



Recovery Products

Training hard is only part of the fitness equation and without optimising recovery you can end up going backwards. **Nik Cook** profiles five products that'll make sure your rest time is maximising your workout time!

Mammoth Mattress

£449.00 (Double)

www.mammothsport.com

There's nothing guaranteed to scupper your training than a few poor nights' sleep in a row. Hard training can also negatively affect your quality of sleep forming a vicious circle. Restless or sore limbs can easily keep you awake when your body is crying out for sleep unless your bed and mattress is spot on. I first realised this when I hurt my lower back eight years ago cycle racing over jarring cobbles in Belgium. For weeks after the initial injury I'd struggle to get to sleep due to the pain and always wake up feeling drained and sore. Eventually I stumped up for a memory foam mattress and it literally delivered an overnight cure. It wasn't all good news though. In the summer I'd badly overheat on the memory foam and as the mattress got older, it seemed to lose its memory! Researching for a new mattress, I came across Mammoth and decided to give one a go. Unlike a memory foam mattress, which relies on your body heat to make the foam mould to your body, the high-specification foam in a Mammoth mattress instantly gives support where your body needs it. Having been developed for spinal injury and intensive care use, it has been tested in environments where comfort and support really are a life or death matter. Combined with the high-tech foam, Mammoth mattresses are criss-crossed with 'Zoned V-Cut Castellations'. These not only give your body precise support but also act as effective air circulation channels. First impressions of the Mammoth on a cool spring night were that it felt immediately more supportive than my old memory foam mattress. Both my wife and I slept

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superbly and having raced a time trial the night before which normally results in a sore lower back come the morning, I felt 100% ache free. I also found getting comfortable and falling to sleep after tough evening workouts far easier. As spring turns to summer, I'd always suffered from bad overheating and sweating during the night but with the Mammoth, I remained at a far more comfortable temperature and felt much less dehydrated in the morning.





Xendurance

€38.99 (30 days supply)

www.xendurance.eu

I'm always very wary and sceptical about sports supplements that promise direct performance gains. However, looking through the research data on Xendurance (Extreme Endurance in the US), the testimonials and results of sponsored athletes and friends and race rivals were raving about it. I decided to investigate further, but what finally convinced me to take the plunge and try the product was the positive reviews and endorsement given by Hywel Davis. Hywel should be well known to regular ultra-FIT readers having dominated the magazine's X Training Gym Challenges in the past. He's also a highly accomplished triathlete having won races from Sprint distance to Double Ironman and is known for his no-frills, no-nonsense approach to training and racing. If it worked for him, I reckoned it was worth a try. As well as providing electrolytes and anti-oxidants, the main role of Xendurance is as an acid buffer. The ergogenic effect of using acid buffers such as Sodium Bicarbonate is well-documented but unfortunately so are their side effects, which include digestive distress, acute wind and loss of bowel control. These are seen by most sane people as too high a price to pay for a Pb. However, Xendurance delivers acid buffering in a stomach friendly formula and the impressive studies on elite athletes seem to back up the claims of significantly improved aerobic threshold, reduced muscle burn, enhanced recovery and decreased muscle soreness. With a typical training load of 10-12 sessions per week, I started taking the prescribed 6 tablets per day. After a week my legs were definitely feeling less tired and heavy and my overall energy levels improved. Following a track session on a Monday evening, my legs are normally shot for my Tuesday morning run but this time they felt fresh and strong. I then carved a massive 40 seconds off my Pb for my local Tuesday evening 10-mile cycling time trial. I also noticed, when out on the bike, that as well as less overall 'burn' when pushing hard, I was more in control of regulating my effort. If I pushed into the red on a climb I was able to back off fractionally and recover whereas previously I would have had to ease right back. I've been really impressed with Xendurance and if you're looking for a significant boost to your race performance, training intensity and recovery I'd say give it a go.

Neovite Colostrum

£25.00 for 300g
(15-30 days supply)

www.neovite.com

Neovite is a dairy protein from milk taken in the first 48 hours after calving and includes colostrum. Our editor John Shepherd conducted an extensive review of the science and effectiveness of colostrum in issue 21-3 and made some very positive findings. For endurance athletes, there are a number of potential benefits that Neovite offers and that have strong scientific backing: The first is improved immune response. Up to a certain level endurance training improves immune response but as the volumes associated with serious running, swimming, cycling and multi-sport training increase this is diminished. Combine this with many endurance athletes doing their heaviest volumes of training over the winter months and any product that helps guard against sniffles, colds and flu is extremely attractive. Secondly improved



recovery from training. Of particular interest to endurance athletes will be a study on the Finnish Olympic Ski team that showed that the group taking colostrum, compared to a placebo group, had half the blood creatine-kinase levels (indicator of muscle damage), reported less fatigue and showed improved performance. I started to take Neovite at a dose of 10mg (1 level desert spoon) first thing in the morning on an empty stomach, I didn't suffer any digestive side effects and soon upped the dose to the recommended 20mg per day for improved recovery and performance. There was no sudden dramatic overnight change but looking back over my training diary, 6-8 weeks after starting on Neovite I was consistently reporting less muscle soreness and energy levels on a whole were higher. I also noticed that my ability to process food when training and racing was enhanced and I seemed able to remain hydrated more effectively especially when the temperature rose. I'd always suffered in the heat and would often have digestive stress during and after exercise but this seemed much improved when taking the Neovite. I'm now taking Neovite in the morning and post-evening training as a recovery drink and despite struggling with the taste sometimes, find the benefits outweigh this one minor gripe. It'll be interesting to see how it sees me through a hard winter's training and I'll report back in the spring of 2012.

The Sprinter Stick

£34.99

www.the-stick.co.uk

You can't beat a decent sports massage for flushing out and reviving sore muscles and for giving you a heads up about any potentially injury causing tightnesses or imbalances. In an ideal world, I'd like one daily, but time and money make that an impossibility. Self-massage is an effective compromise between proper treatments but getting deep enough with your hands alone is almost impossible. The Stick provides an easy and effective way to hit those troublesome tight areas. The Sprinter Stick at 48cm/19" I was supplied with is slightly

shorter than the original 61cm/24" version meaning that some of the upper body and back techniques weren't possible with it. However, for me as a runner and cyclist, it was all about my legs and in a highly scientific experiment, I spent 10 minutes every evening for a week rolling my quads, hamstrings, ITB's and calf of my right leg while neglecting my left! There's no doubt that by the end of the week I felt noticeably unbalanced with my right leg feeling significantly less heavy, sore and tight than my left. Balancing things out the following week, the 20 minutes spent each evening in front of the TV pummeling my legs with the Stick really helped keep my muscles in condition. Turning up for my two-weekly massage my therapist said that my muscles were nowhere near the appalling state they're normally in when he sees me - that was good enough for me to make the Stick a regular part of my post-training routine.



Compressport F-Like Full Leg

£70.00

www.compressportuk.com

Although the jury might still be out as to the performance benefits of compression clothing a number of studies strongly back up their effectiveness for aiding recovery. I've been a convert to wearing compression tights post racing and training for a number of years now and 100% believe that they help. I'm especially keen on them when I have to travel a long distance after an event and overnight after a tough race or training session. The problem with

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tights though is that under regular clothing they can be a bit on the hot side. The same overheating problem applies to wearing them at night and to get the degree of compression around your thighs and calves needed for them to be effective, the waist-band of full tights can be uncomfortably restrictive. These full-length stockings from Compressport deliver a great full-length compression effect without the drawbacks of full tights. I've found them to be extremely comfortable to wear both during and overnight and the amount of compressive feel they give is superb. With eight sizes on offer based around three leg measurements (calf, around the top of the knee and mid-thigh), getting an accurate fit was easy and the silicon hold-up strips around the top meant there was no sagging or slipping. They're also perfect for cyclists looking for leg warmers for those in-between spring and autumn days, as they don't compromise your short's pad. They also wicked water away brilliantly and can easily be removed and stowed in your jersey pocket mid-ride.

