

“I love my job!” – A WEEK IN THE WORLD OF A SPORTS NUTRITIONIST

Richard Chessor is the only sport nutritionist employed by British Swimming. Here he writes about a typical working week, demonstrating what sort of work his niche role involves



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MORE INFO

For more information about the Sports and Exercise Nutrition Register please visit senr.org.uk

As performance nutritionist for British Swimming I am responsible for advising around 60 world-class athletes on their diet. Although I am the only nutritionist employed by British Swimming, there is a small network of nutritionists working within the Home Country Sports Institutes and in private practice so my active case load is reduced to around 45 swimmers. Here is a sample of a typical week in my professional world...

SUNDAY

My week started on a Sunday with a late evening flight to Bristol for two days working at one of our national centres in Bath. I travel up and down the country a lot and love the diversity of working with different swimmers and coaches.

MONDAY

Monday begins at poolside by 7am. When I'm visiting a training centre I always start with a general catch-up with the coaches and support staff – on this occasion the physiologist and physiotherapist. It's helpful to get a personalised insight into how the swimmers are performing before I meet with them. It's easy to miss out on small but important incidents when you are not in a centre day-in day-out.

After the training session I have three one-to-one consultations with various swimmers. Each consultation may only take 30-60 minutes depending on the topic but can often create many more hours of follow-up work in order to bring the discussions to life. This time of year (April) means that many of my discussions are focused around race-day nutrition practices to maximise performance potential.

Back to the poolside for the afternoon session. Being relatively new to the sport, I like to spend time observing training and chatting to the coaching staff about training. It's important for me to understand the physical demands on the swimmers in order to provide them the best advice possible.

TUESDAY

Back to poolside for 7am and a few casual conversations with the swimmers before and after training. These 'corridor conversations' can be invaluable as nutrition support is often about prompts or nudges to make a change or reinforce a good

practice rather than a formal meeting.

Mid-morning we have an MDT meeting where each swimmer is discussed and priority support needs are highlighted. It's really important to coordinate messages, especially in the build up to competition.

Another three swimmer one-to-one meetings before the afternoon training session; then an opportunity to type up some notes before a debrief with the coaching staff and a dash up the M5, M6, and M42 to get to Loughborough.

WEDNESDAY

It's 6.30am at the pool and time for some skinfolds! We regularly monitor changes in the swimmers' body composition throughout the season but it's particularly important at this stage so we can understand how they change in the build up to competition. I've a meeting with our medical team to discuss strategies to minimise illness risk for an upcoming training camp and competition in Asia.

THURSDAY

More 6.30am skinfolds! It's important to measure the swimmers when they are at rest before training as recent exercise will affect the test results. I've also a couple of swimmer one-to-one meetings this morning but this time the focus will be on weight management strategies and ideas to help promote recovery after training.

I have monthly scheduled calls with the nutritionists working with swimmers throughout the network and use these calls to keep abreast of recent activity and get an update on the status of the swimmers I don't work directly with.

The afternoon holds a team meeting with input from our performance psychologist and then an opportunity to tidy up some notes before the late night flight home.

FRIDAY

I worked from home this Friday which gives me a chance to tie up all the loose ends from the week and get stuck into some project work before preparing for the following week. The weekend was time with the family and an opportunity to play about with a new rice-cooker to experiment with some new snack ideas for the swimmers! I love my job! 