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**Has Sports Nutrition Made a Difference?**

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The short answer is “no” -- of course not. Why? There are many reasons, but the primary one is that there is relatively little about sports nutrition that is professionally oriented. As a course in various academic majors, it is hardly a discipline. This is especially the case when the research is commonly driven by the sports nutrition industry. The second reason is convincing athletes to actually abide by solid and credible counseling. Most athletes, even serious ones, are so serious about athletics to even take the time to eat properly. The reliance on sports supplements and drugs is so obvious that it is down right disappointing.

Exercise physiologists, who refer to themselves as sports nutritionists, haven’t helped. It doesn’t matter that they believe as strong as they do about supplements. When they are owned, even if they don’t know it, by the hundreds of businesses that sell products, they are not professionals. They are employees of the businesses. The idea of getting money (even if it is the form of so-called grants) to do credible work (i.e., unbiased research) is ridiculous. Ask any one of them and if he or she had any backbone, the comment would be: Well, actually, if I don’t find support for the product, I’m not going to get anymore money from the supplement company. They may also get me to agree not to publish any findings that fail to support their product.

Hello, wake up athletes and world of others, this is the truth. The third reason is rather simple: Guess what? Nutrition as a discipline isn’t actually a discipline. It is more of a “course in sport nutrition gone wrong” because the teachers have failed to adhere to a code of ethics or code of conduct. Even now, those who have come together to promote sports nutrition and applied nutrition are misleading athletes of all ages. Most of these organizations are supported by a dozen or more supplement companies. They are not professional organizations! And yet, there is the appearance that sports nutrition is more than it is. The truth is this: Sports nutrition is a course. To say it is in its infancy as though it is growing is misleading.

Please appreciate that this comment is in regards to sports nutrition. Without a doubt there are excellent areas of research that could be coined as sports nutrition-driven, such as fluid and electrolyte balance, CHO requirements for endurance athletes, and others. The reality though is that this research has been done primarily by exercise physiologists who may or may not have an interest in sports nutrition. The fourth reason is nothing will change until the so-called sports nutritionists decide to embrace professionalism. Nothing will change until athletes grow up and stop cheating to win at all costs. The weekend warrior mentality and dietary fads are only part of the story. The rest of it is driven by the title of ergogenic aids. Today, the number is so staggering as to blow one’s mind.

And yes, athletes are known to do just about anything to win, but what about their friendly researcher colleagues (mostly in the form of college teachers) — you know the sports nutritionist? Well, he or she is certainly searching for an edge, much like the athlete. And, they too are willing to cheat. Singly and collectively, the search is about status, greed, and money! It is sad to see so many good people go so wrong. Also, it is unfortunate but true that their ritualistic behavior will not change. And, frankly, the sports dietitian is at times just as bad. Why not simply tell athletes to develop good eating habits or they don’t practice? What’s wrong with a balanced diet? What’s wrong with moderation? What’s wrong with teaching athletes (students and parents) that any field can be (and generally is) corrupt? Why not tell them about the conflicts in rushing publications to press to please the industry? Why not teach the concerns that are at the core of most sports nutrition research, and thus be cautious of nutritional fads? Why not tell athletes that cheating destroys integrity? Why not simply put the foot down and say, “Stay away from the sports performance enhancers” or else you don’t play? Why not spread the message that not everyone can be a winner, and that is okay?

**Note:** With permission from [www.boonethink.com](http://www.boonethink.com) (August 12, 2010).