

Footballers .. sportspersons .. worth a read

Herald-Sun, 6/11/06, p. 110 (Daniel Hoy)

All sports are not the same in terms of their dietary recommendations, except that a responsible approach by athletes in all sports is essential ...

Achievement rests not only on endeavour "on-the-day", but also on your total preparation and follow-up. **Your diet** is a important aspect of your performance ... it may be the thing you have control over, that makes the difference.

FOOTBALL TRAINING MEALS

The distance covered by footballers ranges from 12 to 20km a game. Short bursts of flatout sprinting are separated by jogging and standing.

The challenge for any footballer is to maintain speed, have a sound endurance running base, maintain good muscle condition and have consistent power to run, burst through packs and leap.

All these requirements of the modern footballer use different energy systems, and therefore have different nutritional needs.

but the basis for a recreational footballer's diet needs to mimic healthy eating guidelines. A diet rich in fresh fruit, vegetables, cereals, grains, lean meat and fish as part of a diet that doesn't encourage overeating is essential.

A high-carbohydrate diet is important for any footballer, especially on pre-season training and match days.

Before training, foods such as sandwiches, rolls, Weet-Bix, pasta (even a small bowl) and sports drinks are ideal to help optimise energy.

A sports drink consumed immediately after training will help recovery. A muesli bar, a bunch of grapes, banana or watermelon can also help and serve as a "filler" until dinnertime.

On training days, eat a moderate serving of pasta or rice, water with dinner, a serving of vegetables or salad, then some low-fat ice cream for dessert. Elite athletes should eat large servings.

When training in the heat, drink more fluids before training, during training and after training.



PRE-GAME MEAL

THESE are important to provide footballers with sustained energy. Missing breakfast/lunch, or choosing the wrong meal can severely reduce performance, increase fatigue and affect decision making.

Some pre-event meals could be:

- 4-6 pieces of toast with jam or honey
- A large bowl of oats with low-fat milk
- 6-8 Weet-Bix
- A large bowl of muesli with low fat-milk and 1-2 bananas
- 2-3 muffins with banana and jam
- 1-2 banana sandwiches with honey

PRE-GAME SNACK

EATING about 1-2 hours before playing can help top up the body's store of carbohydrates.

Snacks can include:

- Banana sandwich
- Honey or jam sandwich
- Sports drink
- Sustagen
- Scone with jam
- 2 muesli bars
- 2-3 Weet-Bix

EATING DURING AND AFTER A GAME OR TRAINING

CONSUMING a sports drink during a game or training will reduce the use of stored carbohydrates in muscles and help delay fatigue. Drinking only water will bring about fatigue early.

Footballers should use every opportunity to drink during a game and during quarter-time and half-time breaks. Some studies show that footballers who fail to drink carbohydrates can get to half-time with their body's stored carbohydrate levels at only 14 per cent.

Eating glucose confectionery, such as jelly lollies, is a popular practice and can help to increase energy stores at half-time. Immediately

after a game, you should drink a sports drink, eat 1-2 bananas, a bunch of grapes or some watermelon, and/or eat a sandwich or roll, even if the filling is only jam. This will replenish carbohydrate stores and maximise recovery.

Eating a meal in the two hours after a game provides further benefits to recovery, but sometimes this may not be practical.

ALCOHOL

ALCOHOL consumed in the hours after a game delays recovery. The body is already dehydrated, lacking in salts and depleted of carbohydrates.

Alcohol results in further dehydration and loss of water-soluble vitamins such as the B group vitamins, and vitamin C.

OTHER NUTRITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

IF A recreational footballer is serious about performance, Creatine supplements may help recovery.

Creatine helps with explosive power and can help repeated sprinting efforts. It can also help build muscle.

Whey protein taken after weight training may also help with muscle building, but do not take copious amounts.

