



# NUTRITION

## Nutritional Program Makes Weight Management Healthier

By Ty Halpin

Staff Writer, The NCAA News

The National Wrestling Coaches Association (NWCA), in conjunction with the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) and the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), has developed an interactive, online system to assist student-athletes and athletic trainers with instituting a proper nutritional plan.

For those in wrestling — the only NCAA sport that uses weight as a determining factor in competitive balance — a nutritional program is almost mandatory.

“The wrestling community has become a leader in nutrition education,” said Mike Moyer, executive director of the NWCA. “We have invested about \$200,000 in recent years to help wrestlers maximize performance through the integration of this gold-standard nutrition program, coupled with the mandated weight-certification program.”

Wrestlers submit to hydration testing and body-composition assessments before the first practice of the year. At that assessment, wrestlers, coaches and athletic trainers submit forms that show the student-athlete’s lowest weight class for the season. Included in the forms is a week-by-week plan of the allowable average weight loss per week.

“This is what I consider to be another piece of the puzzle,” said Jack Maughan, head wrestling coach at the University of Northern Colorado and president of the NWCA. “I think student-athletes understand how to manage their weight at this point, but nutritionally, there just wasn’t a whole lot of information being provided. Now, that’s changed.”

Mindy Millard-Stafford, a professor at the Georgia Institute of Technology and a member of the NCAA Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports, says the Web site ([www.nwcacalculator.com](http://www.nwcacalculator.com)) is a nice complement to guidelines that already are in place.

“It’s a really good first step, as far as nutrition goes, for wrestlers,” she said. “I like that it promotes some good sample diets.”

### Benefit to other groups

Other groups are getting on board as well. At the high-school level, state associations in Indiana, Nevada and Delaware have pledged to use the system in conjunction with their weight-loss regulations. Oregon will begin to use the system next year and five other states have indicated future support.

“The Federation is making this information available to its membership,” said Jerry Diehl of the NFHS. “The more informed our coaches and student-athletes can be, the better.”

Diehl, the NFHS staff liaison to the organization’s wrestling rules committee, said the NFHS produced a videotape and uses the nutritional planner and weight calculators in conjunction with the NWCA and the NCAA’s weight-management system.

Moyer also was contacted by the Jockey’s Guild, particularly after the group received negative national attention for the eating disorders many jockeys developed.

“They are using the system now,” Moyer said.

Many other sports, it seems, would benefit from an open, interactive system for nutrition.

“This certainly is not a wrestling-only issue,” Moyer said. “We’ve been the leaders because we are so tied to our weight, but everyone can benefit from this. We fully expect this to spill over to other sport groups.”

### Establishing healthy habits

The program assists student-athletes in determining the factors for proper nutrition — amount of calories burned through exercise and daily life and recommended daily energy intake. The Web site also recommends diets and sample menus and offers choices based on personal preferences. Through the site, users may e-mail questions to a registered dietician for assistance.

“The goal of the program is to establish healthy eating habits for life,” Moyer said. “The entire weight-management program has tremendous educational value for



*Wrestling is the only NCAA sport that uses weight as a determining factor in competitive balance. Because of that, a new program to help wrestlers with healthier weight management is both timely and appropriate.*

Michigan's 119 pound Adam Rowe, Dundee, pins Steve Rooks, Warren Lincoln, at the Michigan Duals Tournament. Photo by David Schankin.

the student-athletes. This is another piece that will be helpful."

David Nieman and Alan Utter, professors at Appalachian State University, provided the nutritional expertise for the Web site. Utter has conducted research in conjunction with the NCAA and Nieman has an extensive background in nutrition.

The Web site is unique because it starts, for wrestlers, with the weight-management forms all NCAA institutions must use. Through specific calculations, including percentage of body fat and hydration, the system gives allowable weight loss according to NCAA regulations.

What the NWCA program does is take that information and, through consultation with dietitians and researchers familiar with wrestling, builds a nutritional plan for each individual wrestler.


The site bases menus on a 55 percent carbohydrate, 30 percent fat and 15 percent protein dietary profile and uses specific volumes and serving sizes. The variety offered by the site is an eye-opener to student-athletes who might think they are limited while losing weight and training.

"A huge benefit of the program is flexibility," Moyer said. "There might be two student-athletes who are 150 pounds, but that doesn't mean they both should have the same diet. Having the body composition at the beginning of the process is extremely valuable when it comes time to design a diet."

While the immediate emphasis is on nutrition and safe weight loss, Moyer also sees a larger potential impact on research with this program.

"The data we will be able to collect and track through this program should be helpful down the road," Moyer said. "For example, this should help the governing associations that might think about altering weight classes."

The NCAA also has a Web site devoted to nutritional information, although it is not specifically designed for wrestling. The NCAA site ([www.ncaa.org/nutritionand-performance.html](http://www.ncaa.org/nutritionand-performance.html)) offers information targeted to student-athletes, athletic trainers, coaches, administrators and parents.

"The purpose of the site is to provide a strong support system for student-athletes in proper nutrition," said Mary Wilfert, NCAA assistant director for education outreach. "We also have links to other resources to assist the membership." 



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