

The 5:45 Bus: Meet-Day Fueling When Departure Comes Before Appetite

What a high school runner eats when the bus leaves at 5:45 a.m. and nobody is hungry — how to split the morning into two eating events, what actually survives two hours in a duffel bag, and the food-safety line that decides what goes in it.

ACCESS

Free resource

AUDIENCE

coach / parent / athlete

READ TIME

10 min

AUDIENCE

Coach + Parent + Athlete



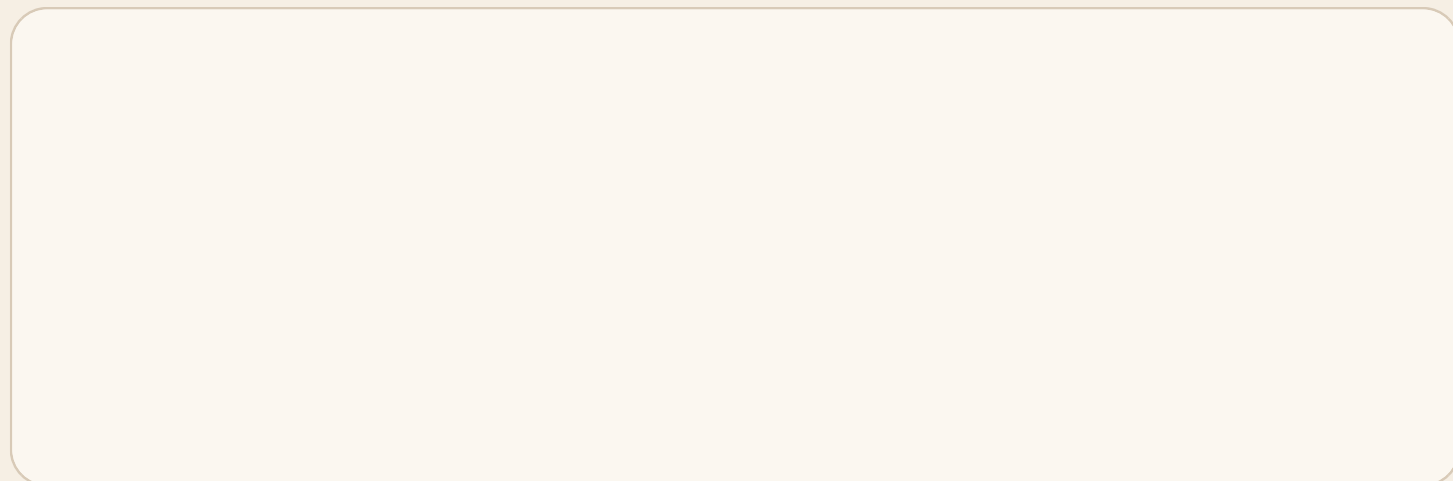
WHY THIS MATTERS

The 5:45 Bus: Meet-Day Fueling When Departure Comes Before Appetite

QUICK START

Start here

What a high school runner eats when the bus leaves at 5:45 a.m.



5:10 AT HOME

Small, liquid-first, no arguing

- A teenager's body clock still says night at 5am, so appetite is absent.
- Juice, milk or a smoothie goes down when a bagel will not.

ON THE BUS

This is the real breakfast

- Sixty to ninety minutes after departure, once they are actually awake.
- Bagel, peanut butter, banana, a second carton of milk.

THE BAG

Pack what survives the ride

- Bagels, bars, pretzels, hard fruit, milk boxes and pouches need no cooler.
- Sandwiches and cheese travel only with an ice pack.

The departure-to-gun math

Three numbers, written on the board Friday, in this order:

Departure time — what the school tells you.

Expected arrival — departure plus travel, plus the fifteen minutes the bus is always late.

Published start time — what the meet tells you, which is an estimate. (What to do when it moves is...

HOME SNACK

at wake-up.

BUS BREAKFAST

60–90 minutes after departure, or as soon as the bus is settled.

RACE-DAY FILTER

Protect the basics before you add extras

What creates avoidable race stress

- Trying new products close to the race
- Fixating on supplements while breakfast is still weak
- Skipping the race-week rehearsal

What usually matters more

- A familiar breakfast and timing plan
- Carbs and fluids that were already practiced
- A simple, repeatable bag and warm-up routine

When they still won't eat

The three moves, in order:

Shrink it, don't skip it. Half the smoothie. One piece of toast instead of two. A smaller version...

Liquid before solid. Chocolate milk, juice, or a smoothie will go down when a bagel won't.

Move it later, not earlier. On a bus morning, later is available in a way it isn't on a home...

When to refer

Almost all of this is logistics, and logistics is a coach and a parent's job.

An athlete who cannot eat anything on any competition morning, across a season, even the small...

Not eating that doesn't stop at meet mornings — an athlete who is under-eating across normal...

Vomiting, or significant stomach pain, at most meets rather than occasionally.

Any pattern where food avoidance on meet days looks deliberate rather than nervous. That is a...

References

CARSKADON MA. SLEEP IN ADOLESCENTS

the perfect storm. *Pediatr Clin North Am.* 2011;58(3):637-647. PubMed 21600346

Thomas DT, Erdman KA, Burke LM. American College of Sports Medicine Joint Position Statement....

de Oliveira EP, Burini RC, Jeukendrup A. Gastrointestinal complaints during exercise: prevalence,...

Desbrow B, McCormack J, Burke LM, et al. Sports Dietitians Australia position statement: sports...

United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service. "Danger Zone"...

What coach says

"Departure time is a fueling decision, and I'm going to tell you what it means before you go home Friday." The bus time is on the schedule; what the bus time requires is not.

Departure time is a fueling decision, and I'm going to tell you what it means before you go home Friday." The bus time is on the schedule; what the bus time requires is not. A coach who says out loud "we leave at 5:45, so eat something small at home and bring your real breakfast onto the bus" has just solved the most...

QUICK REFERENCE

Key targets to keep in view

Use these as planning anchors when you turn the manual into weekly actions.

EATING EVENTS

PLAN OFF

Two: home, then bus

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

Arrival, not departure

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

BAG SAFETY LINE

2 hours, 1 above 90F

Treat this as a decision anchor, not a trivia stat.

COACH TAKEAWAYS

Coach reminder

These are the cues worth repeating before the week gets busy.

Say it Friday: One sentence at the end of practice fixes most of this.

Name the bus time and what it means for breakfast.

Anchor on arrival: Departure is predictable; the meet is not.

Place eating off arrival, then off the real start.

If they will not eat: Shrink it, do not skip it.

Liquid before solid, and the bus is the second chance.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Use it this week

Name the bus time and what it means for breakfast before the team goes home on Friday.

BOTTOM LINE

Something small at home, the real breakfast on the bus, and a bag packed for the ride.

RELATED TOOL

Race week planner

Map the race week around the manual.

Source topics: early bus meet day • 5 am breakfast athlete • what to pack for a cross country meet • meet day bus food • food safety athlete cooler • high school meet departure