



Tampa Bay Wellness

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MAGAZINE

MAKING FITNESS
A **FAMILY** AFFAIR

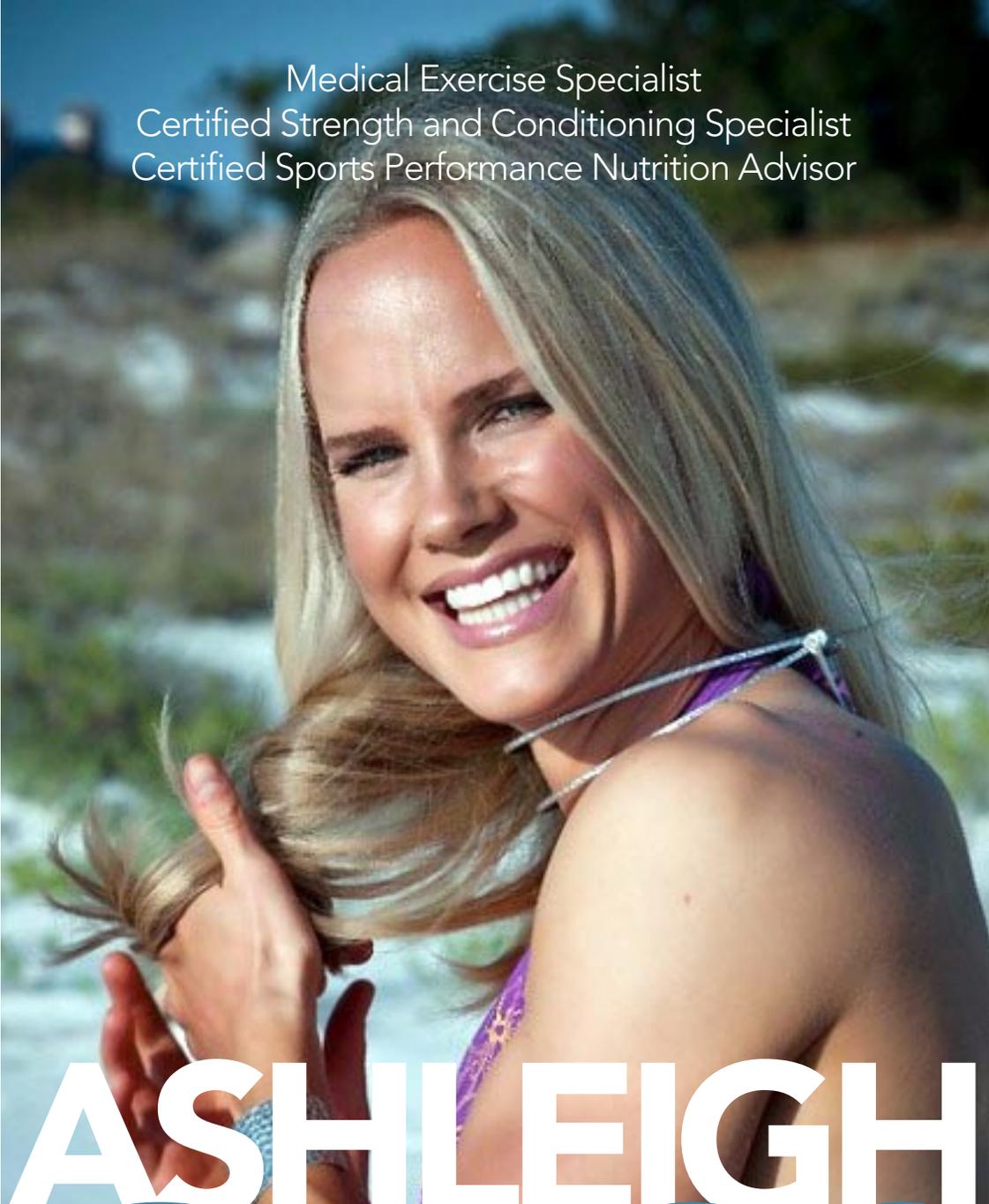
ECO-FRIENDLY
BEAUTY TRENDS

HEALTHY
GROCERY
SHOPPING
ON A
BUDGET

AN
INTERVIEW
WITH LOCAL

EXERCISE, STRENGTH,
CONDITIONING &
NUTRITION SPECIALIST

**ASHLEIGH
GASS**



Medical Exercise Specialist
Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist
Certified Sports Performance Nutrition Advisor

ASHLEIGH GASS

Insights & Knowledge from a Competitor

Ashleigh Gass has worked in the strength and conditioning field for a decade. She works with a wide variety of clientele: College and professional

athletes, weekend warriors, and people who simply wish to overcome the aches and pains of poor training all rely on Ashleigh's expertise.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEIGH GASS BSC, CSCS



Ashleigh's entire life reflects the genuine enthusiasm and passion she has for the health and wellness industry. She has always been involved in competitive sports. Her academic background augments her innate talent and includes:

University of Victoria Graduate, 2003

National Coaching Institute Graduate:
Post-Graduate diploma in Long Term
Development of the Elite Athlete

Certified Sports Performance Nutrition
Advisor (Canadian Health Food
Association)

Certified Strength and Conditioning
Specialist (CSCS - NSCA)

Medical Exercise Specialist (American
Academy of Health, Fitness, and Rehab
Professionals)

Ashleigh also has extensive training in Orthopedic Rehabilitation, Medical Exercise, and Injury Prevention/Rehabilitation. She consistently upgrades her knowledge and skills with Continuing Education. Please join us this month for an interview with Clearwater resident Ashleigh Gass.

Is there anything in your earlier life to which you can attribute your current profession?

Absolutely! Growing up, sports were the center of my life. Competitive gymnastics, soccer, and track and field formed the foundation of my personality and created the desire to work in the strength and conditioning industry. High school was also a key time period. Several of us were fortunate to have the mentorship of our Physical Education teacher, Murray Allen. Murray would work out with us in the school gym several mornings a week before class began. It was there that I began learning my way around weight training.

What began as a small group turned into a large strength and conditioning program at Oak Bay Secondary School in Victoria BC, Canada.

One of my current projects is creating similar programs for young athletes. Having access to high quality strength and conditioning coaching from an early age was key for my development. Therefore, it is something I want to pass on to others.

We know that you have been an athlete your entire life. Can you tell us about some of your most memorable experiences in athletics?

There are so many! Completing my first back-tuck in gymnastics was like flying, which was very liberating! Competing in front of judges for the first time, earning that first score. Locking a spot on Victoria's first provincial soccer team, and then working our way from bottom of the league to one of the top teams. The devastation of second place at the Canadian University Soccer Championships in 2002. Some

of the most valuable lessons in sport come from the most painful losses!

Stepping up on stage for the first time as a bodybuilder, age 19. That was a challenging experience for sure. The figure shows I compete in now are very rewarding. Each show represents an opportunity to refine stage presence and improve physically/mentally.

Do you think that athletes are born, made, or both? Can anyone be an athlete?

"Athlete" defined is 'a person who is proficient in sports and other forms of physical exercise'. Based on that definition, my answer is yes, anyone can be an athlete. Walk into any gym, you will see people who are proficient in weight training. Head out to your local triathlon, you will see people proficient in swimming, biking and running. Make sense?

Competing in sport on the world stage is a different ball game. Put it this way: A person can be 'born' a great athlete but never reach their potential because they get hurt from poorly designed training programs. Guide that same person from birth with intelligent program design and you can 'make' a world-class athlete.

The name of my business, Brilliant Athlete, was inspired by the process I see my athletes go through when we begin our work together. They start off understanding very little about program design, injury prevention, and nutrition, but over time really learn how to do their own planning and preparation. They get to the point where they see me as a guide, not as someone they depend on. The quote "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime" is what I aim to accomplish with people.



"Begin making better food choices daily. Add an extra vegetable into each meal, reduce sugar-infused drink intake from several/day to one, then none. Learn how to plan a menu for one day, then two days, then a week. Begin to enjoy fresh, organic produce. Reduce your intake of garbage foods until you no longer desire them. Learn how to create a more efficient metabolism."

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What can you tell us about the decision you made to commit your profession to health and wellness? Did this seem like a natural extension of your abilities?

It was the only decision. Never once did it occur to me to do anything else. Before I knew what 'Kinesiology' meant, it was what I wanted to do (Kinesiology is the study of mechanics of body movements).

From an early age, I was exceptionally fortunate to meet top strength and conditioning coaches, sports therapists, and sports nutrition professionals. Each of them provided opportunities to work in the real world, with real people.

After high school came College. The college environment coupled with thousands of hours in the gym improved my ability to get results with people I worked with. Although formal education is important, it's equally important not to let school get in the way of your education. Be as practical and real world oriented as possible. Get into the trenches and learn what works and what does not work. Textbooks are great, but the practical side and your willingness to learn will dictate your success.

We know that you are involved with several aspects of the fitness and nutrition. What are some things about your work that might surprise people?

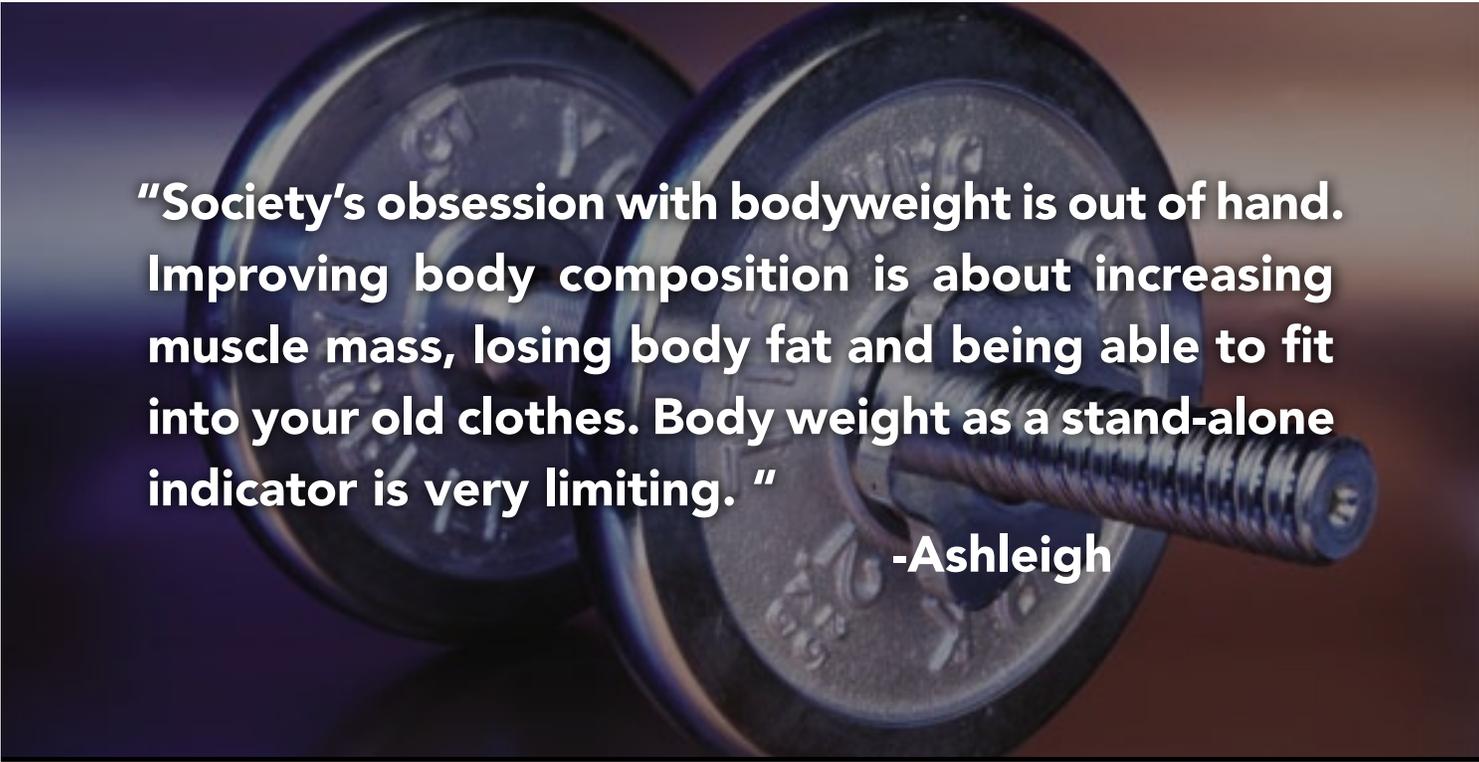
The main areas I focus on are program design, nutrition education, and injury prevention education. Some people are surprised that I am always studying, learning, and refining what I do with the intent of improving the lives of those I work with. My 'work' is my life, passion, and total focus.

Why do athletes and teams begin training programs without understanding the mechanics of what they are doing? They seem to have good intentions. Is this simply due to a lack of education?

Usually it is not a lack of education, but lack of good education. Most training programs are designed with one purpose: push the athlete and entire team for that matter, as hard as possible physically. Very little, if any, respect is given to recovery and good injury prevention strategies. The philosophy of 'more is better' seems to prevail everywhere.

What you will then see is a team of injured athletes. It's typical to have half or more of the athletes on www.tampabaywellness.com

AN INTERVIEW WITH ASHLEIGH GASS



"Society's obsession with bodyweight is out of hand. Improving body composition is about increasing muscle mass, losing body fat and being able to fit into your old clothes. Body weight as a stand-alone indicator is very limiting. "

-Ashleigh

a team injured in some way. Chronic hamstring injuries, lower back problems, knee injuries, etc are common and viewed as an acceptable part of sport. All of this is unacceptable.

When non-competitive athletes (weekend warriors, etc) come and see me, many of them also have sore joints and chronic injuries. I look at their training history and can safely conclude that all injuries are created from years of less than ideal training in the gym, on the field, or a combination of both.

What do you think is the biggest "fitness myth" currently circulating in society?

America's obsession with bodyweight is out of hand. I moved here from Canada two years ago and cannot believe how much emphasis people put on weight loss. Improving body composition is about increasing muscle mass, losing body fat and being able to fit into your old clothes. Body weight as a stand-alone indicator is very limiting.

Another myth that people believe is that improving their health has to be a complicated process. They try every magic juice, pill and pudding, read every health book, and as a result have so much conflicting information they never actually do anything. Improving health takes small steps repeated over time. There is no fast track to optimal health and body composition. It takes work, dedication, and

time.

Begin making better food choices daily. Add an extra vegetable into each meal, reduce sugar-infused drink intake from several/day to one, then none. Learn how to plan a menu for one day, then two days, then a week. Begin to enjoy fresh, organic produce. Reduce your intake of garbage foods until you no longer desire them. Learn how to create a more efficient metabolism.

When teaching, I keep it simple and practical. People learn the basics, then apply the basics, and get outstanding results.

What are the most common goals of the clients that you (or you and your partner) see?

People hire me to guide them with their training decisions, nutrition program design, and reduction/prevention of current and/or chronic injuries. Sometimes, all of the above!

What are your hobbies?

Training, reading, teaching, and spending time with good people.

Are there any local events that you never miss?

I like to attend sport events, conferences, seminars, and anything that advances my knowledge in some way.

What are your plans, for both the short- and long-term future?

My short term and long term plans are to reach more people and improve more lives. In doing so, new business is created, and then expanded. Ultimately, one of my goals is to improve the strength and conditioning, as well as the health and wellness industries.

Check in at www.brilliantathlete.com for updates and progress in the strength and conditioning industry.



Check in at www.mindandbodywellness.org for updates and information in the Health and Wellness Industry and Ashleigh's nutritional education programs

