

SAILING FIT

By: Meka Taulbee

ACE Certified Personal Trainer

SAILFIT Inc

A Change in Menu

I've written a lot of articles that tell the sailors how they can improve their fitness and nutrition for a regatta. Now I'm going to switch things up a bit and talk about how the Yacht clubs can help the sailors during a regatta.

There are different types of regatta's that approach the idea of lunch on the water in different ways. Mainly in youth regattas you will find that at some point during the day the race committee stops and support boats hand out lunches on the water. Sometimes you will find the same in a larger regatta like a North Americans or US Championships. Yet still there are other regatta's that do nothing for lunches and it is up to the sailors to provide themselves with some sort of nourishment on the water. At most every regatta you will be able to find water being passed out in between races. I don't feel that any of these approaches are a bad idea, but I do think we can offer some better choices for the sailors that will benefit them and their regatta more.

If any of you have gotten training from me or been to one of our seminars and heard me talk you know that one of my biggest gripes is the lunches that are served on the water. I would say that 95% of the lunches served on the water look something like this:

- Sandwich on white bread with some variation of deli meat and cheese.
- Packets of Mayo or mustard
- Chips
- Cookie

While I wouldn't recommend this lunch at any time I certainly would not recommend it while you are racing. Here are a few reasons why.

- 1) White bread has the most sugar and the least nutritional content of any other type of bread.
- 2) Deli meats and cheese are pretty heavy on your stomach and take a long time for the body to digest. Even if they are kept in a cooler they don't last that long without starting to go bad. If they do last that long then we should wonder what they are putting in them to make them last.
- 3) While some condiments have a great shelf life they are hard to open and I have seen lots of them floating in the water. Sailors' hands are slippery and so are those little packets!

- 4) Chips are greasy and salty and hard for the body to digest. They give no nutritional value and certainly won't boost your energy.
- 5) Cookies are one of the worst. They are loaded with sugar and while they may give a quick sugar rush you will crash before you hit the first mark in the next race.

Sugars and salts will leave you feeling thirsty and looking for more water than your stomach has room for if you ate the whole lunch. This type of lunch will make you feel full and give you a short burst of energy. The type of sugar in these items is a simple sugar and will breakdown quickly leaving your body feeling like it hit a wall rather than energizing it. Think about what you ate at Thanksgiving. It's pretty similar to what this lunch looks like. Now think about what you did after you ate Thanksgiving dinner. Most people sat back and waited to digest so they could eat more. Did you loosen your belt buckle, take a nap, watch the game. I bet you didn't feel like thinking on your toes and ducking under the boom a few times in hopes of crossing the line first!

Yes, the food you eat can affect how you think as well. When your blood sugar levels get low it is hard for you to concentrate. If you can't concentrate and think clearly then it is hard to make good tactical decisions on the water. You will get frustrated more easily which often times leads to losing your focus. You have to keep your head in the game to put together a good regatta.

A few years ago I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to help a yacht club with their meal planning for the North American Championships. It has always been my feeling that the money spent on those big lunches could be put to better use or to cut the registration fee. My suggestion was to provide the sailors with a nice breakfast each day and at least one nice dinner. On the water I suggested giving them a protein bar (key word here is "protein") as much fruit as they wanted and as much water as they wanted.

The first morning of racing came and the Yacht Club put out a wonderful breakfast. They had real bagels, cereal, toast, eggs, juice, milk, water and other traditional breakfast items. This same breakfast was served every morning. I arranged for a company called EAS to help supply us with the bars. The Yacht club handed out as many bananas, apples, oranges and bars between each race as each sailor wanted. They also handed out tons of water. During the regatta they had a nice dinner as well. The cost of the regatta was down, as compared to most regattas, and the satisfaction of the sailors was up. I heard so many sailors stating that this was a better setup and how much they appreciated what had been done.

I am encouraging the yacht clubs to consider revising their "traditional" meals and trying something like this. I am encouraging the sailors to try this out and to encourage their yacht clubs to adapt a new way of doing things! Let's work together to make the sailors the best they can be. I am more than happy to help any club prepare for a regatta.

On another note I would like to give a big congratulations to Anna Tunnicliffe (www.annatunnicliffe.com) and Andrew Campbell (www.campbellsailing.com). They will be representing the Laser class at the 2008 Olympic Games. They have both worked very hard on their sailing and fitness and are a positive role model for all sailors. Please take a moment to look at their web-sites and don't hesitate to make a donation. It takes a lot to put together a good campaign and it certainly doesn't come for free. They are both very deserving.

As always, if you want to hear about a certain topic or have any questions about this experiment feel free to contact me. You can always find me at www.sailfit.com or email directly to meka@sailfit.com. I look forward to hearing from you