



Racing Weight: How to Get Lean for Peak Performance

Matt Fitzgerald

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In this title, sports nutritionist Matt Fitzgerald offers the first comprehensive and science-based approach to weight management for runners, cyclists, triathletes, swimmers, rowers, and cross-country skiers. For endurance athletes, the power-to-weight ratio is critical. After all, an extra 10 pounds demands more than 6 per cent more energy at a given pace. "Racing Weight" explores weight management as a means to better performance. Losing those last few pounds can seem impossible, but "Racing Weight" will help you hit your fastest numbers. Endurance sports coach and certified sports nutritionist Matt Fitzgerald offers a safe and healthy 5-step plan to help you get leaner and lighter for competition. By improving the quality of your diet, managing your appetite, and timing important nutrients, you can perform better - and look and feel great. After finding your ideal off-season and racing weights, you will learn how to improve diet quality; balance your intake of carbohydrate, protein, and fat; time meals and snacks; manage appetite; and train for lean body composition. Fitzgerald grounds his approach with practical examples of good nutrition, featuring personal food journals from elite athletes competing in six different sports and a selection of 21 recipes from professional triathlete and dietician Pip Taylor. "Racing Weight" is an essential guide to help endurance athletes make the subtle but important changes they need to start their next race at their optimal weight.

Racing Weight: How to Get Lean for Peak Performance Details

Date : Published December 1st 2009 by Velo Press (first published 2009)

ISBN : 9781934030516

Author : Matt Fitzgerald

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Sports, Cycling, Nonfiction, Sports and Games



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From Reader Review Racing Weight: How to Get Lean for Peak Performance for online ebook

Rainey says

I have tried to renovate my diet for years. What I like best about this methodology is that it doesn't put me inside of a box with set numbers or calorie totals, it simply asks me to make choices. I'm awarded points for making good choices in the app with the number assigning, and making poor choices comes with point deduction consequences. He breaks everything down so easily that the real glaring errors in my diet became so apparent and I easily was able to make good changes. This book was recommended to me by a friend over a year ago and I really wish I hadn't waited so long to listen to her. So, listen to me and if you are hoping to change your diet to be more efficient in whatever exercise you do....read this book.

Mirkat says

Matt Fitzgerald offers endurance athletes a different approach to weight reduction than the usual "diet" model. Instead, he outlines a system of improving diet quality, managing appetite through nutrient timing, calculating carb needs based on ideal racing weight + training volume and protein needs based on body weight, and finding the appropriate balance of training volume and intensity. He also identifies how to determine ideal weight/body composition.

As a vegan athlete, I will mention that he is clearly in favor of meat and dairy (as he sees excluding them as artificially restricting categories of "good" foods).* However, he at least recognizes that there are elite endurance athletes who thrive on vegan or vegetarian diets, and he includes a table to use for his "Dietary Quality Score" (DQS) if you are a vegan or vegetarian. Also, in the section where he provides samples from various elite endurance athletes' food journals, he includes Scott Jurek (yay! :)).

I've just completed reading the book, so I haven't yet implemented his plan, but I have high hopes that it will help me improve my body composition over the course of my next marathon-training cycle.

*He's a bit dismissive about T. Colin Campbell, claiming that he relies too heavily to epidemiology and not enough on "common sense." Isn't "common sense" what people resort to when they don't have the science to back up their claims? I happen to find Campbell's research on meat and dairy compelling, but Fitzgerald just sweeps it aside. This almost made me grumpy enough to knock him down to three stars, but he did redeem himself a bit by allowing that meat and dairy are not necessary for endurance-sports success.

Angela says

I first ran across the first edition of this book a couple of years ago when I was looking for a solid, research-based, user-friendly primer on nutrition for endurance athletes, but dismissed it as probably too numbers-on-the-scale-focused for me. Then earlier this year Fitzgerald released a second book, *The New Rules of Marathon and Half-Marathon Nutrition: A Cutting-Edge Plan to Fuel Your Body Beyond "the Wall"*, which I devoured in a day & a half & loved. From that book, I really didn't get the sense that Fitzgerald was promoting one of the meticulous, unrealistic, drop-the-weight-at-all-costs philosophies that have turned me

off from sports nutrition books in the past, so I decided to give Racing Weight a fair shot (by, y'know, actually reading it).

I wasn't disappointed. In a nutshell, Fitzgerald's thesis is that 1) like it or not, we all know that weight is related to performance in endurance sports, 2) we all have an ideal weight where we are strongest, healthiest, & racing our best, & 3) most recreational athletes weigh more than that number. Which is not exactly revolutionary. But having established that, I feel like a lot of sports nutrition writers tend to proceed down more or less the same path:

- * Here is a chart that tells you what you should weigh.
- * Here are some "tips & tricks" for losing all that extra weight.

This is not Fitzgerald's tactic. Instead of telling you what weight to shoot for, he recommends first determining your body composition (% body fat), then setting an individualized goal based on a few different things. I love this approach because it recognizes that we all have different genes and builds and body types, and the optimal weight for one 32-year-old 5'4" female runner may be very different from that of another 32-year-old 5'4" female runner. The weight that correlates with that body composition may not necessarily be your optimal "racing weight," but it gives you a starting point to shoot for that's backed by research.

The rest of the book is chock full of science about how the bodies of endurance athletes process various nutrients, & tools for determining & improving the quality of your diet one step at a time (based on your activity levels & goals), the theory being that as you continue to train well & eat high-quality foods in the right amounts at the right times, your body composition will gradually move towards your goal. Fitzgerald also recommends a standardized performance test (eg, a 10K time trial for runners) every four weeks; if your performance improves with your body composition, you know that you are moving towards your ideal racing weight.

Another thing I like about both of Fitzgerald's books is his recognition of the realities that recreational athletes live with (as opposed to elites who have constant access to nutritionists & personal trainers & also hours and hours every day in which to train & prepare perfect meals at exactly the right times). Although he outlines some useful tools and frameworks for monitoring and improving the quality of your diet, he advises people not to obsess about it and to be happy with small improvements, and that if you can manage to eat pretty well most of the time, you're still doing better than probably 75% of recreational athletes. He also makes a point of advising people not to try to maintain their optimal racing weight year-round once they've found it, and touts the physical and psychological benefits of taking an off-season periodically where you're less careful about what you eat & let yourself gain 7-8% of your racing weight without worrying about it.

While I wasn't planning to *really* start trying to work on this until after the holidays, so much of his system is so easy and straightforward that I've found myself able to improve both the quality of what I eat as well as my body composition to a certain amount without all that much effort (and that's coming from someone with a full-time job, 60 miles of weekday commuting, & way too many evening / weekend commitments, FWIW). Obviously your mileage may vary, but I've found both of the Fitzgerald books MUCH more practical & useable for the average, fairly busy, everyday person than others I've looked at.

Jeni Burckart says

Great book with a simple approach to eating focused on eating high quality foods. A good read while training for my next half marathon because anything that hints at cutting calories is just going to starve training. This book takes a realistic approach to changing body composition while training to improve performance.

Meghan says

I came across this book when I was in the running section at Barnes and Noble. A woman who was also there recommended it to me as we discussed our upcoming races. I am a runner and she is a triathlete. I found when training for the 2009 Marine Corps Marathon, my training program and everything else I read seemed to focus mainly on the mileage and never on the nutrition. This bothered me because I knew I was not eating properly. Once you take on that type of distance the amount of food and type of food you once ate is no longer good enough. You are no longer an average joe but now you must consider yourself as an endurance athlete. I knew I was not eating what my body needed. I knew this because it told me so. I never cared much for red meat until my mileage increased and then I craved it everyday. Maybe it wasn't the red meat, but rather the iron from the meat that my body needed in order to go the distance.

Racing Weight has some very interesting points. I enjoyed how Matt Fitzgerald discussed our early way of life, people lived off of, nuts, berries, and the occasional piece of fish. Describing our ancestors as hunters and gathers, and claiming that is still a diet option for us today. He also goes in depth about the yo yo diets, such as the low carb, or high meat diets, and how they are just recipes for disaster for endurance athletes because they deprive the muscles of fuel. However, the main point of the book is how to get lean for peak performance, or in other words how to obtain your ultimate racing weight in order to perform the best you can. The beginning of this book is fantastic. He talks about each type of endurance athlete, their body type, and what their body fat percentage should be during peak performance. I found it really interesting that he mentioned how the swimmers body holds the highest body fat percentage compared to all the other endurance athletes because they are consistently emerged into cold water.

Fitzgerald discusses the brilliance of the human body, and teaches one to think of food as fuel. He teaches about calories in and calories out. He lists helpful websites to visit, and discusses the different scales/tools to use in order to keep track and measure weight and body fat.

Overall the book was helpful, however I found his writing style hard to grasp because he uses a lot of math, measuring, and numbers in order to make points. I also found him contradicting through out the book. For example, he mentions high intensity work outs vs. moderate, but I am still questioning which one burns more fat and which one is more helpful for endurance athletes. He also uses a lot of scientific studies through out the book that contradict each other.

At the end, he includes recipes and some strength training workouts.

Aaron Maurer says

As I train for my first marathon I decided to give this a read. I posted several posts last year about the first version of this concept of Racing Weight. I found this book to be very helpful. As I read the Quick Start Guide I found much of it to be very similar to the Racing Weight: How To Get Lean for Peak Performance.

That is not to say that it is a bad book, but for being a quick start it was still crammed with information. A lot of good information. I performed the calculations and I understood everything.

This book did help me gain the perspective needed to lose the necessary weight. I did not go to any of the websites and I did not follow the plan perfectly. However, I learned some very useful tips and ideas to help maintain my weight and how to shed a few unwanted pounds. I still have a ways to go, but this book is a great read to learning about the steps needed. I cannot say I learned tons of new information from the previous book, but by this book coming out I did refresh my memory on many things that I had forgotten about. If you have not read the previous book, then this will be a great resource for you. If you have already read the previous book, then I would check it out from the library and read through it for the new things added.

Shira says

This is a rare thing; a book for runners that attempts to actually help and educate you, not make you buy more junk. His books can be dense with information at times, so skim away (read the part about energy drinks, for example) and then return to different parts of his book as questions pop into your head. You could absolutely read this straight through, but I found it useful to pick through it in bits and pieces (at least for the second reading). I think Fitzgerald is a gifted author with a talent for explaining things to runners, and I sincerely appreciate everything he does for the amateurs in the sport who are trying to improve.

Niki says

Great information for nutrition for endurance athletes...that is if you are an elite competitive runner. Fitzgerald's information and advice was sound, all backed by research and common sense. I learned a lot about the athlete's body and ways to nourish it best. However, for the recreational endurance runner, this is not a practical guide. Still a great read!

Mark Sloan says

The meat of this book is contained in chapters 7-11. Fitzgerald includes a Diet Quality Score table and a lot of advice on how to reach your optimum racing weight. He includes specific advice for endurance sports like distance running, rowing, swimming, and triathlon.

Chapters 12-14 felt a little bit like fluff to me. They covered some sample recipes for athletes, a list of what some pro athletes eat, and a quick chapter containing Fitzgerald's opinion on some of the most common available supplements.

I did find his Diet Quality Score table to be helpful and I'm currently using it, time will tell how effective it is. If you enjoy running, this will be a worthwhile addition to your bookshelf to use as an occasional reference.

Sebastian says

And that is how it's done!

I was blown away by this book. I consider myself fairly knowledgeable about nutrition, but I found a whole lot of useful information here about things to tweak in my eating patterns to improve my sports performance and to get leaner. Before I go into the details let me pose a few questions for you:

- 1) Do you think the lowest weight you can achieve should be your target weight to maximize racing performance?
- 2) Do you agree with low-carb diets being the best way to lose weight and keep it off?
- 3) In your opinion, is calorie-counting essential when trying to achieve your optimal race weight?
- 4) Do you think that the timing during the day of your intake of different food sources (protein, fats, carbs) has no impact on weight loss?

If the answer to most of these questions is "No", this is the book for you. Actually, even if you answer "Yes" to the questions, you may be swayed to change your opinion after reading Fitzgerald's clear and insightful explanations.

It all starts with finding a target for racing weight, and this is not based on height or BMI, it is based on % of body fat. You will have to estimate this in some shape or form, the easiest one being a scale that provides this measurement. The target is an approximation, because a low body fat per se is not beneficial unless it's associated with better sports performances. Therefore, during this process you will monitor your performance at different weights / body fat % combinations to determine what your optimal situations is.

One of the main aspects I liked about the book is the philosophy about balanced nutrition. I am one of those people that is completely against low-carb diets, since when I have tried this in the past, I have felt awful. The author presents us with a "scoring system" for our eating during the day in which healthy foods provide you with a positive score but these points diminish as you eat more servings during the day. Unhealthy foods have a negative score, and your goal is to score as high as possible within reason. Since I was eating healthy, I did not drastically change my eating habits, however, one of the elements that are important is timing of nutrition, with more carbs early in the day and relatively more protein later. Also, the author makes you aware of some foods that hide sugar in them and that should be avoided when possible. These simple changes have made me leaner than I ever was.

Like I mentioned before, the book does not focus on counting calories (unless you are in the off season and not training much and need to jump start your weight loss), but there are some recommendations about how to manage hunger. This does not mean that you are severely going to limit your food intake, but instead that you should focus on eating the right portions and combinations of nutrients to deliver your needs without overeating.

There is a section about strength training and high intensity training which were the portions of the book that I did not pay that much attention to. I already have a training plan that works and I do not want to mess with that at this point. This may be helpful to others though, so just be aware that it's there too.

Overall, this is a truly excellent book, with a lot of information and explanations on why the author

recommends the course of action he presents to us. It is so good in fact that I have decided to read pretty much any other book he has written, hopefully with the same results. I recommend this book to all endurance athletes without reservations. As I mention that, I should point out that there is even a section dealing with athletes that are vegetarian and with those that have gluten intolerance.

Mehmet S. says

This book has been a life changer. I am living by this book!

Leobardo says

Una excelente guía para alcanzar un peso óptimo para todo tipo de entrenamiento de ejercicio físico así como mantener un estilo de vida saludable. Quizás el mejor libro de alimentación que combina un alto desempeño con una ingesta correcta de nutrientes para tener energía todo el día y mantener unos altos niveles de entrenamiento. El DQS es la parte medular del libro si queremos tener un plan de alimentación exacto para lograr muchas mejores cosas.

Jewel says

This is one of the best books about fitness and health. It offers a fresh perspective for those who are looking to go deeper with their fitness. It also includes info from top athletes in a number of different sports. I reread it often.

Tyler says

I started running about 5 years ago, and I want to finally focus on improving my performance, specifically my marathon time. one aspect of that will be to manage my weight, and this book has great information on how to go about doing that. The recipes and suggested strength-training exercises are also a plus.

Andrea says

A very comprehensive guide to getting to any endurance athlete's ideal weight. This book is easy to read and has very practical information that can be easily integrated into anyone's life. I really enjoyed this book, it helped me understand why I've felt so different every time my body has changed either into a heavier or lighter version and why my best times and feelings have been when I have been on my lightest even though it's at those times when I'm eating more but with healthier and more constant (practically at the same time each day) food choices. Also, it showed me why and how "getting into shape" can be a critical phase of a training plan if you ever want to perform at your best.

Read it! You won't regret it.

