

Girl athletes need to eat, too

Female athletes take on big meals to make up for burned energy

by **Christine Chang**

A voracious appetite isn't the classiest suggestion for ladies seeking advice on feminine demeanor. Instead, this kind of eating etiquette is stereotypically reserved for guys who sport towering physiques and bulging muscle. Girls, on the other hand, are supposed to be the conservative eaters, the weight-watchers, the elegant diners who help themselves to petite servings at the table. But when it comes to female athletes, the law of eating habits gets tweaked just a bit. Varsity basketball player junior Michelle Srikhundonr really takes things seriously when it comes to food and athletic performance. Going to bed hungry is never an option. For as long as she can remember, snacks and other foods in the Srikhundonr household have maintained a permanent stake of area across half the dining table. And especially during the basketball season, that stake of area gets pretty big.

"I can't concentrate on homework or go to sleep if I don't eat. It's like the first thing I do when I come home because practice makes me so hungry," Srikhundonr said.

From pastries to fruits to sneaky handfuls of Cheerios during class, Srikhundonr is no slow eater. In fact, she boasts a record of finishing one 13-ounce jar of Nutella in two days. Consequently, her mom must make daily trips to Marina Foods as a means of keeping up with Srikhundonr's consumption rate. On most days, Srikhundonr's mom cooks up a meal after coming home from work just as she is finishing her after-practice snack. But that's never a problem. Srikhundonr transitions heartily from snack to dinner, often without break.

Nutritional values also play an important role in Srikhundonr's vigorous eating habits. Since carbohydrates are vital components to a healthy diet for athletes, Srikhundonr does her best to make sure that she gets her fair share. One Saturday, Srikhundonr woke up at 4 a.m. to eat a quick bowl of pasta so that she would have four hours to digest the meal before that day's morning practice. A few mouthfuls later,



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NOM NOM Basketball player and junior Michelle Srikhundonr pumps in carbohydrates with pasta, a croissant, and cereal at lunch on March 4.

she was back in bed.

Similarly, varsity cheerleader and junior Lenira Chan eats in generous portions on days she has cheer practice. Physically and sometimes psychologically draining, the sport requires its athletes to maintain wholesome diets.

"After cheer practice I'm so hungry, I eat so much because I just get really exhausted," Chan said. "I stuff myself during dinner because I burn a lot from practicing."

The routines demand momentum and mental alertness, so much so that Chan "feel[s] like passing out" if she doesn't get the right amount of food she needs during brunch and lunch.

"Most of us eat in healthy portions," Chan said. "We don't starve ourselves, we don't try to fit in with the whole cheerleader stereotype. Even before competitions, a lot of my friends and I will buy the food they sell there and eat it."

Srikhundonr learned the hard way her freshman year when she lacked proper sleeping and eating habits. She would stay up chatting with friends until five in the morning. Then, after waking up, she would

be too tired to eat breakfast, which affected her athletic performance.

"People would throw the ball at me and it would just hit me because I wouldn't have my usual reflexes," Srikhundonr said.

But times have changed, and now Srikhundonr is sure to eat enough food daily to maintain a calorie intake that compensates for heavy workouts. She's a fan of midnight snacks, and whenever she's hungry and there's food up for grabs, Srikhundonr is rarely hesitant.

"Sometimes after practice a few of the [team] parents will bring in lots of fruit for us. We have this thing sometimes where we'll all try to shove as many grapes in our mouths as we can and see who can get the most. It's pretty funny to see a whole bunch of us with our mouths stuffed full of grapes," Srikhundonr said.

But whether it's grapes or sandwiches or even Marie Calender's pies, it seems guys aren't the only ones who routinely devour a mass of food or hold eating contests. Really, it's a girl thing too.