Helping Your Athletes Navigate Life After Sport

Lauren Link, RD, CSSD
Purdue University Athletics
Presenter Conflict of Interest

Author, *The Healthy Former Athlete*

Board of Directors, Collegiate & Professional Sports Dietitians Assoc. (CPSDA)

Subject matter expert, wearegameplan.com

The statements and opinions contained in this program are solely those of the presenter except where appropriately cited.
Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. **Recognize potential areas of concern** for athletes during their transition to life after sport.

2. **Identify opportunities for nutrition intervention** in this population.

3. **Identify potential programming opportunities** that can be developed and implemented to prepare athletes for success during and after their transition from varsity sports.

4. **Identify resources** that can be utilized directly by athletes or included in programming developed to prepare athletes for the transition to life after athletics.
Normal Human Life

- TV
- Couch
- Scale
- Food

Athlete Life

- Workout
- Paperwork
- Cloudy weather
- Rain

Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutrition
But where’s the data?

n=250

- 80% of surveyed former athletes are less active than when they were an athlete
  - Less than 40% said their hunger decreased accordingly
- 48% are unhappy with their current body weight and over 60% are less satisfied with their weight & composition compared to when they were an athlete
- In regards to satisfaction around their current activity plan:
  - Respondents were overall dissatisfied with the frequency of strength-building activities
  - Respondents were overall dissatisfied with the intensity of their cardio and strength-building activities
  - Respondents were least satisfied with stretching, cool down and general wellness around their activity plan
But where’s the data?


n=396 college students (online questionnaires)

- Despite the health benefits of regular physical activity, previous research has indicated that participation in regular physical activity typically declines with age, with the two greatest declines occurring during adolescence and young adulthood.

National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States (2016)

- Less than one third (31.1%) of young adults (18 – 24 years) in the United States met both aerobic and muscular strengthening recommendations.
- Approximately two fifths (38.0%) met neither aerobic activity nor muscle strengthening guidelines.
How can you help?

Big Picture

• Make sure your efforts are focused on just this population
• Get your athletes thinking about the transition that’s coming
• Direct them towards sources of good information
• Talk about it
  • Help them understand that “normal human” things apply to them now
  • Educate on different nutritional aspects of the transition
What are their goals around body weight & composition?
  • Is their goal realistic/appropriate?

Help the athlete understand what might change with body composition
  • Muscle loss is usually inevitable

Help them understand what regular medical care looks like/how to access it
  • Preventative care/screenings
### Energy Expenditure

#### Body weight in kg = Body weight in lbs ÷ 2.2 = 61.4

#### Body height in cm = Body height in inches × 2.54 = 167.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>BMR Formula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>BMR = 88.362 + (13.397 x wt in kg) + (4.799 x height in cm) - (5.677 x age in yrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>BMR = 447.593 + (9.247 x wt in kg) + (3.098 x height in cm) - (4.330 x age in yrs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BMR × 1.9 = 2700 (Energy expenditure as Purdue athlete)

BMR × 1.375 = 1950 (Energy expenditure as retired athlete)
Physical Activity

• Stay active
  • What will that look like? Find something they enjoy!
  • Encourage cross training
  • Be mindful of prior injuries
• Include cardiorespiratory training, strength training and flexibility (Garber et al, 2011)
• Accountability
• Remember that exercise may look MUCH different (and more casual)
  • Athletes often overestimate the intensity of workouts
• Put thought into a plan (Garber et al, 2011; Farren et al, 2017)
  • What will you do? When will you do it? How often?
  • Budget for the plan!
  • Prepare them that the plan will likely change
• Continuing strength training in some capacity is a must
  • In many cases, this is the first aspect to fall off
• Important to have a well-rounded approach to strength training
  • Don’t isolate just a few muscle groups
• Can be accomplished with low-cost at home equipment, or even just body weight exercises
• Don’t neglect warmup and cool down
Macronutrients

Carbohydrates

• Talking points:
  • Normal humans need them too
  • How might needs change?
  • What’s a reasonable portion size to aim for?
  • How can they affect weight gain/loss?

Protein/Fat

• Talking points:
  • Normal humans need them too
  • How might needs change?
  • Cooking methods
  • Reducing processed convenience options
Hunger Miscues

• Former athletes often experience a mismatch between hunger and activity level
• Sternson’s take…
• Positive valence is believed to be “learned” in humans – can it be unlearned?
• These learned habits are perhaps a contributing factor in hunger miscues in life after sport
• Replacing an old habit with a new habit could be effective in helping this transition
Energy & Nutrient Density

1575 Kcal
High Energy Density

1575 Kcal
Low Energy Density
Pre/Post Workout Nutrition

Reality Check!

• Many athletes have been conditioned to include pre/post workout food/supplements
  • Workouts may not justify these additional calories
    • At least 1 hour of moderately intense exercise?
    • May have a hard time abandoning these habits
      • Help athlete understand that a meal may suffice in many situations
  • Athletes may be conditioned to use sports drinks
    • Workouts may not justify these additional calories/Sodium
**Liquid Calories**

- Encourage athletes to drink more water, and less calorie-dense beverages
- Help athletes quantify how these beverages might add up
  - Especially at the bar!
    - Consider limiting alcoholic drinks to a couple nights/week
- Talking points
  - Have a glass of water when they first wake up
  - Keep a refillable water bottle at your desk
  - Take bottled water with you in the car to run errands
  - If craving a “taste” – look for flavored tea, coffee, or flavored water option
Sodium

• Your athlete may have been “trained” to load up on Sodium and likely relies on convenience foods in the kitchen

• Help athlete identify current sources of dietary Sodium

• Talking points:
  • Limit sports drinks (help them understand when this might still be appropriate)
  • Limit table salt (discuss other ways to flavor food)
  • Limit processed foods as able
Calcium & Vitamin D

- Athletes may link this solely to performance vs. overall health
- Emphasize the importance of these nutrients on long term health
- Help athlete identify dietary sources of Calcium & Vitamin D/assess sun exposure
- Talking points:
  - Including dairy and other Ca/D rich foods
  - Supplementation if deemed appropriate
Meal Planning/ Packing a Lunch

• Help your athlete understand the impact that planning can have, and that it doesn’t have to be overwhelming

• Talking points:
  • Make a grocery list!
  • Pick two dinner meals to make
  • Pick one day/week to cook ahead
  • Consider investing in a crockpot, Instapot, rice cooker, grill
  • Limit junk food
  • Always have easy back-up items in the pantry/freezer to fall back on if schedule gets crazy
  • Pack a lunch
Mental Health/Preparedness

• Acknowledge the transition is coming
• What is your identity outside of athletics?
• Encourage them to set short and long term goals (personal, professional, financial, etc.)
• Establish a mentor
• Stay in touch with teammates and friends/don’t be afraid to make new ones!
• When to seek help/from who?
Developing Programming

- Boiler Life After SporT (BLAST)
  - Nutrition & Fitness
  - Financial Literacy
  - Professional Development
  - Mental Health/Identity
- Designed to be largely activities that they can complete on their own time
  - Each pillar has 1-2 activities that they attend in person
- Incentivized through donor dollars
  - If athletes complete everything, they receive $200 towards business clothing & a copy of The Healthy Former Athlete
Programming Cont.

- Professionals available through athletics, campus or locally
  - Dietitian
  - Psychologist/Therapist
  - Physician/Athletic Trainer
  - Strength & Conditioning coach
  - CCO

- Make “seminars” or workshops available periodically
  - Incentivize with food – look into local sponsorship
    - Work with your marketing/fundraising departments

- Local alumni/boosters
  - Share their story
  - Financial
  - Professional
  - Networking
You are the Resource

Mental Health & Preparedness

- GamePlan - https://wearegameplan.com/
- Athlete Network - https://www.athleteetwork.com/
- Podcast – Untold 98%
- NCAA After the game http://www.ncaa.org/student-athletes/former-student-athlete
- The Transition by Kelli Tennant
- 20 Secrets to Success for NCAA Student Athletes Who Go Pro
  - Formerly published as From Athlete to Normal Human

ACSM Resource Library

SCAN

CPSDA

The Healthy Former Athlete by Lauren Link (Skyhorse Publishing 2018)

Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutrition
A scientific practice guide of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Questions?

#glorydays
Referenced Resources


