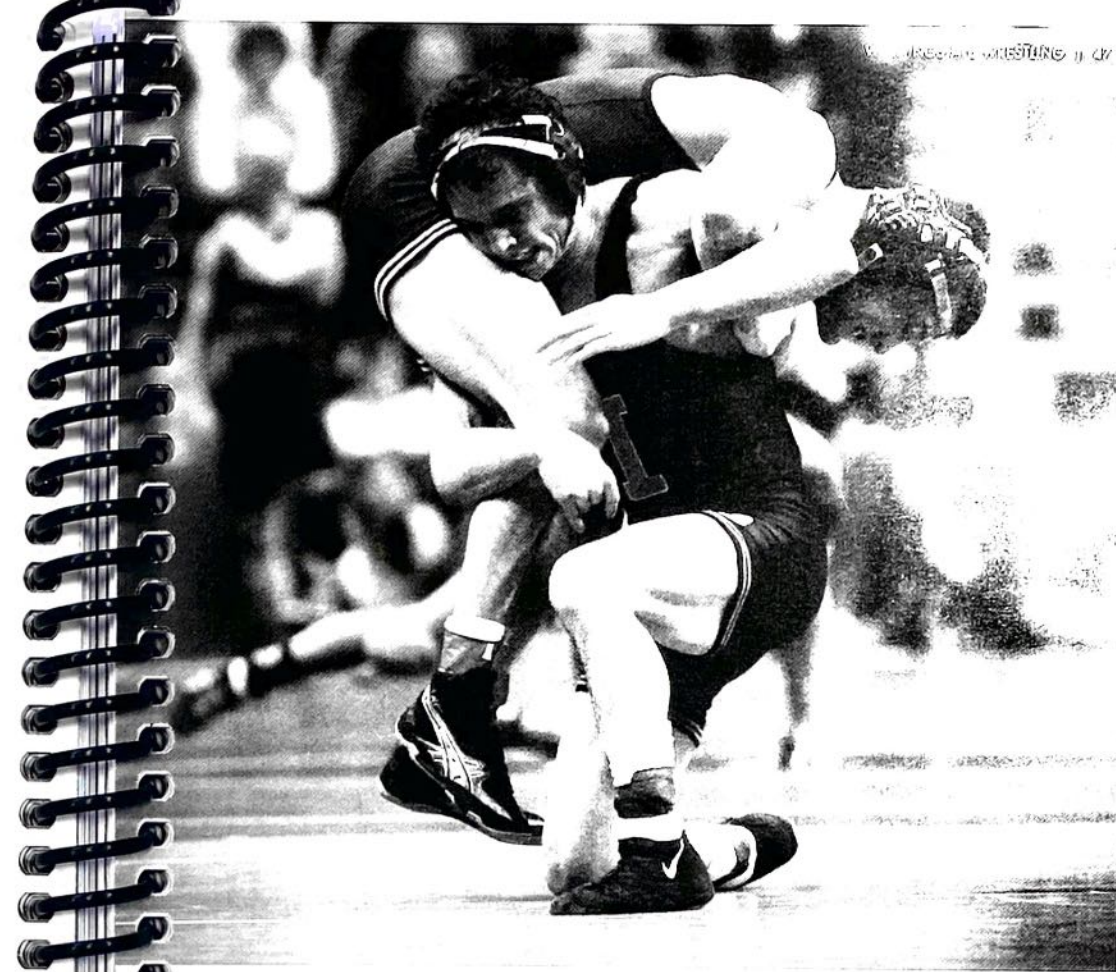
Our Decision-Making Machine

Our bodies don't give out first, our minds give out first. Our "will" (our Grr Factor) and our Superman juice require actual "gas." Take in the scientific fact that our mind burns real fuel. And it burns a lot of it in competition. If it were possible to get an MRI of our brain just before stepping onto the mat, we'd see it light up like a Christmas tree. Our brain would look like a massive emergency response scene with hundreds of emergency vehicles' lights flashing.

Our decision-making machine (our brain) consumes 20% of our total available energy, but what's more important is that our brain cannot store energy—it's completely dependent on a continuous new supply from the bloodstream. In competition our body is performing at peak levels, our mind is on overload consuming 20% of our energy supply, and we expect our physical conditioning to handle the recovery. I don't think so. Think roaring bonfire, not liquid sugar, candy, meat, or other non-energy producing taste items.

- *Point: our decision-making machine needs fresh fuel—frequently!*

Processed junk foods like burgers, fries, shakes, and soda pop, or quickie mart microwave anything are not what our high-performance machine needs to compete at a high level. Our "will," our determination runs on real fuel. Processed junk food is the last thing our mind needs before, during, or after a demanding practice or intense match. Our mind and body need pure energy from two carbs (simple and complex) and good fats. That's what we use to keep our decision-making machine running at peak levels throughout an entire tournament.



Michael Poeta (above) of Illinois puts Tyler Safratowich of Minnesota in a fireman's carry during the 157 lb. quarterfinals at the NCAA Division I championships. Photo source TheGuillotine.com

Two Carbs & Good Fats

As we touched on previously, carbs are split into two categories: simple (paper) quick carbs, and complex (twigs) slow carbs. As competitors wanting to excel, we need a small amount of simple and a large amount of complex. Most of us get the opposite, a large amount of simple and a small amount of complex. Almost no one gets any fat. But to build and keep our bonfire blazing we need a small amount of paper, a larger amount of twigs, and armfuls of dry logs.



BIG DOG FUEL

Combine paper, twigs, and logs to keep your competitive fire blazing. Choose high-octane carbs and fats from fresh sources. No meat. No sugar!

Think of fruit as simple carbs (like paper). Fruit is the quickest energy to get into the bloodstream. Our bodies instantly burn natural fruit sugar. Note: not all sugars are created equal, which I'll explain in the next section.

Natural whole grains (bread and pasta), brown rice, and some fresh vegetables are the complex carbs (like twigs). Our bodies have to work a little harder at burning complex carbs, but they provide a longer-burning, more stable energy stream, unlike fruit (paper), which is—*poof*—gone.

Fats are the least understood, but the most important *fuel* for our roaring bonfire. Our bodies love fat because it's concentrated, dense energy. There is twice as much caloric energy in one gram of fat than there is in one gram of carbohydrate. Fats are the dry logs for our body's competitive bonfire.

Some of the misinformation you may have read or heard includes the idea that fat slows digestion. That's incorrect. The right way to look at fat

Paper

Fast-Burning Carbs



Twigs

Slow-Burning Carbs



Logs

Long-Burning Fats

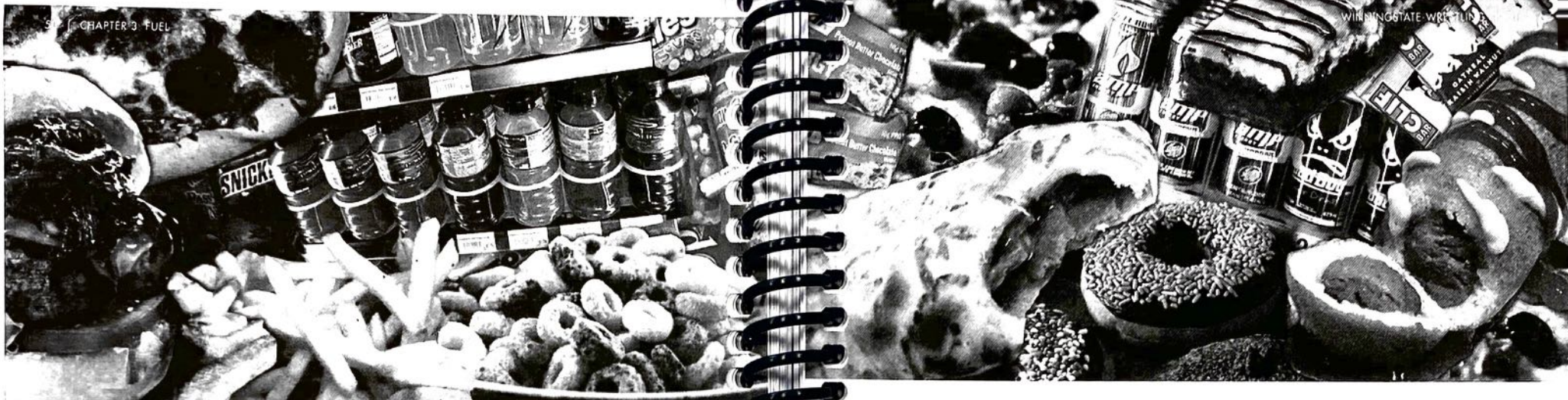


is that it's *slower to digest*. Since fat has twice the energy as carbs, it burns slower, which is a good thing.

Example: Think of trying to keep a bonfire blazing for hours. If we just use paper and twigs, we can't do it. The fire will blaze for about ten minutes and then die out. Not even a cinder will be left. Similarly, if we try and compete on just carbs, we will run out of fuel midway through the match when we need the energy the most, so we must work some fats into our tournament fuel plan. Complex carbs and good fats are how we keep our competitive bonfire roaring for an entire tournament.

Sugar Is Devastating

Sugars are part of the carb family, but not all sugars are created equal. We need to separate "natural" sugar from "refined" sugar. Refined sugars are everywhere. Refined sugars can be so devastating to competitive concentration, physical timing, and endurance that they deserve much closer attention.



POSER FOOD

Don't be a taste junky. Break free of flavor and convenience. Adapt! Put in some effort and choose fresh rocketfuel over low-energy poser food. Connect fueling to winning.

Sugary foods like donuts, candy bars, pastries, cookies, etc., and sugary drinks like soda pop, sports drinks, energy drinks, etc., have no place in a focused, winning competitor's diet—at all, ever!

- *Point: eliminate refined sugar.*

The energy from sugary foods and fluids enters the bloodstream too quickly, almost as if injected by a syringe. We call this sugar dumping, which is tied to poor decision-making and sloppy execution.

Sugary foods and fluids cause our blood sugar to rise too far above the optimal level. When this happens, the pancreas secretes insulin, which pulls the extra sugar out of the bloodstream to store it. Guess what happens next. Yep, we crash. The insulin effect robs the available energy from our bloodstream, leaving us quickly depleted. Hence, we make poor decisions, display hesitant execution, and recovery is almost non-existent.

The deeper understanding here, as we discussed, is that our brain cannot store extra energy—it is totally dependent on a continuous new supply from the bloodstream. When we dump sugar, soon after the insulin effect takes hold, our brain goes into crisis mode. We feel weak, confused, spaced-

out, nervous, and indecisive, along with many other negative side effects. And it's all because of a taste-driven sugar craving.

- *Point: get off the Sugar-Train bound for Poor Performanceville.*

Review the high-octane *Big Dog Fuel Groups* examples on page 49, and limit yourself to those or similar choices. Think with your fierce Big Dog competition mindset first, not with your taste buds—if not every day, then at least throughout the season and especially before and during tournaments.

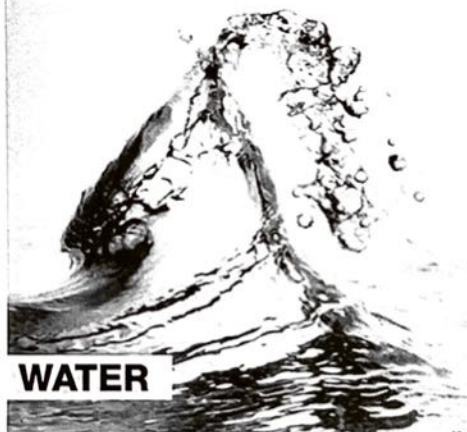
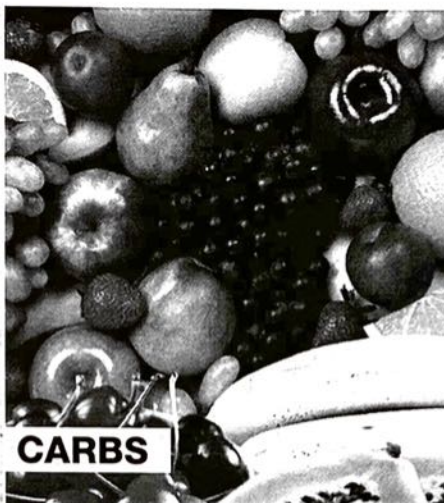
Liquid Sugar

Wow! Continuing with the sugar-is-devastating theme, realize that sugary sports drinks, energy drinks, soda pop, etc., are the worst offenders. All are liquid sugar delivery systems that crush performance. All are nothing but Little Dog taste comforters.

- *Point: Sugar is heroin. It's addictive, it's everywhere, and it's horrible!*

Reality check: For taste junkies this is challenging information. In other words, to keep the same (bad) food habits, taste junkies must reject this information. But *WinningSTATE* athletes take in challenging information, because they know that knowledge equals power and applying that knowledge leads to winning.

Despite what the companies who sell the variations of liquid sugar want us to believe, the stuff not only doesn't provide any benefit, but it also has a negative effect.

**WATER****CARBS**

FUELING SEQUENCE

Our decision making machine (our brain) needs a continuous supply of new fuel. Mute your taste buds! Make winning, high-performance fuel choices. No poser food. No sugar.

Sports-drink salespeople love to talk about electrolytes. (Have you seen the movie *Idiocracy*?) The claim of “optimally replenishing vital electrolytes and nutrients” is a marketing ploy to sell more drinks. Our bodies are 70% water, not 70% sugary drink. So when we’ve sweated off pounds of water, we need to replenish it with pure water. A simple multi-mineral tablet along with lots of water will do more than sports drinks for replenishing electrolytes, which prevent cramping and other important nerve/muscle functions.

Sayo.org added the following to this discussion: “Professional and college athletes drink water at their events, even though the water comes out of Gatorade jugs.” (Notice what most winning coaches get doused with at the end of a game: ice and water.)

Just Google “replenish electrolytes” and you’ll see what I’m talking about. Look for sources on the net that aren’t trying to sell you something and you’ll get the straight information.

An additional reason to stay away from man-made sugar drinks is the toxic chemicals. There is so much garbage in many of the liquid-sugar drinks like dyes, preservatives, etc., that our body has to work at discarding the garbage in order to use the water left behind.

CARB/FAT COMBO

One of the real dangers of trying to hydrate with liquid sugar is we become taste addicted and won’t drink water, so we fail to hydrate as much as needed. Connect with the math in this example: In a packed, muggy arena we can easily sweat off several (two to four) pounds of fluid during a tournament. This makes hydrating with liquid sugar difficult; it’s too concentrated and has too much junk in it. We instinctively stop hydrating after a couple of pounds. For full hydration we would need to drink one of the monster sports drink containers, the big one, the sixty-four-ounce one (four pounds). We won’t do it and we’ll be down two pounds of fluid, so dehydration sets in and by the end of the tournament we’re confused, slow, and disoriented. Or, even if we are the type that will drink several pounds of liquid sugar, it’s just as bad. The effect is still negative. Make sense?

• *Point: drink pure H₂O.*

The energy from fresh fruit (already explained) gets in our bloodstream quicker and burns better. Don’t interpret eating a piece of fruit as drinking gallons of fruit juice. A large amount of fruit juice is not recommended; it’s too acidic and will cause digestive issues. To be very clear, I’m not advocating hydrating with fruit juice. I’m suggesting eating a single piece of fruit before or after matches to keep our blood sugar level elevated—*hydrate with water.*

Tie fueling and hydrating choices to high-performance results, not mindless taste preferences. Think green, not machine. Think water, not



FUEL with fresh, high-octane foods, forget about taste and convenience.

liquid sugar. Think fresh carbs and good fats, along with skipping the protein before a match.

Proteins Are Wet Green Wood

On tournament day, proteins are not max energy sources. Proteins are like green wood on a fire—they don't burn quickly. The body uses proteins to rebuild muscle and other cells. It doesn't easily use proteins as gasoline (energy), so the protein just lies in our stomach taking up digestive capacity. Before and during a match is not the time to rebuild cells. Before and during a match is the time to fill our empty gas tank.

Protein is a good thing at night, when we're through practicing or competing for the day. In fact, when not competing, we need protein throughout the day for a variety of reasons. The primary sources of non-vegetarian protein are beef, poultry, and fish. Tuna is a great source of protein and other important nutrients (e.g., omega fats).

In case this isn't clear, before and during a competition: no protein and no sugar!

Fresh High-Octane Sources

High-octane sources of food and fluids come from nature. They're fresh, meaning alive, not dead. They haven't been processed or modified from their original states. If food has gone through a machine, and had anything taken from it or added to it, it's been processed. Processed food is dead, tongue food, not fresh, high-octane, mind-and-body performance fuel. Nature provides high-octane fuel for max energy. Machines do not.

Here's a simple test. You're on your way to practice and forgot to eat. You have the option to quickly breeze through a fast food drive-thru or to park and go inside a grocery store for some high-octane items. Which do you choose? Yes, grabbing packaged products is easier and they taste good.

That's because most packaged products are artificial, but artificial doesn't get the job done. For example: If our shoes, singlet, and headgear weren't the real deal off the shelf and fell apart when we used them, would we buy them? No, we wouldn't. Someday food manufacturers will get it, but not until the majority of us stop buying the sugar-laced, toxic junk.

• *Point: choosing high-octane sometimes takes more effort, but then don't most things that produce a benefit?*

A large percentage of man-made processed products, like protein bars, have added ingredients. Preservatives have been added for longer shelf life and flavor enhancers have been added to excite our taste buds. This processing alters the structure of the food and makes it harder for our body to burn efficiently. The additives are another issue, but I won't go into how life-draining processed foods are, I'll just stay focused on their inability to be converted to high-octane fuel.

A positive note: Healthy snacks are on the rise. Some "bar" companies are making their products with organic (not processed and chemical free), pure ingredients. So if you like the convenience of bars, just

do a little research and look at the ingredients list. Choose a brand that's made from natural ingredients: oats, fruit, peanut butter, etc. If you can't pronounce an ingredient, typically it's a man-made chemical. If you have to consume packaged products, buy ones that are both a great fuel source and good for you.

Another problem with most bars is they are very low in calories and extremely low in fat. That's a bad thing. Typically, most bars are around 200–230 calories with less than five grams of fat. For most of us that means about twenty minutes worth of medium-grade fuel, even if we choose a bar from natural, fresh sources. So, if we eat a bar just before a match with the idea that we're completely fueling up, we're wrong. Midway through we'll be out of gas, especially if our nerves are sparking. A wholegrain bagel and cream cheese, a wholegrain peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or nut mixes are much better choices than just a bar.

Let your Big Dog out; make time to prepare meals and snacks for high-gear performances. Energy first, flavor second.

- *Point: choose fresh foods that are full fat—no low fat anything.*

The *Food Court* illustration back on pages 44 and 45 offers an exaggerated view of the poser food vs. rocketfuel debate. One side represents processed, dead junk food, while the other side represents fresh sources from nature. Burgers, fries, shakes, hot dogs, soda pop, chips with plastic cheese, and processed pizza from concession stands, along with quickie mart microwaveable anything, are not high-octane Big Dog fuel sources.

Clarification: burgers, fries, shakes, and pizza are not villains in and of

Choose foods that are high-octane fuel sources over foods that are processed for taste and convenience.

themselves; it's the source of the ingredients that matters. A burger made from lean organic beef, a wholegrain bun, fresh organic vegetables, and organic condiments is awesome. The same goes for pizza: wholegrain dough, organic sauce, free range meats, real cheese, fresh veggies, etc. Fries are great, if

they're real, unprocessed potatoes deep-fried in premium oil. A shake is awesome, if it's from whole milk, real ice cream, fresh organic berries, minus the added sugar syrup.

- *Point: the source of the ingredients is the issue, not the type of food.*

Got the picture? Choose foods that are high-octane fuel sources over foods that are processed for taste and convenience. You can eat dead, toxic junk all year long if you want to—yuck! But I encourage you to consume mostly high-octane Big Dog fuel during the season. Look past your taste buds and think about what your mind and body need to recover from the extreme energy drain of long practices and intense competition.

Food choices are either powerful or weak, and since the choice is ours, let's choose powerful.

Tournament-Day Fuel Plan

Put together a tournament-day fuel plan. Review the *4 Match Fuel Plan* on page 57. A four-match tournament, let alone a nine-match tournament, obviously requires some advance fuel planning due to the quantity of fuel

4 MATCH FUEL PLAN

BIG DOG "BONFIRE" FUEL CHOICES



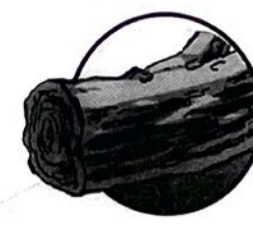
Paper

Banana
Apple
Mixed Berries



Twigs

Wholegrain Bagels
Wholegrain Bread
Brown Rice
Oatmeal



Logs

Cream Cheese
Peanut Butter
Avocado
Mixed Nuts (Trail Mix)
Cheese Stick (Whole fat)

QUANTITY LIST:



- 4 pieces of fruit
- 4 bagels and cream cheese (or 4 PB&Js)
- 1 lb. of nut mix (no candy or chocolate)
- 3 pounds (48 oz) of water

H₂O VOLUME is significant, especially if you cut weight.

4 MATCH FUEL PLAN

Do some planning and bring your Big Dog "Bonfire" fuel with you. Food choices are either powerful or weak, and since the choice is yours, choose powerful.

required. We eat and hydrate on schedule, we don't wait until we're hungry or thirsty. By then it would be too late.

A couple of hours before a tournament, or right after making weight, we grab a real piece of fruit: banana, orange, or apple. We consume this simple carb (paper), which immediately puts fuel in our tank; fruit quickly increases our blood sugar level and we feel instantly energized. We wash the piece of fruit down with water.

After the initial piece of fruit and H₂O comes a carb/fat combo: a wholegrain bagel and cream cheese, or a wholegrain bagel and peanut butter, or a wholegrain peanut butter and jelly sandwich, plus a nut mix on the side. Stay away from meat (protein).

The amount of carb/fat combo we need depends on our size. If we're less than 150 pounds we may only need one serving, but if we're 150 pounds plus, we may need a couple. Add sparking nerves the morning of a tournament, we can easily consume too much too fast, making ourselves uncomfortable. And if our first match comes quicker than expected, it's not a pretty picture. After twenty minutes or so, we can go back for more if needed, but the second time we *skip the fruit*. We grab another carb/fat combo. Once we're full, there's probably an hour or so before starting warm-ups, so we put on our headphones, breathe, think about all of our Big Dog success, and let our body absorb the rocketfuel.

After warm-ups, we make sure to have premium snacks and water with us for easy access. We don't wait until we get hungry. By then our blood sugar will be down and our crispness, both physically and mentally, will be lessened. Fruit and nut mixes are great in between matches. A piece of fruit and a couple of handfuls of nut mix with some water elevates and sustains our blood sugar level, enabling us to finish with a clear head. That's nut mixes minus the candy and chocolate of course—no sugar.

Late in the tournament we may need to snack every thirty minutes or so, especially during longer tournaments with a lot of matches. As we attack our way to the final match that decides who emerges the champion, we fuel with the purpose of sustaining excellent decision-making and powerful execution.

Additionally, resting is critical between matches. As soon as possible after finishing, we fuel up and *get horizontal* to start recuperating for the

next match. Remember, resting is more for our mind and emotions than it is for our body.

Before tournaments, do some planning and some shopping, and bring the high-octane fuel items with you to build your competitive bonfire and keep it blazing through the entire tournament.

Bring It With You

I rarely see teams provide or require specific fuel items for their competitors, which is a bit of a mystery to me. If I were running the show, there would be ample quantities of high-octane fuel available during tournaments: fresh fruit, wholegrain bagels and cream cheese, wholegrain peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, nut mixes, and gallons of water.

If your team is not one that provides or requires specific fuel items, put it on your list of competition necessities and bring it with you.

It's not that tough; throw some high-octane snacks and plenty of water in your sports bag. Make fueling part of your tournament process. Make smart choices that include fresh carbs and good fats.

Make Smart Choices

For outstanding performances during the season, we need to add some high-octane fuel to our daily and weekly food intake. It familiarizes our digestive system with dense-energy foods and helps us recover and rebuild more quickly during the week.

Another example of making smart choices relates to breakfast when we're out-of-town at away tournaments, especially title tournaments. We need to be careful (smart) about going to a restaurant for the *great* breakfast before the *big* tournament. Emotionally that sounds and feels good, but unless we've eaten that great breakfast at that particular restaurant before, it's not a good idea. We need to stay with what our body knows. Eating

Processed burgers, fries, and shakes are not optimal fuel sources. The plastic cheese, chips, and hot dogs at the concession stand aren't either.

breakfast at an unfamiliar restaurant on tournament day is *high risk*. We don't know what we're going to get.

If going to a restaurant is a must, we need to be smart about our choices. We need to eat with max energy in mind first and flavor second. Personally, I wouldn't even consider going to an unfamiliar restaurant the morning of a big tournament—*not a chance!*

As we close this chapter the key point is this: food manufacturers are not on our side, even though their advertising is trying to convince us that they are. They're playing us. They're taking advantage of our natural love for taste. But as high-performance athletes, we must get over it and make smarter choices, not uninformed flavor choices.

WinningSTATE athletes follow the thinking that competing mentally tough under pressure and getting it done requires high-performance fueling. *WinningSTATE* athletes think of food more functionally than emotionally, especially during the season. They think about what their mind and body need to be ready for the next match, not just what tastes good. Join the team. Make smart, winning food choices to fuel your fierceness.

Remember, tournament day is not the day to indulge our taste buds, save that for after the competition—a podium celebration dinner will taste even better.

Now you know how to *fuel your performance*—with fresh carbs and good fats.



POWER UP

3 FUEL

Don't be a taste junky. Choose fresh carbs and fats, hydrate with H₂O. Eliminate protein and sugar.

TOURNAMENT PROCESS

Gather your paper, twigs, and logs, plus H₂O.

FOCUS POINT

Fuel and hydrate frequently or run out of gas.

THE BIG 3

SELF-TALK

"I need to fuel for performance, not eat for taste."

VISUALIZE

Picture your 4 match fuel plan.

ADAPT

Eat to win! Consume rocketfuel, not poser food.