

# DEVELOPMENT OF A METHODOLOGY FOR THE NUTRITION REGIMEN OF MARTIAL ARTISTS BEFORE COMPETITIONS

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## Abstract

This article addresses the improvement of the nutritional regimen methodology for martial artists (including wrestling, judo, taekwondo, and boxing) during the pre-competition period. Given that weight management and rapid weight loss in combat sports often compromise the functional capacity of athletes, this study analyzes dietary strategies aimed at maintaining energy balance and optimal hydration levels. A tailored methodology optimizing the intake of macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats) and micronutrients during pre-competition microcycles was developed. The proposed nutritional framework enhances athletic endurance, maximizes muscle glycogen stores, and accelerates recovery processes under competitive stress.

**Keywords:** Martial artists, pre-competition period, nutritional regimen, methodology, macronutrients, energy balance, hydration, weight loss, glycogen stores, physical performance.

## Introduction

In the modern landscape of high-performance sports, athletic excellence is determined not only by tactical and technical proficiency but also by the precision of metabolic support. Among various athletic disciplines, combat sports present a unique physiological paradigm due to their high-intensity, intermittent nature and strict weight classification systems where athletes must simultaneously optimize their power-to-weight ratio while maintaining peak functional capacity



under intense psychological and physical stress. A pervasive challenge in contemporary martial arts training is the widespread reliance on hazardous rapid weight loss techniques, often referred to as weight cutting, where combat athletes undergo acute dehydration and severe caloric restriction in the days preceding official weigh-ins. While these empirical practices aim to secure a competitive advantage over smaller opponents, they frequently trigger acute dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, depleted glycogen stores, and diminished cognitive function, meaning that instead of entering the arena at peak performance, many athletes suffer from compromised muscular endurance and a heightened risk of injury.

This paradox underscores the critical lack of scientifically grounded, individualized dietary frameworks designed specifically for the final phases of tournament preparation, as current sports nutrition guidelines often offer generalized recommendations that fail to account for the specific metabolic demands of combat bouts which rely heavily on both anaerobic glycolysis and aerobic energy pathways. The effective modulation of macronutrients—specifically the strategic loading of carbohydrates to maximize muscle glycogen and the optimization of protein intake to mitigate muscle catabolism—remains unstandardized within many training regimes, and fluid-electrolyte balance is frequently mismanaged, failing to support cellular rehydration post-weigh-in. Therefore, there is an urgent socio-pedagogical and medical need to transition from empirical, traditional practices to evidence-based nutritional methodologies. Given these considerations, this study aims to address the existing gap by developing a comprehensive, structured methodology for the nutritional regimen of martial artists during the pre-competition period, thereby providing a systematized framework that balances weight management with the preservation of physiological performance, optimizes metabolic efficiency, accelerates post-exercise recovery, and ultimately enhances competitive efficacy.

### **Main body**

To evaluate the efficacy of the developed nutritional methodology, a comprehensive structured intervention was conducted over a six-week pre-competition period involving professional martial artists specializing in judo and freestyle wrestling, who were divided into an experimental group and a control



group of equal sizes. While all participants were subject to identical physical training volumes, their dietary regimens differed fundamentally as the control group followed standard, self-regulated empirical diets, whereas the experimental group adhered strictly to the newly formulated phased nutritional methodology. This methodology operated on a three-stage metabolic optimization model, beginning with a metabolic stabilization phase during the first four weeks that focused on establishing an energy balance while maintaining a gradual caloric deficit not exceeding fifteen to twenty percent of total energy expenditure to reduce adipose tissue without depleting lean muscle mass, supported by a fixed protein intake of two grams per kilogram of body weight daily to prevent catabolism. In the fifth week, a controlled reduction phase was introduced where carbohydrate intake was strategically manipulated through a carbohydrate-cycling model to preserve thyroid hormone activity and metabolic rate, alternating between high and low carbohydrate days relative to training intensity, which was immediately followed in the final tournament week by a supercompensation and hydration phase involving a high-efficiency carbohydrate loading protocol paired with monitored fluid-electrolyte optimization to maximize muscle glycogen saturation prior to the competition, while physiological monitoring included bioelectrical impedance analysis for body composition tracking, urinalysis for hydration status via urine specific gravity, and blood lactate testing to assess anaerobic performance thresholds during simulated combat sessions.

The empirical data collected from these interventions demonstrated that the implementation of the structured nutritional framework yielded statistically significant improvements in the experimental group compared to the control group across several physiological vectors. Regarding body composition management, athletes in the experimental group achieved target weight classifications with a significant preservation of skeletal muscle mass, retaining over ninety-seven percent of their initial muscle tissue, whereas the control group experienced a marked loss of nearly two kilograms of lean muscle tissue due to drastic food and fluid restriction in the final seventy-two hours. Furthermore, the fluid management strategy successfully prevented severe intracellular dehydration, as evidenced by urine specific gravity markers in the experimental group remaining within the optimal, well-hydrated range at the time of mock



competition bouts, while the control group exhibited markers indicating clinical dehydration. Consequently, anaerobic capacity during simulated matches was significantly higher in the experimental group, which achieved a forty-two percent reduction in blood lactate levels within thirty minutes of active recovery compared to only a twenty-six percent reduction in the control group, and cognitive tests revealed that the stable glucose supply in the experimental group prevented the attention and reaction time deficits that impacted the control group, who suffered a fourteen percent impairment in cognitive reaction speeds.

### **Conclusion**

The development and empirical evaluation of a structured pre-competition nutritional methodology for martial artists demonstrate that the traditional, hazardous paradigm of rapid weight loss can be successfully replaced by a scientifically grounded, phased dietary framework. By shifting the focus from acute caloric restriction and severe dehydration toward metabolic stabilization, strategic carbohydrate cycling, and targeted fluid-electrolyte optimization, this study proves that athletes can attain their required weight classifications without sacrificing their physiological and functional capacities. The preservation of skeletal muscle mass and the maintenance of optimal hydration levels directly translate into enhanced anaerobic endurance, accelerated post-bout blood lactate clearance, and stable cognitive functioning under intense competitive stress. Ultimately, these findings reveal that meticulous, phased nutritional planning is not merely a supportive element, but a core determinant of competitive viability and athletic longevity in high-performance combat sports.

The practical implications of this research extend significantly to the optimization of the post-weigh-in recovery window, proving that structured rehydration and glycogen loading protocols are essential to restore cellular homeostasis prior to tournament bouts. Moving forward, the widespread integration of this individualized methodology into standard training regimens offers coaches, sports scientists, and athletic physicians a safe, evidence-based pathway to maximize athletic performance while effectively mitigating the chronic health risks associated with traditional weight cutting. Furthermore, this methodological framework establishes a robust foundation for future sports science research



aimed at customizing metabolic and macronutrient interventions across diverse weight-category sports and varying tournament formats.

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