

## Proteins, carbs vie with snake oil

The sports nutrition category has long been a source of big arms, big egos and big money. And some big risk takers, too, as past steroid scandals have shown. And it's a category that seems especially susceptible to The Next Big Thing, whether it's muscle-building products, free radical scavengers or what have you, all hawked by athletes.

A recent scandal revolved around "geranium oil extract" used in sports supplements. Patrick Arnold, the driving force behind the Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative (BALCO), unearthed a compound originally patented in the 1940s as a decongestant that can function as a stimulant and goes by the names methylhexanamine (MHA) or dimethylamylamine (DMAA). He marketed pre-workout supplements under a variety of names containing the ingredient. Arnold cited DMAA as a constituent of the botanical geranium oil extract via a single scientific paper of dubious provenance out of China. A review by the American Herbal Products Association called into question some of the methodologies the paper used to come to its conclusion. Some in industry said DMAA is basically a lapsed drug, and the World Anti Doping Agency agreed, banning the substance in 2010.

Despite this and other black marks, sports nutrition remains a robust growth category. According to *Nutrition Business Journal*, the annual growth in the sales of sports nutrition supplements averaged 7.5 percent from 2000-2009 before shooting up to over 9 percent in 2010. *NBJ* predicts growth to prevail at about that level at least through 2013.

### Pumping with protein

The mainstay of workout products is protein. Many strength athletes have overdone protein in the past, but there's no doubt that a dose of protein at the right time boosts muscle recovery and growth. Whey is the big winner, with a claim to rapid digestibility. But casein and soy concentrates and isolates have big market shares, too.

Protein hydrolysates are another choice. "More companies and consumers are starting to look at the benefits of protein hydrolysates as opposed to regular protein concentrates and isolates," said Reto Rieder of DSM Nutritional Products. DSM markets a protein hydrolysate called Pep-toPro, which is the sole protein ingredient in a new PowerBar powdered performance drink product called Isomax.

### Continuing with carbs

To build those muscles or win that race, you have to have endurance. One superstar endurance-booster is ribose, a sugar metabolite that's a building block of the ATP energy molecule. Ribose adds only one calorie per gram but it has been shown to help the body better mobilize its energy reserves. On the other end of the calorie spectrum is Vitargo, a functional carbohydrate derived from barley starch that studies show enters the bloodstream faster than any other. "The Vitargo molecule is pure and unique and actually has a patent on it like a drug does," said Anthony Almada, CEO of Genr8, which markets a powdered product based on the molecule that packs 280 calories into each serving.

—Hank Schultz

52 weeks ending 4/16/11 SPORTS NUTRITION	Current \$	Year ago \$	% Chg
Ribose	\$1,255,855	\$1,186,557	5.80%
Guarana	\$2,719,134	\$3,319,464	-18%
Creatine	\$3,229,379	\$2,941,596	10%

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