

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN *Sports Performance*

Dr Karen Reid Ph.D, Registered Dietitian and SENr Practitioner, explains how the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence is highlighting the importance of nutrition in sports performance and recovery



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The Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) is a programme for young athletes (aged 16-19) "who have the realistic potential to achieve excellence in their sport and are seeking to perform at the highest level as their main career goal".

It was developed by SkillsActive in conjunction with national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport and industry experts in 2004 to ensure top young athletes receive the support and training they need to succeed in elite sport. The programme also gives athletes the skills, knowledge and qualifications to pursue a secondary career within sport, even if they fall short of their ultimate goal to represent their country or gain professional contracts.

Essentially the AASE is designed to teach athletes to apply themselves to professional development within their sport (skillsactive.com/aase).

AASE FOR ATHLETICS

From 2001-2007, I worked as a Performance Nutritionist within the UK Athletics World Class Performance plan in London and the South East and have since continued to work with developing athletes and their coaches. So I was well placed to lead the development of the AASE nutrition programme for athletics.

The programme was piloted almost 10 years ago and now supports over 70 athletes each year. To support the growing numbers of athletes, I've

recruited a team of nutritionists from the Sport and Exercise Nutrition register (SENr). The SENr was helpful for assuring the standard of practitioner. They were also all UK anti-doping advisers (UKAD) having successfully completed the UKAD module.

AIMS OF DIET ADVICE

A well-balanced diet that supports growth and development is essential for adolescent athletes to achieve their performance potential.¹ One of the trickiest things to manage is meal planning around training sessions, competitions and school/college. In accordance with published consensus statements for youth athletes, a food first approach underpins the AASE nutrition programme, teaching athletes how to achieve an appropriate dietary intake rather than relying on supplements^{2,3,4}.

At the recent SENr event in Leeds, Professor Sue Backhouse highlighted the growing trend for supplement use in adolescents for weight and body composition issues, fatigue and injury with many getting their sports nutrition advice from online forums^{5,6}.

Anti-doping guidance is an essential part of the AASE programme and the message that athletes should consider their diet before using supplements is fully supported by the AASE nutritionists who provide informed choices about food sources of key nutrients. Where supplements are used, the athletes are taught how to check products have been batch