

Kyle



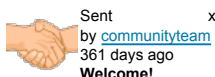
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Sports Stack

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Tennis Players Drop Gluten, Find Success

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Written by [kylestack](#) on 7/8/2011 2:46 PM

I've written about athletes' nutrition trends in this space – coconut water, Steve Nash's sugar-free diet – with some degree of skepticism. But a nutrition trend has arisen which I think might become commonplace among athletes as they learn how to properly fuel their bodies. Pro tennis players Novak Djokovic, the top-ranked men's player in the world, and Sabine Lisicki have experienced new levels of success on the court, as they've dropped gluten from their diet. Coincidence? Perhaps not.



Gluten is found in any product that's processed from wheat, barley or rye. It's what gives dough its elasticity; it's commonly found in bread and pasta, both of which are valued energy sources for many athletes. Djokovic and Lisicki eliminated gluten from their diets after nutritionists told them they were gluten-intolerant.

Djokovic went gluten-free [starting in 2010](#). The Serbian, who'd won only one major tournament in his career heading into 2011, has cleaned up this season with wins at the Australian Open, Wimbledon and five other tournaments. Lisicki sacked gluten from her nutrition plan [this season](#). She subsequently made it to Wimbledon's semi-final round – the first time the sixth-year pro had moved past the third round in any major tournament.

Whether these players' success has anything to do with going gluten-free is debatable. Lisicki complained of a lack of energy in a French Open loss, which came shortly after she dropped gluten. To rid oneself of gluten means eliminating the majority of eating options at restaurants and grocery stores.

It's unknown, based on their respective articles, whether Djokovic and Lisicki suffer from celiac disease, which is a condition that makes gluten-intolerant persons unable to absorb nutrients from gluten products.

Still, Djokovic and Lisicki's success since going gluten-free, and the media attention that has been devoted to the topic, might convince tennis players and other athletes to evaluate what a gluten-free lifestyle might do for them. The more athletes who take up the diet, the better we can determine what effect it has on their athletic performance.

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7/8/2011 4:49 PM

The Garmin-Cervelo bicycling team (currently leading the tour de France) went gluten free (or at least gluten reduced) a couple of years ago. A trend?

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