

CasePerformance

Jan-Feb Newsletter

Part I



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In Part I of this month's newsletter....

I. Leading Off	2
II. Community Member of the Month Interview: Mitch McNett.....	3
III. Community Member Discussion: <i>Melatonin – Beyond the Zzzz’s</i> by Alex Leaf.....	10
IV. Meets/Events.....	16

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Hello,

I hope that the month of December has treated everyone well. I'm confident that you're a step or two closer towards achieving one of your short/long term goals. Things are active here for the CasePerformance team members.

Our [strength](#), [running](#) and [nutrition](#) consultations are going well. If you're interested in finding out about our group discounts please send us an [email](#).

I. A Look at This Month's Newsletter

January was a busy month at CasePerformance. Thus, rather than try to rush out a subpar newsletter, we decided to do a combined Jan-Feb one. Quality over quantity, right?! Alright, let's get straight to it....

We kick things off with our CP Community Member of the Month interview featuring fitness enthusiast Mitch McNett who shares with us how a farming accident at the age of 12, which required 17 surgeries, was the spark that got him interested in physical training. Topics covered include his training, nutrition and supplement methods as well as the recovery methods he likes to incorporate following a hard day at the gym!

Following our interview, we get to our CP Community Member Discussion where Alex Leaf shares with us *Melatonin – Beyond the Zzzzzz's*. In it, Alex discusses the role that melatonin, a hormone most commonly associated with sleep, plays in cardiovascular health, Alzheimer's disease protection, cancer, pain and longevity. Additionally, Alex discusses his approach to supplementing with it.

Needless to say, I think you'll enjoy Part I of our newsletter!

Respectfully,

Sean Casey

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II. Community Member of the Month...



Mitch McNett – Fitness Enthusiast

This month's CasePerformance Community member of the month is Mitchell McNett who comes to us from Madison, Wisconsin, USA. As with all in the CP community, Mitchell pursues a life of training, nutrition and healthy living. Mitchell isn't our normal athlete; He's had to overcome many obstacles following a farming accident at the age of 12 that required 17 surgeries to fix; he couldn't walk for an ENTIRE year. Mitch never let them stop him as he's achieved some pretty impressive feats in the weight room and aesthetically.

These accomplishments are in addition to his current studies in pre-dental at University of Wisconsin–Madison with plans to attend dental school during the upcoming academic year. It's funny, but one of the common things I hear when working with university age students is that it's too hard to find time to train/eat well. However, despite rigorous academic studies and working various jobs throughout his university career, Mitchell has

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yet to state this as a reason to quit exercising. Which just goes to prove one point – if you make eating healthy and training a priority in life, one can ALWAYS do it.

However, enough of my ramblings, let's turn it over to the CasePerformance Member of the Month – Mitch McNett!

I want to thank you for taking the time out of your training, work and social commitments to join us today. We are honored with your presence.

No problem Sean. Your training and nutrition programs have made a huge difference for me the past couple of years and glad to share my experiences with the CasePerformance Community.

Tell us a little about your background... How did you first get interested in training and exercise? Were you active as a youth?

As a youth I was very active. I think at one point I played 6 sports. I played football, basketball, baseball, swim team, and soccer. Additionally, growing up on a dairy and crop farm I spent much time doing physical labor.

Formal exercise did not start till 7th grade. It was at this time that I had the farming accident that badly injured my legs; I had to relearn how to walk. This process took a year of intense physical therapy so you could say that this was the start of my “training journey.” After that I just kind of exercised to keep my legs in shape.

In 8th grade I started to lift weights in preparation of football as I wanted to improve my athletic performance. That was probably the next four years of my life. After high school I didn't really have to train for a sport anymore, so I more just wanted to switch my training over more to look good. That's basically where the focus of my training has been since.

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Has the accident you experienced as a kid affected your ability to train. In other words, are there any exercises, etc, that you have to be careful with/avoid?

I can do just about anything I want. I have a pin in my big toe on my right foot that makes it difficult to do anything that causes me to dorsiflex it (which occurs when you lunge). The other area that never really came back entirely is my balance. I'm missing a lot of muscles on the right side making things quite difficult.

That said, I've come a long ways since the original accident. I can stand on one leg for at least a minute, which was something quite difficult for me to do at one time. However, I still have issues w/ certain yoga poses and any resistance training exercises that require single leg balance (lunges, single leg deadlifts, etc).

When you first started exercising, what were some of the biggest mistakes you found yourself making?

"... made the mistake of trying to be that macho guy in the gym..."

Like most individuals, my form (while completing the lifts) was a bit rough. Actually, now that I think about it, I would now characterize it as being pretty awful - ha ha. I also made the mistake of trying to be that macho guy in the gym and lift more than he should have; We all started somewhere and my first experiences in the weight room were with older kids who could do more, so I thought lifting more weight would make me look cooler, but often I couldn't do the weight.

Other than that I never really had a set workout routine. I would just kind of go in and do whole body every day and do about 13 or 14 exercises. That's a lot of reps and sets, so I may have overtrained a bit when I started working out, but I learned over the years, and a year or two later I had a solid training regimen down.

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Since you've started to work with me at CasePerformance, how have you seen your body change??



My first goal when starting to work with CasePerformance was to bulk up. I set a numbers goal to bench 315 pounds and be well rounded in all my other lifts. I wasn't well balanced starting out. I had strong triceps and a big chest, but not much for back, shoulders or biceps. Eventually all my lifts became even and I got 315 lbs.

After that I wasn't interested in moving heavy weights anymore. I started following more workouts that focused on the aesthetic part of lifting. Around this time I'd say I was about 238 and 15% body fat (see picture to left). This was about approximately 1 year ago. Now I'd say I'm around 218 and 8% body fat. So my body has changed a lot. Most major lifts went up 50 lbs or more and my body fat has been cut in almost half.

After training in the gym for 10 years, I know you've tried a fair amount of exercises. What would you say are your favorites from a pure enjoyment standpoint? Why are they your favorites?

"... I'm a killer for those big cannon ball shoulders."

I'd say shoulders. I guess I'm a killer for those big cannon ball shoulders. I've seen guys at the gym with them, and I've always wanted to have them. So when I work out shoulders I get that vision in my head and it just makes it enjoyable. I also like biceps, triceps, and back exercises. Basically anything besides chest ha ha. I've never wanted giant pecs. I

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don't skip leg day, but I don't necessarily enjoy it anymore, so I would put legs somewhere in the middle for enjoyment.

I like anything with a mirror in front of me. Although some may be embarrassed to admit it, I'm not; it's fun to watch yourself lift. You can see the muscles working, and the difference one month to the next.

What does your typical training week look like?

I do 12 week cycles and it changes depending on the season. During winter and fall that's usually my bulking season when I try to put on most of my muscle. Spring and summer is more when I try to slim down. The volume, intensity and rest intervals between sets adjust accordingly based off these goals.

Do you have any non-nutritive strategies to help with recovery between workouts?

Oh boy do I ever. Since I have some pretty extensive leg injuries I've had to really learn how to take care of my calves and lower legs. In high school I took care of them to just be able to go to practice the next day so I didn't fall behind my other classmates. Now I've applied the same techniques to my entire body.

I'll start pretty basic, but sleep is an absolute must for performance. I usually shoot for 9 hours of sleep every night. It makes a huge difference in my daily life both cognitively and physically.

"... I stretch almost every day... stretching just helps me keep my body right..."

The second is I stretch almost every day. It's actually quite embarrassing sometimes. I'm that guy that can do the splits, but we will keep that on the down low ;-). Honestly stretching just helps me keep my body right. I always have some soreness due to the aforementioned issues, but since implementing a stretching routine I never get too sore or have injuries that prevent me from working out anymore.

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Last I would say light to moderate cardio really helps out with recovery. You're not stressing your body out too much, and I feel like the increase in blood flow and the use of the muscles really aids in recovery.

A couple other small things I do when I'm really REALLY sore is massage work and warm baths. I have one of those massage machines from the chiropractor, so when I get really sore I grab a friend, hopefully a girl, (it's always awkward when a guy does it), and have them run that over my painful spots and that makes a huge difference. Finally, I don't know what it is about warm baths, but they make a world of difference when your body is getting really beat up. Those are the things I've done to assist recovery and they all help somewhat in their own way.

Switching gears here a bit, a topic I always get questions about is nutrition and supplements. What are some meal strategies that you've found to be effective as a college student?

"... A high quality protein powder & creatine ..."

As a college student I've tried a lot of stuff. I've read a lot of stuff, and I can honestly say most of its crap. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is. I've tried fat burners, pre-workouts, protein, creatine, and many other vitamins and minerals. I can honestly say I haven't noticed much improvement from a lot of those. A high quality protein powder & creatine are the two things that I've found to make the biggest difference. I was never that big of a guy until I started taking protein (and carbs) postworkout and upping my overall protein and kcal intake throughout the day. It helped a lot from a recovery aspect and I finally started putting on a lot more lean muscle mass.

Creatine is basically something I think everyone should be on. There are a lot of negative associations with it, but they are all false as you addressed in newspaper article earlier this February ([CLICK HERE](#)). Creatine helps turn your ADP back into ATP. It will help you get that extra rep or two and keeps you from burning out so quickly during the workout. Also, on a more global level, I've found myself having more energy and the ability to focus better during the day, so it helped my school work out, which is even higher on my priority list than working out.

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Fat burners don't work, and I've never been a big fan of pre-workouts. I've noticed how hyped they get me, but I've noticed the same effect with a cup of coffee or two – it's a lot more effective and doesn't leave me so jittery for the rest of the day (I workout in the morning).

Do you have any favorite recipes that you'd care to share with us today?



I'm a big smoothie guy. Being in college I'm always on the run so I have to keep meal prep to 15-20 minutes per day. Smoothies are a good way to go in these situations.

There are a ton of smoothie recipes on line, just look something up that sounds good to you. Look for something with some greek yogurt, whey protein, banana, fruits, maybe some orange juice, and whatever else you like. Take a peek at the macronutrients and make sure it fits for you and your goals. Pictured to the left is one of my spinach apple greek yogurt smoothies

Any final thoughts/advice you're willing to share with us at CasePerformance?

Diet. Diet is what made the difference for me. I've always worked out a lot, but I never started achieving the body or athletic performance I wanted until I started eating specifically for my goals. I've literally watched my body change. I used to be about 205 lbs 15% body fat entering college and now I'm about 218, but 8% body fat, and I look a lot better. Diet is what made the difference. I increased my protein and fats, and I love carbs so I had to cut them back quite a bit, and it made a huge difference.

Thanks for the great advice and taking time out of your day to join us here at CasePerformance!

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III. Community Member Performance Discussion

In his article, [Dark Nights & Healthy Living in a Modern World](#) (See Part 1 of our December 2014 Newsletter), Jeff Rothschild discussed the important role that melatonin played in establishing a healthy sleep cycle. However, have you ever wondered if it did anything beyond this role? If so, you're in luck as in this CP Community Member Discussion Alex Leaf discusses this very topic. For those who've read any of Alex's [previous articles](#) here at CP, you'll know one thing – he does excellent work. Thus, I encourage you to buckle up, put on your thinking helmet and enjoy the read!

Even if you're pressed for time, I still encourage you to read the “TLDR” (Too Long, Didn't Read) summary at the end for tips on how to take advantage of the benefits of this hormone.

Melatonin – Beyond the Zzzzz's

By: Alex Leaf

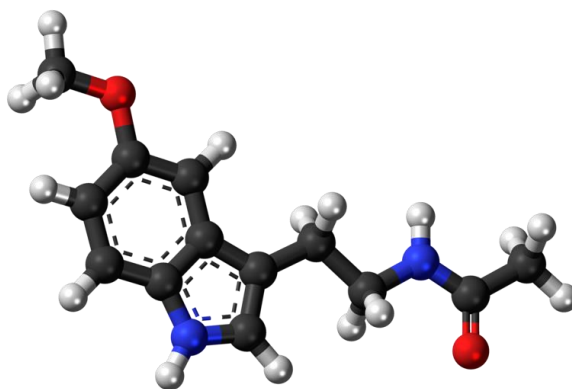


Figure 1. The melatonin molecule. Image Source.¹

Melatonin... the famous sleepy hormone secreted by the brain's pineal gland during darkness in order to help the body fall asleep; many of melatonin's long-term benefits are mediated simply through normalizing sleep patterns and circadian rhythms. There has been countless evidence to support this, which is why it is not worth looking at. Yes sleep is important, but with regard to melatonin, have you ever wondered if there is more to it? If you have no issues falling asleep and maintain good sleep hygiene, then what reason is there for melatonin supplementation?

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One word: Antioxidant

Melatonin an incredibly [powerful antioxidant](#) produced within the body that protects lipids and proteins from oxidative damage. In fact, it has a radical scavenging activity level double that of vitamin E, no apparent pro-oxidative effects, and has important synergistic action with other antioxidants such as vitamin C and glutathione. Melatonin not only exerts

“... melatonin impacts multiple facets of healthy aging.”

these effects throughout the bloodstream because of its water solubility, but surprisingly, is also highly lipid soluble, allowing it to be widely distributed within cellular membranes to prevent oxidative damage. The lipid solubility also means that melatonin can cross the blood-brain-barrier to protect the delicate brain. Taking into account the versatility of this molecule, it should come as no surprise that melatonin impacts multiple facets of healthy aging.

Strokes and blood pressure

The brain-protective effects have been demonstrated in [animal models of stroke](#), whereby melatonin supplementation has been shown to reduce the neurophysiological deficits, infarct volume, lipid peroxidation, protein carbonyls, DNA damage, neuron and glial loss, and death of the animals. Similarly, melatonin may help manage one of the leading risk factors for stroke – hypertension. A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover trial in men with untreated essential hypertension found that daily supplementation of 2.5mg of melatonin for three weeks [reduced systolic and diastolic blood pressure](#) during sleep without affecting heart rate. Moreover, these effects were completely independent of the improved sleep quality of the subjects. This outcome was later [replicated in women](#) using 3mg per night for three weeks.

Neurodegeneration & Alzheimer’s Disease

Unfortunately, melatonin production declines with aging and [this is believed](#) to contribute significantly to the onset and progression of age-related diseases such as neurodegeneration (see Figure 2). Some researchers even argue that it is the amplitude and duration of nocturnally elevated melatonin that determines the rate of aging.

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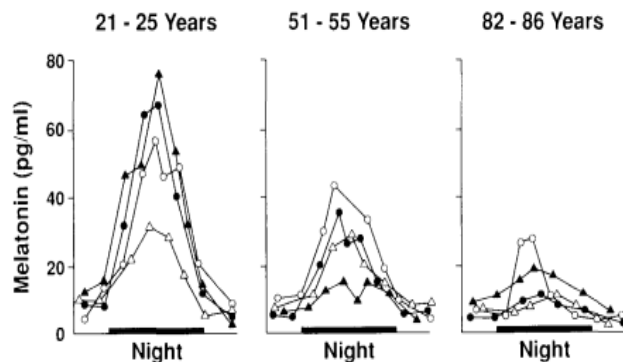


Figure 2: Representative blood levels of melatonin during the day and at night in humans in three different age groups. As humans age, the amplitude of the melatonin rhythm as well as the duration of the night melatonin peak diminishes. The changing melatonin rhythm may be a major factor in aging, and all animals studied to date illustrate a similar age-related reduction in melatonin synthesis and production. [Source](#)

Is it coincidence that the decline in melatonin levels with age mimics the rise in Alzheimer's incidence? One [fascinating study](#) found that in healthy persons aged over 80 years, melatonin levels of the cerebrospinal fluid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord were only half the level seen in middle-aged adults. However, in aged-matched older persons with Alzheimer's, melatonin levels were only one-fifth that of the healthy controls. In animal models that have impaired melatonin synthesis, cognitive impairment and [brain changes](#) that resemble Alzheimer's disease become apparent. Yet, supplementation with melatonin prevents these deficits. Moreover, [melatonin protects](#) against the buildup of

β -amyloid and prevents activation of the tau protein; two events that are hallmark characteristics of Alzheimer's disease.

But so what? Most of you reading this are probably young and not concerned with diseases that may appear 40 years down the road. Well, there is a thing called preventive medicine for a reason. In [transgenic mice](#) predisposed to Alzheimer's disease, signs of behavioral and cognitive deficits are evident by middle-age. In fact, changes in brain structure including reduced antioxidant potential were present before any symptoms showed. However, when these same mice were supplemented with melatonin before the disease manifested, none of the pathological changes occurred.

"... experience a slowing of cognitive impairment..."

While it would be difficult to replicate this finding in humans, if for no reason other than the ethical complications of predisposing persons to Alzheimer's disease, studies have demonstrated that long-term melatonin supplementation (3-10mg nightly) in Alzheimer's patients experience a [slowing of cognitive impairment](#). Using doses of 3-24 mg nightly for 15-60 months, subjects with mild cognitive impairment showed significantly [better performance](#) in every neuropsychological test assessed compared to controls who received a placebo.

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Cancer

One of melatonin's underappreciated abilities is fighting a [vast number of cancers](#), including breast, liver, lung, and brain. When women with [metastatic breast cancer](#) who had failed to respond to tamoxifen alone received 20mg of melatonin daily as an oral supplement, there was clear tumor regression, leading the authors to suggest that “because of its complete lack of toxicity, the combination of [tamoxifen] and [melatonin] could constitute a new effective modality of therapy for metastatic breast cancer.” Moreover, most of the women also experienced anxiety relief from the melatonin supplementation.

“... because of its complete lack of toxicity...melatonin could constitute a new effective modality of therapy...”

In vitro studies (i.e., those done in test tubes) also suggest that melatonin can help fight one of the most dreaded malignancies of aging men – [prostate cancer](#). In this study, melatonin treatment significantly reduced the levels of hormone sensitive and insensitive prostate cancer cells. Of the survivors, they began to show signs of proliferation and differentiation characteristic of normal, healthy cells. Additionally, in a [meta-analysis](#) of ten randomized controlled trials examining the effectiveness of melatonin in cancer therapy, it was shown that supplementation (20-40mg daily) reduced the relative risk of death at one year by 34% regardless of the type of cancer. Importantly, no adverse effects were reported, which the same cannot be said for standard cancer treatments.

Speaking of which, melatonin may also help [counteract chemotherapy toxicity](#). Two-hundred-fifty men and women undergoing chemotherapy for advanced lung, breast, GI tract, or head & neck cancers were randomized to be treated with chemotherapy alone or chemotherapy plus 20mg of melatonin daily in the evening. After one year, the melatonin-supplemented individuals demonstrated a significantly higher rate of survival, as well as protection against many of the chemotherapy side-effects such as bone marrow toxicity, platelet deficiencies, neurotoxicity, heart dysfunction & damage, inflammation of the mouth, and muscle weakness.

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Pain



Melatonin may also be a pain-management option. One study documented that 3 mg of melatonin daily, taken 30 minutes before bed, [reduced the frequency](#) of migraine headaches by more than 50% in 32 of the 34 subjects. Additionally, the intensity and duration of the headaches was reduced. These effects may extend to those who suffer from [chronic cluster headaches](#) as well. Some researchers have even argued that melatonin may be useful in [battling the pain](#) and increasing pain threshold in IBS patients.

Longevity

So melatonin sounds pretty good right? Sounds like we should start supplementing early and reap the benefits. So, how long should we supplement for? If preliminary animal trials translate to humans, then probably for a long time.

Melatonin is one of the few supplements that may actually [interact with telomeres](#), suggesting it has a role in longevity. In [single-celled organisms](#), melatonin supplementation was able to extend lifespan by 24%. In [fruit flies](#), life span was extended by 33%. In [elderly rodents](#), surgical replacement of the pineal gland (makes melatonin) with one that was removed from a young rodent extended lifespan by 12%. The opposite also holds true, as replacement of a young rat's pineal gland with that of an old rat's actually [accelerated the aging](#) process.

In humans, a comparison of young, old, and centenarian persons found that the centenarians (persons living over 100-years) had [similar melatonin](#) excretion as the young persons. It appears that melatonin [increases the expression of SIRT1](#), which activates a host of “self-healing” genes implicated in life extension. This is also the protein that is activated through caloric restriction, and as it turns out, animals that undergo caloric restriction and fasting show significantly elevated levels of melatonin; so much so that some [researchers suggest](#) that “instead of being permanently hungry, a prolongation of human life could be achieved by a replacement melatonin therapy.”

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The “TLDR” Summary

Melatonin is synonymous with sleep. Its role in circadian rhythms and sleep hygiene certainly mandate that we take extraordinary precautions to preserve our nap times, but there is much more to this little hormone than we appreciate. When we’re young, melatonin protects the brain and body from oxidative damage. As we age, however, our production begins to decline regardless of sleep patterns. This leaves us increasingly vulnerable to the free radical assault central to living, and any increased damage leads to risk of neurodegeneration and circadian disorganization.

Studies have proven melatonin’s potent antioxidant effects and ability to offset numerous diseases. But like all preventive medicine, protection requires early action. Melatonin is produced naturally as darkness sets, but our modern way of living is full of artificial lighting that literally blocks melatonin production. Don’t get me wrong, I love my TV, computer, kindle, and smartphone, but there is a time and place for everything, and bedtime is not the place for these electronics.

Fortunately, there are two things you can do to help:

1. Buy some [blue-blocking glasses](#) and installing programs such as [f.lux](#) on the computer for those times when staying up late is necessary.
2. Supplement with melatonin. The majority of the studies showing benefits beyond sleep use doses of 3-10mg nightly. I don’t recommend jumping into doses this high, as it can make you feel sluggish and groggy in the morning, but it is a dosage range to work towards. Perhaps in 500mcg increments every 1-2 weeks or when you start feeling better on the higher doses.

For what it’s worth, I currently take 10mg around 8pm, which is when I put on my blue-blocker glasses and finish up any work that needs to be done in the next 40 minutes, which is when the need for sleep really hits me thanks to the melatonin. So I shut down, go to bed, get up early, and have a great day.

Image Sources

1. Jynto. Melatonin molecule ball. August 24, 2011. Accessed February 13, 2015 from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Melatonin_molecule_ball.png
2. Sasha Wolff. Migraine Dec 14, 2008. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license. Accessed February 13, 2015 from: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Migraine.jpg>

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IV. Meets/Events/Clinics

Strength Sport Events

I have not been notified of any strength sport competitions.

Endurance Sport Events

Mississippi Valley Running Association Heritage Trail Run

What: A 5k/10k run

Where: Dubuque, IA, USA

When: May 9th

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

For a general listing of running events going on in your area, [CLICK HERE](#)!

*** Please know that CasePerformance does **NOT** receive any financial or other incentives if you choose to participate in any of the above events.

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Clinics

Building Better Athletes Elite Performance Clinic

What: A one day clinic covering all ends of training for sport and performance featuring...

Where: Dubuque, IA, USA

When: May 2nd

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

Presentation Line-Up...

Science of Speed - Michael Zweifel CSCS (Owner and Head of Sports Performance at Building Better Athletes)

Thorough discussion on the mechanics of speed development. Learn what takes place during acceleration and sprinting, muscle activities, and how to coach the different phases of sprinting.

Practical Sports Nutrition for the Fitness Professional - Sean Casey CSCS, RD, CISSN (Head of Sports Nutrition at Building Better Athletes)

Focus on a practical approach to help individuals optimize the training experience via nutrition intervention. Topics covered include determining energy needs, fitting the food with the lifestyle, supplementation & special issues that fitness professionals need to be aware of while working with athletes

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The Experimentation and Use of Velocity Based Training: Ideas and Concepts - Mike Mandot MS, CSCS (Head of Strength and Conditioning at University of Dubuque)

There are many applications for using velocity based training feedback, a major one being maximizing power output via tracking movement velocity. Coach Mandot will discuss his experience with using velocity based training (Using a Tendo Unit) and how he implements it with his athletes and how he purposes it to be effective.

The Common Link in Athletes 8 to 80 - Dan Johnson (Owner of Spine and Sport Chiropractic)

Dr. Dan Johnson works on the Sports Medicine side getting athletes back to the playing field. In this presentation, Dan will take a look at how thoracic spine motion/mobility and sitting affect athletes of all ages.

How CrossFit and Strength and Conditioning Can Blend - Phil Gothard (Owner of CrossFit Dubuque)

The Strength and Conditioning world and CrossFit world often clash on different topics, but Coach Gothard will discuss how the two can blend and benefit from each other. You don't have to take a single side of this discussion, instead know the two are different and how each can learn from the other.

Scientific Principles Associated with Developing Peak Power in the Athlete - Jed Smith MS, CSCS (Head of Strength and Conditioning at University of Northern Iowa)

Coach Smith is known for his ability to develop power in athletes, after all the ability to express power is a key quality in high level athletes. His talk will delve into the scientific principles of developing peak power and how to apply these principles to your training.

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

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That wraps up Part I of this CasePerformance newsletter. Hope you enjoyed it. Stay tuned for Part II of the Newsletter where we share news of note at the CasePerformance & partner websites before touching on the CP Performance Discussion, *Establishing Running Camps in a Foreign Land*, written by Justin Andrews, CP's [endurance running coach](#)!

Until then... Train smart, train hard and leave the excuses to someone else!

Respectfully,

[The CasePerformance Team](#)