

6-1, 6-1: Undefeated Nutrition Defeats Exercise in the Waistline Battle

Look around your tennis club. They're all around you sweating hard in pursuit of better appearances, fitness, and health. They are your members and, if true to national statistics, nearly 70% of them are overweight. What an opportunity!

Over the years since college they've accumulated a few inches around the middle. They're thinking, "If I could just get out and play tennis a few more times each week, I could exercise off that weight." Wrong! Exercise is an inefficient route to weight-loss for adults. Nutrition can be six times more effective!

Here are two recommendations:

1. Encourage them to play tennis for the joy of the game and for the workout. Don't rely on this amazing game as their sweet spot for a weight-loss program.
2. Begin to offer calorie restricted, nutritionally dense, healthy options on your club's menu. In lieu of \$1 candy bars offer \$1 cups of fruit or nuts.

Healthy tennis players are more prone to play and purchase. Let's toss up the facts on losing for you to share with your members.

To lose one pound of fat a member needs to burn 3,500 calories while not double faulting their metabolism. Starve themselves simply slows down their metabolism from the typical rate of burn. By consuming 100-calorie snack packages, they're fooling themselves – the packs are nutritionally empty so they lose lean muscle mass, not fat. The key to winning at the waistline is to reduce the calorie intake with nutrient-dense, low calorie small meals about 6 times per day. This protects lean muscle mass, burns the fat, and adequately fuels the body.

Let's take Jan as an example. She's a 5' 5" adult woman who weighs 165 pounds and would like to lose 35 pounds. At her current weight, just going through her day she burns about 2,250 calories – known as her total energy expenditure (TEE). At 130 pounds Jan's TEE will be about 2,000 calories because she will no longer be carrying around the extra weight.

To maintain her current weight of 165 pounds, Jan would match her TEE calories in and out. If she eats more than her TEE, then she gains weight. If she consumes fewer calories than her TEE, then she loses weight. It's just science!

Jan, however, eats about 2,750 calories a day so she is gaining weight. On the day she plays a hard hour of doubles, Jan burns about 500 calories and remains calorie neutral. On the other six days per week when she's not playing tennis, Jan packs on 3,000 calories too many – she's gaining nearly a pound per week.

But Jan has a solution. She weighs herself regularly. When her weight hits a new high, she plays another game called "yo-yo dieting" that's messing with her metabolism.

Fault!

To get a lift to her day, Jan grabs a daily 180-calorie Starbucks Caffe Latte plus a number of other “little food rewards” often known as chocolate. Despite taking supplements, her nutritional intake is calorie high and nutritionally in the net.

Double fault! Jan is not serving herself well. Yes, Jan definitely benefits from playing tennis but she will neither lose weight nor gain nutritional health with her current waistline play.

Instead, what if Jan smartly feeds her body with a nutritionally dense, low calorie “fueling” about every 3 hours? Her metabolism and nutrition are more apt to be in balance.

A weight-loss program (not a diet) for Jan might have her consuming a healthy 1,500 calories per day.* This deficit of 1,250 calories per day compared to her TEE equates to playing 2.5 hours of hard doubles per day – every day of the week. Jan is going to lose a 2-3 pounds per week. Good nutrition beats exercise in the battle of the waistline every time 6-1, 6-1.

Achieving a calorie-restricted, nutritionally-dense, balanced approach to a healthy weight is delicate, but very doable. As health coaches, we’ll first help Jan understand why weight-loss matters to her and help her set healthy goals. Next, Jan will get a convenient lifestyle nutritional program suited to her tastes and day-to-day reality. For a weight-loss program to work, it must be personalized and accommodating within the realities of science.

As important as weight-loss is, keeping the weight off is more important. When one’s body is fueled properly, members become more clear-headed and energetic. Help them care for their health and bodies and your members will reward you with winning on and far beyond the tennis court.

* Consult your physician before starting a weight-loss program.

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