



How Races are Lost in the Kitchen

The Milk and Cereal Diet

Would you drive to Los Angeles with half a tank of gas? Only if you wanted to be stranded in the middle of nowhere. Many cyclists race on half empty tanks and lose. Winning races is not just about being strong. Eating properly gives you the energy to win. It's your choice, win or lose.

My son Ethan went to all his races last year on a half empty tank of energy. That is what we learned when we sat down with Katherine Parker, a sports nutritionist (see her article below). I called Katherine for help because all Ethan seemed to eat was cereal. Nothing I said had an impact on him. Think of a car and every time you fill the tank you put in one less gallon of gas. Soon you run out of gas. That is exactly what Ethan used to do.

Wake up at 7 AM: cereal. Got to school. An apple and a sandwich at noon. Home: bowl of cereal. Ride 1-2 hours with a calorie expenditure of 500-800. Come home: bowl of cereal at 5 PM. Try to study. Bowl of cereal at 6 PM. Dinner at 7 PM, nibble at it because still full from cereal. Study. Bed. Start over.

Ethan was digging a deeper and deeper nutritional hole for himself, because he never had enough calories on board, and was eating the wrong food selections. This also puts stress on the immune system, and kids are more likely to get sick.

After working with Katherine, Ethan began eating like an athlete, with more frequent smaller meals, more balance between carbs and protein, vegetables and fruit. He gained 10 pounds very quickly and has noticed a big change in his energy levels. He feels stronger riding, has more energy to study, and actually eats his dinner. So far this season, Ethan has broken all his times from the year before by several minutes. Some of that is eating better, some is what I've taught him (sorry can't help myself; I have to try rewriting history).

If your cyclist is on the milk and cereal diet, get some advice from a nutritionist. Kids listen to a nutritionist when they won't listen to us, particularly if you can find someone who has been an athlete and works with athletes. If your cyclist has any specific health issues, check with your child's doctor first.

Stephen Weiss, MD

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