

Birmingham Leads Sport Nutrition in a New Direction

Posted on Saturday 7th July 2007

As the world's best cyclists prepare for the start of the Tour de France in London, many of the world's leading sports nutritionists will meet at the University of Birmingham to draw up new guidelines to help elite athletes use nutrition and diet to improve their performance.

Nutritionists from Olympic Institutes, major European Football clubs, the main professional cycling teams and other major sports bodies, will be attending the two day Sport Nutrition Conference at the University's School of Sport and Exercise Science on July 5th and 6th.

The conference will discuss new developments and the latest research findings on areas such as diet, training and weight management – with the aim of producing a set of guidelines to help coaches and athletes.

The conference organiser Professor Asker Jeukendrup, Director of Birmingham's Human Performance Laboratory and sports nutrition expert, comments: "Often guidelines about how to use nutrition are very vague and not very useful. We will try to be more specific and produce some guidelines that athletes and coaches can apply immediately..

Athletes spend hours and hours training and preparing for competition but how much attention does nutrition get? Yet the right nutrition is absolutely key if athletes are to get the maximum benefit from their training. We believe that coaches and athletes need to give nutrition the same attention as physical training and mental preparation."

As part of the conference, Professor Jeukendrup will be discussing how best to provide energy and fluid for athletes during exercise. This is essential to cyclists in the Tour de France, who consume up to 15 litres of fluids per day, mainly in the form of sports drinks.

Professor Jeukendrup continues: "There have been major advances in the field of sports nutrition in recent years. Here at the University of Birmingham we have shown that using specific combinations of carbohydrates can increase both energy and fluid delivery for athletes by up to 75% . Sports drinks manufacturers are now adopting this approach in their drinks.

For Tour de France riders this means that they are able to take more energy and fluid on board during the race. This may not only help their performance during a days racing, but also helps to maintain energy balance during the three weeks of the Tour."

Other speakers include Professor Bengt Saltin, one of the world's leading physiologists who received the IOC Prize, an Olympic Gold Medal, for having made the greatest contribution to our understanding for health and performance.

The conference will be supported by Nestle PowerBar who are also an official supplier and sponsor of the Tour de France.

Ends

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Notes to Editor:

- This is an invitation only event. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the Press Office on the number above.
- The University of Birmingham's £16.4 million School of Sport and Exercise Sciences was officially opened in June 2007 by Dame Kelly Holmes. The new building is the largest purpose built sports-science facility in the UK, containing state-of-the-art facilities for teaching and research.
- The school is one of the leading UK centres for research in performance sport, exercise physiology and sports psychology and was awarded the maximum 6* rating at the last Research Assessment Exercise. Current projects include research tackling psychological barriers to exercise, optimising nutrition and training interventions to improve performance of athletes, the chemical processes that influence diabetes and obesity, and studies of the links between stress and our immune systems.

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