

Nutrition in Football

This is a fundamental topic in football and quite broad to cover just in 1 article. I will try and summarise yet touch on key issues. Nutrition is essential in football and it plays a very key role in player's performance.

Eating a good diet meal can help provide the energy a player needs to finish a match. A player is more likely to be tired & perform poorly during a football match when they do not get enough calories, carbohydrates, fluids, proteins, iron, vitamins and other minerals. It is important to note that a player should avoid fats in their meal before a football match or training.

The amount of food group a player needs to consume depends on among other things exercise intensity, duration and weather conditions. To ensure better performance it is very essential that a player avoid training or playing a match on an empty stomach.

It is always best for a player to eat a carbohydrates & protein rich meal 3 hours before a football match/training especially for a session that will take more than an hour. However the player can snack with simple sugars just before the game. Carbohydrates is the most important food group to be taken before exercise because it is a readily available energy source. It is mostly stored in muscles and liver. Food source includes pasta, rice and whole grain bread which provide energy, fiber, vitamins and minerals. It also includes simple sugars like soft drinks & jam which provide calories but no vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.

Water is also very important even though it is the most overlooked nutrient. A player can lose several litres of water through sweat in just an hour of high intensity training session or match. Therefore it is essential that a player is adequately hydrated before training or football match.

It is important that after a vigorous session a player drinks a lot of fluids and eat a carbohydrate rich simple meal to replenish the muscles' energy stores depleted during the game/training. It is also essential that a player consumes a protein rich meal 2 hours after exercise to enhance muscle growth and repair body tissue that was damaged during exercise. It must be noted however that proteins can also be used by the body for energy, but only after carbohydrates stores has been depleted.

A lot of players normally tend to use supplement products in order to enhance performance, which then predisposes them to WADA banned substances. This may be through wrong labelling of the product, contamination from the manufacturer or honest oversight by the player. Doping is also a broad topic which will be discussed in the next article. My view is that supplement by definition is meant to address a deficiency and if there is a deficiency it can be addressed through proper nutrition not supplements. This practice will help minimise the doping cases and make our football a fair sport.