

Recommended Readings

By Matt Brzycki



It is estimated that at least 32 million books have been “published” in the last 5,000 years. Even if you exclude clay tablets and papyrus rolls, that still represents a lot of books. In 2005 alone, there were 172,000 new books or new editions of previous books published. It is unclear as to the exact amount of books on fitness and nutrition. But simply walk into any library or bookstore and you will quickly discover that the shelves are jam-packed with books on those topics. With such a plethora of books, which ones should you choose to read?

BOOK SUGGESTIONS

What follows are reviews of some of my favorite books on fitness and nutrition. Unlike most other books on those topics, these recommended readings offer safe and practical information in a no-hype manner. Included in the reviews are brief descriptions of the contents, information about the authors, some words of wisdom from the books and notes about the publishers.

Building Strength & Stamina (2nd ed.)

This is perhaps the most enjoyable and easiest-to-read book about strength and fitness. In fact, my opinion is that it is the single best book on strength and fitness that is currently available.

The information in the book is based upon scientific evidence not anecdotal reports. The book thoroughly examines all aspects of strength training and aerobic training. Included in the book are detailed descriptions for performing more than 50 exercises with machines and free weights. The book also discusses techniques for advanced training and offers sample programs.

The author of the book is Wayne Westcott, Ph.D. Dr. Westcott is one of the most prolific writers on strength and fitness in the world, having written more than 20 books and 1,000 articles/columns. He is also a highly popular speaker. Dr. Westcott has won numerous awards for his contributions to the strength and fitness industry including the Healthy American Fitness Leader Award from the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

Words of wisdom: “The key to effective high-intensity strength training is to put more effort into each set rather than to put more sets into your workout.”

The book has 223 pages with well more than 100 photographs and charts. It is published by Human Kinetics Publishers (2003).

Strength Training for Women

This book is an oldy but a goody. It contains a wealth of practical information that addresses the specific needs of women. The book has easy-to-follow instructions and provides information on many topics including myths and misconceptions, nutrition, program design and sample workouts along with detailed instructions for performing more than 60 exercises with free weights, machines, bodyweight and manual resistance.

The book is co-authored by three individuals: James Peterson, Ph.D., Cedric Bryant, Ph.D. and Susan Peterson. They bring a wealth of experience to the table: Dr. Peterson was a faculty member at the United States Military Academy at West Point for nearly 20 years and has more than 40 books to his credit; Dr. Bryant was a collegiate strength coach and is a frequent contributor to various fitness magazines; and Susan Peterson was the first female instructor of physical education at West Point and has more than 10 books to her credit.

Words of wisdom: “Women have a potential for muscular fitness particularly in their upper bodies - that usually remains untapped.”

The book has 155 pages with more than 100 photographs. It is published by Human Kinetics Publishers (1995).

ACSM’s Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription (7th ed)

With a very strong emphasis on science and written in a textbook-like style, this book is not for everyone. But if you really appreciate the scientific nuts and bolts of the training process, this book is a clear winner. It is, perhaps, the most frequently read and referenced book about health/fitness and exercise science on the planet. (More than 100,000 copies of the previous edition were sold.)

This 30th anniversary edition has grown considerably since the book was first published in 1975. Of interest to coaches and wrestlers (as well as physical-education instructors) are research-based recommendations for fitness testing, exercise prescription (for aerobic training, strength training and flexibility training) and weight loss.

There are a senior editor and two associate editors of the book, all of whom have doctoral degrees. It also boasts 16 authors, all of whom have either doctoral or medical degrees.

Words of wisdom: “Flexibility exercises

should be performed in a slow, controlled manner with a gradual progression to greater ranges of motion.”

The book has 366 pages with numerous tables and illustrations. It is published by Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

The Interval Training Manual

This book is, without a doubt, the most comprehensive resource on interval training that has ever been written. Simply, it is bursting at the seams with detailed information about the subject.

For the uninitiated, interval training is essentially a series of repeated segments or “intervals” of intense activity - such as sprinting alternated with periods of recovery. An example of this technique is to run a given distance at an intended pace, recover and then repeat the run-recover sequence until the workout is completed.

The book contains target times and recovery times for varying abilities of both male and female athletes along with recommended training progressions. Also included are pre-established interval-training workouts, 528 of them, to be exact (132 different workouts with four varying levels of difficulty). The workouts are given for a variety of venues, including basketball courts, football fields and outdoor/indoor tracks. In particular, coaches and wrestlers will benefit from the workouts that involve short intervals and shuttles.

The author of the book is Tom Kelso, the Coordinator of Strength and Conditioning at Saint Louis University. He has more than 20 years of experience as a strength and conditioning coach at the collegiate level, having worked previously at the University of Florida, Southeast Missouri State University and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Coach Kelso is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist by the National Strength and Conditioning Association and a Strength and Conditioning Coach Certified by the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association. He has trained athletes at the Olympic and professional levels, presented at various clinics and seminars and worked at several sport-related camps.

Words of wisdom: “All factors considered, better-conditioned athletes will not only potentially perform better in competition, but they can also reduce their risk of becoming injured.”

The book has 264 pages with hundreds of clear, easy-to-read charts. It is published by Coaches Choice Books (2005).

Speed & Agility Revolution

This unique book contains detailed information on the basic principles of speed and agility, warm-up and stretching, sprint mechanics, footwear and strength training. Also included are dozens of agility drills and descriptions of roughly 24 strength-training exercises. The final chapter is on program design which offers sample routines for improving speed and agility.

The author of the book is Jim Kielbaso, a highly respected authority on athletic development. Jim was a collegiate strength and conditioning coach for several years before taking his current position as the Director of the Total Performance Training Center in Wixom, Michigan. He is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist through the National Strength and Conditioning Association and has spoken at clinics, camps and conferences throughout the United States. Jim has trained literally thousands of individuals at all levels of competition including youth, scholastic, collegiate, professional and Olympic athletes.

Words of wisdom: "Superior athletic performance will never be achieved without excellent technical skills."

The book has 164 pages with more than 100 photographs and diagrams. The publisher of the book is Crew Press (2005).

Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook (3rd ed)

Undoubtedly, this is the most enjoyable and fact-filled book on nutrition that you can read. It is written in a highly clever and enthusiastic manner making an otherwise dry topic - pardon the pun - easy to digest. The book includes detailed information on eating strategies for breakfast and snacks, fueling before and after exercise, carbohydrates, protein, weight management, eating disorders and food obsessions. Also included are more than 65 "winning recipes" when preparing foods such as vegetables and salads, chicken and turkey, fish and seafood and snacks and desserts.

The author of the book is Nancy Clark, who is one of the most sought after sports nutritionists in the United States if not the world. She has a private practice located at Healthworks Fitness Center in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. Previously, Nancy was the Director of Nutrition Services at Sports Medicine Associates in Brookline, Massachusetts. Her clients have included untold numbers of collegiate, professional, elite and Olympic athletes in a variety of sports. Nancy holds the enviable distinction of being on a Wheaties box for their 2004 Olympic series.

Words of wisdom: "The more different types of foods you eat, the more different types of nutrients you consume."

The book has 406 pages with plenty of charts and diagrams. It is published by Human Kinetics Publishers (2003).

The Volumetrics Eating Plan

As the name suggests, this book is about

an eating plan not a dieting plan. While this may sound like doublespeak, there is a distinct difference between "eating" and "dieting" in that a diet typically does not teach you how to eat.

Volumetrics is based upon scientific research and common sense. Although a good deal of information is given for weight management, this revolutionary approach to eating can actually be used by anyone who wants to select nutritious and satisfying foods.

The book contains sound nutritional advice for breakfast; appetizers, starters and snacks; soups; sandwiches and wraps; salads and salad dressings; vegetables and vegetable dishes; meats; fish and shellfish; poultry; beans, rice and grains; pasta and pizza; and desserts and fruits. Also included is information on how to modify your favorite foods/recipes as well as menu planners, self-monitoring forms to track your daily food intake, charts and sidebars on healthy food choices and roughly 125 recipes.

One of the key aspects of the book is that it emphasizes the number of calories in a given weight of food. This is referred to as "energy density" or "caloric density." Eating foods with a low energy density - those that have the smallest number of calories in the largest portions - will mean that fewer calories are consumed without sacrificing satiety. Consider, for example, grapes and raisins. Essentially, raisins are dried grapes. In terms of weight and volume, 100 calories of grapes are more food - and more filling - than 100 calories of raisins.

This concept is especially intriguing if you consider the fact that people tend to eat about the same weight of food per day; not the same calories, the same weight. So if you eat the same weight of food each day, choosing foods with a low energy density will help you to lose weight (assuming, of course, that you do not reduce your level of

activity).

Foods that are less energy dense tend to have lots of water and fiber such as fruits, vegetables and soups. According to the book, someone who wants to lose weight should consume foods that have an energy density that's lower than 1.0. Using the previous example, grapes have 6.7 calories per gram which is an energy density of 0.67; raisins have 30 calories per gram which is an energy density of 3.0.

Bottom line: Volumetrics is a simple, practical, healthy and effective way to choose foods that are nourishing as well as satisfying.

The author of the book is Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., the Guthrie Chair of Nutritional Sciences and Director of the Laboratory for the Study of Human Ingestive Behavior at Penn State. Dr. Rolls has written three other nutrition books for health professionals as well as more than 200 research articles.

Words of wisdom: "Not only do you need to choose foods that are nutritious and enjoyable, you should make selections that will keep hunger at bay."

The book has 317 pages with numerous charts and graphs. It is published by HarperCollins Publishers (2005).

THE LAST REP

There are a staggering number of books on fitness and nutrition from which to choose. Your goal is to select those that offer information that is safe and practical without any hyped-up promises.

Matt Brzycki has authored, co-authored or edited 15 books on strength and fitness including *Wrestling Strength: The Competitive Edge*, *Wrestling Strength: Prepare to Win* and *Wrestling Strength: Dare to Excel*. These three wrestling books are available at all major bookstores or through Cardinal Publishers Group (800-296-0481).

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