The Art and Science of Low Carbohydrate Performance

Just read this book the other day, The Art and Science of Low Carbohydrate Performance, by Jeff Volek and Stephen Finney. Volek is a prominent dietary researcher, as well as an athlete, and Phinney is a physician who has done original research on ketogenic diets. The book is a follow-up to their previous book, The Art and Science of Low Carbohydrate Living, which I also read and is very worthwhile. The present book is in Kindle format for 6 bucks.

The book addresses questions and issues for athletes who want to eat a low carb, ketogenic diet. The current dogma is that athletes must consume high amounts of carbs. The dogma also states that at high levels of intensity in exercise, cells burn chiefly carbohydrates. Well, they do if one eats a high carb diet. The authors demonstrate that on a VLCKD (very low carb ketogenic diet), cells adapt to fat burning and, after a period of time to allow for “keto-adaptation”, typically 2 or more weeks, athletes on this diet can perform as well or better than others.

The authors discuss the importance of mineral replacement, esp. of sodium and potassium, the lack of which has typically hindered performance on the VLCKD in the past. The body handles these minerals differently when carbs are nearly absent from the diet. (A VLCKD contains under 50 grams carb daily.)

One issue I would have liked to see the authors address is for bodybuilders, among whom current dogma states that carbs must be eaten to gain muscle. Research shows that the added insulin spike from carbs does not produce any further growth than that produced by protein alone. OTOH, bodybuilders do like to go very low carb to shed fat.

All in all, quite a good book that can be read in a couple of hours.