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## **Understanding The Care and Feeding of the Modern Basketball Player:**

To make a naturopathic analysis of this creature, it is first necessary to analyse the genesis and body type in its natural environment and then consider the requirements and demands of its sport.

*What is required by this sport is a very tall, springy and fit body which can effortlessly carry a keen and calculating intelligence with a very good eye and dynamite reflexes, up and down the court, hour after hour and year after year, of games and training.*

This body must begin its training long before, and reach a very high level of perfection shortly after, it stops growing. It must then maintain this level with short breaks only, for 15 or 20 years with minimum downtime for minor injuries and constant protection against career threatening breakdown. The intelligence and reflexes must remain keen and very highly tuned in spite of the mind numbing repetition of training and playing, disruptions to family and social life, and the exponentially increasing distractions which come with success.

### **The Body Structure:**

To grow tall enough, one must have tall parents, an excess of human growth hormone and a diet, which is un-naturally high in Calcium.

These three circumstances have been taken care of in the last four generations of our species, by big business. Not intentionally, but as a by-product of their desire to grow grain and stock bigger and faster using hormones, selective breeding and more recently genetic engineering. Business interests have also managed to have us consume more dairy products during our growing years since the 1930's than ever before in the history of mankind. (With the possible exception of the Ashanti Peoples of southern Africa.)

It is true that Calcium grows longer bones but it is also true that these long and fast growing bones are weaker and more subject to disease and injury than the slower growing bones of our predecessors. Take the Japanese grand parents for example on their traditional, almost dairy free diets with lots of Soy, Rice and Seaweed, a full foot and a half shorter than their offspring and almost completely free of arthritis, often despite a whole lifetime of manual work.

This tall body also shows up with very large feet. Also, and because of the demands of such a high rate of growth during early teens, the body exhibits a tendency toward a lack of coordination and slower than average reflexes. This tendency shows up especially during the six or eight years of abnormally fast growth beginning before puberty which is coming earlier and earlier due to the same exposure to hormones.

It is the big feet, the wear and tear on immature and rapidly growing limbs, along with inappropriate exercise and nutrition during this period of growth, which will set up underlying weaknesses. These are the weaknesses, which will in the end, dramatically cull the number of prospective basketball players who will arrive at the top structurally durable for a career in their sport.

Analysing the requirements defined as above is pretty straightforward from a naturopathic or holistic medical point of view.

Herbal/Nutritional support during growth and development to facilitate the rapid and healthy growth and maturity of the structure, to greatly improve its durability and minimise injury would include the following simple elements;

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**Millet:** We need Millet as a silica rich grain feed to provide the mineral balance so lacking in a high dairy diet. It is the silica in correct balance with calcium, which will allow those fast growing bones to quickly mature into tough durable and flexible bones. The organic compounds high in silica will toughen and seal the bone ends as they are growing, to minimise damage while training on immature joints. The same compounds will encourage the joints to mature completely when growing is finished preparing them for the high shock loadings and wear and tear of this sport for 15 years or more. These joints will also remain undamaged to allow a pain and arthritis free life afterward.

**Linseed:** Linseed in combination with Millet provides correct nutrition for the elasticity and strength of Ligaments and ligament attachments. The ligaments must grow and stretch and maintain their elasticity right through the rapid growing time. They must mature early to allow the workload so necessary to build up the fitness and reflexes needed during training. Ligaments must be totally healthy from an early age to cope with the loadings on the feet during growth and training. Ligaments and bones must be especially tough to cope with the heavy weight programs designed to develop fast twitch and strength reflexes required to jump.

Interestingly, the breakfast cereal of the Cossacks on the steppes of Russia who engage in a form of dancing which sees 16 stone middle aged men springing about from a bended knee squat position is a porridge made from ground millet and linseed. If you have ever wondered how their ligaments could stand up to such strain the answer is in their cereal.

Maybe cruciate ligament protection could be as simple as a daily bowl of porridge made from millet and linseed.

**Herbs:Comfrey** is a herb which has the ability not only to heal bone and ligament injury much more rapidly than by any other means but, if given in small amounts throughout all stages of growing and training, would ensure a totally healthy structure. Comfrey will also focus extra healing and toughening on all areas being subjected to special strain.

Comfrey partnered with the two further herbs Nettle and Equisetum complete this particular support package. Nettle for the iron levels and circulatory support and Equisetum (Horsetail) for the extra silica which, operating in harmony with Comfrey, will complete the herbal requirements for optimum bone growth and health.

A herbal support package of these three herbs also means that each sports specific area of strain would be selectively strengthened during the whole of training and preparation. Therefore, when the full demands of the sport are realised, the structure would have been prepared naturally in a way, which is far beyond what can be achieved by specific training programs not incorporating naturopathic understanding.

Externally, Linseed Oil, Arnica and Wintergreen should all be combined into all linament massage oils and bruising creams.

**Linseed Oil** will be absorbed and provide support directly through the skin to ligaments and their attachments, in addition to the dietary intake. An oil containing at least these three ingredients should massaged daily into limbs, joints and feet at all stages of training and competition.

**Arnica** is well known as a vulnerary bruising treatment. It works by dramatically increasing the circulation to and from an area of damaged tissue, like a bruise, thereby allowing blood and plasma to drain away from the site of the injury and blood borne healing agents to more quickly to effectively resolve the damage. Arnica also resolves the shock effects of any such injury.

Less well known is the ability of Arnica to carry out exactly the same task within bone tissue itself, facilitating the resolution of bone bruises, the healing of microscopic stress fractures, and minimising scarring due to all such injury. This property then, will assist in maintaining the correct elasticity and resilience in bone tissue rather than suffer the progressive calcification and scarring leading to brittle bones

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and increased likelihood of serious fracture as the load stresses of the sport continue over time.

**Wintergreen** is a heating agent which draws circulation and warmth to any area to which it is applied. It also has the property of drawing deeply into muscle and bone tissue, along with the healing herbs applied externally.

A small amount of wintergreen oil is valuable in all massage and liniment oils but it should not be applied where there is fresh bruising or open wounds.

## **Health and Vitality:**

A fundamental of the preparation of all athletes should be the enjoyment of total health and vitality and a bullet proof immune system. They should be feeling 110% jumping out of their skin fit and healthy all the time and if they are not, then there is something less than perfect about their care and feeding.

This seems like a tall order but it really is not at all. All that is required is a detailed understanding of wellness rather than the striving for the absence of illness which is the focus of the allopathic medical approach. Wellness and the absence of illness are not the same thing, they are not even close. An immune system functioning at about 60% will keep illness at bay. Wellness is all about 100% fit and well in body, mind and spirit.

## **Physical Wellness:**

Physical wellness is easy enough to define.

It is a state where the cardiovascular system, the muscular structure and all the organs of metabolism are functioning at peak and in harmony; the adrenal reserves are plentiful and readily accessible and the immune system is functioning at peak.

## **Cardiovascular Health:**

Is well-understood in sports medicine and training. It is the most mechanistic of the components of health and the most subject to measurement. Therefore, in this rational/scientific age where increasingly we try to quantify everything, this system has received more than its fair share of attention. I have no argument and nothing much to add except to caution that a focus on measurement and scientific evaluation leads to a tendency to discount or disregard all those factors not easily, or perhaps not ever, subject to measurement. It is only a short step to the ridiculous along this path, as a consideration of all the following aspects of physical wellness will show.

A Herbalist or other Natural Therapist can support any deficiencies or weaknesses in the cardiovascular in particular individuals on a case by case basis. These could include for example; inefficiencies in the Lungs or Bronchioles where herbs like Elecampane, Coltsfoot or Gelsemium may be valuable; weaknesses in the vein walls where Rue is very important; or in the heart itself where Hawthorn is particularly valuable. Other areas of bone marrow or spleen health or other blood quality factors that can impinge on cardiovascular efficiency are dealt with below.

## **Metabolic Harmony:**

Is achieved when the Pituitary, Thyroid, Kidneys, Adrenals, Liver, Spleen, Pancreas, Heart, Lungs and Bone Marrow are all healthy. These combine to ensure that the Digestive, the Respiratory and the Circulatory systems are functioning at peak.

A diet with plentiful natural sources of Carbohydrates, Vitamins and Minerals and a minimum of adulterated or otherwise processed foods is important but on its own will not ensure the health and harmony of the component organs and systems. Each athlete must be regularly accessed within the context of his or

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her own individual constitutional and nervous system type and health history to provide individually crafted support. This is the task of the Naturopath who looks holistically at an individual and prescribes herbs, dietary supplements and nervous system tonics to suit the individual. To take a few examples:

The gut reactor is an individual who internalises all their stress and pressure and expresses it as a disruption in the digestive processes. This may show up as dyspepsia, ulcers, colic, nausea, bloating, intolerance to fat, diarrhoea, irritable bowel, constipation or the inability to maintain body condition. A digestive system exposed to such patterns cannot function at peak, cannot absorb completely the nutrient content of their feed and, if left untended, will in the end lead to more serious health problems. A herbal supplement program to deal with such a pattern may be as simple as a combination of herbs such as Chamomile, Alfalfa, Dandelion, Slippery Elm and Liquorice.

The muscle tension reactor is an individual who reacts to stress and pressure by building up tension in muscle tissue within the body. This can show up as teeth grinding, elevated blood pressure, neck tension headaches, cramps and excess muscle bulk built up through the isometric effect of muscles pulling constantly against one another. The management of muscular mass, fitness, tone and vitality is critically important in all sports and especially so in the basketballer who must be able to direct muscular effort in a single direction which is up. A program to deal with a pattern of muscle tension reactivity can be as simple as the use of the herb Valerian, coupled with deep tissue massage and maybe meditation.

The head reactor will process all stress and pressure in the brain, which will work harder and harder going around, and around, unproductively. This will interfere with the quality of sleep and relaxation, cause anxiety even depression and deplete vitality, Vitamin B and adrenal reserves all to no purpose. A program suited to such an individual might include herbs such as Hops, Passion Flower and Vervain along with relaxation and perhaps yoga or meditation techniques and regular counselling.

Other individuals react to stress and pressure by depleting adrenal reserves, compromising their immunity, restricting circulation to areas of their bodies or impeding respiratory efficiency. All these tendencies must be accessed, understood and addressed long before they result in lost performance and certainly long before they result in serious and career threatening illness which they all have the potential to do if left untended.

Attempting to sustain health and athletic potential purely on the basis of inputs and outputs (food, training, supplements and vitamins for example) in some sort of 'scientific' manner is naive, ridiculous and haphazard in the extreme. Without an holistic understanding and support of each individuals history, reactions and response to pressure and stress underpinning everything else, no athlete can reach and maintain their potential.

## **Adrenal Reserves:**

depend on the health of the Kidneys and Adrenal Glands and high levels of Vitamin C stored in the Adrenals. Adrenalin is depleted by apprehension, fear, shock, overtraining, caffeine and cola drinks. Confidence, challenge, success, kidney health, Iron and Vitamin C sustain adrenalin. Management of adrenal reserves is critical to athletic performance at peak.

**Adrenalin** is most valuable to the athlete when it is held in reserve and not when it is being utilised. It is only possible to sustain peak health and performance over the long term if it comes without depending on adrenalin. The adrenalin will kick in and immediately recharge itself at those critical times when the basketballer needs to fly just that little bit higher or react just that little bit faster for a single instant.

The habit of depending on adrenalin routinely for training and in competition will inevitably compromise potential and result in physical and emotional health problems cutting short a career. Herbs which boost and protect adrenal reserves are Borage, Rosehips and Liquorice which should be used regularly as part of the basketballers tonic intake.

**Immunity:** depends on the proper development of the immune system and the minimum of intervention in

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normal illnesses to allow the bodies own immunity to mature. Immunity depends on high blood iron and oxygen and plentiful Vitamin C and Antioxidant supplies.

The herb Rosehips provides all of the above requirements. Rosehips is an excellent source of organic iron compounds and it is higher in Vitamin C than almost any other natural substance. Rosehips is a better source also, because the Vitamin C is formed and stored by nature and partnered with Iron, Copper and a trace of Cobalt. This allows it to be absorbed and utilised much more effectively than can any manufactured ascorbate Vitamin C.

Rosehips therefore supply antioxidant activity to the athlete to assist in clearing the high levels of free radicals generated by 'excessive' physical exercise. Rosehips are also a major Kidney and Adrenal Tonic and not a bad Liver Tonic. Any athlete of any description needs to drink copious amounts of Rosehips tea as a regular part of every days fluid intake.

Oxygenation of the blood, given healthy bone marrow and spleen function shouldn't be a problem as so much of athletic activity and training is aerobic. Comfrey besides being good for the bones as described is a principal spleen tonic also in conjunction with Rosehips. The herb Yarrow is another very high iron source and it also functions specifically on promoting bone marrow health.

The highest antioxidant herb is the bark of the Maritime Pine, which is about 25 times as powerful as vitamin C in this regard. This amazing herb also protects peripheral circulation and prevents burnout from overtraining as well as protecting the immunity at a very fundamental level to minimise the likelihood of severe immune system diseases like Cancer and Rheumatism for example.

The immune system works at a whole range of different levels and the nourishment of this critical system is very poorly understood by allopathic medicine. For example if a top athlete suffers a flu just prior to a major event it is considered as bad luck really. There is some acknowledgment that it might have something to do with over training or anxiety but mostly it is blamed on some errant virus which the athlete was unfortunate enough to catch. The best allopathic medicine can do is suggest that the athlete has more Vitamin C.

Understanding, supporting (and respecting) the immune system must begin before birth and continue for the whole of a persons lifetime. For example mothers abusing their own bodies prior to falling pregnant with all sorts of substances and emotional problems, probably fathers as well, abuse during pregnancy like smoking or other addictions. Breast feeding and all the rest of maternal nurturing is a critically important part of immune system development.

The routine interference using chemical medicines in the normal childhood illnesses which were provided (along with enlarged tonsils, adenoids and thymus glands) to assist in the development and maturity of the immune system is another major problem. The abuse of injectables of all sorts be it drugs, medicines or even vitamins and blood doping all compromise the immunity. Every single injection provides a grave shock to the immune system when unnatural or even changed natural substances show up in the blood stream without the normal warnings (or time to prepare) as in the case where substances are taken into the body naturally.

A healthy immune system will enable us to function at peak much longer than if it is compromised. It is not just a matter of catching fewer colds and getting over them faster. It includes the life long minimisation of medical intervention with all its attendant dangers. A healthy immune system allows the body to heal and repair itself more effectively, completely and rapidly from all injury and from wear and tear. It means that we can cope with the draining effects of stress and pressure more effectively and it means that we don't grow up suffering from Hyperactivity disorders or end up with Arthritis, Rheumatism, M.S., M.E., Cancer, Cardio Myopathy or any of a plethora of so called 'Genetic' conditions.

**Mental wellness:**

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Is a state where the individual is happy, positive and fulfilled. The mind is alert and calm at the same time and is able to sustain periods of intense focus without depletion. Mental wellness includes being in touch with ones personal power and self-confidence.

The particulars of flair and reflexes and all the other elements which make up the ideal basketballer has been debated at length by psychologists and cultural anthropologists already. The emergence of the sport from amongst black American city dwellers as a channel of upward mobility cannot be discounted. Neither is it possible to duplicate these influences in the life of a rich white kid.

It is likely however that we have gone beyond the genesis of the sport to place basketball along with other professional ball sports where the rewards of excellence are now so high as to be equally attractive to all socioeconomic groups of all nations.

Basketball still has the advantage of being easily available to any kid with a pair of sneakers and a ball and a little room to move much in the same way as Soccer.

All of this discussion is outside the realm of the Naturopathic Herbalist but the maintenance of mental acuity and the protection against stress related problems are very much within this realm.

## **Stress:**

Besides all the tools of the sports psychologist, acuity depends on the physical nourishment of the nervous system as alluded to earlier during the discussion on metabolism. The physical nervous system of every individual is structurally different and requires slightly different nutrients.

Throughout the ages different criteria were used to differentiate types including astrological signs as historically the most comprehensive and enduring. We have much more crudely classified mental and body types as Type A and Type B for example while at the same time pooh poohing some of the older systems.

It is important to evaluate every individual and attempt to come up with a blend of Nervines (herbal nervous system tonics) which suit that individual. These tonic substances may not be so critical in everyday life but the pressure of elite competition soon depletes the nervous system to an extent where special attention is necessary for maintenance. This maintenance can be as simple as a cup of Chamomile tea before meals or before bed or a couple of Valerian capsules before bed. It can be as bizarre as a cap full of Lavender Oil in a hot bath or a few drops of Sandalwood Oil rubbed into Cervical spine 5 or any number of other oils or incense burnt or steamed in various ways.

As a herbalist I also have access to a range of Homoeopathic remedies including the Bach Flower range where I can dissipate the effects of shock or balance out the effects of confidence, fear, apprehension, panic, distraction and all the rest.

Self prescription of many Nervines and all Homoeopathic remedies is to be avoided and is best left to the objective professional as it is nearly impossible to assess yourself or a person close to you. There are exceptions with the simpler of the Nervine herbs and with the use of Rescue Remedy for example to dissipate the negative effects of shock. Rescue Remedy should be carried by all mothers, all coaches and medics to be administered as the first step of first aid in all cases of shock large and small. For small shocks it facilitates the dissipation of the energy of shock, preventing depletion of adrenal reserves and improving recovery times. For large shocks it can save a life.

Glandular Fever, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Post Viral Syndrome are all conditions where the immunity has broken down due to stress and not to physical factors. Once again this is poorly understood outside of holistic medical circles mostly because you can't measure stress objectively. Our modern scientific approach makes it so much easier to discount it and concentrate on viral or genetic indicators as a way of explaining such illnesses.

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The elite athlete just the same as a high school senior with Glandular Fever have both depleted their reserves of Vitamin B to the extent that there is a catastrophic collapse in this system. The symptoms of this collapse are various but often include swollen glands, aches and pains, extreme weariness and poor recovery in sleep, poor concentration and severe malaise generally. It is true that there can be found secondary viral infestation like the Epstein-Barr Virus for example, in the case of Glandular Fever, but this virus does not cause the symptoms and is not responsible for the depletion that resulted in the illness.

The B group Vitamins are those responsible for supporting our systems against emotional stress (as contrasted with Vitamin C which supports our systems against physical stress). When dietary intake is not high enough as is the case with many modern breakfast cereals and breads or dietary regimens without sufficient unprocessed carbohydrates, our Vitamin B reserves can be marginal.

The stress and pressure of competition at any elite level coupled with the demands which success breeds, can all accumulate to bring down an athlete at any stage of their career. To regard this as bad luck or some sort of genetic weakness or the fault of an errant virus, is asinine.

A diet high in B group Vitamins and a metabolism, which is healthy and capable of absorbing such nutrients, is all that is required to protect both the athlete and the high school senior from all such stress related illnesses and may easily save a career.

## **Mental Acuity:**

As discussed above, the development and training of the fundamentals required to excel at the sport of Basketball is outside the scope of my craft.

However there is a great deal of traditional knowledge and more recently research, into tonics and supportive nutrients to improve and maintain mental acuity. Ginseng supports pituitary function and may be useful if there is some imbalance needing correction in this system. Sage, Rosemary and Ginkgo Biloba all function as Cerebro Circulatory Tonics. Adrenalin plays a role as do Endorphin's in maintaining an edge. A whole variety of trace minerals and elements are known to be critical to peak metabolic and mental health. Meditation techniques are extremely valuable to help clear the mind of clutter and unwind residual stresses leaving it more able to maintain relaxed alertness or intense focus as required.

All of these substances and areas need to be considered when designing a program for your basketballer. The requirements will vary over time but less than one would imagine. Once properly accessed it is surprising how many of the same basic supports, nutrients and herbal treatments remain important for a particular individual no matter which demands or health problems they happen to be dealing with at any stage throughout their lives. This is only a reflection of the individuality within each of us where we have our own peculiar strengths and weaknesses to cope with stress and other demands or as my teacher would have it, 'to cope with life itself'.

## **Maintenance at Peak:**

Assuming now that we have our Basketballer grown and trained and functioning at peak and that we have done a lot of the homework to ensure that his or her structure is well prepared for the demands of the sport. Maintenance is now a simple matter.

**Massage:** Regular massage is part of any athletes program nowadays to prepare the muscles for a game or to loosen them afterward. However regular, routine preventative maintenance through massage is not so well developed. Regular massage using linseed oil based blends containing the herbs Comfrey, Arnica, Maritime Pine, White Willow Bark and Wintergreen would be many times more effective than current practices. Further, daily foot massages including stretching and flexing of all the ligaments in the foot and the utilisation of Reflexology techniques would allow a basketballer to completely avoid foot problems altogether.

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## Diet:

**Grains:** It is well known that cereals are fundamental to a healthy diet and should provide the major part of such a diet. However the purveyors of commercial cereals neglect to advise us that the benefits of cereals are really concentrated only in fresh, whole and preferably Organic or Biodynamic grains.

Nothing like the same values can be found in the modern processed cereals where the grain was probably grown half way around the world and stored using a variety of chemical protective processes. The protective and mineral rich husk was then broken and probably sold for Hog feed long ago. The cereal was cooked, adulterated with colourings and flavourings. Vitamins lost in the process were then added back using commercially manufactured substances and there it is all packaged and advertised for our consumption. Nutritionally and as compared to natural whole grains, this stuff is Crap.

Millet and Linseed freshly ground as porridge daily for bones and ligaments and for vitamin B. Buckwheat freshly ground for Vitamin B and Rutin as in pancakes with perhaps a little fresh wheat germ for Vitamin B and Vitamin E added in. Breads made from wheat and oats and rye or combinations. These are all serious foods and should form more than 50% of every days food intake. Make a little extra effort in this department, sweeten with honey and not with refined sugar consider organic Soy Milk as an alternative to Dairy and enjoy bottomless energy and bullet proof good health and vitality.

**Fruit and Vegetables:** Fresh, local and in season is best. Organic or Biodynamic is better still.

A variety of all classes of fruit and vegetables in moderation is what is required. Avoid large amounts of fruit or vegetable juices, which are useful in smaller amounts, but can overload the system if taken in excess. If a moderate amount of something is good for you it does not follow that more is better, in fact the opposite is very often the case.

Some of the best vegetables are Spinach and Broccoli for minerals, iron and for choline; Potatoes and Yams of all sorts for carbohydrates and minerals; Carrots for Vitamin A and Parsley and Celery for kidney health and electrolyte balancing. Remember that the highest content of minerals is found in the skins and outer leaves of vegetables and that much of the goodness ends up in the water when vegetables are boiled.

**Flesh:** Fish is great, lean young free-range white or red meat is good. Battery, lot-fed, hormonally, chemically and antibiotic contaminated meat and poultry is seriously bad food.

Wait until we have all the above which has been genetically engineered also to chose from!

One meal per day containing flesh is more than enough. Three or four such meals a week is a better average.

**Fluids:** Rosehips Tea hot or cold should form a mainstay of an elite athlete in work. Some fruit juices are OK but not particularly Apple or Grapefruit. Black Currant is probably the best of them for its Iron, Rutin and Vitamin C content. Fresh squeezed Orange Juice in moderation. Plenty of plain pure water. A few cups of hot teas through the day; Dandelion for the liver, Chamomile for the nervous system, Mint for cooling and for digestion are all good. Regular tea is not bad. The odd recreational or social cup of Coffee (only one or two per week) is not harmful.

Forget the soft drinks altogether especially the Cola based ones. Forget electrolyte replacement drinks. Drink cold Rosehips tea with a little fresh Lemon. Make up Lemon water with whole sliced lemons steeped in fresh water. Nibble on Celery to make up for lost electrolyte when in heavy training.

## Supplements:

Throw away all the bottles of Vitamins and Supplements and start from scratch. Build in most of the requirements as enjoyable dietary items. Get a qualified Naturopath to conduct an individual assessment and

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make specific individual recommendations. If these result in a dozen expensive bottles, pills or buckets of powder, go and find another Naturopath and start over.

The only general supplements from all of the discussion above and except for Nervous system tonics (Nervines) which may not be included in the diet are certain trace minerals and elements most of which can be found in kelp or other seaweeds, some Comfrey perhaps and the Maritime Pine antioxidant.

The task of the Naturopath is to take each individual in the context of their own particular health history, structural and personality type and craft additional support to suit the individual.

## **Balance:**

Balance is so often lost in the lives of busy people in the modern age. The elite athlete often has more assistance with day to day matters and can often organise time for more balance and is also used to budgeting his or her time to work around the demands of training, travel, recovery and competition. The deliberate inclusion as a priority of activities, which help to balance the demands of their sporting life, is essential.

There are as many different programs, which can be constructed to provide balance, as there are individuals. The only requirement is that these activities suit the individual rather than the individual being forced into someone else's ideas of what constitutes a good balance.

All forms of dancing (even ballet) or yoga or ti-chi or karate would be wonderful relaxation, training and discipline for a basketballer. Calming and absorbing mental activity would be another area, which could be developed. Meditation, playing a musical instrument, writing or studying something of interest, are some that come to mind.

A supportive and well rounded home and social life is critical, especially when demands of training and travel so often disrupt all of these.

Your basketballer must be protected from all of the excesses, which stressful modern lifestyles throw up. These include all addictive behaviour from coffee and cola to hard drugs and alcohol. The best defence against any excess is a balanced, well supported and rewarding life with bullet proof health, fitness and vitality.

## **Fine Tuning:**

Each individual sports person's performance can be enhanced on the day with extra tonics. There is such a wide range of herbal and natural tonics available, which do not contain banned substances that it is stupid to even consider using other performance enhancement substances.

A mixture, which I would recommend to suit a basketballer immediately before, during and after intense competition, would include many of the following herbal extracts;

**Borage:** Is a primary adrenal tonic used through the ages to bolster performance under stress and protect adrenal reserves.

**Dandelion:** Supports both the Liver and the Kidneys. These two organs are primarily responsible for cleaning the blood of both metabolic waste products and the waste products from high levels of exercise.

**Kelp:** Provides direct support and stimulation to the Thyroid and Pituitary glands and is useful in a performance tonic as well as a regular supplement.

**Hawthorn:** Hawthorn is a major heart tonic, which will allow the heart to work at peak without stress or long term strain. Hawthorn is one of those herbs which will allow an athlete to draw upon very deeply

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hidden reserves at critical times.

**Nettle:** Is the highest common vegetable source of iron again to maximise the ability of the blood to carry the required levels of oxygen to the muscles and the heart.

**Parsley:** In situations of extreme demand Parsley will support the central nervous system and again, allow an athlete to draw in deeply hidden reserves without suffering any after effects.

**Rosehips:** Is such an important support the Kidneys, the Adrenals and the Blood that extra doses on the day are mandatory to provide the edge which is needed to win on the day.

**Rosemary:** In small amounts will enhance further blood supply to the muscles of the body on the day.

**Sage:** Is a cerebral circulatory tonic and provides the extra blood and therefore oxygen to the brain to maintain the peak of concentration needed on the day.

**Yarrow:** Is a high organic iron source and a blood tonic, working especially in stimulating bone marrow production of red blood cells. Yarrow also functions also as a support to the nervous system under high physical stress loadings.

Have your naturopathic practitioner consider the above tonics. Have them also consider Kinesiologic Muscle Testing or Reiki techniques for example to see whether there are substances which deplete your energies in other ways.

Many, many people for example cannot produce their best performance when wearing man made fibres next to the skin. It may be possible to improve your performance 10% simply by switching to cotton socks and cotton uniforms.

Have your practitioner investigate homoeopathic preparations, which could be specifically suited to the enhancement of your energies and investigate any other avenues within their own fields of competence which they consider useful.

### Conclusions:

Be very selective about all that is new, scientific, commercial or expensively promoted. The fundamentals of peak health and performance are not the domain of science or big business although they would have us believe that this is the case.

Common sense, instinct, nature and balance are much more important factors. If any exercise, training, dietary item or supplement seems to suit you and you can actually feel the benefits, pursue these directions and be prepared to change it all around from time to time as you feel the need.

Seek professional help but don't believe anything and don't persist with anything, which doesn't strike a chord with you personally.

Remember, 100% health, happiness and vitality are your birthright. If you don't feel like this almost all the time you are not doing it right.

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