

# A Look Back at *Creatine*

BY BOB ROWBOTHAM, BFS PRESIDENT

The decision not to sell creatine at BFS may not have been popular, but it was the right one

The decision about whether or not BFS would sell the amino acid creatine monohydrate was the hot topic at our Annual Clinic Convention seven years ago. Creatine appeared to have some great benefits, especially for short-term strength and bodyweight gains. But we were skeptical.

From a business standpoint, we stood to make a lot of money selling this product. How much? Well, probably a lot, when you consider that it was estimated that creatine sales reached \$193 million in 2003. Even Wal-Mart sells it! Anyway, after much heated discussion, we took the matter to a vote and decided that selling creatine, and thereby endorsing its use, was just not right. Bottom line: Our priority at BFS has always been to put the welfare of athletes first, and there were just too many red flags associated with this product.

First, we didn't believe that creatine had been adequately researched, although we had already heard about instances of cramping and muscle pulls, especially from inferior imported products. Because creatine is considered a nutritional supplement, the US Food and Drug Administration does not require manufacturers to demonstrate the effectiveness or safety of the product, as it does with drugs.

At best, as with shark cartilage pills that were supposed to cure cancer, some supplements are simply worthless and, fortunately, pretty much harmless. Others, such as the herbal supplement

ephedra, have many undesirable side effects and allegedly have been linked to more than 150 deaths. Again, BFS could have easily sold ephedra products before they were banned by the FDA and made a considerable amount of money.

Another problem we had with creatine was that we were concerned that if we endorsed it, kids would take many times the recommended dosages. We've heard more than our share of nightmare stories of athletes overdosing on caffeine, causing serious problems that often resulted in athletes requiring medical attention. Perhaps there is no way to overdose on creatine, but we don't know that; and it's my guess that it would be difficult to get approval for a study on controlled overdosing on individuals under the age of 18.

Is creatine harmful? That's a question that only further research can answer, but in 1998 the FDA reported 32 side effects associated with creatine, including cardiac arrhythmia and even death. In 1999, the Journal of the American Dietetic Association published a survey on college athletes using creatine in which 31 percent reported experiencing diarrhea and 25 percent reported muscle cramps. But even more disturbing was research acquired by award-winning medical writer Dan Hurley. Hurly, in his book *Natural Causes*, says that between 2001 and 2003, the US Poison Center reported 733 adverse effects from using creatine, 334 that required hospital treatment and 11 that were life threatening.



Finally, we didn't want athletes to believe they wouldn't win without creatine or believe that if they took the supplement they wouldn't have to work as hard in the weight-room or pay close attention to their diets. And you have to always ask the question that perhaps one reason some athletes report less progress when they stop using creatine is that they were not getting enough protein in their diet in the first place.

## A Sensible Approach

Our current policy on supplements is to recommend a pharmaceutical-grade multivitamin/mineral supplement – and perhaps a fish oil supplement if fish is not a regular part of an individual's diet. One reason a multivitamin/mineral supplement is necessary is that soil qualities have diminished, and as such, a supplement can help bring the nutritional quality of our diet up to the standards of the past. And we specify *pharmaceutical-grade*, because estimates are that one fourth of supplements are tainted with products that could cause

an athlete to fail a drug test.

We also endorse a few convenient food products, such as powerful fruit juice loaded with antioxidants and a food bar that makes a great snack. These products are certainly a better alternative than drinking soda and eating candy bars. Protein powders can

be helpful – and we did sell them until our suppliers insisted on using harmful artificial sweeteners – but they are not really necessary with a good diet. Of course, we have no problem if a doctor recommends a specific supplement, such as a bone building formula for women, but that’s about as far as BFS

goes in recommending supplements.

So that’s our take on creatine. Yes, our critics will aggressively disagree with our conservative approach to nutrition and continue to sell their brands of creatine, and we can’t blame them. Selling creatine can be a profitable venture. But it’s just not the BFS way. BFS

# WINNING NUTRITION

BFS is proud to endorse and provide the full line of Pharmanex® nutritional products. Pharmanex products are used by athletes at all levels, from grade school athletes to Olympians. In the interest of helping athletes achieve physical superiority and enjoy optimal health, BFS recommends you start with the following Pharmanex products:



## > G3® Superfruit Juice

- Derived from carefully selected "Super Fruits"
- Provides strong vascular and cellular protection
- High in antioxidants
- Delicious!

## > G3® Superfruit Juice Pouches

- Same superior nutrition as G3 Superfruit Juice
- Convenient, spill-resistant pouches
- Each pouch provides two daily servings
- Delicious!



## > LifePak®

- The world's most complete and effective nutritional product
- High in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants
- Convenient, pre-sorted packages

## > XÔI Bar®

- Superior energy bar with G3 Superfruit Juice
- A food-based product with nuts, fruits and whole grains
- Low-glycemic carbohydrates to provide sustained energy
- High in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants
- Convenient, individually-wrapped bars for maximum freshness



## > LifePak® Women

- Scientifically formulated to fulfill the special needs of women
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- High in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants
- Convenient, pre-sorted packages

## > LifePak® Teen

- Specifically designed to fulfill the special needs of children 9 to 18
- Protects and nourishes growing bodies
- High in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants



## > Marine Omega

- Provides essential omega-3 fatty acids
- Rich in EPA and DHA for optimal health
- Promotes normal heart and brain function, immune and joint health
- Promotes healthy skin and natural anti-inflammatory response
- Free of harmful toxins, contaminants and heavy metals

To order these cutting edge nutritional products, and for advice on how to improve your dietary habits for optimal health and athletic performance, check out our website.



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