

## Physical Culture

GEAR TEST WITH Molly Kimball, sports dietitian

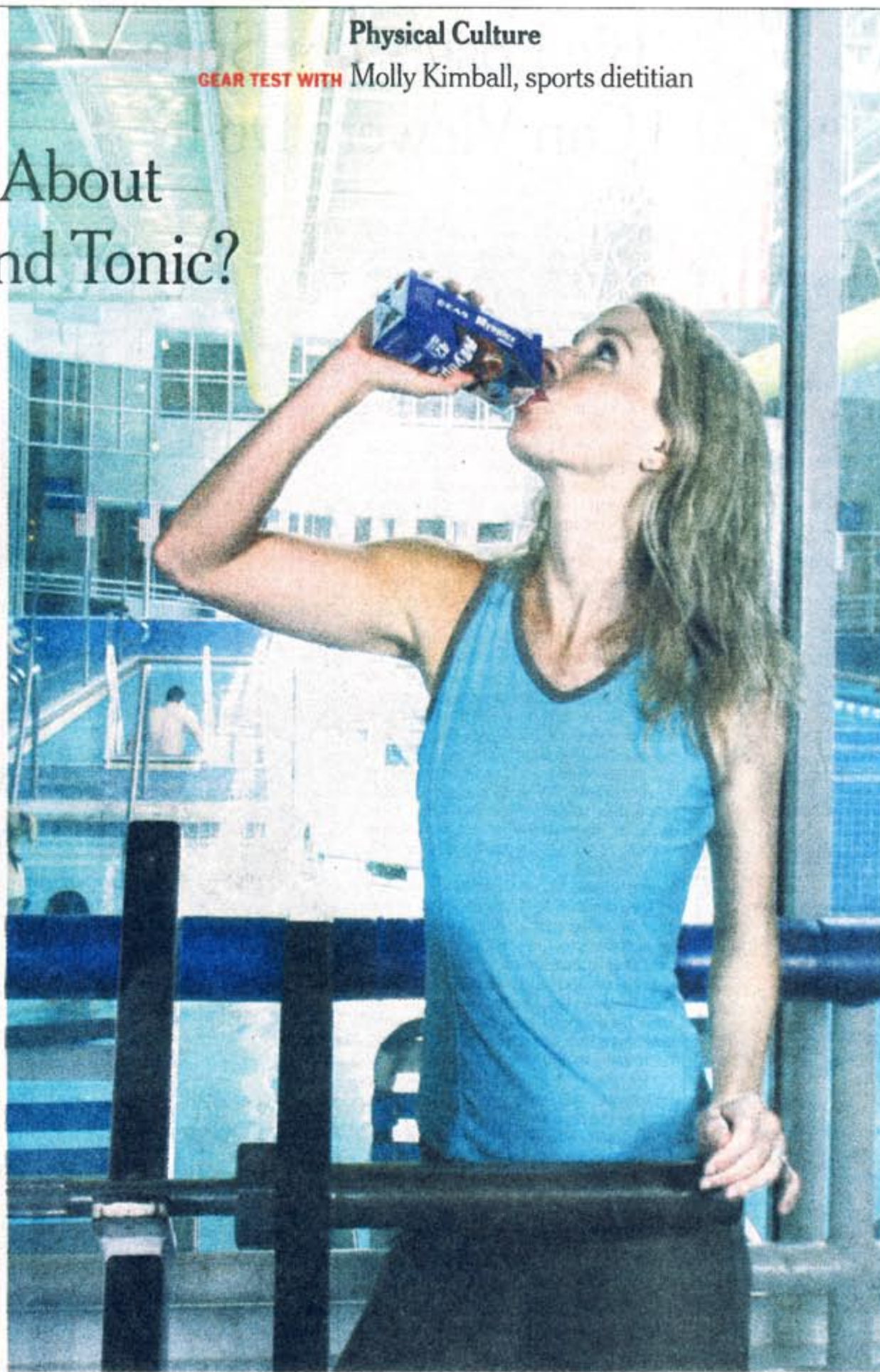
How About  
A Spin and Tonic?

**P**ROTEIN shakes used to be favored mainly by muscle heads, avid strength trainers who were looking to add bulk. But endurance athletes have discovered the benefit of ingesting protein along with carbohydrates after a challenging workout. In response, several new ready-to-drink shakes have hit the shelves.

"The big craze is for runners, cyclists and triathletes to use these shakes, helping them recover faster and exercise again sooner," said Thomas Chapple, a coach of endurance athletes in Mountain View, Calif., and the author of "Base Building for Cyclists." He pointed out that they are easy to digest and a convenient way to replenish muscle energy in the crucial 30-minute window after exercise.

To see if these shakes did speed post-workout recovery — and to give them a taste test — Molly Kimball, a multisport athlete and a registered dietitian who works at Elmwood Fitness Center in New Orleans, drank them after running, Spinning and strength training for at least 90 minutes.

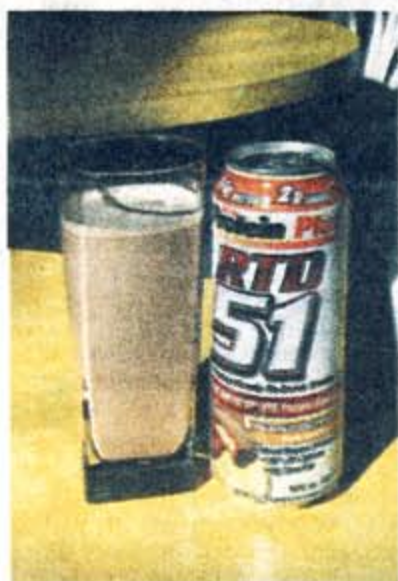
SARAH BOWEN SHEA



PHOTOGRAPHS BY PATRICK SALISBURY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

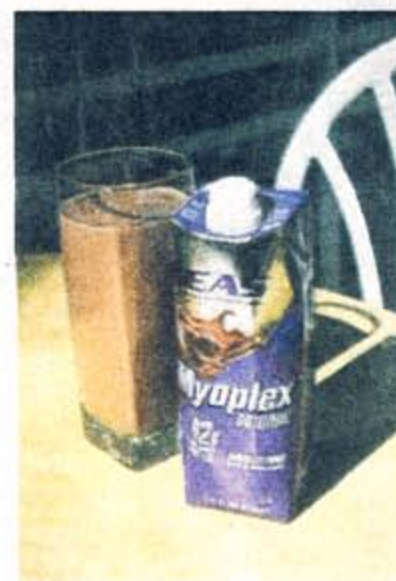


**GATORADE PROTEIN RECOVERY SHAKE** \$25.99 for 24 11-ounce cans, <http://gatorade.elsstore.com>. This shake had "slightly higher levels of sodium and potassium" than all but the Myoplex. Ms. Kimball appreciated the added electrolytes as she sweat heavily. For endurance athletes looking to speed recovery and avoid muscle soreness, the carbohydrate-to-protein ratio was "pretty decent" (45 grams to 20 grams), "better than the Myoplex, MET-Rx and Muscle Milk." Chocolate was her favorite, but she said all the flavors had "a slight metallic taste" straight from the can. It improved in a cup.



**MET-RX RTD 51** \$43.08 for 12 15-ounce cans, [www.metrx.com](http://www.metrx.com). Ms. Kimball thought she "would love the Peanut Butter Cup and Cookies & Cream" flavors, "but they were thin, watery and synthetic tasting." With 4 to 6 grams of carbs to 51 grams of protein, RTD 51 was "not ideal for muscle recovery," but "it could be used as a meal replacement shake."

**EAS MYOPLEX READY-TO-DRINK** \$49.95 for 12 16.9-ounce containers, [www.eas.com](http://www.eas.com). The chocolate Myoplex was "slightly gritty and chalky," but Ms. Kimball liked it for being "not too sweet." This drink "didn't have a great carbohydrate-to-protein ratio" (23 grams to 42 grams) yet the day after 90 minutes of running and Spinning, she had "no fatigue" in her muscles while exercising. She "absolutely loved the re-sealable container."



**CYTOSPORTS MUSCLE MILK** \$41.99 for 12 17-ounce containers, [www.gnc.com](http://www.gnc.com). Chocolate Muscle Milk, Ms. Kimball said, was "delicious — sweet, creamy, the closest to chocolate milk." Packing 330 calories and 17 grams of fat, this high-calorie drink kept her "full for hours." She worried that "the higher fat content could actually impair muscle recovery" by slowing digestion, but the day after a workout, she "didn't feel stale or fatigued."



**POWERBAR RECOVERY** \$6.95 for 4 10-ounce containers, [www.rei.com](http://www.rei.com). This was Ms. Kimball's "top pick" in terms of nutrients and flavor, especially the "smooth, sweet and creamy" vanilla. The chocolate was "a little overpowering." The carb-to-protein ratio (34 or 40, depending on flavor, to 13) was "excellent," she said. The evening after a two-hour morning workout, her "muscles didn't feel tight or achy."