In-Season Nutrition

4 reasons why your performance will decline over the season and how to prevent them from happening.

Like clockwork, two weeks into every lacrosse season I receive a handful of calls, texts, and emails from athletes freaking out about losing weight too quickly and as a result being concerned about their on field performance. 4 out of 5 times this problem arises from solid athletes who have great off-season work ethics and even better nutrition habits. So what’s the problem? PLANNING, consistency is key.

Common In-Season Nutrition Problems and Misconceptions

1. Convincing yourself that because you are more active (3 hours of practice/games 5 or 6 days week) so you can eat like a bag of shit and get away with it. Wrong, you are eating for performance. This the absolute worst time for you to eat like shit. This is reason #1 why athletes lose 5-10 lbs every season and get fatter. Get it together.

2. Failing to routinely eat a quality pre-practice/pre-game snack. Eating lunch somewhere between 11-12 may get you to the 3pm practice but, whether you realize it or not, your body will definitely be slowing down halfway into that game or practice as glycogen stores are depleted and energy is diminished.

3. Weekend Nutrition. Staying out late, sleeping in, and missing meals. Most high school and college athletes will sleep in to 12, 1, or even 2pm and miss breakfast. Probably will get a sub or chipotle a couple hours after waking up then wait until 7 or 8pm to eat dinner. This adds up to 4-6 MISSED eating times in a week, this is a big deal.

4. Buzzkill Alert: Drinking 100 beers after competing in a 2-3 hour intense game, practice, or training session is not a proper recovery tool. We’re all well aware of the ‘fun’ that goes into playing sports with our friends and teammates. Give your body enough time to recover (4-6 hours) for rest, post workout nutrition, and rehydration. Binge drinking is the absolute worst thing you can do for your body...pretty much the anti-christ of recovery tools. Make a weekly habit of this and you'll find yourself being unable to recover from the overall wear and tear a tough season of lax can put on the body leading to decreased performance come playoff time.

In regards to nutrient timing and recovery, the off-season training schedule is usually consistent and therefore easier to maintain a quality nutrition program. Then tryouts, pre-season camp, pre-season tournaments and jamborees happen aaaand “consistency” gets flushed down the
toilet along with weight and overall energy. It’s a vicious cycle of failed preparation and “not enough time to...” ending in terrible nutrition habits (grab and go packaged snacks, fast food, or even missed eating times). Have the foresight to analyze your game/practice schedule and breakdown YOUR eating schedule to 3 categories: After school practice/games, Evening practice/games, and rest days. Cliché Nutrition Advice Alert! There should be NO difference in the way you eat on practice days or games days. Eating healthy is a lifestyle not a short term habit, be proactive.

**After School Practice/Game**

- 6:30 Breakfast
- 8-11:30 Class
- 12:00 Lunch
- 2:30 Pre Practice/Game Snack
- 3:30-6:00 Practice/Game
- 6:15 Post Practice/Game Recovery Snack
- 7:00 Dinner
- 9:30 Snack

**Evening Practice/Game**

- 6:30 Breakfast
- 8-11:30 Class
- 12:00 Lunch
- 3:00 2nd Lunch
- 4:30/5:00 Pre Practice Snack
- 6:00-8:00 Practice/Game
- 8:15 Post Practice/Game Recovery Snack
- 9:00 Dinner

**Rest Day**

- 10:00 Breakfast (Sleeping in is ok, but wake up at a reasonable hour)
- 11:00-12:30 Nap (Naps are great)
- 1:00 Lunch
- 3:30 Snack
- 6:30 Dinner
- 9:30 Snack

**Sample Meal Plan (After School Practice/Game)**

- 6:30 Breakfast: (within 30 minutes of waking up) GOAL: 25g of protein
• Option 1: Omelette: 3 egg whites with chopped vegetables(1 cup), 1 slice ham and 1 slice cheese. Oatmeal/wheat toast/bagel (1 spoon of Almond/peanut butter)
• Option 2: Protein Shake (8 oz milk, 1 yogurt, 1-2 scoops of almond/peanut butter, 1-2 servings of fruit, whey protein.) **Disclaimer: REAL FOOD IS ALWAYS BETTER**
• 9am Snack: 1 cup of trail mix and 1 yogurt
• 12pm Lunch: 6 oz of meat (chicken, fish, beef) 1 serving vegetables, 1 carb
• 2:15 Pre-Practice/Game Snack: PBJ, Apple
• 6:15 Post-Practice/Game Snack: 20 oz of water or Organic fruit juice, 30 g whey protein, 2 servings of fruit
• 7:00 Dinner: 4-6 oz of lean meat (fish, chicken, beef) 1 cup veggie, 1 cup carb
• Snack 3: 2 tbsp of Almond Butter on Celery Sticks (2), 1 tbsp of flax oil

Every Day Goals

Prepare meals and snacks in advance

1. 120 oz water Minimum
2. Multivitamin every morning

Recommended Supplements

• Whey Protein
• Pro-Lytes (electrolytes you can squirt into any water bottle, almost tasteless)
• Multivitamin

Do yourself a favor, take 15 minutes a day and prepare your meals and snacks. This can be done before you go to bed or before school, whatever is easiest for you. A consistent nutrition program will keep you stronger and healthier throughout the season and ultimately prevent burn out or decreased performance.

Opportunities are everywhere,
Joe Drain CSCS