

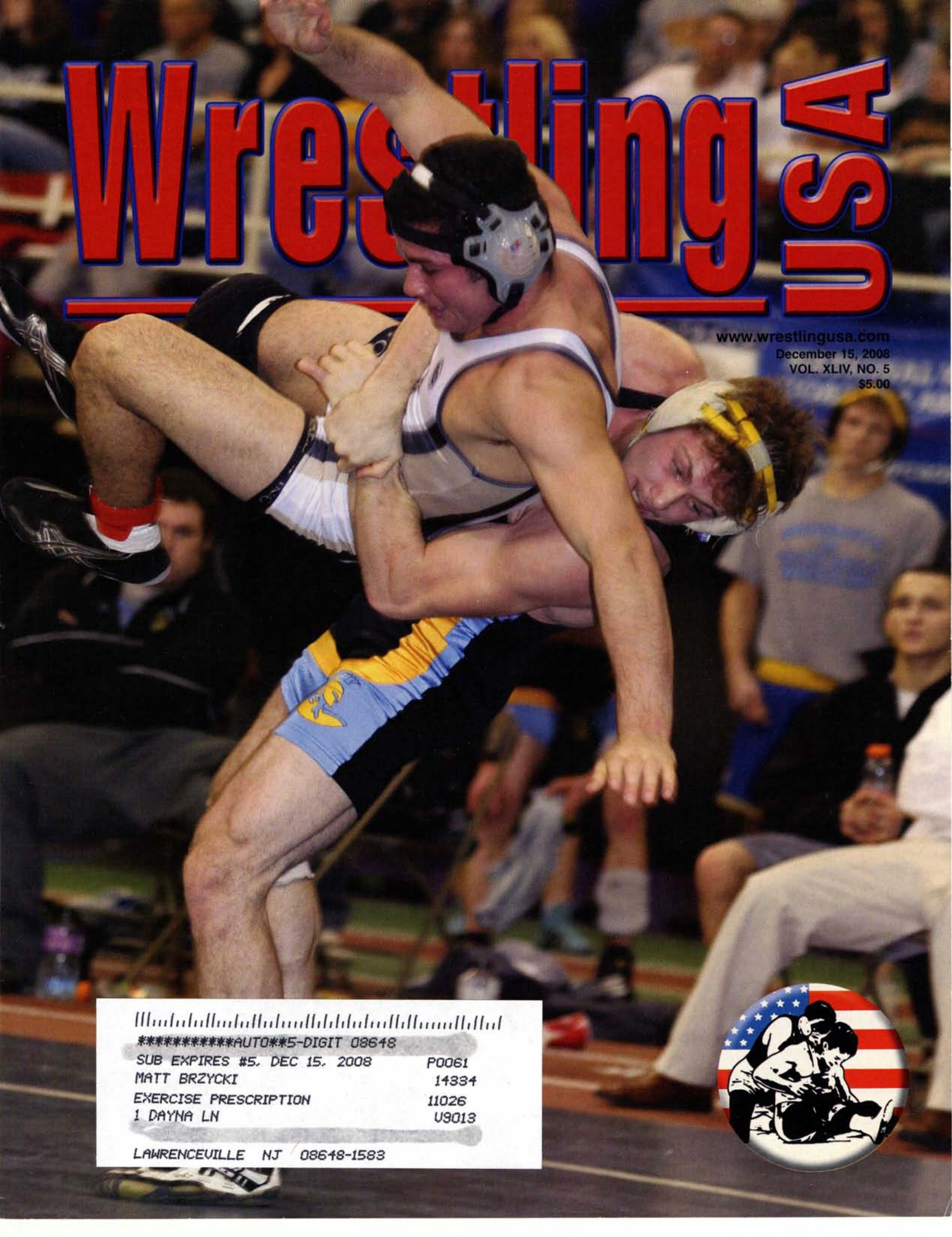
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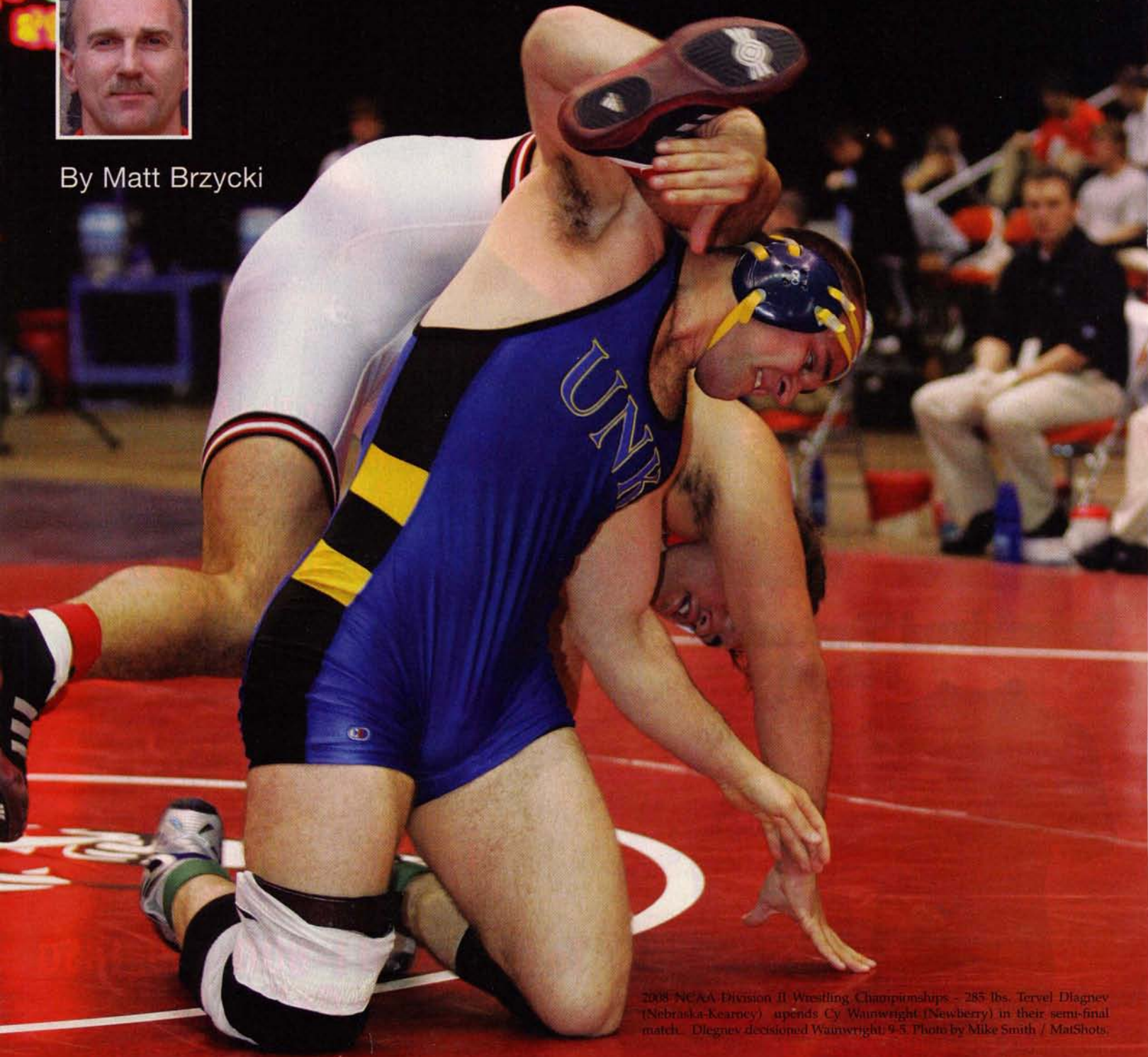
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DRINK RESPONSIBLY!



By Matt Brzycki



2008 NCAA Division II Wrestling Championships - 285 lbs. Tervel Dlagnev (Nebraska-Kearney) upends Cy Wainwright (Newberry) in their semi-final match. Dlagnev decisioned Wainwright, 9-5. Photo by Mike Smith / MatShots.

When you are reading or studying, do you swig a sports drink? When you miss a meal, do you drink vitamin water? When you need to get fired up for a practice or match, do you guzzle an energy drink?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, read on.

"PERFORMANCE" DRINKS

Sports drinks, fortified water and energy drinks are different types of "performance" drinks. Many of these products are used regularly by younger athletes. Let's take a closer look at these drinks and learn about some potential pitfalls that you must take into consideration.

Sports Drinks

This type of beverage is designed to re-supply your body with the fluids, electrolytes (sodium and potassium) and, to a lesser degree, carbohydrates that are lost during strenuous physical activities such as running, strength training and drilling. There is no question that replenishing these nutrients soon after exercise/activity aids the recovery process. But there is really little benefit for you to drink these beverages on a casual basis.

Consider this for a moment: Powerade's Liquid Hydration + Energy Drink has 17 grams of carbohydrate per eight ounces of

which 15 grams are from sugar (high fructose corn syrup). Since there are four servings per 32-ounce bottle, gulping the entire contents would get you 68 grams of carbohydrates (272 calories) of which 60 grams are from sugar (240 calories). For those who are trying to maintain/lose weight, the calories in these and other beverages only add to their "caloric budget." And if consumed quickly enough, this could conceivably produce a "sugar rush" followed by a "sugar crash."

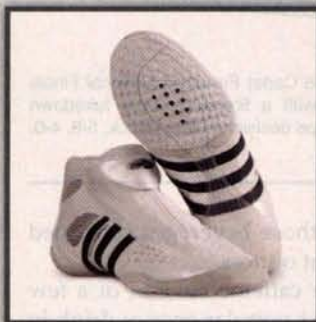
Gatorade's G2 is billed as a "low calorie electrolyte beverage." It has the same amount of electrolytes as its Thirst Quencher but with seven grams of carbohydrates per eight ounces – literally half the calories. Because the price is the same for both products, it is more economical to dilute the regular brand with water. This can be done by simply filling a container halfway with Thirst Quencher (or any other type of sports drink) and then topping it off with water.

Do not misunderstand the message here: There is nothing inherently wrong with sports drinks. When consumed following strenuous activity, sports drinks help expedite recovery. But when consumed on other occasions, sports drinks have no real advantages.

Fortified Water

Similar to sports drinks, fortified (or "enhanced") water usually contains more sugar – and more calories – than might be expected. An eight-ounce serving of Glacéau VitaminWater, for example, has 13 grams of sugar (crystalline fructose). So, someone who drinks a

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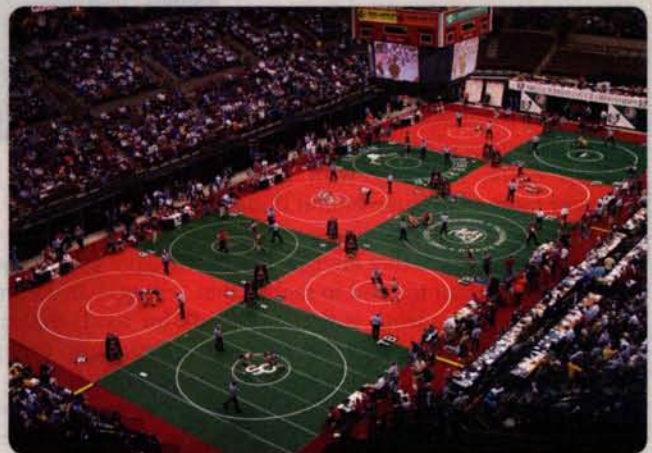
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20-ounce bottle gets 32.5 grams of sugar (130 calories). Sure, the product is enhanced with vitamins but for less than a dime, you can get pretty much the same thing by washing down a multi-vitamin/mineral supplement with a glass of water. And this self-made version of "fortified water" has no calories.

Besides, those who eat a balanced diet have no need to drink water that is fortified with vitamins. Remember, the best way for you to get vitamins (and minerals) is by eating fruits, vegetables and other wholesome foods. And the best way for you to get fluids is by drinking plain, old-fashioned water. If used as a post-exercise/activity beverage, fortified water can be diluted in the same manner that is recommended for sports drinks.

Additional "water beverages" offer an alluring array of other enhancements including amino acids, antioxidants, herbs and minerals. None of the products live up to their advance billing.

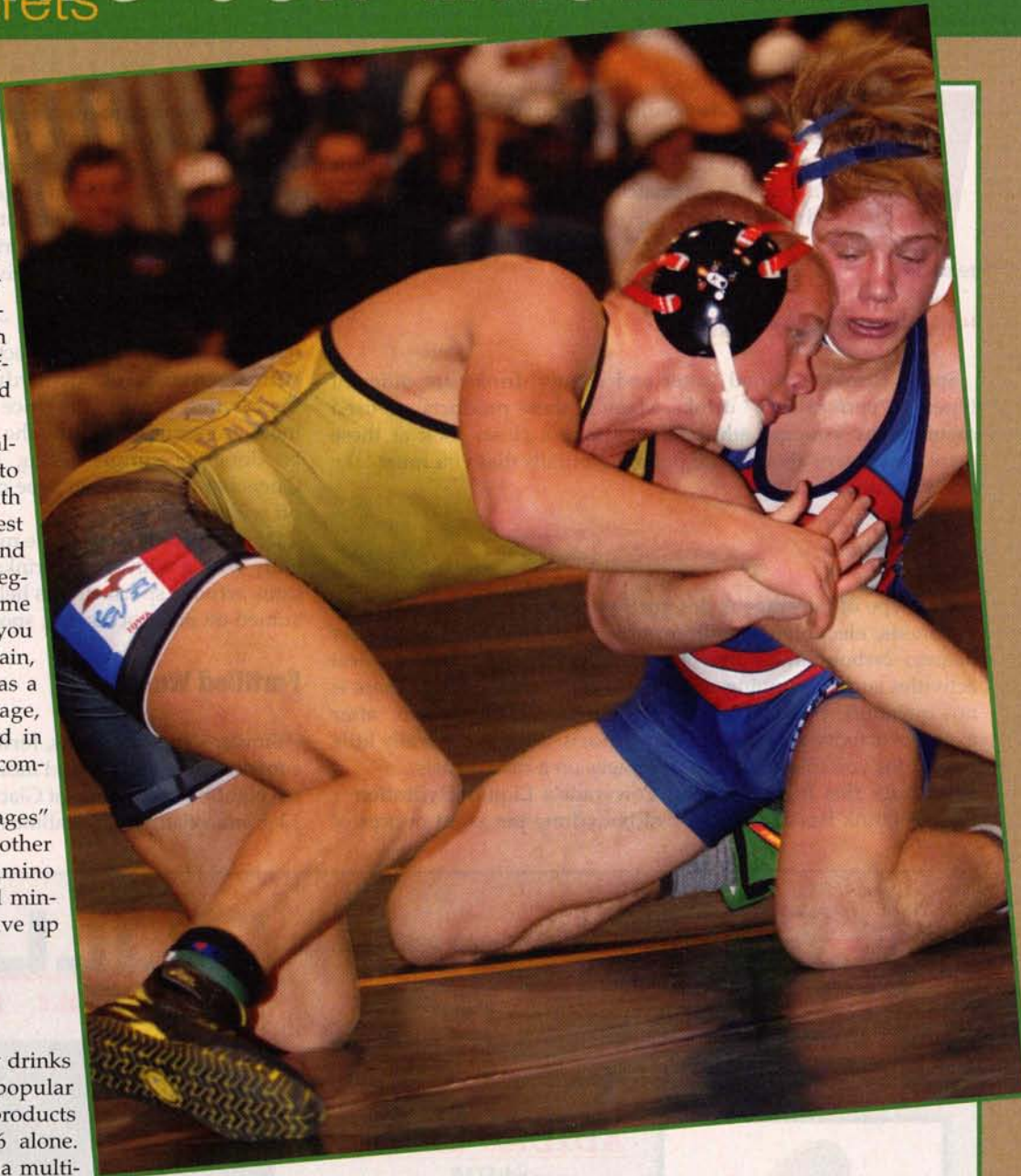
Energy Drinks

In the last few years, energy drinks have become increasingly popular with more than 500 new products spawned worldwide in 2006 alone. These beverages have fueled a multi-billion dollar industry with annual sales of more than three billion dollars right here in the United States.

The implication is that energy drinks will give you energy. But it is important for you to realize that "energy" is derived from calories. The truth is that any drink (or food) that has calories gives you energy. So technically speaking, orange juice, iced tea, non-diet soda and wine are energy drinks.

Of course, what is being marketed to you as energy drinks is a different story altogether. Standard ingredients of these beverages usually include sugar as well as various vitamins, amino acids (such as taurine) and herbs (such as ginseng). But the real buzz often comes from a hefty dose of caffeine. And this is, perhaps, the biggest concern with energy drinks.

Just how much caffeine is in these beverages? Well, declaring the amount of caffeine on the Nutrition Facts panel is not required and most companies do not voluntarily disclose the information on their containers. In one study, however, researchers tested the caffeine content of 10 energy drinks.



2008 Cadet Freestyle National Finals
- 171 lbs. Chris Phillips (Ohio) with a fireman's carry takedown attempt on Ethan Blackstock (Georgia). Phillips decided Blackstock; 5-0, 4-0. Photo by Wyatt Schultz.

They found that the majority of those beverages contained about 62 to 74 milligrams per eight ounces.

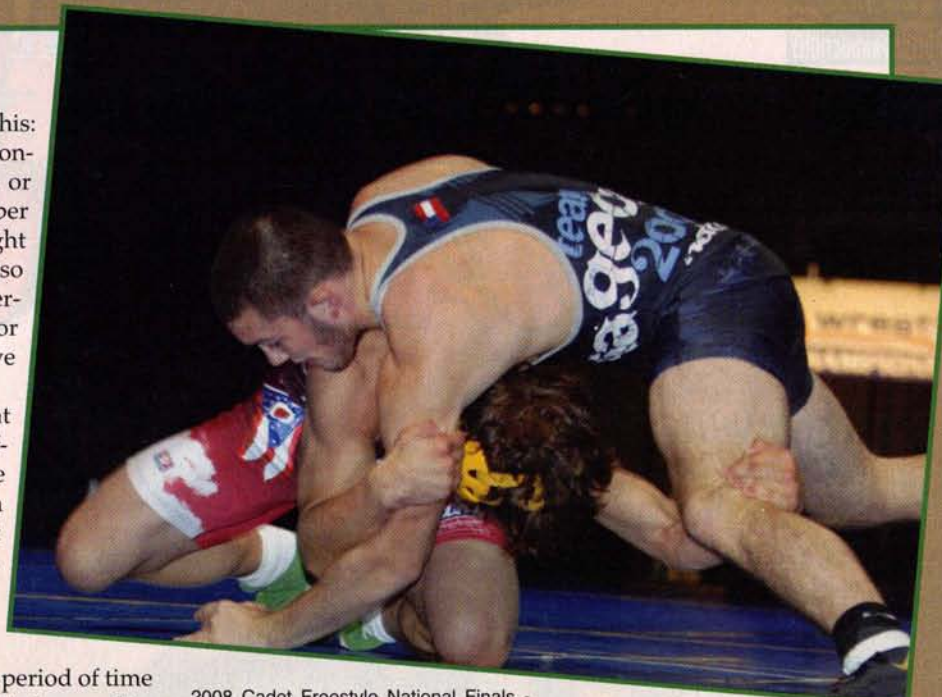
It is well worth mentioning the caffeine content of a few energy drinks. Red Bull – the most popular energy drink in the world – contains 80 milligrams of caffeine per 8.3 ounces which actually pales in comparison to many others. No Name – which, believe it or not, was once known as "Cocaine Energy Drink" – contains 280 milligrams of caffeine per 8.4 ounces. And Spike Shooter has even more with an astonishing 300 milligrams of caffeine per 8.4 ounces. But these levels of caffeine do not come close to the amount that is available in some smaller servings. A two-ounce "shot" of Fuel Cell has 180 milligrams, a one-ounce "shot" of Ammo has 171 milligrams and a 2.5-ounce "shot" of Redline Power Rush

has – no typo – 350 milligrams.

If this is not disturbing enough, think about this: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers a safe limit of caffeine for carbonated or “cola-type beverages” as about 65 milligrams per 12 ounces (or about 43.33 milligrams per eight ounces). So, why can energy drinks have so much more caffeine? The reason is because energy drinks are not classified as carbonated or cola-type beverages. Thus, these potions have gone unchallenged by the FDA.

Why the concern? Studies have shown that consuming beverages that are loaded with caffeine without reducing the intake of caffeine from other sources may produce a condition known as “caffeinism.” Researchers feel that caffeinism occurs more often in those who consume energy drinks because of the speed and volume at which the beverages are ingested. Most individuals who drink hot coffee do it slowly over the course of an extended period of time while youths tend to guzzle the cold energy drinks – and in greater amounts than the hot brews.

The symptoms of caffeinism include nausea, diarrhea, indigestion, irregular heartbeat and respiration, light-headedness, jitteriness and frequent urination. Needless to say, none of these conditions are desirable prior to wrestling or training (or at any other time, for that matter). So, the overconsumption of caffeine – which is dictated by individual sensitivity – can lead to a number of uncomfortable treks to the bathroom, sleepless nights and “the shakes.” Because of its diuretic properties, many athletes can experience muscle cramping and fatigue which more or less squelches the notion of getting an extra boost from caffeine to improve ath-



2008 Cadet Freestyle National Finals - 171 lbs. Chris Phillips (Ohio) with a fireman's carry takedown attempt on Ethan Blackstock (Georgia). Phillips decisioned Blackstock; 5-0, 4-0. Photo by Wyatt Schultz.

letic performance. It should be obvious that athletes who consume these beverages even occasionally are at great risk. Also consider the fact that youths who are not habitually exposed to caffeine may develop these symptoms from even a moderate dose.

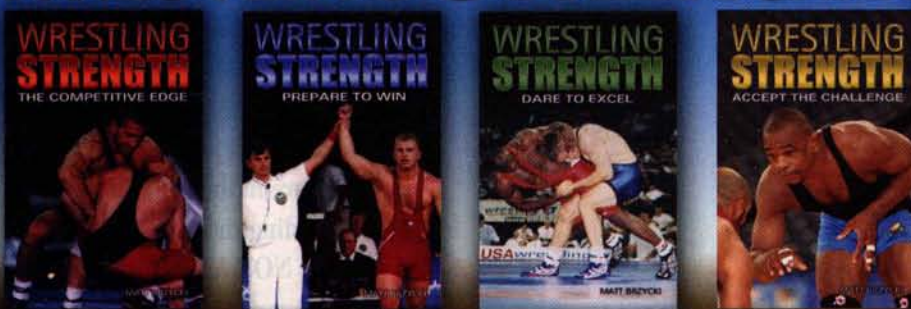
Concerns about the consumption of too much caffeine via energy drinks should not be taken lightly. In a three-year period, 265 cases of “caffeine abuse” were reported to the Illinois Poison Center (Chicago) of which 37 were from dietary supplements and 41 were from “caffeine-enhanced beverages.” In nearly 12% of the 265 cases, the patients were hospitalized for medical complications from caffeine.

THE LAST REP

There is an old adage that “you are what you eat.” But another adage should be “you are what you drink.”

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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