

# THE CONCOCTION FOR WINTER TRAINING

**“YOUR BEST SLEEP HAPPENS BEFORE MIDNIGHT.”**

**T**he holiday season is approaching, which usually brings a host of opportunities to break your training, eat tons of junk, and stay up way later than you should. The winter season is also a period of training that can be more grueling than any other period of the year.

In order to be a great swimmer, you must be able to stay dedicated to your training, holding strong against many of the temptations that can inhibit your top performance. However, balancing the demands and the temptations of the holidays can be easier than you think. Here are some things to think about:

## RELIEVING YOUR WORRIES:

GENERALLY, one or two decisions are not going to make or break your ability to swim fast, with the exception of those that cause you physical injury. Swimming fast is a combination of many decisions you make. However, deciding to skip winter training to go on a long family vacation, for example, will definitely have a negative effect on your aerobic capacity coming into the end of the season.

A HUGE HOLIDAY DINNER, with dessert and all the fixings, is not going to ruin your winter training. If you're working hard, and consistently focusing on your nutrition, there's nothing wrong with going all out on a few meals over the holidays.

MISSING SLEEP ON A NIGHT or two during the holidays does not ruin your training cycle. However, if shortening your night's sleep becomes a habit, you will pay the price during both training and competition. The best athletes get at least seven to eight hours of sleep, often going to bed before 9 or 10 p.m.

## CRITICAL ACTIONS YOU MUST TAKE TO MAXIMIZE WINTER TRAINING:

**Eat before EVERY workout, especially during longer winter training sessions.**

- ▀ *Ideally you want to eat 30-60 minutes before diving into the water. Carbohydrates are your best friends here, as they are the main building blocks of energy when we're exercising.*

**ALWAYS keep a water bottle at your side. Increased demands of workouts can make it harder to stay hydrated, limiting the performance of your mind and body. Drink consistently throughout the day, and even keep a water bottle next to your bed, helping to ensure you wake up hydrated in the morning. Hint: cold weather can also dehydrate you, particularly if you are living in dry, arid places.**

**Eat after EVERY workout, ideally within 20-30 minutes after exiting the pool or weight room.**

- ▀ *Simple sources of carbohydrates, e.g., fruits, help replenish the glycogen you lost during workouts.*
- ▀ *Protein helps rebuild the muscle fibers you broke down during training.*
- ▀ *Fat helps reduce the inflammation in your body, making it easier for your body to recover.*

**“Your best sleep happens before midnight.”**

**—Brendan Hansen, Olympic Gold Medalist**

- ▀ *The earlier you get to bed, the more prepared you will be for your workouts. Don't be lured into staying up late just because you don't have school. You will pay the price for it!*

Recognize that as an athlete, you have more decisions, and more at stake, than many of your friends. Setting big goals means you automatically have a higher level of responsibility. You won't always make the right decisions. Nobody does. You do, however, have the power to make many more good decisions than bad ones. Take advantage of this winter training, and use the opportunities you have ahead of you to make this upcoming season of racing even faster, and more productive, than your last.