

From the blog, <https://starify.com.br/lanacy/wrestling-with-the-scale/>

Instead of the lonely weight battles, high school wrestlers need to know that ...

Food is your Friend

Sport's top nutritionists offer advice on how athletes can focus on refueling instead of cutting weight

By Mike Finn

Dr. Ken Lane had already spent nearly two decades dealing with the health needs of America's top elite wrestlers, but it wasn't until the native of California found himself sitting near a parent at the Battle of the Belt high school wrestling tournament in Temecula Valley four years ago that he discovered his real passion in wrestling.

"A mom sat down next to me and tears were welling up in her eyes," he recalled. "She said to me, 'Dr. Lane, my son won't even come into the kitchen during wrestling season.' That's when I realized we have a problem."

For it was also at that tournament that he noticed some high school wrestlers not eating between matches at the two-day tournament.

"When I'd ask a kid about that, he'd say, 'Dr. Lane, I have to weigh in tomorrow,'" Lane recalled. To which he'd reply, "Weigh-in tomorrow? You have to win today but you are not refueling or rehydrating. You are going to be weak by the end of the day and lose your last match."

Dealing with weight is a common theme in the sport of wrestling. About 20 years ago, three college wrestlers even died in one season allegedly through cutting weight and the use of a supplement used to be built up muscle but also dehydrates the body. That led to many changes in the college sport, including doing away with saunas and plastic suits and making wrestlers weigh in an hour before matches.

And the methods of rehydrating the Senior-level athletes were also not very healthy at one time, which forced FILA (now renamed United World Wrestling) to change its procedures and weigh-in methods.

Lane remembers it was after the 2008 Olympics when then USA national freestyle coach Zeke Jones brought in Canadian Jennifer Gibson to install a better nutritional program for USA's most elite wrestlers.

"Zeke was on the right side talking to wrestlers following their match and Jennifer was on the other side handing them what they needed to refuel for the next match," said Lane, who has served as tournament physician for nearly every United States World/Olympic Trials the past 17 years and has also served as the co-Medical Director at the UWW World Championship in 2015 in Las Vegas, and the Medical Director for the California State High School Wrestling Championships, and USAW Junior/Cadet Nationals in Fargo, N.D., for over 15 years.

Unfortunately, Lane believes high school wrestling is still dealing with this problem. The former UCLA wrestler still calls it an epidemic because he believes coaches and parents are still more concerned about wrestlers cutting weight instead of building a better wrestling body by the most natural methods: real food.

"I want moms to go into a store and grab food, put it in a container and tell their kids they need to eat this much protein or fruit," said Lane, who (added people do not) believe that good food is actually cheaper than what they find at a fast food store.

"It's where you shop in the store. Food that is in a bag, a box or a bottle is more expensive than fruits and vegetables and meat."

Lane has also seen why some international programs are so successful.

"I talk to their doctors and most of the elite athletes are not starving and not dehydrating."

Lane is so passionate about nutrition that he believes high school programs and coaches should be more interested in hiring nutritionists than strength trainers.

"Weight management is a huge part of our sport and if you don't do it right, athletes will be protein-malnourished and they will be weak," said Lane, who said many of his memories as a wrestler were negative because of the weight-cutting.

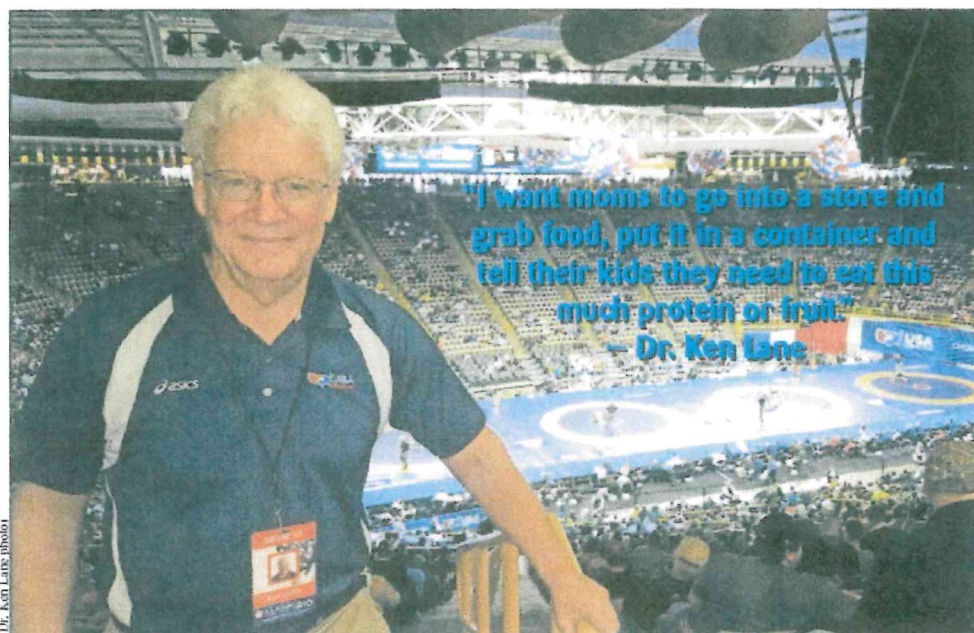
"Everybody knows it, but very few know what to do about it. Every wrestling coach, unless they were a heavy-weight, lived my life when they wrestled."

But Lane also believes there are professionals out there who are helping high school wrestlers.

One of those, he points out, is Kim Tirapelle, who is a sports dietitian at Fresno State and also helps out prep



Kim Tirapelle



Dr. Ken Lane photo

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— Dr. Ken Lane

Dr. Ken Lane has served as tournament physician for nearly every United States World and Olympic Team Trials for the past 17 years, including last April in Iowa City.

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wrestlers in nearby Clovis, Calif., where her husband Adam serves as a volunteer coach for his father Steve at Clovis High School. Brother Troy Tirapelle is the head coach at Buchanan High School in Clovis, while another brother Alex is the head coach at Penn. All wrestled at Illinois where Adam met Kim, a soccer player at UI.

"Kim knows her athletes and tells them what to eat," said Lane. "Practically, she is at ground zero when it comes to nutrition and she knows how to explain it to parents."

"We don't do drastic weight-cutting and we put them at a weight that they will be competitive and able to maintain that weight without getting sick, which happens when you do drastic weight cutting," Tirapelle said.

She also believes sports nutrition is an emerging science ... as long as high school administrators and coaches are open to it.

"I'm not sure all high school coaches understand the power and importance of nutrition and there are not a lot of schools that employ nutrition outside of what they provide for lunch," she said.

"Up until the last decade, dietitians were not on staff of athletic teams. The idea of nutrition for wrestlers before, during and after competitions has grown. Now we are seeing how that has impacted performances and people are seeing how carbohydrates have affected performances, the science is growing."

Tirapelle said there is no science on

determining what weight a young athlete should wrestle, especially as they are going through growth spurts around their middle school years.

"It depends on the age," she said. "We are trying to get away from the message of weight cutting in middle school. They need to grow. They are young adolescent children who have high energy needs. Their bodies are maturing and growing."

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— Sports Dietitian
Kim Tirapelle

"Once a young person has met his maturity and they are not going to be growing three more inches, there can be more of a manipulation of diet."

"At a younger age, let kids grow. Then the goal as they get older can be to use diet to fine tune."

Tirapelle has been doing this for almost a decade in Clovis and parents are finally understanding how nutrition works in wrestling ... or at least know they have someone with whom they can ask questions.

"I will get e-mails from parents saying their son is struggling. I will meet with the parents and athletes and will send them a

sample meal plan to help them reach their goal," she said.

"I think there is a sense of relief where they don't feel by themselves and they have someone there to help support their sons and daughters."

But Tirapelle also said she reminds both the parents and athletes they should be responsible for themselves.

"There is no more of this, 'I don't like what mom and dad are cooking,' " she said. "If you want to be an elite athlete and want to perform, you need to take ownership of what you are doing. I tell them, 'Go to the store with mom and dad and tell them what you like.' But if you tell them, 'I don't like that and I'm not going to eat this,' that will not work out well."

Tirapelle also pointed out that Clovis wrestling preaches a nutritional lifestyle even once the high school season is complete.

Both Lane and Tirapelle understand it's hard for people to change eating habits and also deal with cultural traditions where some foods are not that healthy.

"When I look at what they like to eat, I will suggest a healthier way of cooking or is there a substitution they can make by adding a meat or lowering the calories by increasing more fruits and vegetables," she said.

Eating disorders are also a concern for both boys and girls at this level.

"I think it still exists," she said. "One good thing about having a dietitian on staff is that we work with men and women who are identified as at risk of having an eating disorder. We have doctors and psychologists for athletes to talk to. Dietitians are helping manage calories. We give advice on that."

The National Wrestling Coaches Association has created a Weight Management program and Optical Performance Calculator, which high school coaches use to determine what the lightest weight a person can wrestle is as the season begins.

While Lane appreciates the NWCA's efforts, he said the process can also be confusing for both coaches and parents and would like to create a location where simple nutritional questions can be asked.

"We need to make a simple website for the coaches to tell parents what kids need to eat." ■

The Wrestler's Top-10 Power Foods By Kim Tirapelle

As a wrestler, maintaining a competitive weight throughout the season can be hard. By selecting the most nutrient dense food options, while limiting those that can be detrimental to your performance, you will have more energy and endurance on the mat than your opponent. Remember, nutrition can make a good wrestler great, or a great wrestler good — which do you want to be?

Top 10 Foods to Include in My Diet

1. Fresh fruits - high in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and carbohydrates, these nutrient powerhouses will give you an energy boost!

2. Whole grains - bread, pasta, cereal, rice, oatmeal - these should be the staple of your diet and included daily. These carbohydrate-packed foods will help keep your muscles fueled for competition.

3. Low-fat dairy products or soy - Include dairy or soy products three times per day to help increase your intake of bone-building calcium and Vitamin D, and protein, potassium, and riboflavin. Greek yogurt also provides double the protein of regular yogurt! Make a fresh fruit smoothie with dairy/soy to go.

4. Lean meats - chicken breast, beef sirloin, pork tenderloin and deli meats like roast beef, ham, and turkey provide protein-rich sources to your diet, as well as iron and zinc. Include a protein source at every meal and snack.

5. Vegetables - dark leafy greens, as well as brightly colored vegetables are low in calories and are exploding with Vitamin C, A, folic acid, potassium, and iron just to name a few. You can't ever go wrong with raw or plain steamed veggies.

6. Nuts and seeds - rich in Vitamin E, healthy fats, and fiber, these little portion-controlled snacks can help you feel full for hours!

7. Fish (canned or baked/broiled) - Tuna, salmon and halibut are rich in Omega-3s, which help to reduce inflammation in the body after a hard workout. Eat fish 3x/week for a heart-healthy fat and lean-protein source.

8. Baked Potatoes/Sweet Potatoes - bursting with Vitamin C, potassium, and carbohydrates, these are a great addition to a meal. Eat the skin to increase your fiber intake and top it with light sour cream or mash it with low-fat milk.

9. Peanut butter - a heart-healthy fat and protein source that can be carried with you and added to bread, fresh fruit, pretzels or crackers for a quick meal or snack. Don't leave home without it.

10. Eggs - rich in protein, choline and Vitamin D, they can be included at breakfast, or as an on-the-go snack. Scramble in the microwave for one minute and add to an English muffin and a slice of cheese for your own breakfast sandwich.

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