

# Luke Kuechly Stays Hungry

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As the youngest-ever recipient of the AP NFL Defensive Player of the Year Award, 25-year-old Luke Kuechly is already being hyped as the best linebacker of his generation. But even that might not do justice to this young man's impact on the [professional game](#).

A first-round draft pick for the Carolina Panthers in 2012, the Boston College grad grabbed the franchise record for tackles in a season with 205, and the following year, when he won that big award, he broke the NFL record for tackles in a single game with 26. His pick six in the NFC Championship Game last year helped take his team to the [Super Bowl](#), where he racked up 10 tackles and a sack... while fighting through a torn labrum.

Reward for his troubles? A five-year, \$62-million-dollar contract extension! So with the 2016 season quickly approaching—the Panthers kick off their preseason slate at Baltimore this Thursday night—we tracked down “Super Luke” to talk tackling, [training](#), concussions and one very busy day in the life of his diet. Oh, and hunting and fishing, of course.

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## **You hold the record for most tackles in a game with 26. Think that number will go up this year?**

We’ll see what happens. If we’re on the field that much, it might not be a good thing. Fortunately we won that game. And as long as we win the game, it doesn’t matter how many tackles I get. As long as I’m doing my job and we go out there and win, I’ll be happy.

## **You suffered a concussion early on last season [Week 1 vs. the Jaguars, in a collision with running back T.J. Yeldon]. Can you tell us what that was like? Did you know right away that something was wrong?**

I hit the guy and I kind of knew something was up. So I sat down and my training staff came out and did a really good job of trying to assess the situation and figure out what needed to happen—[they] handled it very well. The concussion protocol that’s been put in place for the NFL is really fantastic. We went through all the steps of that three-and-a-half week program. The guys who handle it for the Panthers took it really seriously, and they do a great job. Once all of the symptoms were gone and I passed all the tests, I was good to go.

## **What was it like making it to the Super Bowl?**

As a young boy it’s something you dream of. You just hope that you get there. We had a great season, we had a lot of fun. Our fans were awesome. It was a special year, and obviously we wanted to win the game, but an experience like that is something that you have for the rest of your life. And now we’re just going to work our butts off to get back.

## **How have you been preparing for the upcoming season in terms of fitness and training? Do you stick with a specific regimen?**

We have a good program at the stadium. There’s a group of guys who get together pretty much every day to get out there and run. And then we hit the weight room. So we’re there four to five days a week and on the field we try to incorporate different aspects of what we do in a game.

We have three or four different conditioning programs that we’ll run during the week. There’s some agility stuff that mimics catch drops or breaking on routes, and changing direction within a play. So you have various cone drills, and

different shuttles that you can do to work through that. Then you have your linear speed, which is primarily acceleration and sprint work that works on top speed, to the point where if you're working toward a ball carrier, that top end speed will kick in after five or 10-yards. And we have single-leg movements, biomechanical things. So you're moving over hurdles just to stimulate explosive power as well as landing mechanics.



### **What about your diet?**

We have some nutritionists who come in and help us out with that stuff. And I recently partnered with [Eat The Bear supplements](#). The mindset behind their products is clean, pure and very transparent. So it's beneficial for me to work with these guys.

### **What changes have you noticed in your body from clean eating?**

The thing it allows you to do is put on lean muscle. You've got to put on weight the right way. You can put on weight easily by eating poor stuff but doing it right is a little more difficult. You're eating chicken, you're eating fish, you're eating clean, red meat—stuff that protein-wise is leaner, but more difficult to add up calorie-wise, so you may have to eat some more. And that transitions to your carb intake, too. So you need complex carbs like quinoa, brown rice, sweet potatoes—stuff that's going to help the carb aspect of your nutrition, but it's more than eating a hamburger bun.

### **So what does a day in Luke Kuechly's life look like in terms of food?**

I wake up, my breakfast is usually oatmeal, and I throw in my protein granola, and a big scoop of peanut butter, honey and berries. And a banana with peanut butter toast.

Then when I go to workout, I take my [Eat The Bear pre-workout supplement](#). After I workout, in that little window I take [Eat The Bear post-workout](#) in a shake.

Next, we transition into lunch. I usually have two chicken breasts, maybe a chicken breast sandwich with lettuce and tomato. I'm going to have a carb, too, so maybe a sweet potato with some quinoa or rice.

I have a snack before dinner, which may just be a shake with [protein powder](#).

Then you have to get your carbs to help translate that protein in your body, so dinner may be a filet of salmon, and I

rotate through kale salad or spinach salad with nuts or berries or other different variations of veggies to help get those carbs in.

**You have some hobbies outside of football too—hunting and fishing with your brothers.**

Yeah, I'm a big fisherman. I've been fishing since I was a little kid. Especially down here in Charlotte, there's a lot of opportunity to do that. You've got some good spots up in the mountains that are within two hours, and you can scoot over to the beach. And then you can run down to Charleston and fish in some of the canals and look for red fish or you can head out offshore and do some stuff, too.

**What are you looking forward to most?**

Just getting back out there with all the guys. I miss that portion of the game during the offseason, because my buddies are going back to where they're from or going on vacation, so I don't get to see them a lot. But once training camp rolls around they'll be there, and we usually have a lot of fun.