

Basic Nutrition

As a player, athlete or coach the goal is always on maximising performance.

Everything from plyometric work to myofascial release, Tabata training to supplementation has been introduced to improve the chances of winning. Irish players are no longer having a pre-match pint and a half time smoke break. The increase in global communication has allowed us access to methods used by coaches as far a field as Australia and the United States. With the increased level of information it seems perplexing that many players still struggle to cover their nutritional bases.

Food has to be one of the most overlooked areas of performance. It has often been said that you cannot run a car on butter yet many guys and girls seem to be doing just this. Even with such great advances in sports nutrition, players seem to concentrate more on supplementation than basic foods which can leave them struggling on the field.

PROTEIN

Protein can be found in animal foods such as fish, steak, chicken and eggs with lower amounts in other foods, for example, nuts and grains. As a food group, protein is made up of amino acids which are often classed as the bodies' building blocks for their role in growth and repair. To a player, an adequate amount of protein is essential for many reasons –

METABOLIC RATE

The amino acids that make up protein can be used to build muscle tissue. More muscle tissue not only equates to more potential for power on the pitch but an increase in the metabolic rate – the rate at which the body burns energy. If your body has a higher metabolic rate then the rate at which it burns fat, even at rest, is much greater. Therefore a diet with a good supply of protein may aid in both muscle gain and fat loss.

T.E.F.

The thermogenic effect of feeding is not something many players know about. When you consume food it doesn't just go into the mouth and fall out your anus, it instead goes through a process of digestion. Digesting food places demands on the body which again increase the metabolic rate. Let's view an example –

A male weighing 200 pounds may eat around 200 grams of protein per day.

1 gram of protein equates to 4 calories so for our guy his 200grams of protein per day equates to 800 calories.

During the digestion of this amount of food his body may use up 200 calories as energy just breaking the protein down into amino acids. Therefore eating 800 calories and losing 200 calories in digestion leaves our player with less total calories in his daily intake.

HUNGER

One of the hardest tasks in staying lean is hunger control. Locker room abuse for your womanly man boobs is one thing, but being out performed on the pitch due to a high level of body fat could leave your fat ass on the bench. By eating a diet rich in protein you not only help build muscle and raise the metabolic rate but you also help curb hunger pangs which can mean the difference between being greased lightning or just plain greasy! Protein with each meal helps give the feeling of fullness helping you avoid the intake of excess calories

SUMMARY

Proteins only really problem has been its popularity which in turn has lead to many misconceptions regarding its usage. First off, raw eggs are pointless. I remember watching Stallone swallow raw eggs in Rocky and for weeks after I would happily consume a glass of raw eggs in the hope of one day waking up with a body like the Italian Stallion. We now know that protein needs to be cooked as the body cannot make use of the protein unless it has been heated. It takes no time at all to boil, scramble or poach an egg and as far as quality goes, eggs are one of the best sources of protein you can buy. In future articles we will discuss not only the other food groups but the use of supplements in a well planned diet.