

Module 4. Continued Development of the Sports Nutritionist in Football

Unit 4.1. Best practice of sports nutrition in football

The objective of the “Sports Nutrition for Football” certificate is to provide you with the foundational scientific knowledge from which sports nutrition recommendations for football can be made. The assessments attached to each module have been designed to encourage you to implement that knowledge in more applied scenarios. Thus, the completion of the certificate should develop your competence and communication skills when providing sports nutrition support in football. The aim of this unit is to provide advice and guardrails concerned specifically with your professional practice, i.e. how you deliver and conduct your applied work. Ethical considerations will be discussed first, followed by best practice concerning record keeping and data dissemination. Finally, this unit will cover the role of social media within sports nutrition, and guidance will be given on how best to navigate this evolving platform.

Did you know?

Ethics may be defined as the moral principles that govern an individual’s behaviour, in this case, conducting sports nutrition services.

Guiding principles

Sports nutritionists do not need to obtain any specific ethical approval from local committees or governing institutions to work at a football club or with football players. As part of their role, a sports nutritionist may be required to engage with players of all ages, to collect human bodily samples (blood, sweat, urine), and to be responsible for data management. The points below are to serve as guiding principles for a sports nutritionist to strive towards. As a sports nutritionist you are directly accountable for ensuring ethical behaviour when working in football and should be committed to the following.

Excellence – The sports nutritionist should strive for excellence and aim to produce work of the highest quality.



Honesty – The sports nutritionist should be honest in relation to their own experience and expertise. It is important that the nutritionist does their best to ensure accuracy of data and results. Furthermore, they should not engage in, or conceal, the misconduct of others.

Integrity – The sports nutritionist should comply with any legal or ethical requirements relevant to their place of work.

Co-operation – The sports nutritionist should promote the open exchange of ideas, data, experience, research opportunity and collaboration. This is conditional to any confidentiality considerations.

Accountability – The sports nutritionist is ultimately accountable for the players under their care and the club they work for. Given the interest in football by the wider general public, the nutritionist should be aware of their position as a role model and influencer.

Compliance - For any data to be used for research purposes, the sports nutritionist should seek and comply with any ethical approvals, agreements, terms and conditions relating to the specific project.

Training and skills – The nutritionist should ensure that they have the necessary skills, training and resources to carry out their jobs. They should also embark on a program of professional development (Unit 2) and ensure all qualifications are current and valid.

Safety – The sports nutritionist should guarantee the dignity, rights, safety and wellbeing of all players under their supervision.

Consultation

It is advised, if possible, that the sports nutritionist holds individual consultations with each player. This allows the sports nutritionist to build rapport and understand the player's dietary strengths and weaknesses. On initial consultation, it is an opportunity to gather foundation information. As a guide, the list below outlines the data and information, which can be collected through assessments, questionnaires, or interviews.

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Country of birth
- Current address
- Contact details



- General health questionnaire (seek template from sports medicine department)
- Previous clubs
- Previous nutrition regime
- Dietary allergies/intolerances
- Previous/current dietary supplements
- Current match day nutrition routine (typical)
- Current training routine (typical)
- Gastrointestinal comfort issues
- Nutrition knowledge questionnaire
- Physique management: body composition assessment
- Date consultation

The data collected must be confidential. The sports nutritionist should prepare a consent form, which includes a list of the club's staff members (e.g. coaches, medical team and sports science staff) with whom the information may be shared with. This document should be explained in full before the player signs for the consent form.

Data collection and storage

The collection and storage of data (record keeping) is an essential element of a sports nutritionist's professional practice. Record keeping may also be a legal requirement, depending on the region that the nutritionist is working. A player's record may be kept on paper, electronically or stored on another device such as a memory stick. A record does not just apply to the player's direct data, but also includes food diaries, minutes of meetings, as well as meal and dietary supplementation plans. As a guide, records must be:

- complete,
- accurate,
- relevant,
- accessible (to those with access rights),



- timely.

Did you know?

If using paper-based records, it is important for others to be able to read your writing. Write clearly, and sign and date all entries.

Making and keeping accurate records is an essential part of player care. You should aim to keep records for every player who benefits from your advice or nutrition services. It is advised to complete all records promptly, so that data is not lost or forgotten. Keeping good records of the players you work with will improve efficiency and provide evidence of the work you have completed (Unit 2). The data recorded may also allow you to justify and recall why dietary decisions were made when evaluating practice later. Finally, should you leave your position at a club, it is important that the incoming nutritionist can easily see what measures have been implemented and more importantly, why.

The method and style used to keep player records should be appropriate to the occasion. For example, when recording body mass before and after exercise, this data can be rapidly captured using paper and pen. However, when capturing consultation notes, it may be more appropriate to enter data directly into an electronic platform. It is important to use a writing style that is clear and accurate. If abbreviations are commonly used, such as “BM” for “body mass”, then a key with the translations should be included. In addition, it is the role of the nutritionist to remind players that they can request access to their records at any time.

When collecting data or keeping records, it is inevitable that errors will be made. If an error is instantly identified, then the sports nutritionist is advised to draw a single line through the entry so that the original entry is still clearly visible. The new entry should be dated and initialled. It is recommended not to use an eraser or white-out liquid, nor permanently remove the original entry on a player’s record. If a large correction is required then a note should be made on the page to explain this change, as well as the date on which it is made.

It is of utmost importance that all records are safeguarded. Thus, the sports nutritionist should take the appropriate steps required to ensure the protection of data. For example, care should be taken not to leave notes out on desks unattended or near telephones. Any paperwork with data should be stored in a locked drawer or cabinet. For electronic records, all computers or tablets should be password protected. If data is stored on memory devices, then these must be stored securely, and password protected. The best practice when using identifiable information may be to anonymize the data. This can be achieved by removing individuals’ identifiable details and replacing them with a code or



number. In addition to player data, the sports nutritionist should also keep a record of any purchases, such as dietary supplements or sports nutrition products. Finally, the length of time data must be stored for is largely region dependent. It is recommended to store records for at least 8 years before destroying or deleting them from systems.

Did you know?

The sports nutritionist is advised to request and keep a record of the certification of “batch tested” dietary supplements from the product supplier.

The guidance described here for record keeping is relevant to all areas of best practice. Ultimately, the responsibility of data collection and record keeping lies with the sports nutritionist (you). You must decide what is relevant and what should be recorded. It is important to note that, with the players’ consent, other members of the club’s staff could potentially access what you have recorded.

Liability

When working with a professional club, the sports nutritionist should have a countersigned contract adhering to the country’s employment laws. The contract should clearly define roles, responsibilities, liability, and any additional insurance requirements. It is important to understand that the player is ultimately responsible for all the foods and beverages that they ingest. The sports nutritionist should educate and inform the player of the risk of ingesting dietary supplements. If insurance is not covered by the club, then the nutritionist is advised to gain independent insurance, either through affiliation with their local governing body or privately.

Working with academy or youth players

It is the responsibility of the sports nutritionist to ensure that they are aware of any legislation, which could affect their work with youth players. The guidelines presented here are intended to apply to any sports nutrition work directly involving players under the age of 18, whether undertaken independently or in conjunction with a parent, guardian or other responsible adult. The sports nutritionist should provide details of any testing (especially body composition), or collection of data (i.e. body weights, sweat) that may be used to inform nutrition recommendations. Children/youth players and their parents/guardians must be fully briefed about what a nutritional consultation involves, including details of how and when data will be collected. All sports nutrition explanations should be clear and easy to understand, and there should be an opportunity for questions to be asked. When chaperoning players, the sports nutritionist should ensure that another member of the medical team or coaching staff (of the same gender as the player) is always present. If sensitive issues are being assessed, such as the assessment of maturity, procedures should be explained by a member of the medical team or a nutritionist of the



same sex as the player. It is strongly advised that sports nutritionists avoid any situation where they will be alone with a youth player.

Collection and destruction of player body fluids

The role of the sports nutritionist may require the routine collection of players' body fluids. Table 1 outlines examples of collected body fluids, along with their use for dietary interventions.

Table 1. Examples of player body fluid collected and use by the sports nutritionist

| Player body fluid collected | Nutrition use | Sample disposal |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Urine | Indicator of hydration status | Toilet |
| Sweat | Calculate sweat rates and electrolyte losses during exercise | Yellow biohazard bag |
| Saliva | Analysis of saliva IgA to assess immune function | Yellow biohazard bag |
| Blood | Assess dietary deficiency | Sharps disposal box (needle) and yellow biohazard bag |

Source: own elaboration.

To prevent possible illness or inadvertent contact with the bodily fluids listed in table 1, as well as vomit, then the nutritionist should consider the following advice and have access to the appropriate equipment, listed below.

- Disposable protective gloves.
- Yellow biological hazard bag.
- Plastic forceps.
- Disinfectant wipes (cleaning surfaces).
- Sharps disposal box (blood collection).
- Body spill granules x 1 sachet (cleaning spillages or vomit).



- Disposable polythene apron (or appropriate protective clothing).

Following collection, the body fluids should be only analysed for the purpose of the assessment explained to the player. All samples should be disposed of safely and appropriately following analysis. The sports nutritionist is advised to work in conjunction with the teams' medical department to ensure the availability of equipment, and that the standard operating procedures for the disposal of blood are followed.

Social media

Social media is prevalent in all clubs, independent of level of competition. Social media is a platform to share information online. Once online, the internet enables this information to be shared rapidly and dispersed globally. Thus, any sports nutritionist working in football should be aware that any videos, comments or pictures posted online would be in the public domain. It is likely that more than 70% of players will use online social networks in one form or another (Waddington, 2012). Examples of social media include:

- X (formerly Twitter),
- Tiktok,
- Facebook,
- Instagram,
- Blogging,
- YouTube.

Social media presents a challenge for a sports nutritionist in that it may blur the line between professional and personal life. For example, players may contact the sports nutritionist at any time of day if they are online. In addition, the sports nutritionist may be contacted by players wanting to be "friends" on Facebook. It is advised that the sports nutritionist aims to separate their private and professional life. The sports nutritionist is recommended to set up a "professional" social media profile/account, through which all player interactions can take place. A professional nutrition "profile" can then be kept consistent across multiple social media platforms. When used effectively, social media can be a great tool for education and sharing information. Social media can also be used to promote the work that you are doing and to share content from conferences to the wider footballing community (Dunne et al., 2019).



It is vital to never share private or personal information about your players, coaches, club employees or co-workers without consent. If sharing with consent, it is important to ensure full anonymity where necessary to maintain confidentiality. The sports nutritionist should be aware of any social media or communication policies within the football club they are working in. If there are none, then it is advised that approval is sought from a line-manager and that a social media policy is introduced.

Guidance

Stop and think before posting on social media - is the information you are sharing appropriate? As a guide, see table 2.

Table 2. Guide to decision making on content to be shared on social media

| Share on social media | Do not share on social media |
|--|---|
| Positively promotes your role as a sports nutritionist. | Conflicts with the club's social media policies |
| Shares reputable sports nutrition education events (conferences, etc.) | No consent |
| Shares vacancies in sports nutrition | Reveals confidential player information |
| Shares new research relevant to football sports nutrition | Inappropriate language or images |
| | Reaction to a negative comment |

Source: own elaboration.

Uniform considerations

Many professions are instantly recognizable by their uniform. For example, think of a fireman, medical doctor, nurse or soldier. Now think of a sports nutritionist. What does that individual look like? How would you like to be perceived when entering a football club? In some clubs, the sports nutritionist will wear the club's training kit; however, this is not always the case. When a training kit is not provided, it is advised that the sports nutritionist dresses in a manner that is appropriate for the situation. For example, when working on the field, sportswear may be the best option. For all other occasions, it is recommended to avoid "casual" clothing, and instead select professional attire.

Sport nutrition affiliation



At present, the term “sports nutritionist” is not a protected term or profession. The academic qualifications and experience required for an individual to classify themselves as a sports nutritionist will vary significantly depending on the country in which they are based. It is advised that the sports nutritionist researches their country’s/state’s recognized authority in nutrition and become a member. For example, the Sport and Exercise Nutrition Register (SENR) in the UK (United Kingdom) is a voluntary register designed to accredit suitably qualified and experienced individuals with the competency to work autonomously as a sport and exercise nutritionist. Joining a recognized governing body will offer several advantages to the sports nutritionist working in football, offering protection, advice and professional development opportunities (Unit 2).

Summary

- A sports nutritionist working in football should operate in line with guiding principles.
- Initial sports nutrition consultations are an opportunity to gather baseline information on the players’ dietary strengths, weaknesses and requirements.
- Record keeping is an essential element of a sports nutritionist’s professional practice.
- The sports nutritionist should be aware of any legal requirements or legislation for them to operate as a “sports nutritionist” or with youth players in their specific region.
- Social media is a valuable and evolving tool. However, it should be used with caution, adhering to the club’s specific social media policy.



Unit 4.2. Continued development in sports nutrition for football

The objective of the “Sports Nutrition for Football” certificate is to provide you with the foundation knowledge from which to base your dietary advice. All information shared throughout the course has been based on peer reviewed scientific studies, reviews or consensus statements. This process ensures that any guidance or advice on football nutrition can be “backed by science”. However, as scientific studies continue to be published, it is important that you can interpret new data, which may be relevant for football. Thus, this unit will provide you with guidance for your continued professional development in sports nutrition for football. The assessment of scientific literature will be discussed first, followed by the key steps in improving your understanding and practice in football.

Assessing the evidence base for football nutrition recommendations

The “Sports Nutrition for Football” certificate has been constructed based on the latest scientific evidence. However, studies which refine our understanding on how nutrition may impact football players’ health and performance continue to be published. It is important that the sports nutritionist can assess and interpret the new studies as they are published.

Nutrition strategies or dietary supplementation may have direct or indirect benefits for a football player’s performance. However, very few studies have been carried out on professional footballers, or are directly related to football exercise. Therefore, the sports nutritionist must be able to identify relevant studies to football and balance the appropriateness of other related sports nutrition research.

Determining the relevance and impact that new research findings have on nutrition practice is a hard task (Burke and Peeling, 2018). As a guide, figure 1 provides a hierarchical model, which displays the relative strength of the evidence provided by different information sources.

Case studies

Historically, most of the information surrounding nutrition for football has come from the lowest rigour of evidence, such as coach or player anecdotes/observations. These learnings may be classified as case studies, where usually a single player has responded to a specific intervention. A case-controlled study is typically specific to the individual



player and aimed at a specific occasion. For example, does modifying the protein content of a player's pre-match meal influence their gastro-intestinal comfort before a match?

Cohort studies

A cohort study is usually aimed at a population of interest and is more long-term focused. For example, monitoring physique changes of elite football players over the duration of a season.

Research studies

Controlled research studies are designed to answer specific questions. This type of research is tightly regulated and the results are rigorously analysed.

Reviews

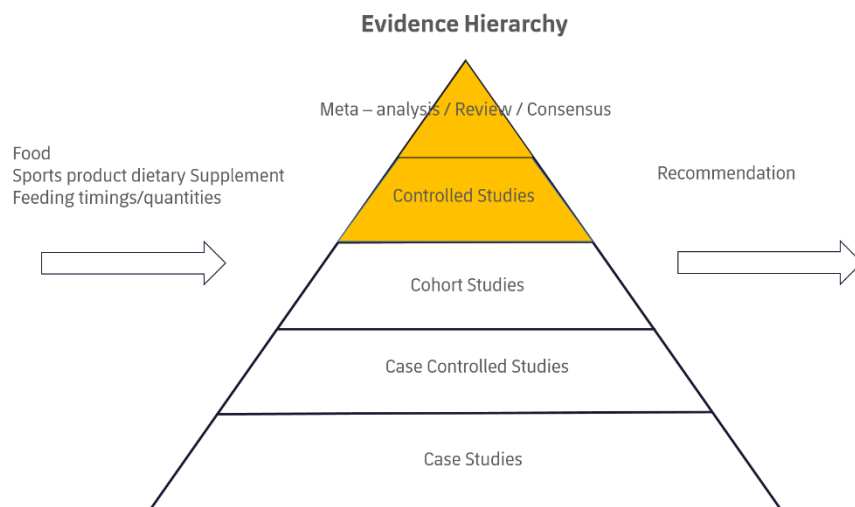
To date, the best level of evidence available to the sports nutritionist comes from systematic reviews and meta-analyses. This research tabulates and analyses the results of many studies on the same topic to yield a conclusive statement about the effectiveness of an intervention (Maughan et al., 2018). Whilst these studies provide evidence for general dietary guidelines, the conclusions of meta-analyses only reflect the quality and quantity of the available studies. The inconsistency across research studies, due to differences in quantity and timing of nutrient intake, as well as the protocols used to assess performance, presents a key challenge. During the pandemic, many reviews were written due to the pause in clinical research.

Consensus statements

As mentioned, there is a lack of studies specifically in professional football. To this end, consensus statements are of great value as they bring together experts on a certain topic and can provide sport-specific context to the body of evidence available. I contributed to the most recent UEFA expert group statement on nutrition in elite football. Which covered the current evidence to inform practical recommendations and guide future research (Collins et al., 2021).



Figure 1. A hierarchy of different types of evidence that might be applied to decisions made about sports nutrition use in football



Source: own elaboration based on Burke and Peeling, 2018.

Coaches and players, who are not from a scientific background, may require or expect answers to all their questions. It is unrealistic that conclusive evidence for a specific question will always be available. In many situations, the answer to a nutrition related question will be “it depends”. Nevertheless, the nutritionist is advised, when possible, to gather all the information required and provide an answer based on the best available evidence. It is important to note that it is ok for the sports nutritionist to say “I don’t know” to a specific question. In this case, time can then be taken to complete the research required as well as seek advice from colleagues/experts for the best response.

How to search for nutrition information

Sports nutrition information is readily available via a host of different platforms. For example:

- journal articles,
- newspaper articles,
- magazine articles,
- official publications,
- tweets,
- blogs,



- online websites/searches,
- governing bodies/local authorities' leaflets,
- television programs.

It should be remembered that not all that is written will be true. The sports nutritionist should not be sceptical, but instead review nutrition articles/information with an analytical rigour. In general, popular media articles included in newspapers or magazines are written by "non-experts". Those authors typically read one "new" scientific manuscript, sensationalise the findings, and seek an expert opinion on the topic. Even then, the expert quote may be taken out of context or mis-quoted. Therefore, when reading popular media articles, consider the quality of the publication, the journalist and if any "experts" have been consulted.

Did you know?

A scientific journal is used for academics to publish studies, opinions and reviews. These articles are subject to "peer review" (reviewed by other academics) and journal editorial requirements. The purpose of journals is to further the understanding on a topic by publishing new research.

Journal articles are often the best source of sports nutrition information. Hard copies of journal articles may be found in libraries, and electronic copies via the internet. Care must be taken due to a recent explosion of online journals which vary in quality. Suggested journals that are relevant, but not limited to, the sports nutritionist in football include the following.

- *Journal of Sports Science*
- *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise*
- *International Journal of Sports Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism*
- *Science and Medicine in Football*
- *Sports Medicine*
- *British Journal of Sports Medicine*
- *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*
- *Nutrients*



- *European Journal of Sports Sciences*

When completing an online search, you may instinctively use a search engine such as Google. However, using this method to search for “carbohydrate AND football” will produce approximately 9 360 000 results (hits) of varying quality. It is advised that using *Wikipedia* as a reference should be avoided. For online searches, it is recommended that the sports nutritionist uses a scientific search engine such as PubMed (www.pubmed.gov) or MetaLib (<https://metalib.gpo.gov/>). These search engines will search the appropriate scientific journals and allow you to refine your search. For example, if you search “carbohydrate AND football” in PubMed you will view approximately 300 results. To refine your search further you can modify the year or search terms, as well as altering the search criteria, i.e. only review articles. For example, searching “Carbohydrate AND football AND extra-time” will then produce a search result of five studies. Equally search “Rollo, I.” and a list of my past and current publications will appear. The search results will give you the information of the study, including the author, date and the journal in which it was published. When you access a specific research study of interest you can use it to inform/support your practice or extend your search of the literature.

Interpreting a controlled research study

The gold standard for investigating the effects of a sports nutrition intervention on football performance is a randomised, controlled scientific trial (Burke and Peeling, 2018). In this type of investigation, the participants are randomly assigned to either an experimental or placebo treatment group. Ideally, this would be achieved in a double-blind and cross-over manner so that the participants receive both treatments in counterbalanced order, under standardised conditions.

Did you know?

In a “double-blinded” study, both the investigator and participant are totally unaware of which treatment they have received until the data collection and analysis has been completed.

A research article will include an abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion and reference section. When reading a research article, there are certain aspects of the manuscript that the sports nutritionist should pay particular attention to the following.

The introduction to a research paper is usually short, but should include all the relevant previous research on that topic. This background information should “justify” the completion of the current study. By reading the introduction, the sports nutritionist can ensure they are familiar with the previous studies. In addition, the studies included in the



introduction can be found in the reference list, at the end of the manuscript. The nutritionist can then search for studies of interest and repeat this process.

When reading the method section, there are several key elements that the nutritionist should focus on. Firstly, the participant characteristics (i.e. gender, age, competitive level and training status) should ideally be relevant to football, i.e. team sport players. However, it is important to note that mechanistic type studies or “performance” studies may include other athletic groups, which may be directly transferable to football players. As an example, the first caffeine studies investigated continuous endurance type exercise and endurance athletes to determine dose and timing protocols. These studies preceded the studies on caffeine that were completed “directly” on football-specific performance (Ali and Williams, 2009).

The sample size refers to the number of participants used in the investigation. The sample size should be sufficient to ensure that the statistical analysis has enough “power” to detect a possible statistical difference between treatments. The number of participants in a study will also depend on the nature of the research, the calibre of participants and number of trials required. Studies in “elite footballers” may be published with a low participant number (*n*) due to the novelty of the population. In general, sports nutrition studies have a sample size of between 10 and 30 participants, depending on the study design.

The protocol used to assess the effect of a nutrition intervention should, as closely as possible, replicate the physical demands and conditions of football. For example, football-specific protocols such as the Loughborough Intermittent Shuttle Run Test and Copenhagen Soccer Test (LIST) have been validated to replicate the physical demands of a football match (Bendiksen et al., 2012; Nicholas, Nuttall and Williams, 2000). The protocol used needs to be able to detect a meaningful difference in the performance outcome relevant to the nutrition intervention being investigated. Ideally the day-to-day variability of performing that exercise by the population being tested should be reported.

There are many factors, which influence football performance (physical and technical). To account for this, the appropriate standardisation of key variables that might influence the results is important. Variables include pre-exercise diet and physical activity. The environmental conditions, such as temperature and humidity should also be the same between trials. Ideally, the pre-test standardisation should replicate that which is representative of football. For example, ingesting a carbohydrate-rich meal 3 hours before exercise would be representative of a “pre-match” meal.

The nutrition intervention itself should be one that is “likely” (based on previous studies) to influence performance. This includes the quantity and timing of intake. The method should list the full composition of any sports products being tested. The sports nutritionist



should be mindful of whether the product contains any compounds (such as caffeine) which have the potential to impact the results. The research article should also include, in the results section, details that verify that the nutrition intervention was completed. For example, blood glucose concentrations following carbohydrate ingestion.

The discussion section of the manuscript will analyse the results of the study, but in the context of the known literature on the topic. This is an important aspect for the sports nutritionist to review as it will provide them with information on how the results “fit” with the current understanding. The discussion may also highlight limitations of the investigation and, depending on the journal, detail the practical implications of the results. Finally, the manuscript should finish with a conclusion, which should summarise the key findings of the investigation.

Continued development

Once a nutritionist begins working with a football team, it is advised that they keep a “folder” of all the activities they have completed. This can be recorded in written form, but it is recommended that pictures (with club consent) are used to capture the impact of sports nutrition at the club. The record should serve as a working document (updated regularly) which then provides evidence of practice. Suggested headings that the sports nutritionist should aim to accumulate evidence for include the following.

- Communication: How are sports nutrition messages disseminated throughout the club? How is nutrition information modified depending on the target audience?
- Working as an interdisciplinary team: provide examples of interactions with other members of staff at the football club (sports doctor, physical trainer, psychologist). What was the situation? What was the contribution of sports nutrition? What was the outcome?
- Case studies: ensuring anonymity of the player (Unit 1), record interventions to specific situations i.e. player injury, performance, body composition, gastrointestinal complaints.
- Professional development activities: detailing courses and conferences attended. Who presented? Which nutrition topics were covered? What were the take home messages? How did you share this with the wider team?
- Review and evaluate nutrition interventions: list the nutrition element that was evaluated. What was changed? What was the outcome?



Regardless of the experience or “level” of the sports nutritionist, all practitioners will benefit from having a “mentor”. A mentor would ideally be a senior or more experienced person within sports nutrition. The nutritionist may already know an existing/ex-academic supervisor or internal colleague they could approach to take on this role. A mentor can be of great value to the sports nutritionist. They may act as a sounding board for ideas, as well as provide an independent perspective on the practice, which has been implemented at the football club. When approaching a mentor, the management of the relationship is up to the sports nutritionist. It is advised that clear goals, expectations and time frames are established early. If the sports nutritionist does not have access to a “senior” mentor, then teaming up with a friend or peer in a similar position at a different club will also offer a great opportunity to share experiences.

Key point

The sports nutritionist should assume responsibility for their own growth and development.

Attending conferences is a great way for a sports nutritionist to continue their professional development. Typically, conference presentations either summarise the available knowledge on a topic or share new information. This can create great learning efficiencies, especially if working day-to-day in a professional club. The conference arena also offers the opportunity to meet colleagues and build a support network of sports nutritionists working within different fields (e.g. academia or professional football). An example is Barcelona Innovation Hub Conferences. Other conferences for consideration include the UEFA medical symposiums, European College of Sports Sciences (ECSS: Europe), World congress of Science in Soccer (Europe) and the American College of Sports Medicine (North America: ACSM).

The role of the sports nutritionist in the interdisciplinary team

The sports nutritionist should not work in isolation. It is important for the sports nutritionist to understand their role and contribution to the wider interdisciplinary team at a football club. Other members of staff at a football club may include, but are not limited to, the following.

- Manager
- Coaches
- Sports medical doctor
- Physiotherapists
- Sports masseurs



- Physical trainers (field based/gym based)
- Sport psychologists
- Sport scientists
- Performance analysts
- Player talent scout
- Kit people

The job of a sports nutritionist will involve elements of education, monitoring, and delivery. It is important to remember that dietary changes are a consequence of the player modifying their behaviour (Halson and Lastella, 2017). The most effective way to achieve this is to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. As such, all members of the interdisciplinary team (“touch points” for the player daily) should be aligned to reinforce the objectives of the sports nutrition strategy. However, it is also important for the sports nutritionist to understand the other roles. It is advised that, if possible, the sports nutritionist asks to “shadow” or help the other disciplines. This experience will produce a greater appreciation of the demands placed on fellow colleagues and creates an opportunity to learn about how sports nutrition can be best integrated into practice.

Complimentary skills for football

Below is a list of potential qualifications, which may complement the sports nutritionist’s role within football.

First aid

When working in a football environment, it is important that the sports nutritionist has basic first aid skills. Basic first aid training will give the sports nutritionist the skills to respond rapidly and appropriately to minor and emergency situations. The sports nutritionist is advised to gain the appropriate regional first aid qualification. Furthermore, the sports nutritionist should be trained on automated external defibrillator (AED) devices and familiarise themselves as to where they are located at the football training ground and stadium.

Additional languages

Football is a global sport. A football squad typically consists of numerous nationalities. The ability to speak multiple languages is an attractive skill for many clubs and will improve the communication of nutrition strategies on an individual player basis.



Food safety

The safety of the player should be the primary concern of the sports nutritionist. A buffet is the typical method of presenting food to players. Details on food safety are beyond the scope of this certificate. However, the sports nutritionist is advised to approach the local food standards authority to gain a basic qualification on food safety. This will allow the sports nutritionist to evaluate the food safety practice, both within the club and at external venues when the club travels.

Final whistle

I hope you have enjoyed the “Sports Nutrition for Football” certificate. You now have the knowledge to benefit the health and performance of the football players and ultimately the team’s success that you work with. I wish you success and happiness in your career as a sports nutritionist. Keep a look out for articles and updates on sports nutrition on the Barcelona Innovation Hub website.

Summary

- The sports nutrition practice at a football club should be “backed by science”.
- Systematic reviews, meta-analyses and consensus statements provide the best level of evidence to inform nutrition practice in football.
- The sports nutritionist should seek and interpret new scientific evidence relevant to football.
- Attending sports nutrition conferences, engaging with a mentor, and gaining complimentary skills will contribute to the continued professional development of the sports nutritionist.
- This certificate is the start of your journey to understanding and delivering sports nutrition in football.

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