How Effective are Energy Drinks before a Game?

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Many young athletes are turning to energy drinks to boost their metabolism and energy before a game or a workout at the gym. The question here is: does it really boost your energy level? A 2009 study performed by Canadian professors of Kinesiology and Health Studies investigated the effect of sugar-free Red-Bull energy drink (main ingredient is caffeine) on high-intensity run time-to-exhaustion in young adults *1. In this study, they separated physically active university students from both genders into two groups; one consuming sugar-free Red Bull. The other group consumed a placebo (non-caffeinated, sugar-free, lemon-lime flavored soft drink, tonic water, lime juice). Both groups showed no significant differences in their performance.

So, if energy drinks don't show any performance boosting capabilities, what can an athlete drink before a game or a workout to stay hydrated, restore lost electrolytes? An electrolyte drink like the caffeine free, gluten free, Gatorade can be a good choice. When we exercise, we sweat and as a result of the sweating, we lose a considerable amount of electrolytes. Laboratory tested Gatorade can restore those electrolytes *2. Gatorade contains minerals such as Sodium, Potassium, and Chloride which can restore the ones we lose while sweating.

Recently, an interesting 2009 British study found that chocolate milk showed good results for athletes. In this study, nine trained cyclists performed 3 trials, where they consumed chocolate milk (CM), or carbohydrate replacement (CM), or fluid replacement drink (FR). Athletes Cycled 51 % and 43% longer after drinking CM than after ingesting CR or FR *3.

Accordingly, Keep yourself away from Energy drinks even if sugar free, as they showed no significant improvement in performance and you are consuming an unnecessary amount of caffeine. Caffeine has not been proven to show any improvement in athletic performance if consumed prior to a game. Instead turn to electrolyte drinks and/or chocolate milk, as they can be a better choice.

References

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