

The Sports RD advantage



Sports RDs on the rise in high profile athletic programs

Let's face it, it took a while. But "nutrition" is finally being taken seriously at many of the larger, most high profile athletic programs in the U.S., and there's good reason for that. As CPSDA grows in membership and stature, many more of its core members are demonstrating that proper management of the food supply, dietary supplements and anti-doping procedures virtually pays for itself.

The single best way a national not-for-profit organization like CPSDA can benefit athletes and athletic programs is to help develop more Registered Dietitians and students of dietetics into well-rounded and properly prepared Sports RDs.

Specializing as a Sports RD has never been more challenging. We have a global food supply today, adding to the challenge of food safety inspections. We have an ever burgeoning variety of dietary supplements to choose from, some of which contain ingredients not found on the label. And everyone in sports knows the challenge of keeping up with ever-evolving anti-doping efforts to protect athletes from compromising their eligibility with performance-enhancing drugs.

Sports RDs are on the rise, and further evidence of that arrived in the summer of 2011 in the form of a national Associated Press story, which we reprinted on the back side of this document, courtesy of AP.

7 key benefits of Sports RDs:

Expertise that pays for itself

Food supply management & monitoring

Selecting the right combination of healthy whole foods for an athletic population; and monitoring food safety to prevent illness.

Dietary supplement control

Supervising dietary supplement inventory & proper usage to ensure rules' compliance.

Anti-doping supervision & education

Screening to prevent substance abuse & accidental doping; educating athletes about risks & consequences of doping violations.

Performance & recovery

"Feed-to-fuel" philosophy practiced by Sports RDs enables athletes to maximize performance and recover more quickly.

Education & personal counseling

Systematic nutrition education and one-on-one counseling for individuals who require nutrition therapy.

Athlete recruitment & retention

Fostering loyalty by demonstrating athletic department's care and concern for athletes.

Budget management & cost reduction

Funding efficiencies through better management of the global food supply and dietary supplements that help offset most of the cost of hiring Sports RDs.



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Sports Dietitians fueling top college football programs

By ERIC OLSON, AP Sports Writer—August 31, 2011

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Rex Burkhead arrived at Nebraska two years ago like a lot of other college students. He had weaknesses for ice cream and late-night hamburgers. Nowadays, under the supervision of the Cornhuskers' sports nutrition staff, the junior running back can account for every calorie and carb that goes into his body. Those midnight burgers are out, and Burkhead said he's never felt, or played, better.



University of Nebraska Sports RD Josh Hingst.

Can a winning diet lead to wins on the football field?

The Collegiate & Professional Sports Dietitians Association said 13 schools in the preseason Top 25 poll employ at least one full-time sports registered dietitian and five of those schools have two. The group said there are only 13 full-time sports RDs spread across the other 95 members of the Football Bowl Subdivision. The CPSDA said schools serious about competing at the highest level need people to oversee what, when and how much their football players are eating.

"I take a lot of pride in feeling like our guys are going to be the best-fueled team out there," Nebraska director of sports nutrition Josh Hingst said. "When it comes to the third and fourth quarters, our guys aren't going to be dragging. We're going to fuel them to perform, and nutrition isn't an aspect where we're going to drop the ball."

Long gone are the days of the old-school training table, usually a partitioned dormitory dining hall where steak was served once a week and the athletes could go back for second helpings where it wasn't allowed for other students. Nebraska will spend more than \$1 million this year on specially prepared foods for its athletes, and that doesn't include more than \$200,000 for supplements or Hingst's \$74,000 salary.

Nebraska, however, is one of the few athletic departments that operate in the black. Cost-conscious athletic directors have been slow to commit resources to sports nutrition, CPSDA president Dave Ellis said. Typically, he said, an outside consultant or someone from a university's student health department will give a talk to athletes about healthy eating and then provide no follow-up.

Tom Osborne, Nebraska's Hall of Fame coach and now the athletic director, was among the first to buy in to the value of sports nutrition. Nebraska built a premier training table complex with the money it received for appearing in the 1983 Kickoff Classic, and the school hired Ellis as its first sports nutritionist in 1994.

"It's a student-welfare argument more than a keep-up-with-the-Joneses argument," Ellis said. "How can you assume these are part-time athletes? They may only practice a set number of hours in season and in offseason workouts. The damage done takes longer than 24-hour cycles. It's a very important thing to know we're in the recovery business, and these athletes are always in a state of damage and recovery that requires quality rest and quality intervention with diet."

Alabama's Amy Bragg said she and other sports RDs must break their charges' bad habits when they arrive on campus. Like many Americans, she said, most freshmen eat too much fast food and not enough fruits and vegetables.

Eating right — and at the right time — promotes faster muscle recovery and deters athletes from seeking shortcuts. Bragg said sports RDs can also assess supplements and are on the lookout for the use of substances that are banned by the NCAA.

"Let's feed them right so they don't have to do the other things," Bragg said.

At Nebraska, each football player is analyzed at the start of his freshman year to determine, among other things, whether he needs to gain or lose weight and how many calories he requires to perform at his highest level. Each gets a laminated meal card that he can refer to when he goes to the training table and for snacking tips.

Burkhead adheres to a 4,500-calorie-a-day diet that allows him to maintain his 210 pounds and 6.5 percent body fat. Offensive linemen, on the other hand, might require 5,000 calories a day to stay at 300 pounds and have 20 percent to 25 percent body fat. The average male requires about 2,000 calories a day to maintain his weight.

Ellis founded an easy-to-follow 1-2-3 plan for players to follow. Fruits and vegetables are "1," carbohydrates are "2," and lean proteins are "3."

At lunch and dinner Burkhead ladles up a predetermined number of servings of each. He visits an area in the football complex known as "the landing" throughout the day to snack on fruits, trail mix and sports drink. He has a glass of milk at bedtime. Players stop by the "fueling table" on their way in and out of practices to pick up approved supplements and other items that help them recover quickly from the wear and tear on their bodies. Players are monitored through weekly weigh-ins, with Hingst tweaking their meal plans accordingly. Hingst also offers cooking classes to players so they can prepare their own meals when the training table is closed, and nutrition staffers clip newspaper ads pointing players to the best grocery buyers around Lincoln.

Burkhead said a football player can't help but eat right at Nebraska — though he does admit to sneaking some ice cream from time to time.

"I thought I knew a lot about nutrition before I got here," he said, "but I didn't know nearly as much as I know now."

Hingst said the dietitian's role is as important as those of the strength coach and athletic trainer in college football.

"We're trying to look at every single area of nutrition and do the best job we can and make sure it isn't the limiting factor, the weak link in the chain," he said.

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