

FUELING YOUR TRAINING

BY ALAN CULPEPPER



Effective training is a delicate combination of many varying elements, including how we fuel our bodies. Fueling is one of the most misunderstood facets of training and presents a unique challenge because of our natural tendencies, upbringing or existing habits.

Most athletes enjoy focusing on their workouts and seeing the direct benefit of pushing themselves, but lack understanding about the direct contribution that fueling has on training. Consider the following fueling suggestions as you think through how best to maximize your preparation.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

You must be conscious of the timing of your fuel intake. Along with the combination of nutrients, the timing of consumption is critical to successful fueling during training. Thus, smaller meals and snacking should become part of your everyday routine. Backloading calories at the end of the day or going long periods without eating will negatively affect your workouts. Develop a routine that allows for optimal fueling at regular intervals throughout the day.

KEEP IT REAL

With an array of supplements, bars, gels, blocks and beans available to you, it can be tempting to shift toward a fabricated version of real food. Nutritional supplements should only be used to do just that—supplement your intake and not replace more appropriate choices. It can be easy to rely on packaged products throughout the day instead of fresher, less convenient options. Eat real, wholesome food whenever possible. Be conscious of this throughout the day and remember that convenience isn't always a better option.

BREAK BAD HABITS

Bad habits can be the biggest detriment to fueling your training effectively. Even with proper education and insight, we are all affected by bad habits. Become aware of those limiting factors and address them head-on, whether it's poor meal planning, bad intake timing, nutritional deficiencies or personal vices like too much caffeine, sugar, dessert or chips. Don't let a bad habit be the detriment of all your hard work, sacrifice and preparation.

BALANCE IS KEY

When it comes to fueling your training, a balanced diet is most effective. Essential vitamins and nutrients, fresh fruits and vegetables, carbohydrates, fats and proteins are all necessary to fuel your training. Don't become swayed too far in any one direction—let the pendulum settle on a reasonable and rational approach.



Two-time U.S. Olympian Alan Culpepper won national titles from the 5K to the marathon. His first book, “Run Like a Champion,” is available at VeloPress.com.