

the grappler's guide

john berardi

michael fry



to sports nutrition

for body composition and performance enhancement

The Grappler's Guide to Sports Nutrition

for body composition and performance enhancement

JOHN BERARDI • MICHAEL FRY

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part 1



The Importance of Good Nutrition for Grapplers

Foreword

Dying to Make It, by Mike Fry

What do Billy Saylor (19 years old) at Campbell University in North Carolina, Joseph LaRosa (22) at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, and Jeff Reese (21) at the University of Michigan all have in common?

Unfortunately, they're all dead now; victims of one of the ghastly secrets of college wrestling.

All three young men were engaged in dehydrating practices - trying to lose weight in order to qualify for their first college wrestling matches. Reese was trying to lose 17 pounds so he could wrestle in the 150-pound weight class. His two-hour workout in a rubber suit in a 92-degree room cost him his life. He died of rhabdomyolysis -- a cellular breakdown of skeletal muscle under conditions of excessive exercise, which, combined with dehydration, resulted in kidney failure and heart malfunction. LaRosa was also riding a stationary bike and wearing a rubber suit when he collapsed and died. Saylor was riding a stationary bike in a predawn workout when he suffered a heart attack.

What do their stories have to do with this book?

Well, let me take you on a trip to the not-so distant past of my own grappling career.

When I was in high school, I wrestled for one of the top teams in the state of Michigan. It was a school with a reputation. When a wrestler from this high school stepped on the mat to compete, everyone knew what the outcome was going to be. We were going to beat you and beat you bad. We were a team that had not lost in over 4 years and were riding a 15yr conference winning streak.

And, of course, if you're on a team like this, especially on the varsity team, you do what you need to do. You keep your spot - regardless of how bad it hurts.

One night, during my sophomore year, we were to wrestle a team from the other side of the city. This team was of lesser talent than us and I had taken practice light during the week. As we were getting ready to board the bus, my coach pulled me aside and asked me how my weight was. I told him "Under by 2 pounds...Not a problem coach!" This is where the nightmare began.

I arrived at the host school and stepped onto the scale to find myself over by ½ pound. I remember how I felt – it was panic – "this can't be happening!" And, like all "dedicated" wrestlers of my era, I was off to the bathroom to try to vomit, urinate, and/or defecate my way to a half pound weight loss.

The problem – I hadn't eaten anything all day and, with nothing in my gut, bowels, or bladder to lose, I caught the worst butt-chewing of my career. My coach chided me for "letting the team down," "not taking care of my responsibilities," and more. He sent me to the gym to exercise off that ½ a pound. Unfortunately, I failed to make weight. Even more unfortunately, I vowed to myself that I'd do whatever it took to never again miss making weight.

Fast forward to last summer. I had just returned from training in Brazil and was beginning preparations for the Connecticut Nutmeg State Games. The scales in Brazil told me I was 6lbs over – no problem for the last few days of preparation, right? Well unfortunately, as I returned to the US, just 3 days before my matches, I realized that I wasn't 6lbs over – I was 6kg, or 13 lbs over. I misread the scale and confused kilograms for pounds. And I was screwed!

Even though I knew better; even though I knew the stories of Billy, Joseph, and Jeff, I remembered my promise to my high school coach. I had vowed to do whatever it took to never again miss making weight. So, foolishly, I began a ridiculous (and life endangering) program of starvation, dehydration, and overwork. Yes, I knew better. Yes, I knew the consequences of rapid dehydration and starvation diets. Yes, I knew I was risking my life. But I didn't know what else to do. I wanted to win!

For the next 3 days, I spent between 4-6 hours each day in the 95 degree heat with a trash bag and sweat suit, playing football and soccer. I would then run home, shower, drink a protein shake and go to bed.

The last night before weigh-ins came, I went to the gym one last time for some high intensity cardio. After, I sat in a hot tub to increase my body's core temperature, jumped out, towed off, put on a trash bag and sweats, and went to bed. Of course, I didn't really sleep. I woke up numerous times during the night with massive cramping in my legs due to dehydration.

Crazy, isn't it? You bet! So crazy that I woke up the next day (having made weight) and vowed to NEVER, EVER risk my performance, my family, my job, and my life again. I vowed to contact the right people, the best experts in the world, and figure out how to make weight – the right way.

Now, a year later, I know the right way. With the help of Dr John Berardi and his cutting-edge nutrition expertise, I know how to make weight safely and effectively. I also know how to make weight while keeping all the strength and endurance I've built up during my training season. And this knowledge allows me to dominate on the mat; no more struggling to make weight, no more staying up all night.

Believe me; I know that grappling is a sport that requires its athletes to make sacrifices on a daily basis. But if anyone tells you that you have to sacrifice your nutrition, your health, and possibly your life to make weight, run away – they're ignorant and dangerous. Extreme practices of weight-cutting aren't hard-core and they aren't necessary (nor are they "manly" or the domain of "real" athletes). They're simply what the ignorant do. They're what those who don't know any better do.

Listen, I wish Dr. John and I didn't need to write this book. I wish that all grapplers were healthy, well nourished, and fully hydrated. Most of all, I wish they got the right advice from coaches, teammates, and parents. But they don't. And that's why Dr. John and I are making this book available. That's why this book is necessary. Until the right nutrition information gets out there, until the right weight-cutting information gets out there, athletes will continue to hurt themselves.

Do you want to dominate on the mat?

Then use this book and learn how to lose weight in the most hard-core way of all – the way that helps you step onto the mat at your leanest, most muscular, and strongest; not to mention healthiest. Follow the strategies in this book and you can be confident that while your opponents have suffered, are cramping, are dehydrated, and are weak, you're fresh, strong, and ready to win.

Introduction

By Dr. John M. Berardi

If you're an athlete, this book is for you. Read it and apply the information contained herein and watch as your physique, your health, and your performance dramatically improve.

However, if you're a grappler, not only can this book improve all the things mentioned above, it could quite possibly save your life. Dramatic? Perhaps, but considering many of the current strategies grapplers use to prepare for competition, strategies that have led to the deaths of more than a few young wrestlers, the techniques we'll teach you in this book might just prevent you from suffering the same fate. But this book isn't just for amateur wrestlers. It's for grapplers of all types; mixed martial artists, Pride fighters, even "professional" wrestlers benefit tremendously from all the information we're about to share with you.

The bottom line is this. If you train hard in a combat-type sport, if your sport requires a high strength to body weight ratio, and if you require a high muscle mass to fat mass ratio, you need this book.

So, what are you going to learn? Well, for starters, you're going to learn how to eat properly, day in and day out, during the off-season, during your competitive season, and during competition. Also, you'll learn cutting edge sports nutrition techniques for promoting rapid recovery from training and competition. Importantly, you'll also learn how to take these recommendations and translate them into usable, daily plans of action – knowing exactly how to adjust these plans of action if they're not getting you the results you need to improve.

Let's face it, many athletes and coaches put a lot of thought and care into their training. But nutrition usually doesn't even show up on their radar. This is a huge mistake. Any athlete seeking information on physical and/or mental performance who doesn't also look for integrated nutrition information (that they can put into practice immediately) is missing a large piece of the performance puzzle.

Just how important is nutrition? Of the modifiable factors that can contribute to optimal training and competition performance, nutritional intake can be improved quickly, and the results of this improvement can be seen almost immediately. Training adaptations, technique modifications, and mental preparatory techniques take weeks, months, and years to master and yield results. However, nutritional intake can be changed today; and the results seen tomorrow.

For example, consider the following acute nutritional manipulations.

- Caffeine ingestion prior to competition
- Carbohydrate supplementation during endurance exercise and/or intermittent exercise
- Glucose-electrolyte beverages while training in hot environments, carbohydrate/protein recovery drinks between performance bouts
- Tyrosine supplementation prior to power exercise
- Creatine supplementation in the days leading up to strength and power events

Each of these interventions can have rapid and immediate effects on your training and performance.

Good nutrition also offers long-term benefits. As the right food intake can support both the physical and mental adaptations you expect to gain from your daily training, good nutrition needs to be viewed as an all-the-time thing, an everyday thing. Simply put, eating and supplementing appropriately, day in and day out, can lead to the optimal intake and absorption of the two major food categories: a) macronutrients – which include proteins, carbohydrates, and fats, and b) micronutrients – which include vitamins and minerals.

These macro- and micronutrients are essential to several processes including:

1. Muscle protein turnover (The breakdown of old tissue and the rebuilding of new, more functionally adapted tissue)
2. Nervous system function and recovery (All of your strength and power originates from the nervous system)
3. Immune system function and recovery (You can't train hard and recover properly while sick)
4. Musculo-skeletal system function and recovery (Injury healing and muscle-specific recovery is critical here)

No other non-training athletic intervention can hold as much power over your training adaptations, your body composition, your recovery, and your competition-day performance as good daily nutritional intake can. But don't

just take my word for it. In 2003, the IOC (International Olympic Committee), for the first time in its history, gathered together some of the top nutrition scientists and coaches in the world and formed a nutrition and sports performance consensus statement. This publication was a landmark one, since it's the first time the IOC officially recognized the role that good nutritional intake can play in athletics. Check out what these experts had to say about the relationship between nutrition and performance.

"...The **amount, composition and timing** of food intake can **profoundly** affect sports performance. Good nutritional practice will help athletes train hard, recover quickly and adapt more effectively with less risk of illness and injury..."

"...The right diet will help athletes achieve an **optimum body size** and **body composition** to achieve greater success in their sport..."

"...Athletes will benefit from the guidance of a **qualified sports nutrition professional** who can provide advice on their individual energy and nutrient needs and also help them to develop sport-specific nutritional strategies for training, competition and recovery..."

Despite this consensus, most athletes continue to leave out this critical piece of the performance puzzle. And, in grappling sports, not only is good nutrition often ignored, it's also manipulated in ways that are both dangerous to the athlete's health and damaging to overall athletic performance.

An important question arises; why aren't athletes and their coaches, especially those involved in grappling sports, paying more attention to their nutrition? Instead of allowing their poor nutrition habits to get in the way of their success, why aren't they using good habits as the ultimate performance edge?

From the coach's perspective, several reasons are plausible.

- First, since coaches are often juggling the responsibilities of teaching appropriate movement patterns, emphasizing skill development, and improving energy system efficiency, it's no surprise they find it difficult to also take the time to discuss nutritional intake.

- Secondly, while it's easy to oversee what their athletes are doing for 1-2 hours/day during their training sessions, it's much more difficult to monitor what their athletes are doing during the other 22-23 hours of each day.
- Finally, many coaches are just not comfortable enough with the intricacies of nutrient metabolism and biochemistry to dispense nutritional information to their athletes.

Yet, even with these challenges, most coaches do understand how important targeted nutritional practices are. They also realize that if they fail to learn or communicate this knowledge effectively to their athletes, they will not only place their athletes in a compromised training state, they'll also compromise their own effectiveness as a coach.

But, of course, responsibility doesn't fall squarely on the coach's shoulders. Ultimately it's the athlete's responsibility to take control of their own nutritional intake. So why aren't the athletes doing so?

First, high volumes of training can keep an athlete relatively lean and therefore falsely convince the athlete that he or she is "getting away" with their poor nutritional choices.

Secondly, while training may only take a few hours per day, a good nutrition plan is an all-the-time thing that must be planned for, prepared, and consistently adhered to all day, every day.

Furthermore, an athlete's habits are influenced by the same social pressures that influence a sedentary population. Cultural heritage, family dietary habits, peer pressures, and media influence play roles in all of our food choices and athletes are not excluded.

Finally, since the North American diet is typically rich in highly processed "convenience foods," and athletes (young or adult) tend to be more "on the go" than most of their sedentary counterparts, athletes often develop habits inconsistent with what's necessary to support their training and competitive demands.

Most athletes and coaches in weight class and aesthetic sports like grappling, gymnastics, figure skating, etc have little knowledge of the best practices for weight loss, metabolic stimulation, boosting nervous system and muscular efficiency, feeding the body important nutrients, and the timing of nutrients relative to training and competition, thus they fall back on ineffective nutrition patterns. After making poor food choices day in and day out, and finally

realizing that their body composition is not ideal for competition, they resort to the same ridiculous weight loss practices that desperate dieters everywhere turn to, starvation diets.

For years I've been hired by some of the top athletes and teams in the world in order to both help them avoid such mistakes, as well as create proactive nutritional patterns for the future. Now, you've got me in your corner.

With this book, you're going to learn:

1. How to implement systems of nutritional intake that are actually consistent with how the body works and are congruent with the needs of your sport.
2. Through case studies and sample menus, you'll see just how easy it is to use all the information in this book to generate an effective plan.
3. How to sort out the good, the bad, and the ugly of nutritional supplementation.

Now, as I wrap up this introduction, it's important for me to be clear on what this manual is and what it's not. First, what it's not. This book is not an exhaustive discussion of every single detail and aspect of nutritional prescription and biochemistry. Such a discussion goes far beyond the scope of a single book. After all, it's taken us years of research, decades of study, and hundreds of thousands of dollars of tuition to learn what we currently know. To put all of this into a single book (or even a volume of books) would be nearly impossible.

Next, what it is. This book is designed to help you accomplish 2 specific goals.

1. Teach you what you need to know to avoid the typical energy, macronutrient, and micronutrient deficiencies seen in athletes attempting to follow the typical North American diet while engaging in strenuous exercise or sport performance.
2. Introduce the best nutritional tools, including weight loss strategies, supplement strategies, etc for the grappling trade. This is information that all grapplers, at any age, can use right away.

Beyond these things, if you have highly individualized needs, the assistance of a sports nutrition professional, one trained in both exercise science and nutrition, is required. If you're looking for such a professional, check out the last chapter of the book, Chapter 10: What's Next. There you'll learn how to get in touch with me and the many ways I can assist you further with your individual needs.

The following is an excerpt from the Grapplers Guide to Sports Nutrition. If you're interested in picking up a copy of the entire book, click here to find out more:

