THE PLAIN FACTS - NUTRITION

Carbohydrate loading

Many cyclists will carb load prior to events to improve energy stores during the event. This is the process of depleting the body’s carbohydrate stores by avoiding intake of carbohydrate foods and/or depleting the stores by exercise. Many well trained athletes can achieve carbohydrate loading without depletion.

Although often a popular choice, I personally wouldn't advise attempting this if you haven’t before for a ride of this length and duration. Carb loading is very individualistic and experimenting with this variable prior to your biggest cycling challenge is not something I would necessarily recommend.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrate intake during exercise is essential. It was formerly believed that the body could only efficiently utilise around 75g of carbohydrate per hour during exercise. However, recent research shows that much greater volumes of carbohydrates can be utilised for fuel during exercise when different types of carbohydrates are combined. Popular and efficient combinations such as Maltodextrin and Fructose (As found in Nectar energy gels) and Glucose and Fructose.

Fortunately, many of the foods you’ll most likely consume at stops along your route will provide good amounts of various carbohydrates. Cakes and sweets will contain high amounts of glucose for almost instant energy and fruits will contain higher amounts of fructose. A combination of both is best advised.

Carbohydrate overconsumption may resort in feelings of bloatedness which may cause discomfort during your ride although this is a very mild side effect which most of you likely won’t encounter.

Protein

Recent research suggests that protein can play a role in not only aiding muscle recovery but also potentially aid performance. Over a 4 day ride, I would advise cyclists to look to consume protein during the course of the day to help in both of these aspects. Meats and cottage cheese are two sources that will provide this. However, if looking for something lighter during the course of the day, milk-based drinks such as For Goodness Shakes will provide ample amounts of protein, carbohydrates and fluids.

Hydration

It used to be recommended that fluid intake should match that of sweat loss during exercise. However, this is extremely difficult to monitor during exercise and simply drinking according to thirst has been shown to work effectively. Needlessly excessive ingestion of water may also lead to feelings of sickness, bloatedness etc as well lowering concentration of essential salts/electrolytes which are required for optimum performance and fluid retention in the body. Maintaining optimum
levels of these electrolytes and salts during the race shouldn’t be a huge problem as many foods you will consume at your stops will contain these. Additionally, milk-based drinks have excellent electrolyte properties, matching those of any popular ‘sports’ drinks available on the market.

Post-race

Over the duration of a multi-day ride, it’s really important to refuel the body at the end of each day to aid with recovery and preparation for the following day. Best advised will be a meal high in starchy carbohydrates (e.g. pasta, rice, potatoes etc.) to reload energy stores and protein to help with muscle recovery and prevent breakdown of muscle. Eating a large meal straight after exercise is often not desired or practical but it is advisable that some sort of nutrients are consumed to help immediately with the recovery process. A really good solution for yourselves would be to drink a For Goodness Shake drink – high in carbohydrates and protein.