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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF TESTOSTERONE PAGE 3C

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Meghan Mellentine was one of just five Special Olympics athletes from Florida to compete in the North America Tennis Championships on Hilton Head, South Carolina. SUBMITTED

ADVOCATE, ATHLETE, INSPIRATION

Lehigh Acres' Meghan Mellentine has been involved with Special Olympics for more than 20 years

Special to Fort Myers News-Press

Tennis, swimming, standup paddle boarding, bowling... it seems like Meghan Mellentine does it all.

The 33-year-old from Lehigh Acres has been involved in Special Olympics for more than 20 years, earning medals in multiple sporting events at the competitions. The experience has provided a chance for Mellentine, who has Down syndrome, to break barriers and serve as an advocate for the local special needs community.

In the fall of 2018, Mellentine brought home a Level 3 gold medal from Special Olympics North America Tennis Championships, held on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. She was one of just five Special Olympics athletes from Florida to compete in the event, which included athletes representing states across the nation. This determined athlete excelled through the county, area and state competitions before reaching the championship level, and then – game, set, match – she brought home her latest gold medal win, adding to a drawer full of medals earned throughout the course of her decades-long Special Olympic career.

The thrill of the competition and opportunity to make

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Meghan Mellentine brought home a Level 3 gold medal from Special Olympics North America Tennis Championships. SUBMITTED

FITNESS

Your fitness is a journey, not a destination



Angie Ferguson

Guest Columnist

USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

I'm sure you've heard the adage, "life is a journey, not a destination." The same is true for fitness as well. Often we see enthusiasts work toward a fitness or health goal, achieve it and then slowly slide back to where they started. Sound familiar? This cycle is easy to break if you shift your thinking and training to cultivate long-term habits, rather than just short-term fix goals.

First, understand there are several reasons why maintaining a change in behavior is often more difficult than making the initial change itself. These include the following:

- Starting with a 'race to the finish' mentality (common in fitness challenges), where there is a start and end. This approach doesn't work long-term because you fail to enjoy the journey and you burn out.

- Failing to plan to maintain your goals once you've achieved them. Once a target is met, people often take that as a reason to relax and celebrate, rather than continue their good work.

- Setting large goals and not smaller, more quickly achievable ones. Long-term goals only work if you have day-to-day goals to help and encourage you through your journey.

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LEE HEALTH

Why you should be taking your balance seriously



Nathalie Grondin, PT

Guest Columnist

USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Gray hair, hearing loss and wrinkles—these are all signs of the normal aging process. A deterioration in balance is often mistakenly considered a normal part of getting older, but falling and dizziness are normally symptoms of a bigger medical issue.

Balance is an important skill—it's crucial for functional independence, mobility and avoiding falls. It's important to recognize signs of imbalance before a fall, to get the appropriate care and intervention. Balance deterioration can happen as early as age 40.

Balance is the result of multiple body systems working together, including the eyes, inner ears and proprioception (the body's sense of where it is in space). De-

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Meghan

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new friends are what drive Mellentine full-steam ahead.

“It means a lot to me,” Mellentine said. “I love making new friends and it’s fun to win and to watch others win as well.”

But that’s still not enough for Mellentine. She also serves as a Global Messenger for Special Olympics. A role that she has filled since high school, Mellentine regularly speaks to local civic groups about Special Olympics, sharing her story to inspire peers to join the competition while encouraging local businesses and organizations to show their support.

“Through her role as a Global Messenger, Mellentine serves as an ambassador for the Special Olympics, using her longtime involvement and love of sports to spark a passion for the program,” said Justin Copertino, Lee County Director for Special Olympics Florida. “She encourages others to reach their dreams as Special Olympics athletes, and her spirit is infectious.”

When she’s off the court and out of the water, the Estero High School graduate stays active. She works as Raymond Building Supply as a part-time administrative assistant, a position she’s held for three years. Her ambition and positive spirit serve as a source of encouragement



Special Olympics Florida representatives receive their medals at the North American Championships. SUBMITTED

for her co-workers and leadership.

“As an all-around athlete, Mellentine always brings it all, whether she’s on the court, in the office or out in the community,” said James Martin, vice president of operations for Raymond Building

Supply. “We’re continually inspired by Mellentine and her drive, and we couldn’t be prouder of her continued successes with the Special Olympics and in her professional life.”

Mellentine currently competes

alongside 26 other talented Special Olympics athletes as part of the Lee County Special Olympics tennis team. Mellentine’s team, as well as their fellow Lee County teammates contending in track and cycling, most recently took on the Area Games at Golden Gate High School on March 16, bringing home area ribbons for their performances.

The tennis team is supported by a crew of outstanding volunteers, including a tennis teaching professional, Jamie Bonter, who helps train the athletes, and even one of Mellentine’s coworkers, Hassaan Rehmatullah, a truss designer for Raymond Building Supply who shares his time and tennis knowledge to help the Special Olympics athletes prepare for competition.

The Lee County tennis volunteer coaches also include Renee Bailin, Barry Belkin, and Steve Daily with head coach, Sue Mellentine. Sue is Meghan’s mother and fellow coworker at Raymond Building Supply.

What’s next for Lee County Special Olympic tennis athletes? Quotas for State Games will be sent out in a few weeks, after all the area games around the state have been completed. Mellentine and the rest of the team will be hoping for another chance to take to the courts. Competition will be held at the USTA National Campus at Lake Nona May 10-11.

“I love the sport and I’ve been training hard. I can’t wait for the next competition,” Mellentine said.

Fitness

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People who enjoy the fitness journey, often don’t think of themselves as motivated. They just consider themselves consistent. The trick then to staying on your own personal journey is to keep doing something long enough that it feels unnatural not to do it. For example, consider how it would feel if you didn’t brush your teeth in the morning or didn’t have your seatbelt on. Fitness

shouldn’t be your focus. There are going to be weeks when the figure on the scale doesn’t budge. It’s important to look at the big picture. For example, if you’ve been attending the gym for two weeks and barely notice weight loss, don’t be hard on yourself. The fact you managed to stay purposely active for two weeks is an achievement.

There are a few life-hacks you can use to reinforce and enjoy your own journey rather than focusing only on the destination.

1. People often relapse into old patterns of behavior because they’ve forgotten the discomfort associated with their former selves. Once a goal is reached, it’s easy to slip back into old habits. Write some honest, brief evaluations on your opinion of self-image, quality of health, level of fitness and

your old energy level. Be candid. Write ‘Old Me’ at the top of your list, and stick it in a place you often frequent to serve as a constant reminder of why you embarked on your journey.

2. Aim for progress, not perfection. Even Olympic athletes have tough days. Aiming for perfection is a fast way to develop an unhealthy relationship with exercise. Give yourself a break if you slip up. Find out what caused you to slip and learn from it. Be patient and forgive yourself.

3. When looking at improving health and fitness, people often make goals based on numeric targets. This

shouldn’t be your focus. There are going to be weeks when the figure on the scale doesn’t budge. It’s important to look at the big picture. For example, if you’ve been attending the gym for two weeks and barely notice weight loss, don’t be hard on yourself. The fact you managed to stay purposely active for two weeks is an achievement.

Angie Ferguson is an exercise physiologist from Fort Myers. She is a USA Triathlon Advanced Level 2 coach, USA Cycling coach, has a Specialty in Sports Nutrition certification and a PhD in results! For more tips, contact her at gearedup.biz.



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