

When fight week rolls around, it's tempting for fighters and fans alike to assume the following: "I'll get behind on sleep this week, but I'll just make it up later." Unfortunately, sleep — much like a fight camp itself — isn't that flexible. Several factors unique to fight week conspire to create intense sleep debt and limit recovery, undermining the idea that you can "catch up" on rest once the chaos settles down.

In this post, we'll break down why the concept of "making up sleep later" doesn't fightful.com hold against the reality of fight week, incorporating insights from physiology, circadian science, and the essential but often neglected battle with weight cuts and hydration. We'll also reference some batch lab reports and Certificates of Analysis (COAs) that highlight how supplements and recovery aids claim benefits but often lack rigorous verification. To tie it all together, we've embedded a detailed **YouTube interview with a high-performance sleep coach** who works with elite fighters, giving insider context to what the rulebook on sleep really says.

The Unforgiving Schedule of Fight Week: Chaos and Sleep Debt

Fight week is anything but restful. The schedule typically includes:

- Multiple media obligations: interviews, press conferences, weigh-ins
- Stringent nutrition monitoring combined with dehydration protocols
- Physical conditioning and pre-fight tactical sessions
- Social media engagement and promotional activities
- Travels often crossing time zones and disrupting circadian rhythms

These components create a perfect storm for fragmented sleep and progressive *sleep debt*. Sleep debt accumulates when sleep duration or quality falls short of individual physiological needs night after night, and it's critical to note what **the rulebook says**: According to sleep science, sleep debt is *not* fully recoverable by sleeping extra hours later — especially not in the compressed timeline of fight week.

What Does Sleep Debt Do to a Fighter?

Chronic sleep debt leads to:

- Reduced cognitive performance and slower reaction times
- Impaired judgment – critical in split-second decisions during bouts
- Decreased immune function, increasing the risk of illness during camp
- Disrupted hormonal balance impacting nutrition and recovery
- Heightened perceived fatigue and mood disturbances

Because these factors cumulatively degrade performance, "making up" missed sleep later is not just impractical but may be impossible to fully realize in a high-stress, short-duration window.

Weight Cut Dehydration and Fragmented Sleep

One of the most brutal contributors to sleep disruption in fight week is the weight cut, specifically the dehydration cut phase. Fighters strip water to hit their weight, which causes:

- Physical discomfort and frequent nighttime awakenings
- Electrolyte imbalances that interfere with the normal stages of sleep

- Increased heart rate and restlessness, making achieving deep sleep harder

Weight cuts disrupt the natural progression of sleep architecture — the cycles through NREM and REM sleep critical for cognitive and physical restoration. Attempts to “make up” sleep after weigh-ins face the physiological barrier that these critical sleep stages were diminished or skipped entirely.

The Science of Sleep Fragmentation During Weight Cuts

Studies on dehydrated subjects show a significant increase in micro-arousals and lighter sleep stages, effectively decreasing overall sleep quality. So while a fighter may spend 7-8 hours in bed, the effective restorative sleep is far less during intense weight cuts.



Rehydration Night Physiology & Sleep Interruptions

The night following weigh-ins is often assumed to be the catch-up night. Fighters rehydrate aggressively, consuming fluids and electrolytes to restore performance capabilities. However, this creates another challenge:

- Increased urination frequency due to rapid fluid shifts
- Discomfort from sudden changes in gut and kidney function
- Potential gastrointestinal distress from reintroducing foods and supplements

These factors cause repeated awakenings, impairing sleep continuity exactly when recovery is most critical. The body is actively engaged in internal physiological recalibration, not restful restoration. For this reason, the “make-up sleep night” after weigh-ins is often fragmented and not equivalent to naturally achieved deep sleep.

Supplement Claims and the Importance of Lab Verified Recovery Aids

Fight weeks have spurred a booming market of supplements promising “instant recovery” or “better sleep tonight” benefits. But as someone who covers fighters and camps intimately, the first question is always: **What does the lab report say?** Without valid Certificates of Analysis (COAs) or batch lab reports verifying contents, these claims are suspect.



For example, some supplements claim to enhance sleep with melatonin or magnesium, but the exact dosage and purity vary widely across batches. Reliable COAs provide transparency, but many products used by fighters lack proper documentation. Without verified quality, such supplements at best provide placebo effects and at worst introduce unexpected side effects that further disrupt fight week recovery.

Time Zone Shifts and Circadian Disruption

Travel during fight week adds an extra layer of complexity. Fighters commonly cross multiple time zones, leading to acute circadian disruption. Our internal clocks, regulated by light exposure and hormonal rhythms, take time to realign — often several days to weeks, depending on the number of zones crossed.

- Misaligned circadian rhythms delay sleep onset and shorten duration
- Daytime alertness and energy fluctuate unpredictably
- Digestive issues and mood instability feed back into poor recovery

Trying to “make up” sleep in a post-fight week when circadian rhythms are scrambling is therefore just another challenge. The body can’t simply bank sleep hours as if they were currency; each night’s sleep quality hinges on many synchronized biological systems.

Embedded Expert Insight: Sleep Coach Interview

Below is a YouTube interview with Dr. Samuel Conway, a sleep coach who specializes in combat sports. He breaks down the details of how scheduling chaos, weight cuts, and circadian misalignment make sleep during fight week uniquely challenging. Watch as he explains why “catching up” on sleep post-event is not straightforward and why fighters and their camps need structured approaches to mitigate debt *during* fight week, not just after.

Table: Summary of Fight Week Sleep Disruptors and Recovery Barriers

Disruptor	Effect on Sleep	Impact on Recovery	“Make-Up” Sleep Feasibility	Fight Week Scheduling	Shortened sleep opportunity, stress-induced insomnia
Weight Cut	Dehydration	Fragmented, shallow sleep	Suboptimal muscle and cognitive recovery	Very low — architecture disrupted	Rehydration Night
		Frequent awakenings, discomfort	Unstable sleep cycles during critical		

rehydration Low — sleep not restorative Time Zone Changes Circadian rhythm misalignment Impaired hormonal regulation, mood Low-to-moderate — depends on adjustment methods Unverified Supplements & Aids Possible adverse reactions Potential sleep interference or placebo Uncertain — depends on product quality verified by COA

Conclusion: Plan Sleep Ahead — It's Not a Flexible Resource

So, why can't you just make up sleep later during fight week? Because **sleep is not flexible** and the physiological disruptions caused by fight week routines, weight cuts, rehydration efforts, and travel create barriers that can't simply be erased by catching extra hours later. Sleep debt accumulates in ways that cast shadows on cognitive performance, immune function, and mood — all critical for a fighter's success.

Recovery limits are real and must be respected in the planning phases of camp and fight week. Instead of relying on "making it up later," fighters and their teams should implement prioritized sleep hygiene, evidence-based supplementation verified by batch lab reports and COAs, and carefully managed schedules that minimize circadian disruption whenever possible.

Remember: sleep is a cornerstone of performance — not a luxury to be postponed.