

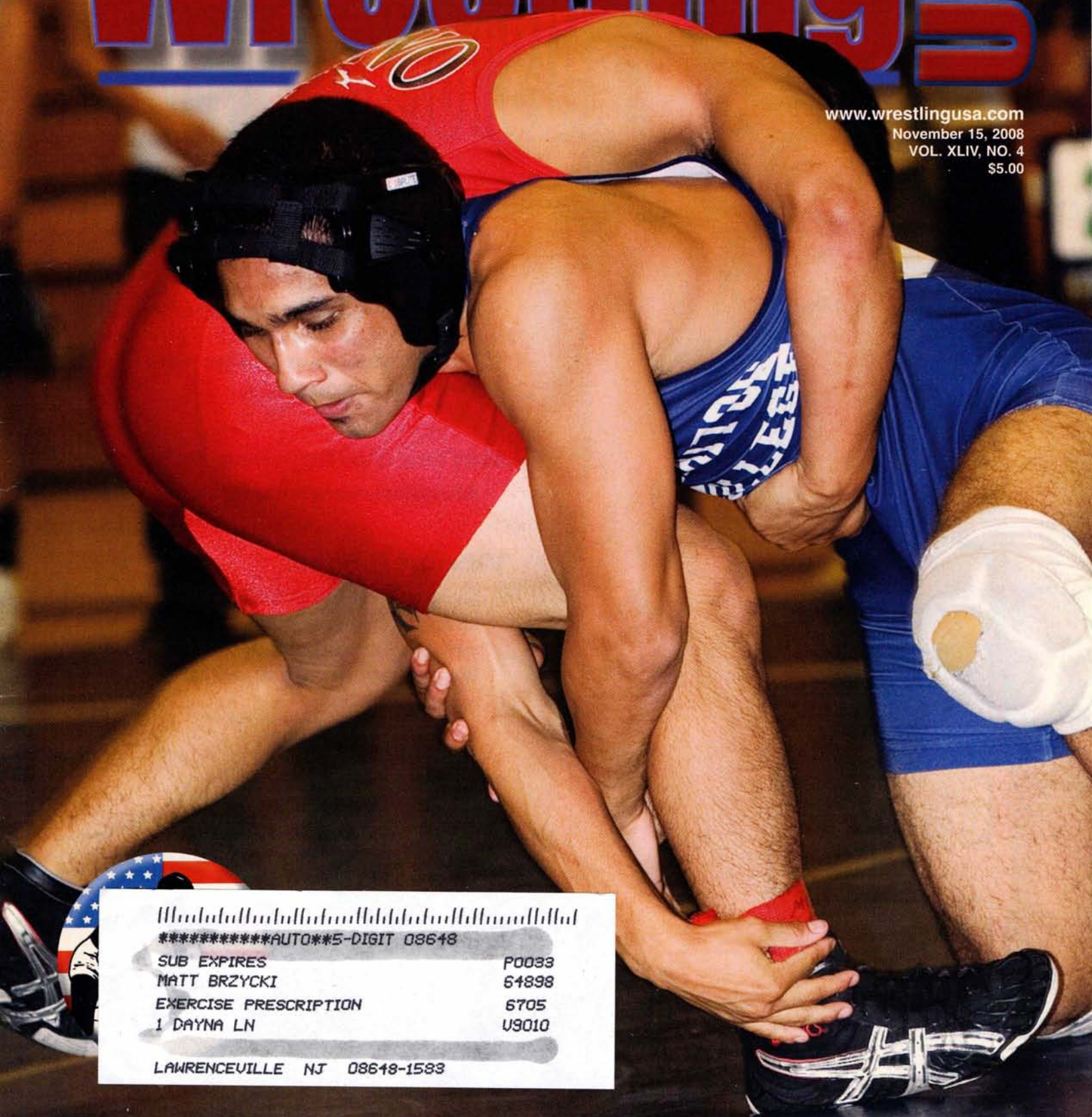
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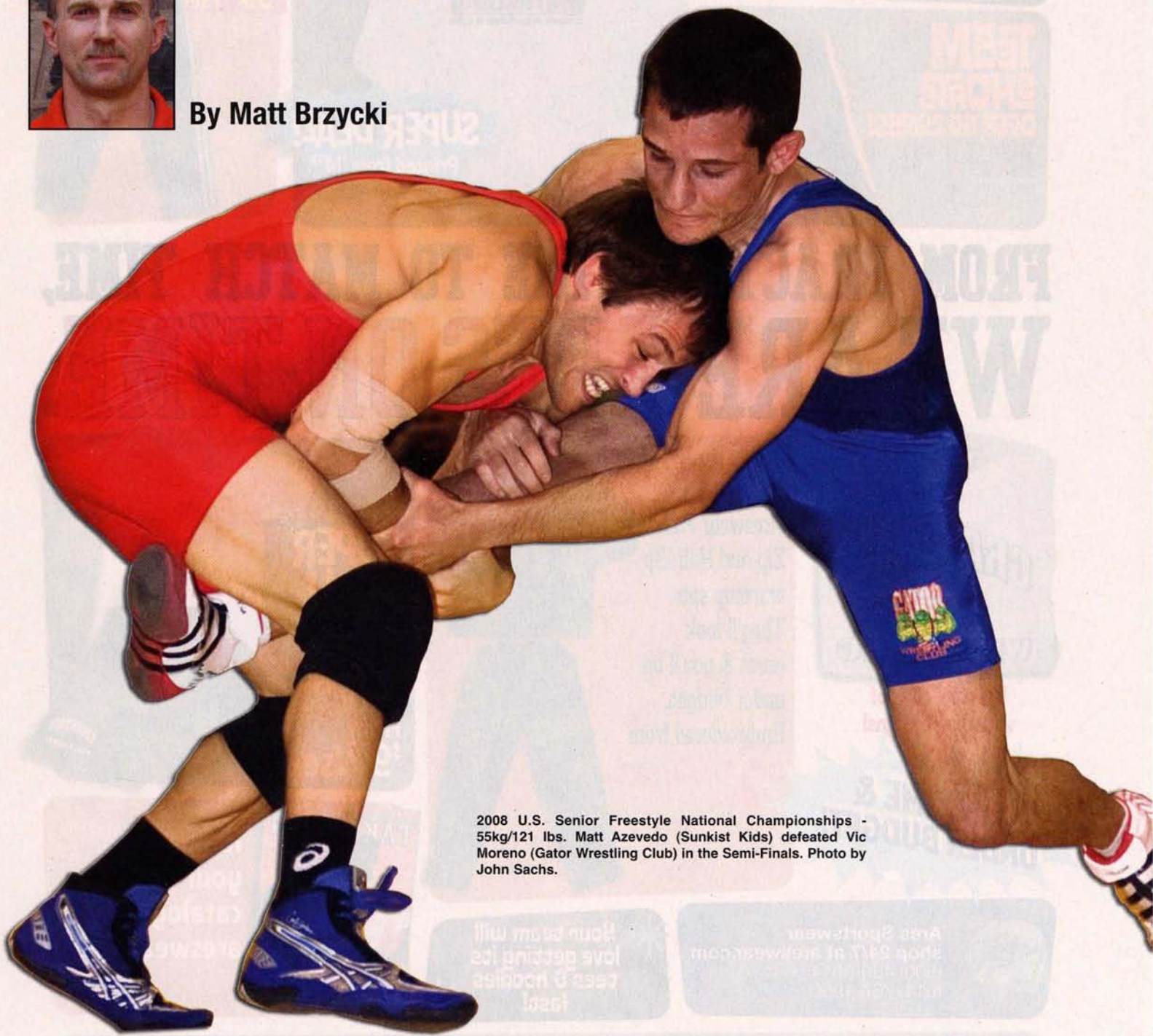
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Body Types AND DIETS



By Matt Brzycki



2008 U.S. Senior Freestyle National Championships - 55kg/121 lbs. Matt Azevedo (Sunkist Kids) defeated Vic Moreno (Gator Wrestling Club) in the Semi-Finals. Photo by John Sachs.

The number of "diet" books that are available to consumers is truly mind-boggling. And it seems as if each book offers its own unique twist on the subject. Among the many theories is that your body type is a critical factor in your approach to eating.

In one book, the author asserts that there are four different body types: thyroid, adrenal, gonadal and pituitary. These classifications are named after four major glands in the body. However, categorizing body types in this manner has not gained any acceptance by the scientific and academic communities. So before discussing the merits of the notion that you should eat according to your body type, it is worth reviewing some background information.

WHAT'S YOUR TYPE?

Basically, "body type" refers to "body shape." In a 1940 book that he co-authored, Dr. William Sheldon – a physician and psychologist – advanced the idea that there are three main body types: endomorph, mesomorph and ectomorph. These classifications are the ones that are most widely used in science and academia. Let's take a closer look.

Endomorphs have a soft and round physique. They have a very high percentage of body fat without much muscle tone. Examples of endomorphs include Chris Taylor (NCAA Champ for Iowa State in 1972 and 1973; bronze medalist at the 1972 Munich Olympics), Tab Thacker (NCAA Champ for North Carolina State in 1984) and "Manny" Yarborough (NCAA All-American for Morgan State in 1983, 1985 and 1988). Older readers will remember that each of these athletes weighed more than 400 pounds. (This was before the NCAA imposed an upper limit in the heavy-

weight class.) Mesomorphs have a heavily muscled physique. They have an athletic build with broad shoulders, a large chest and a trim waist (giving them a V-shaped appearance). Examples of mesomorphs include Terry Brands (NCAA Champ for Iowa in 1990 and 1992; bronze medalist at the 2000 Sydney Olympics), Chris Bono (NCAA Champ for Iowa State in 1996) and Brock Lesnar (NCAA Champ for Minnesota in 2000).

Ectomorphs have long limbs and a slender physique. They have a very low percentage of body fat but little in the way of muscular size. Examples of ectomorphs include John Smith (NCAA Champ for Oklahoma State in 1987 and 1988; gold medalist at the 1988 Seoul Olympics and 1992 Barcelona Olympics), Mark Perry (NCAA Champ for Iowa in 2007 and 2008) and J Jagers (NCAA Champ for Ohio State in 2008).

Keep in mind that these are examples of some wrestlers who have a strong tendency toward one body type. The fact of the matter, though, is that most wrestlers are a combination of body types. Many wrestlers, for instance, are mainly mesomorphs with some characteristics of endomorphs or ectomorphs. Thus, their body type would be that of a meso-endomorph or meso-ectomorph.

Meso-endomorphs have a high degree of muscular development (but not like that of a mesomorph) coupled with a round physique (but not like that of an endomorph). Examples include Rulon Gardner (NJCAA Champ for Ricks Junior College in 1991; gold medalist at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and bronze medalist at the 2004 Athens Olympics) and Steve Mocco (NCAA Champ for Iowa in 2003 and for Oklahoma State in 2005).

Meso-ectomorphs have a high degree of muscular development (but not like that of a mesomorph) coupled with a slender physique (but not like that of an ectomorph). Examples include

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Dan Gable (NCAA Champ for Iowa State in 1968 and 1969; gold medalist at the 1972 Munich Olympics) and Cael Sanderson (NCAA Champ for Iowa State in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002; gold medalist at the 2004 Athens Olympics).

SOMATOTYPES

A somatotype has been defined as a "numerical descriptor of overall physique in terms of body shape and composition." Somatotypes are derived from various rating systems in which an individual is given a "score" for each of the main body types. There are three numbers used in a somatotype, a number for endomorphy, mesomorphy and ectomorphy (always in that order).

The system that was created by Dr. Sheldon employs a scale that ranges from 1 to 7 to designate the degree of each of the three components with 1 being the least amount and 7 being the greatest. In 1967, two researchers – Barbara Heath and Dr. Lindsay Carter – published an article on the Heath-Carter Method that uses a 9-point scale. At the present time, this is the most common method of somatotyping.

With the Heath-Carter Method, ratings of 0.5 to 2.5 are considered low, 3.0 to 5.0 moderate, 5.5 to 7.0 high and 7.5 and above very high. In this system, a somatotype of 9-1-1 (read as "nine-one-one") indicates extreme endomorphy (fatness), 1-9-1 extreme mesomorphy (muscularity) and 1-1-9 extreme ectomorphy (leaness).

As mentioned earlier, some wrestlers have a propensity toward one body type but most are a combination. For example, somatotypes of 5-5-1 and 4-4-2 would be indicative of a meso-endomorph and somatotypes of 1-5-5 and 2-4-4 would be indicative of a meso-ectomorph.

Interesting note: A study of athletes who competed at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics found that the average somatotype of Olympic-level wrestlers was 2.2-6.3-1.6, thereby demonstrating a high degree of mesomorphy.

Having said all of this, how can you determine your somatotype? Well, it involves calculations using your height, weight, several skinfold measurements and a few other anthropometric variables such as the circumference of your flexed arm. Needless to say, the calculations are a bit complicated. A few years ago, a colleague of mine from Canada used a computer software program to calculate my somatotype. According to the program – which used a 9-point scale – I am a 1.8-4.4-2.0 or, rounded off to the nearest half numbers, about a 2.0-4.5-2.0. This somatotype is considered to be a "balanced mesomorph," meaning that I have a moderate degree of mesomorphy with roughly equal degrees of endomorphy and ectomorphy.

Although calculating a somatotype is complex, you can get a good idea of your body type by considering your physical characteristics. If you have a heavily muscled physique, your body type is mainly a mesomorph; if you have a low percentage of body fat but not much in the way of muscular size, your body type is mainly an ectomorph. You get the idea.

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

One popular misconception is that you can change from one body type to another. An ectomorph can increase his muscle mass but not to the degree of a mesomorph; an endomorph can decrease his body fat but not to the degree of an ectomorph. So while you certainly can improve your appearance, you cannot change your body type to a significant degree.

While on the subject, manipulating the number of repetitions that you do has little effect on your body type. It has often been said that doing high repetitions with a light weight will increase muscular definition and doing low repetitions with a heavy weight will increase muscular size. But this is another "urban leg-

end" that has no scientific basis.

In one study, researchers randomly assigned 44 subjects to one of four groups: One group did sets of 3-5 repetitions, another group did sets of 13-15 repetitions and a third group did sets of 23-25 repetitions; the fourth group served as a control. The subjects in the three training groups did four sets of the barbell squat to the point of muscular fatigue three times per week for seven weeks. The researchers found that all three training groups significantly increased quadriceps thickness (and strength). And there was no significant difference among the three groups, meaning that all of the subjects – despite using repetition ranges that differed markedly – increased the size (and strength) of their quadriceps by about the same amount.

OKAY, NOW WHAT?

So, what does your body type have to do with the foods that you should consume? Not much, really. There are not any special foods that an ectomorph or an endomorph needs to eat, for example.

Sure, a likely goal of an ectomorph is to increase lean-body mass but that simply means eating more calories (while engaging in strength training). Similarly, a likely goal of an endomorph is to decrease body fat but that simply means eating less calories (while engaging in aerobic training and strength training). No matter what body type you may have, your intake of foods should contain appropriate percentages of carbohydrates, protein and fat along with adequate amounts of vitamins and minerals.

What we are really talking about here is weight management: gaining, losing or maintaining your bodyweight. In this respect, there are several tactics from which all wrestlers can benefit regardless of their body type.

Goals

A key factor in weight management is setting goals. The goals should be of two types: short-term goals to change your behaviors and long-term goals to manage your weight.

One of the main reasons why many individuals have difficulty in managing their weight is that they do not set specific goals. When you have explicit goals in mind, you are more likely to achieve them. In addition, the goals must be measurable and quantifiable. So rather than have a general goal to do physical activity, for instance, it is more effective for you to have a specific goal to do strength training an average of two days per week.

Some people set specific goals that are measurable but are often far too difficult to attain. A goal of losing 25 pounds of weight or more in three months, for example, is unrealistic and unhealthy. A better tactic is to set a series of incremental objectives – say, to lose one pound of weight per week for the next two months. Remember, small steps can eventually lead to big changes.

Food/Activity Diary

Another helpful practice is to utilize a food/activity diary. One study found that people who used a food/activity diary for at least six days per week lost about twice as much weight in six months as those who did not use such a diary.

In the diary, you should record the specific foods that you eat as well as a rough idea of the quantity. Documenting your food intake may reveal that you actually eat more/less than you thought. Track your good choices (such as the servings of fruits that you eat) and bad ones (such as the number of sweetened beverages that you drink).

Calories count but there is no need for you to literally count calories in the food/activity diary. You should simply be mindful of calories.

Strength training and aerobic training are also integral aspects of weight management. Therefore, it is important for you to main-

tain a record of your physical activities, too. Note the types of physical activities that you do as well as the duration of the activities and, if applicable, the distances that are completed. Include participation in formal activities (such as strength training, aerobic training and practicing), informal activities (such as "pick-up" games), organized sports (such as wrestling and football) and physical education ("gym class").

Food Labels

Thanks to the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990 – which amended the 1938 Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act – food labeling is required for most packaged foods. This includes breads, cereals, canned/frozen foods, snacks, desserts and beverages. Food labeling is not required for fruits, vegetables and fish. In addition, any health claims that are made on food labels must comply with specific requirements.

Located on the food label is an area that is known as the "Nutrition Facts panel." The facts panel must include information on calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrate, dietary fiber, sugars, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.

Especially important for weight management are the serving size and number of servings per container. In order to compare similar foods, serving sizes are standardized in an amount of food "customarily consumed" and use a "common household measure that is appropriate to the food." Examples are cups, grams, milliliters, ounces, tablespoons and teaspoons. Also of note is that some of the measures incorporate fractions such as 1/2, 1/3 and 1/4. Interpreting this information can present a daunting challenge. Do you know, for example, the difference

between a tablespoon and a teaspoon? Or what a quarter cup of nuts actually looks like? (For the record, three teaspoons equal one tablespoon and one quarter cup of nuts is about the size of a golf ball.)

Also be wary of the fine print. For instance, a package of food that has 100 calories per serving means that the package has 100 calories if and only if it has one serving. If a package of food has 100 calories per serving but has four servings per package, eating the entire contents will get you 400 calories.

THE LAST REP

So that there is no misunderstanding, I did not calculate the somatotypes of the wrestlers that are mentioned in this article. I reviewed their photographs and conferred with two wrestling coaches (Chris Ayres and Michael New) then took an educated guess as to their body types. In other words, classifying them as a certain body type required some guesswork on my part. In my estimation, the wrestlers that I chose as examples of different body types are correct but like all guesswork, may not be exactly right.

One thing is certain, though: Despite having vastly different body types, all of these wrestlers have been highly successful. And that is a very important point for all wrestlers to realize.

Editor's Note: Matt Brzycki has authored, co-authored or edited 17 books on strength and fitness including four that are devoted to wrestling. His latest book is *Youth Fitness: An Action Plan for Shaping America's Kids*.

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