

Sports drinks help replenish fluids

college press EXCHANGE

With college students around the nation starting to get back into the grind of classes, students will once again be cramming the fitness centers and picking up their workout habits.

But with this summer being especially hot, taking care of yourself is just as important as keeping in shape.

For Kim Streit, an Orlando marathoner, water is passé on long training runs. She likes sports drinks.

"As soon as I drink Gatorade, I feel an instant boost," Streit said. "I usually drink it at about 8, 14 and then again at 17 miles, depending on how hot it is. It gives you more energy than water. And I think it helps you recover better afterward."

For Streit, 38, and other athletes who exercise vigorously for more than an hour at a time, sports drinks really do work better than water at replenishing the body's fluids and preventing dehydration, say dietitians and exercise physiologists.

But, said Orlando dietitian Karen Beerbower, "unless the physical activities last longer than 60 minutes, water works just as well."

Because only a tiny percentage of people vigorously exercise for more than an hour at a time, the potential market for sports drinks should seemingly be equally as tiny. But, say Beerbower and other experts, anybody who spends time in the heat — playing sports, mowing the lawn, reshinging a roof, paving a road — is at risk of dehydration and can benefit from sports drinks.

The benefits are particularly important for those spending time outdoors during a heat wave, although just about any summer day is hot enough to make dehydration a risk.

"Studies have shown that people won't drink as much water as they do sports drinks," Beerbower said. "If kids and adults will use sports drinks more frequently and in more volume than water because of its taste, it will prevent dehydration."

Liz Applegate, nutrition editor for Runner's World, agreed. "Especially in the summer, it's important to pay attention to fluid intake. To many, water is not that thrilling, and sports drinks are much better for you than soda or beer."

"I always recommend sports drinks," said Applegate, a nutrition professor at the University of California-Davis. "It motivates people to stay out longer."

I hear things like: 'I kicked in, and I got the hedges trimmed when I was only going to do the lawn.'"

Gatorade, invented in the mid-1960s at the University of Florida, is the best-known and biggest-selling sports drink, with about 80 percent of the \$1.8 billion sports drink market. But Gatorade has plenty of competitors. Coca-Cola's Powerade and Pepsi-Cola's All-Sport are major players at supermarkets and convenience stores, while smaller brands such as Cytomax, Glycoade and XLR8 are sold in sports and health food stores.

As far as Applegate and Beerbower are concerned, they all work well. "I always tell people, find one that tastes good and use it," Applegate said.

The two other main factors in choosing a sports drink should be price and availability. "I wouldn't pay more for one than the other," Beerbower said.

In other words, don't be dazzled by ingredient lists or inflated claims. All sports drinks do two things: They rehydrate you with water and replace some of the carbohydrates, or sugars, you burn through physical activity.

Sports drinks include electrolytes, particularly sodium and potassium. The idea is, the body sweats out these mineral salts, and they must be replaced. But their more important function in sports drinks is to stimulate thirst and help the body absorb water.

Three popular beverage ingredients—caffeine, alcohol and carbonation — impede proper hydration. Caffeine and alcohol are diuretics, which increase urine production and thus speed dehydration, while carbonation bloats the stomach. That means old favorites like soft drinks, iced tea and beer don't work well, no matter how good they might taste.

Formulating a sports drink requires a balancing act, because large amounts of carbohydrates slow the absorption of water into the bloodstream. An effective sports drink must contain enough carbohydrates to replenish lost sugars but not so much as to slow hydration. The magic number is "a solution containing 4 to 8 percent carbohydrates," according to a position paper on sports drinks by the American College of Sports Medicine.

So if the "Total Carbohydrate" percentage on the nutrition label falls outside the 4-8 percent range, it's not a sports drink. That works out to between 14 and 20 grams of carbohydrates per 8 ounces of fluid.

Penny pinchers easily can make their own sports drink. Just mix a pinch of salt, a dash of lemon juice and a tablespoon of sugar for each 8 ounces of water, chill overnight, and you'll have a homemade sports drink that's both effective and cheap.

It probably won't taste as good as the commercially available ones, however. And if you don't like the taste, you won't drink enough to get the job done.

The job is harder than even your body would lead you to believe. "If you only rely on thirst to tell you when to drink, you may seriously underestimate your need for water. The thirst response arises when your body has already lost a lot of fluid," wrote Applegate in her Runner's World column.

Although the taste of sports drinks can encourage more liquid intake, their cost can discourage their purchase. When bought in bottles, they typically range from about 4 to 8 cents per ounce. Those ounces — and pennies — add up quickly when you're quenching an exercise-induced thirst.

"There is a cost factor with sports drinks," Beerbower said. "The cheapest way is to buy them in powdered or concentrated form. There is no difference in benefits, as long as they're mixed correctly."

The price of both Gatorade and Powerade drops from about 4 cents per ounce to about 1 cent per ounce if they're purchased in canisters of powder rather than bottles of liquid.

Even if cost is no factor at all, sports drinks won't work for everybody. "Not everyone can tolerate them," Applegate said. "Some people have intestinal tracts of stainless steel. Others do better drinking water and chomping on a gum drop" to get their carbohydrate replenishment.

Beerbower put in a special plug for kids in organized sports, who often will play several games in a row outside on hot summer days.

"It may be fine to use water with adults, but to get a group of 10-year-old soccer players to drink enough water is tough. They'll drink Kool-Aid, but it has too much sugar. So do juices and soft drinks. Sports drinks can really help."

Big Ten plus Notre Dame?

college press EXCHANGE

With the Big Ten Conference in a serious expansion mode, commissioner Jim Delany said Thursday that he hoped to know "within months" whether Notre Dame will become the 12th member of college football's oldest and most storied league.

Without divulging details, Delany reiterated during a media briefing that both the conference and the Fighting Irish have had "a thorough exchange of information" that could lead to the end of Notre Dame's standing as an independent in football and a member of the Big East in basketball and other sports.

"My hope is that, this fall or winter, something will come of it or something will not," Delany said. "At present, no invitation has been extended and no invitation has been asked for. We're seeing where we are on a variety of issues. We still have questions for them, and they have questions for us."

Delany conceded he initiated contact with Notre Dame in 1994 but that nothing came of it and the conference declared a moratorium on expansion. It is apparent that Notre Dame's interest in joining the Big Ten has intensified since then, and further discussions on the matter are taking place.

this week among conference athletic directors and coaches who have gathered in Chicago for the league's annual football preview sessions.

"Based on what I've been told, Notre Dame's excited about coming into the league," Indiana coach Cam Cameron said in a remark that must have made those involved at the highest level of discussions cringe.

According to a report in Wednesday's Chicago Tribune, Notre Dame Athletic Director Michael Wadsworth told Big East colleagues last month the Irish were seriously exploring the possibility of joining the Big Ten.

Gene Corrigan, a former Notre Dame athletic director, was quoted in the same report as saying: "If they don't do something this time, they're going to stop talking about it. That's why they're taking such a hard look at it. It's something they'd be wise to look at."

Delany offered another indication of how serious the discussions are when he said no other university had been approached about joining the conference. Syracuse had been considered a possibility, but university president Kenneth Shaw said he and the Big Ten had not been in contact.

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Settle it on the field, not on opinions

JOHNSTON cont. from page 1B

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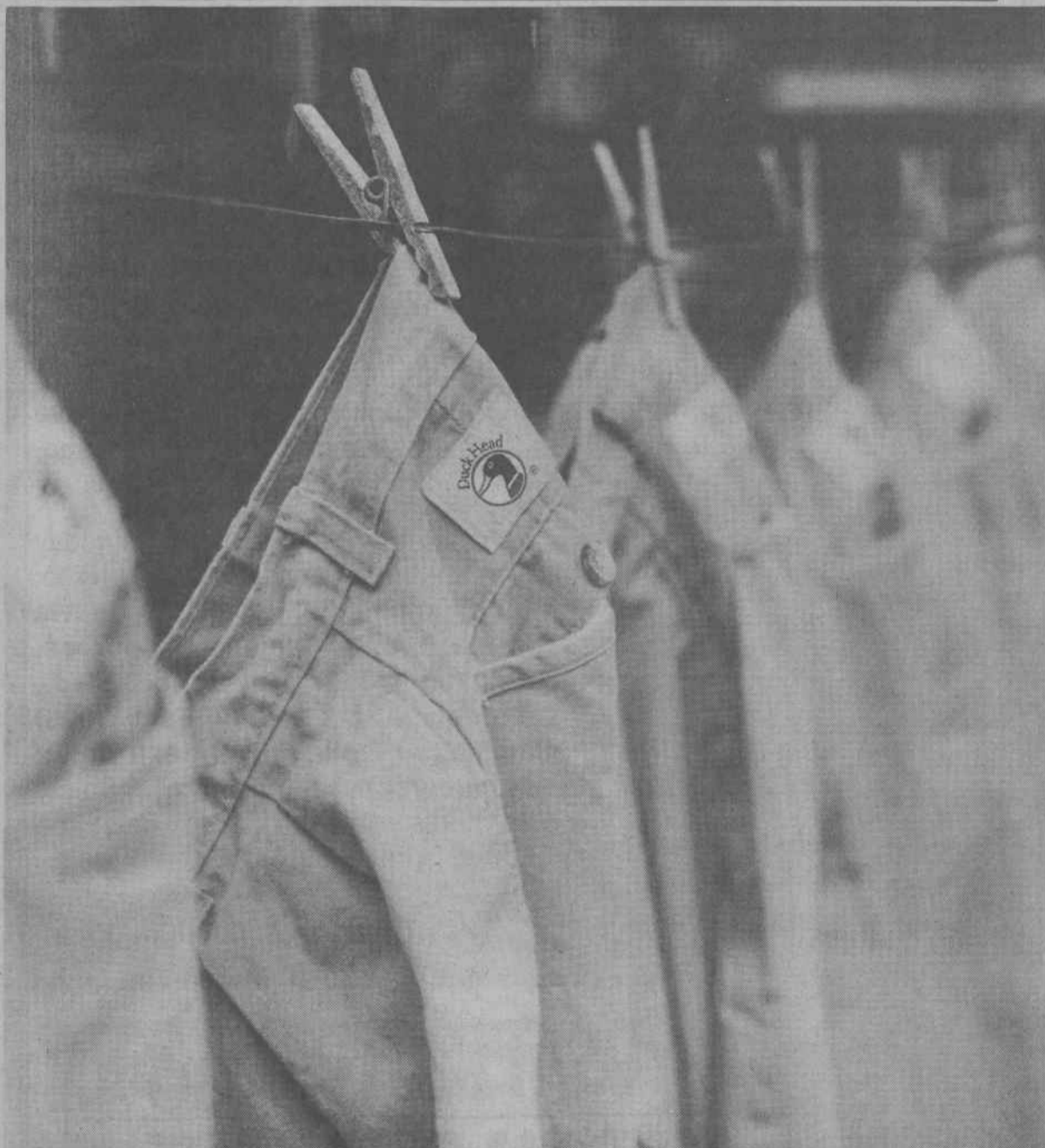
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