

ALUMNI PROFILE

TED HARPER

ENTERING HIS SIXTH SEASON AS THE New England Patriots' sports dietitian, Ted Harper (HHS'08) is fueling Super Bowl champions. His comprehensive eating plans have helped 300-pound defensive linemen take on double teams totaling 600 pounds and kept 180-pound speedsters fresh on long runs through the playoffs.

Yet he wouldn't have his position with one of the most successful franchises in sports had he not alarmed his parents by switching majors after his freshman year. A multi-sport athlete from Shelbyville, Indiana, Harper planned on going into one of the family trades. After completing his first year in building construction management, he took a summer internship with an uncle's construction firm in Laguna Beach, California, where a job eventually awaited him. But despite the geographical appeal of life in a seaside town, Harper was unhappy with that career prospect.

Impressed by his love of athletics and go-getter personality, an academic counselor steered him to a double major in dietetics and nutrition, fitness, and health. After graduating, he traveled west to earn a master's degree at the University of Utah. Technically, he remained in the construction business — trading buildings for bodies.

Harper's first professional break came as the sports-nutrition consultant for US Speedskating, where he developed nutrition plans to help world-class speedskaters stay competitive while maintaining low body weights. During two contractor stints with the United States Armed Forces beginning in 2010 — first the air force and then the army — Harper applied his expertise as a performance dietitian where "wins and losses have a totally different meaning."

He would have happily stayed with the army had the



Patriots not pursued him. From his first summer training camp in 2012 to the brink of this year's championship defense, Harper has been a staff of one keeping close tabs on intake levels and body compositions of rosters that hold 90 players in camp and enter the season with 53 roster and 10 practice-squad players.

With the smallest staff in the National Football League, the Patriots build a championship culture with fewer people putting in very long hours. "Coach Belichick brings in like-minded folks," Harper says. "We are of one voice all driving in the same direction." For Harper, that includes up to 17-hour days, where he prescribes individualized nutrition plans that ebb and flow throughout the season to maximize player performance and recovery for a playoff run.

Even though the days are intense, it's not all hard work for one of the hardest-working sports dietitians in football. "Thankfully my job is fun," says Harper, who enjoys training with colleagues and running the stairs of Gillette Stadium. "And at the end of the day, I look forward to the hour or two I get to spend with my wife and son when I get home."

—WILLIAM MEINERS (MFA'03)

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