

# Performance Nutrition AND THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

**Irene Riach**, Senior Performance Nutritionist at Sportscotland Institute of Sport speaks of the exciting work in preparation for and delivery of the recent Glasgow Commonwealth Games



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**T**he Sport and Exercise Nutrition Register (SENr) is an important element of BDA work. Within the last 12 months it has doubled in size and now has membership and support from the key Sport Institute employers across the UK, along with professional sport and education and research partners.

The Sportscotland Institute of Sport provides support services to Scottish athletes. We have a team of specialists in the fields of sports medicine, physiotherapy, physiology, strength and conditioning, skill acquisition, performance lifestyle, sport psychology and (most importantly!) performance nutrition. I am a senior member of the performance nutrition team with a responsibility for leadership, strategy, development, quality assurance and technical delivery. I manage a team of nutrition experts that deliver to a number of sports, athletes and coaches in Scotland.

As planning for the games progressed it became clear that there were three separate areas of performance nutrition delivery: The Team Scotland preparation camp; the 'Games Time Support' exclusive to Team Scotland; and following my advice to the organising committee a nutrition kiosk located within main dining hall at the games village.

## TEAM SCOTLAND PREPARATION CAMP

Three objectives were agreed:

**1 Design and construct a daily menu for the duration of preparation camp. This included tasting sessions, recipe manipulation and full dietary analysis.**

**2 Day-to-day management of catering operations.**

**3 Provision of performance nutrition support to sports and athletes.**

In total, the preparation camp catering delivered 3015 meals over a period of 18 days. There were no incidences of food borne illness or allergic reactions noted during this time.

Prior to the preparation camp going live I delivered an education session to key catering and management personnel to introduce them to performance nutrition ethos and how this might operate for Team Scotland during the preparation camp.

We formed excellent working relationships with management and lead chefs. The chefs assured us of the quality of food that was being served and any additional requests were always considered.

Team Scotland operated a snack station in the athlete lounge area of the preparation camp and was open from 6.30am to 10pm. This snack station was well received by athletes. The range and quality of food and fluids available was adequate.

In addition, performance nutrition staff were available for individual consultations around the dining room and athletes lounge. Having a dietitian on site with an in-depth knowledge of the menu content and menu structure allowed daily adjustment of intake to tailor weight loss. This occurred throughout preparation camp and continued into the games village environment. There was also a significant focus on health and hygiene as athletes entered the camp. This included the 'hand foam police' at the dining room entrance, snack station, toilets, reception, communal



LONDON 2012  
LARGEST EVER NUMBER  
OF SCOTS ON GB TEAMS,  
CONTRIBUTING TO 20% OF THE  
OVERALL MEDALS AND 24% OF  
GOLD MEDALS

SOCHI 2014  
BEST EVER RESULTS FOR TEAM GB  
WITH SCOTLAND CONTRIBUTING  
TO THREE OLYMPIC AND  
PARALYMPIC MEDALS

GLASGOW 2014  
LARGEST EVER TEAM,  
BEST EVER PREPARED  
53 MEDALS  
19 GOLDS  
63 MEDALLISTS

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areas and toilets. These hygiene measures alongside probiotic use influenced the low incidence of illness among our athlete population.

### GAMES-TIME SUPPORT

We were approached in early 2013 by the organising committee of Glasgow 2014 for advice on food provision across the various games sites. This involved a scoping exercise that resulted in a list of recommendations for the organising committee to take forward to the relevant venues and caterers. One recommendation that was well supported was the installation of a nutrition kiosk in main village dining area which was staffed by the performance nutrition team. The nutrition kiosk was well used in addition to the two dining options in the village: casual dining – which was a BBQ-style setup with picnic tables and a smoothie bar in a covered but open environment which overlooked the river Clyde; and there was the main dining hall in the centre of the athlete village.

Many people were fed over games time and the logistics of feeding a significant number of people is quite fascinating! We made some interesting observations, for example the time of day that people eat – often we were quite busy at the kiosk from 10.30pm to midnight as people returned

from competition and treatment. The most popular foods/dishes were:

- Smoothies (were a great success with a peak daily number of 4500).
- Chicken breast
- Salmon supreme
- Scotch steak
- Steak burgers
- Lamb skewers
- Turkey skewers
- Ice cream
- Scottish salmon

### NUTRITION KIOSK

The athletes' village became operational on the 8 July and at this point the performance nutrition team set up a nutrition information kiosk located in the main dining hall. The kiosk was a point of contact for athletes and team officials for any catering matters.

The desk was open day from 7am until 11pm with a handover period after each shift conducted to ensure continuity of service. 304 consultations were recorded on nutrition related subjects and 163 physical weigh-ins from athletes and team officials. The SportsScotland Institute provided calibrated scales for the duration of the games.

Consultations at the kiosk included:

allergy advice; anti-doping; appetite loss; blood pressure/diet; competition meal planning; constipation advice; DM; food request/issues; general enquiry as to what advice is available; hydration; menu advice (labelling/content/dining room orientation); travel advice; weight (loss, maintenance and gain).

The nutrition kiosk was an excellent opportunity to understand the challenges that come up for caterers, sports staff and athletes. It was also a great learning opportunity to speak with people from other countries and learn about their challenges in nutrition and sports performance.

Having worked previously at London 2012, the Glasgow games were especially important as they were on home soil and I am proud to have been part of a special wider games team that has contributed to history. It really is a privilege to be part of an athlete's journey to the podium, there really is no such thing as an overnight success as many in the performance landscape will know.

So when the dust settled on Glasgow 2014 it marked the most successful cycle for Scottish sport ever and in the words of Prince Imran of the Commonwealth Games Federation at the closing ceremony: "Glasgow, you were pure dead brilliant". ●