

Fight week—arguably the most chaotic, adrenaline-fueled, and sleep-deprived time in a combat athlete’s career. Between juggling media obligations, weight cuts, rehydration, and travel, the stressors stack up quickly, risking the fighter’s performance come fight night. As someone who’s covered over a decade of boxing and MMA camps, I’ve seen firsthand how these stressors can derail even the most disciplined athletes.



In this comprehensive guide, I’ll break down the essential elements every fighter and team should account for during fight week: from **sleep banking** and **light management** to a well-crafted **locker room plan**. Along the way, I’ll embed a must-watch YouTube interview and explain why understanding batch lab reports—or Certificates of Analysis (COA)—can protect you from dangerous supplement claims.

Why Fight Week is a Perfect Storm for Sleep Debt and Disrupted Physiology

First, let’s acknowledge the reality: fight week is rarely relaxing. It’s a dense maze of last-minute weight cutting, photo shoots, press conferences, strategic media appearances, and travel logistics, often within multiple time zones.

- **Weight cut dehydration and fragmented sleep:** Fighters often experience significant dehydration during their final weight cut days, which leads to interrupted and shallow sleep cycles. Your body simply isn’t in recovery mode when it’s battling electrolyte imbalances and thirst.
- **Rehydration night physiology and interruptions:** On weigh-in night, fighters start rehydrating, which means frequent bathroom trips and disrupted rest. Even though you are “refueling,” your body’s recovery sleep is often fragmented.
- **Time zone shifts and circadian disruption:** International events or cross-country fights compound the issue. Jet lag is no joke when you’re trying to balance weight management and mental focus under pressure.

Fight Week Scheduling Chaos: What Does the Rulebook Say?

It’s tempting to cram media sessions, open workouts, and community appearances into the same days—and often multiple in one day—but what does the rulebook say about proper scheduling? There aren’t always strict

regulations regarding event scheduling, but the *Unified Rules of MMA* and major boxing sanctioning bodies emphasize fighter safety and medical checks.

This means teams should proactively [how to fix sleep debt](#) design schedules that optimize rest windows and avoid unnecessary time conflicts that disrupt sleep or nutritional routines. Here's why:

1. Disrupted sleep reduces reaction times and cognitive clarity—critical for fight night.
2. Weight-cut dehydration worsens with limited rest and stress.
3. Frequent interruptions during rehydration delay proper glycogen restoration.

Sleep Banking: How to Build Resilience Into Fight Week

If you haven't heard of **sleep banking**, it's a strategy where athletes accumulate extra sleep in the nights leading up to a stressful period—in this case, fight week. Think of it like a sleep savings account.

Research shows that banking extra sleep (by going to bed earlier or sleeping in) during the week before fight week can help offset the inevitable sleep debt accumulated during media obligations, travel, and weight cuts.

Steps to Implement Sleep Banking:

- **Start Early:** At least 5-7 nights before fight week, increase nightly sleep to 8.5-9 hours.
- **Consistent Bedtime:** Stick to a regular bedtime schedule for circadian rhythm stability.
- **Limit caffeine and screen time:** Blue light disrupts melatonin production—see *light management* below.
- **Power naps:** 20-30 minute naps can help top off your sleep reservoir if your schedule allows.

Light Management: The Secret Weapon in Circadian Health

One overlooked factor is how light exposure affects your circadian rhythm—especially when fight week, travel, or media commitments last late into the night.

- **Morning sunlight:** Exposure to natural light right after waking helps reset your internal clock, so get outside ASAP—even if for 15 minutes.
- **Blue light avoidance:** Avoid screens at least 1 hour before bedtime or use blue light blocking glasses or apps.
- **Flashlight tricks:** Some teams use timed, dim red light exposure to mimic dusk for smoother melatonin release.

For fighters traveling across time zones, timed light therapy can be a game-changer to adapt faster to new rhythms. This requires careful planning around when to seek light and when to avoid it relative to your target timezone.

Locker Room Plan: More Than Just Towel and Gloves

Far too many fighters underestimate how crucial a solid **locker room plan** is for managing both nerves and logistics on fight day. Your locker room environment and pre-fight routine are where mental focus and physical readiness align.

Key Components of a Locker Room Plan

Aspect Details Purpose Equipment Checklist Wraps, gear, nutrition, hydration, towels, timing devices Eliminate last-minute scrambles Media Timing Scheduled interviews with minimal interference Protect mental focus Warm-Up Space Quiet area for stretching and mental prep Optimize physical readiness Hydration & Nutrition Pre-planned snacks and fluids post-weigh-in Maintain energy without stomach upset Support Team Coordination Clear responsibilities for cutmen, coaches, and medical checks Streamline fight night workflow

Remember: a locker room plan isn't just paperwork—it's rehearsed and adaptable. The aim is to anticipate potential disruptions (e.g., delayed medical checks or last-minute media requests) and maintain calm throughout.

Batch Lab Reports and Certificates of Analysis (COAs): Know What You Are Putting Into Your Body

Supplements are a huge industry in combat sports, but supplement talk without scientific backing or batch lab reports is my personal pet peeve. If a supplement claims it will “instantly improve your sleep” or “sharpen your reflexes without trial,” I ask first— *“what does the rulebook say?”* (And by rulebook, I mean scientific rigor.)

Batch lab reports or **Certificates of Analysis (COAs)** verify purity, potency, and absence of banned substances for each supplement batch. Without these, you risk contaminated products or inconsistent dosing that can negatively impact your weight cut, sleep, or fight performance.



Before you toss any supplement into your routine during fight week:

1. Request the manufacturer's COA for the specific batch number.
2. Verify third-party testing that includes anti-doping screening.
3. Avoid vague or exaggerated claims without published research.
4. Consult your coaching or medical team.

Practical Fight Week Timeline Overview

Day	Focus	Key Actions	Notes
Monday-Tuesday	Sleep banking & hydration	Increase sleep time, hydrate, light management (morning sun, limit screens)	Start slow weight cut if applicable
Wednesday-Thursday	Weight cut & schedule optimization	Maintain sleep schedule, plan media sessions around rest, batch COA checks for	

supplements Stick to locker room plan draft Friday (Weigh-in) Rehydration & rest Post weigh-in nourishment, controlled hydration, minimize bathroom disruptions with timing Light exposure management for circadian alignment Saturday (Fight night) Final readiness Locker room plan execution, warm-up coordination, mental focus routines Stick to hydration/nutrition plan, avoid last-minute distractions

YouTube Interview: Sleep Strategies with Dr. Michael Breus

For those who want a deep dive into practical sleep strategies combat athletes can apply, here's an excellent interview I recommend. Dr. Michael Breus, a clinical psychologist and sleep specialist, breaks down how to optimize sleep under pressure:

Final Thoughts

Fight week might be chaotic, but with deliberate strategies around **sleep banking**, **light management**, and a robust **locker room plan**, you can minimize physiological and psychological disruptions. Pair this with informed supplement choices backed by batch lab reports or COAs, and you're setting yourself up for the best chance at peak performance.

Remember, the bell never rings for "relaxation night" at weigh-ins or media sessions. Your job is to anticipate the chaos, control what you can, and keep the fight plan simple and science-based.

Stay sharp, fight smart.