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Nutrition 101

We're often asked about race fuelling and nutrition, and thought we'd share what we know with anyone seeking a deeper understanding on successful fuelling.

As we know, Nutrition is the 4th 'event' in the sport of triathlon. After struggling with nutrition issues, and trying various products, we knew this was a component we had to get better at understanding in order to race successfully at Ultraman. Being a multi-day event, a bad nutrition day would ultimately lead to failure so it was important to take the time to figure it out. Most triathletes are already over-saturated with gear and training and they don't take their nutrition pain seriously, or have run out of time and energy and just figure they can survive with what's on course. We 'survived' in the past, but after multiple Ironman events, you start wanting to refine and make those subtle improvements that really make the training and racing a better experience. We tried and tested several products on the market, and asked a lot of other Ultra endurance athletes what they were taking – the majority had been using Infinit (now known as *Gruppo* – same product!) so it was time for us to give that a try.

The first and most important 'number' to focus on is 'sweat rate'. It's imperative that you become familiar with your own personal 'number', as it is the key in taking the first step to better fuelling. You need to test yourself over short 10K runs, in various weather conditions (ie. hot & humid, cold and overcast) to get a baseline understanding of your 'low' and 'high' sweat rate numbers. Once you know 'your' numbers, you simply match your fluid intake in training and racing according to that ml/hr number, then work in your nutritional requirements. Knowing that you can only really digest about 300 calories an hour, you need to ensure you have the right balance of nutrition and electrolytes within those 300 or so calories.

What we liked about Infinit was that it offered us a complete blend of everything in one package - sodium, carbs, protein, magnesium, calcium etc... so no extra salt tabs and electrolyte pills to add to the mix. An alternative would be to simply take bars & gels, along with water, and you'll end up at a similar end-point, but Infinit is neutral in its osmolality - meaning the concentration of particles that is dissolved in the water is similar to that which is in your own body, so it's easily digested. If you have a higher osmolality, you end up with GI because it delays gastric emptying, whereas a lower osmolality tends to empty from the stomach too quickly. A few other things we liked was that it was a clean fuel source, so easy to ingest & digest, doesn't go rancid in the heat, and tastes good warm when you're out there for a long day.

We started with the basic Run and Ride formulas, which were great out of the gate, then after a few months of intense training, went on to customize our own blends slightly. We basically dialed 'down' the level of flavour and added a little more protein for the ultra distance requirements, and a little more sodium to Kevin's blend since he's is a 'heavy-salter', 'heavy-sweater'.

Since racing is generally done at a higher intensity and under more stress, you have to try to simulate that in training to some degree as well. In addition, some people can tolerate solids, others not, some people can digest protein, others not - Kev and I have totally different blends in the Infinit bottle, because our needs are different, but the fluid intake is the start-point no matter what. The KEY to

digestion is neutral intake of whatever it is - basically, too much concentration in the gut means you WON'T digest anything and your stomach will shut down, so knowing your fluid rate then adding an average intake of about 300 calories per hour is a general starting point, + or - 50 calories. Remember, the stomach can't process more than that per hour, so you want those 300 calories to be absorbed - otherwise, you'll run out of energy!

We've included our 'sweat-rate' sheet on how to calculate your sweat-rate on our website nutrition page at: <http://endurancetriathletes.com/nutrition.html> so feel free to use it as a tool to help you find your number - It's a great learning process to take the time to get your baseline number.

That being said, each person is totally different, so what works for one person doesn't always work for another. It is a bit of a trial and error process, but once you get it, you're done and just have to follow it in training and racing.

Hope this helps!

Handwritten signatures of Kevin and Kat in cursive script. The signature 'Kevin' is on the top line and 'Kat' is on the bottom line, both written in black ink.

Kev & Kat ~ Triathlon Team

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