



Tiger Feeding Time

Missouri Sports Dietician **Jana Heitmeyer** knows that athletes must practice proper nutrition to perform at the highest level.

While strength and conditioning programs at colleges and high schools continue to receive great emphasis, there is a growing awareness that sound nutritional practices can also have a major impact on athletic performance. Strength training increases muscle, but without the proper fuel those muscles cannot operate at peak capacity.

For Jana Heitmeyer, Director of Sports Nutrition at the University of Missouri, eating right is an essential part of a comprehensive athletic training regimen. Her focus is working with members of the Tiger football team to ensure they are getting the right food in the right quantities. Hydration and workout recovery are other areas where her expertise as a Registered Sports Dietician is utilized to help athletes maximize their performance.

While she doesn't monitor everything an athlete eats, Heitmeyer does work with individual players to establish dietary guidelines that will help them meet their individual goals. An important part of her job is education – teaching athletes about the benefits of proper nutrition and how it can affect performance.

AFM recently asked Heitmeyer about sports nutrition, her guidelines for improving athletic perfor-

mance and the role that Muscle Milk products play in Missouri's nutritional and recovery programs.

AFM: How important is good nutrition for athletes that want to perform at the highest level?

Heitmeyer: Nutrition is the one thing that will set you apart from other elite athletes. Everyone is in college because their skill level is high and they are more talented than most. Everyone trains hard, everyone conditions hard, but we can't be with the athletes 24 hours a day. The ones that stay the healthiest, recover from practice to practice and game to game the best and repeatedly perform the best are the ones that make nutrition as important to them as film, rehab, conditioning and practice.

Is there something that coaches and athletes can do nutritionally that can contribute to greater stamina and endurance late in the game?

Hydration is a huge contributor to fatigue during game. Hydration needs to start, at the latest, two nights before the game and focus on maintaining clear urine until after the game. Focusing on recovery throughout the week and not just the day of the game is also important. Lastly,

We use Muscle Milk RTD shakes for recovery and we have Muscle Milk bars available for snacks throughout the day.

How do you ensure that the sports nutrition products you are using are safe and effective?

We use www.drugfreesport.com to find information on supplements we may not be as familiar with, as well as other educational materials.

You are a Registered Sports Dietitian. How has the role of "Sports RDs" grown and evolved in recent years in collegiate athletics?

Sports RD roles are evolving and becoming more integrated with teams. It used to be that all they did was education a couple times a year, no real contact with the athletes. Now our job has become that of an educator and counselor covering everything from dining hall menu planning and



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- Jana Heitmeyer

you can maintain your energy levels by snacking during halftime on things like bananas, gummies, and Muscle Milk RTDs and bars.

Are nutritional programs for football players custom-designed based on their positions and/or body type?

We do a basic nutrition program called **FASTER** for all players. Faster stands for **F**ill up with fruits and veggies, **A**lways hydrate, **S**tart with breakfast, **T**hink lean protein, **E**at often, and **R**est and recover. As they mature and continue through the program, we individualize more based on their body type/position and goals, as well as their daily schedule.

What role do Muscle Milk products play in your nutrition programs for Tiger athletes, specifically football players?

Muscle Milk products are used in every aspect of our training process. We use Muscle Milk protein pre-workout for sustained energy during

Drug free sport has been an excellent partnership for us as we try to help our athletes navigate the world of supplements.

What should high school coaches be doing differently to nutritionally prepare football players to succeed in college?

Most high school kids want to get bigger and stronger. High school coaches should emphasize breakfast, real food first, and hydration. If they want a supplement, protein is the only thing we recommend. At least ninety percent of the time, the first thing we work on is eating breakfast. Empty tanks do not provide the energy needed to improve. Second thing is eating consistently three meals a day plus a pre-workout snack, then a bedtime snack. We emphasize peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as snacks instead of weight gainer supplements. Drinking water is the third thing we talk about on a daily basis. Since our muscles are made of water, they need to get in the habit of drinking water all the time, not juice or pop or energy drinks or even sports drinks.

management, education of teams and individuals, organizing food while teams travel to assessments during physicals, individual meal plans, body composition and nutrient analysis for every athlete. Our offices are in the weight room or training room so we're making contact with our athletes on a daily basis at the minimum. Our role has expanded to being a vital player in every aspect of the athlete's day – that's how it has to be if you want to win!

Sports RDs are now taking the lead in evaluating dietary supplements and managing sports supplements/bars/shakes/permissible foods. We are also playing a role in medical nutrition issues for concussions, heat illness/cramping, inflammation and allergies/intolerances.

Once athletic departments get a full-timer in place, most start trying to add second full-timer, GA, interns, and student workers. There have been six new full time sports RDs added in the last year – LSU, UGA (2), FSU, IU, UCLA. We continue to grow every year as Athletic Directors see the value of having an expert to manage nutrition issues ranging from team recovery to training table to body composition. ▲