

# CasePerformance

## October Newsletter

### Part I



# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

**Here is the news that we'll cover in Part I of this month's newsletter....**

I. Welcome .....	2
II. Community Member of the Month Interview: K Ashby Meisel.....	3
III. Community Member Discussion: Don't Overlook "The Rest" of Your Training....	10
IV. Meets/Events.....	14

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

Hello,

I hope that the months of October treated everyone well and that you find yourself a step or two closer towards achieving one of your short/long term goals. Things are active here for the CasePerformance team members.

Our [strength](#), [running](#) and [nutrition](#) consultations are going well. If you're interested in finding out about our group discounts please send us an [email](#).

## I. A Look at This Month's Newsletter

After having to resort to a combined newsletter to cover August-September, I'm pleased to inform you that we're back to our monthly format! As always, I do what I can to "stack" the newsletter with great content! This month, in our CP Community Member of the Month interview, yoga instructor and fitness enthusiast K Ashby Meisel shares with us her training background. Additionally she provides some great tips, including yoga exercises to assist with hip mobility.

Following our interview, we get to our CP Community Member Discussion. This month, Alex Leaf shares with us, *Don't Overlook "The Rest" of Your Training*. In it, Alex explains how the #1 thing killing your exercise progress is in fact, the urge to exercise more!

Needless to say, I think you'll enjoy Part I of our newsletter!

Respectfully,

Sean Casey

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## II. Community Member of the Month...

This month's CasePerformance Community member of the month is yoga instructor and fitness enthusiast K Ashby Meisel who comes to us from Lawrence, Kansas, USA. She has dabbled in a little bit of everything, including biking, running, group fitness, etc before finding a “home” in strength sports. With that being said, let’s get straight to the interview!

**First off, I want to thank you for taking the time out of your training, work and social commitment schedule to join us today. We are honored with your presence.**

Thank you for having me, Sean. I’m honored you took an interest in what I do. Let’s talk shop!

**Tell us a little about your background... How did you get involved with physical training? Did you participate in any sports while growing up?**



I was an active kid who grew up climbing trees, riding bikes, playing soccer and generally spending as much time outdoors as possible. As a teenager, I ran track and forayed into diving.

With respect to yoga, I first got into it back in 2005; starting off with discipline known as Hatha before moving into Bikram yoga (**Editor's Note** – The different forms of yoga will be explained a bit more in-depth later in this interview.)

In 2007, at the age of 23, I went back to college for my Accounting degree and regularly biked to campus and work. Being a student, I was also able to spend quite a bit of time at the university gym and got back into running. At this time however, I can't say that I followed a specific training program of any sort. Group fitness classes such as Zumba, pilates, and kickboxing were mixed in during this time period as well.

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

Shortly after graduating, I developed painful stress fractures in my shins from running, at which point it was suggested to me that I take up resistance training to strengthen my bones. I was skeptical, but I started training in my home with a few adjustable dumbbells and some mismatched weight plates I picked up on craigslist.

By the time my legs had healed, I'd come to love lifting and joined a local CrossFit affiliate. I enjoyed CrossFit, but after unsuccessfully trying to combine progressive strength training and random CrossFit WODs following my first powerlifting meet, I decided to focus my strength training on powerlifting.



**When first starting off, what were the biggest mistakes you found yourself making? In other words, what would you advise people NOT to do when first starting a training program?**

I have a tendency to throw myself head first into things, for better or worse. When I became more involved in Bikram yoga and wanting to compete in it (Yes, competitive yoga *does* exist!), I pushed myself too far and ended up partially tearing a hamstring. In a similar manner, I ended up with the stress fractures in my shins from pushing myself to run further and further distances without allowing myself enough time to recover.

# CasePerformance

## “For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

When I first got into CrossFit, I sustained some mildly alarming, painful swelling and temporary loss of movement after a particularly intense CrossFit workout. While none of these things sidelined me for very long, it just goes to show that I have to rein myself in if I want to endure.

My advice to others starting out is to take it slow no matter what your pursuit. Whether you think you adapt quickly to new programs or simply feel you're adept at getting physical, keep it simple; give yourself more time to recover than you might think is initially necessary.

Also, don't fall into the trap of thinking that more is better or that you have to feel worn out after a training session or be sore the next day. Training is about building yourself up not tearing yourself apart, so pushing to failure or retching isn't beneficial. Do what's in the program, do it to the best of your abilities that day, then move on.

**Since "entering" the world of training what have been your proudest moments to date?**



Each time I achieve a new yoga pose I had previously not thought possible is a moment of pride for me – such as the first time I achieved the full splits (Hanumanasana) and got into full Kapotasana without assistance.

In strength sports, hitting a weight I'd been working towards for a long while and winning or placing well in competitions is big for me. This summer I squatted 250 lbs (113 kg) and deadlifted 305 lbs (138 kg) at a bodyweight of about 135 lbs (61 kg).

I'm most proud of the accomplishments I've achieved in competition. The most recent competition I competed in was the inaugural [Strength Guild Games](#). I was the lightweight female member for team Strength Guild Games. I'm incredibly proud of our team's performance in the Games and am pleased to say I held my own in the competition as the smallest woman on the field. We took first place!

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## What are your particular short and/or long term goals with respect to training?

Currently I'm putting together a home gym and will do the majority of my training on my own. Therefore, staying motivated and sticking to my program with only "me" to hold myself accountable is where my immediate focus lies.

I don't like to put time restraints on my goals with respect to max lifting performances. While I have numbers in mind, such as squatting 280 lbs (127 kg), benching 135 lbs (61 kg), and deadlifting 350 lbs (159 kg), whenever I hit them, I hit them. Going into a meet or competition, I'm never quite sure how the day will go and so I just put everything I have into my lifts and events. I'm in this for the long haul and I hope to continue lifting and hitting ever-bigger numbers for the foreseeable future.



## What does your typical training week look like?

I lift three days a week and practice yoga for one long session (60-90 minutes) with short sessions of 10-20 minutes interspersed throughout the week. I like to walk and will get in 2-3 miles once or twice a week, weather permitting.

My first lifting session of the week is usually a push-pull day of bench press, deadlift, a deadlift variation, and possibly a bodyweight movement such as push-ups. My second session typically involves something along the lines of clean & jerk or front squats and strict press along with another bodyweight movement like chin-ups and perhaps some dumbbell work. Squats are done on the weekends along with more accessory work. While the main lifts don't change, my accessory/assistance exercises evolve from training cycle to training cycle.

It seems like a lot when I type it all out, but I generally only spend about 6 hours per week lifting and each training session is comprised of 3-4 movements. Anything more than that ends up being too much. People try to pack in as many different exercises as possible in a training session, but I've found that less is more when it comes to building

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

strength progressively over time. The key is to give yourself just enough to look forward to without overdoing it and burning out.

**Between your yoga background, along with your work with strength sport athletes, I'm sure that you've come across some common flexibility issues. Can you share some of these and what exercises you like to do to overcome them?**

When you look at the way the average person stands, they're hunched over with a tilted pelvis. The biggest issue facing most people, athlete or not, is tightness in the hips and shoulders, often to the point of immobility. Many Westerners are used to sitting in chairs for hours at a time and lose their innate ability to squat or even sit and stand up straight. While foam rolling and myofascial release do help, I find the best way to loosen the hips is through basic mobility drills (such as the Agile 8) and yoga. I've posted a video on [YouTube](#) with a basic sequence and yoga poses for the purpose of squatting.

The shoulders are trickier to fix and, for this, I prefer myofascial release, which can be done on your own with a hard rubber ball or, if you have assistance, through massage. Once we've broken up the fascia and tight tissue, from there we can move into mobility drills and yoga.

**There are many disciplines that follow underneath the "yoga" umbrella. Are there specific ones that may be of greater benefit than others to athletes or do they all have a time and place?**

Indeed, there are so many different styles of yoga out there that it can be overwhelming to the newcomer. Classes such as Hatha, Vinyasa, Power Yoga, Ashtanga, Yin Yoga, and Bikram / Hot Yoga focus on the physical moreso than the spiritual aspects of yoga and often include a breathing exercise or two (called Pranayama) and perhaps a few minutes of quiet meditation or relaxation at the end.

Yoga is beneficial to athletes in that it improves mobility, control, and mentality. The practice requires you to focus on the posture or movement at hand while breathing steadily and, of course, increases flexibility and range of motion. Some forms of yoga, such as Vinyasa, require the practitioner to move constantly, “flowing” from posture to posture.





# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

In contrast, Hatha-based forms (which include Ashtanga and Bikram yoga) focus on the postures (called Asanas) themselves and so more time is spent in each posture, often with much less repetition than in Vinyasa, with a focus on proper alignment and muscle control.

I personally prefer Hatha forms of yoga, but it's up to the individual practitioner to find not only a style they enjoy but a teacher that challenges them without pushing them too far.

**A topic I always get questions about is nutrition and supplements. Have you found any particular nutrition strategies to be particularly effective for you? Ditto for supplements?**

I'm an advocate of S.A.N.E. eating, which stands for Simple, Accessible, Nutritious, and Enjoyable. As I'm usually not very hungry in the mornings, I've found that a blended shake of greens, veggies and/or fruit, oats, milk and protein powder are the best way for me to take in nutrients and calories. The rest of my meals are pretty basic and comprised of a protein (beef, chicken, pork, eggs, fish/seafood, etc), a starch (rice or whole wheat pasta), and two servings of vegetables. I try to eat seasonally and I vary my cooking so as to not get tired of certain foods. I also try to knock out most of my cooking for the week on Sunday or Monday.

As for supplements, I consume protein powder (25g) in the mornings and post-training. I also add 5g creatine monohydrate to my morning shakes. In terms of general supplements for daily health I take 3g fish oil, 1.5g psyllium fiber, and a multi-vitamin.

Beyond that, I drink a lot of water and I do enjoy wine and beer in moderation. I'm not a fan of soda or sweets and I don't keep junk or processed foods in the house, but I do allow myself to have something if I'm craving and to enjoy my few meals out, which plays into the S.A.N.E. approach. I don't feel like I'm missing out on anything as I don't restrict my intake and I don't have to schedule “cheat” meals, I simply eat for my training goals and enjoy food.

# CasePerformance

**“For Sport, For Life”**

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

**Any other final thoughts/advice you're willing to share with us at CasePerformance?**

While I am a strength athlete and yoga instructor, I support all forms of physical activity not just strength sports and yoga. Whatever you love to do, I'm glad that you're doing it and encourage everyone to keep moving forward!

**Great advice there! Once again I want to thank you for joining us here today. Keep up the great work! For those interested in finding out more about your training approaches, view your training, or interested in learning how to incorporate yoga into their training program, where can they find you?**

I record my training on the [Strength Guild forums](#). I'm also on [Facebook](#), and I run a [personal fitness-focused blog](#).

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## III. Community Member Performance Discussion

In this month's Community Member Performance Discussion, I have the pleasure of sharing with you the thoughts of community member, Alex Leaf, who comes to us from Bellevue, Washington, USA.. For those who follow the CasePerformance newsletter, his name should be well recognized as he's contributed a few [excellent pieces](#). In this particular community discussion, Alex shares with us a key factor which may be limiting your gains ....

## Don't Overlook "The Rest" of Your Training

By Alex Leaf

### Why is rest important?

If you are anything like me, you probably spend hours thinking of a new workout routine, everything from exercise selection to volume, frequency, intensity, and even the playlist you'll listen to. In many ways you are training like a pro... yet progress has stalled. What's going on, you ask? Well, I have one question for you:

*How many days do you take off from training each week?*

And by off I do not mean, “I did an hour of cardio but that doesn't count”. I'm talking about no training. One, maybe two days max? Trust me; I have been there; working out six days per weeks (at least I conceded one day to rest), constantly tired and burnt-out wondering why my progress has stalled, etc. If you are anything like the average trainee, you are doing too much. You lift 4-6 times per week, do cardio another 3-4 times per week, and wonder why your joints hurt and your motivation is lacking. You're not allowing your body a chance to recover!

Maybe you're someone who follows that latest routine in some fitness magazine, or do the workouts that professional bodybuilder's swear by. You argue that *they* workout six times per week, and I concede that some people do thrive on intense and frequent workouts. I will say, however, that most of those people are also the genetic elite, allowing them enhanced recovery and performance not typical in the average Jane/Joe. Additionally, for professional athletes, training is their job; they aren't working the typical 40-50 hours per week and facing the life stresses that come with it. The other truth is that most of them are on some form of drugs, but let's end that discussion here.

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## So what determines recovery ability?

Let's start with the obvious: training load. This refers to all the factors that go into your training; frequency, intensity, and volume among others. Managing the training load to allow for recovery is a delicate balancing act of the overall stress and stimuli put onto the body to improve performance or accomplish some goal. And herein lays the problem. In order to achieve some goal there is going to need to be a minimum amount of training that is performed. In other words, below this threshold your goals simply can't be achieved.

This threshold has also led many to a “do-or-die” mindset where most feel the need to destroy themselves in the gym; the classic “if some is good, more must be better” mentality. And this, inevitably, leads to stagnant progress, burnout, and overtraining. So essentially there is an upper and lower limit to optimal training load, but as mentioned earlier, where these points are depends on a lot and focusing solely on training variables misses part of the picture.

This brings us to the second determinant of recovery ability: lifestyle. Despite lifestyle factors being arguably the largest determinant of recovery ability, quite often they are overlooked when designing programs. These factors include things such as how much sleep you get each night (or more importantly, the quality of that sleep), your diet and food choices, leisurely activities, and other behaviors of everyday living. To further complicate matters, these things may change without notice. Have a stressful deadline for work? Decided to stay out late with friends at the bar? Who cares? Honestly, so long as you get this stuff in order 99% of the time, enjoying a drink (or working late) won't derail you. However, it could impact recovery and needs to be considered. But that's the key, getting this stuff in order 99% of the time. Before you even start messing with your new workout routine, take a moment to evaluate your lifestyle.

And finally, we come to the inevitable: genetics. Literally the stuff you have no control over (short of drugs), genetics consists of all things YOU! Your training ability, rate of improvement, and degree of improvement is largely determined by your genetics. Surely you have noticed that some people build muscle by merely looking at weights, while others train everyday but are as thin as twigs. There are several factors that influence recovery more so than others (1).

- Hormones. Both growth hormone and testosterone are associated with tissue growth and development. They are highest during youth and decrease with age. Individuals with higher levels of these hormones typically have greater potential for muscle development.

# CasePerformance

## “For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

- Gender. Although muscle tissue quality is equivalent in both men and women, men normally have greater muscular size and strength due to larger bodies, a higher lean body mass percentage, and elevated anabolic hormones such as testosterone.
- Age. Not surprisingly, the potential for muscle growth diminishes with age, in part to the decrease of anabolic hormone levels. However, people of all ages benefit from resistance training and gain muscle at approximately the same rate during the initial training period.
- Muscle Fiber Type. Muscles are composed of two categories, type I muscle fibers and type II muscle fibers. Both are involved with resistance training, but type II fibers experience greater size increases than type I. Therefore, individuals born with a higher percentage of type II fibers have more potential for muscle growth.
- Muscle Length. Muscles attach to bones by tendons. Some individuals have short muscles with long tendons while others have long muscles with short tendons. Those with the longer muscles have more potential for growth simply because they have more fibers that can be trained.

The concept that a training program must be individualized is perhaps the most important training principle. All the scientific research in the world could tell you the optimal training load and lifestyle modifications needed to achieve your goals, but as Sean Casey pointed out in his article, [“Re”-search Leads to “Me”-Search](#):

*Limitations do exist in scientific research – they're only truly applicable to those who participated in the study! Thus, don't make knee jerk reactions placed off the results of just one. Let the “Re”-search guide you in the “Me”-search to see if you'll receive benefit from manipulating a given variable to your life (2).*

If anything, you must make a routine that literally works for you. The name of the game is self-experimentation, and “the most important studies are those in which N=1, with that 1 being YOU!” (2).

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## So what does all this mean?

I suppose everything I just wrote is a long-winded way of saying that recovery ability is influenced by innumerable factors that extend beyond simply how hard you are training. In fact, it gets down to the genetic level and that is where everyone is different. The thing is, you won't know what works and what doesn't until you try.

So how many days off from training do you take each week? Try this, figure out how to get your training down to 3-4 sessions per week, increasing the time you allow for rest and recovery, and see if you don't freshen up, break some plateaus, and once again become enthusiastic about hitting the gym hard.

## References

1. Westcott, Wayne. ACE Personal Trainer Manual. [ed.] Cedric X Bryant and Daniel J Green. *ACE Personal Trainer Manual*. 4th. San Diego : American Council on Exercise, 2010, 10, pp. 311-367.
2. Casey, Sean. "Re"-search Leads to "Me"-Search. *CasePerformance.com*. [Online] June 17, 2013. [Cited: August 11, 2013.] <http://www.caseperformance.com/135/re-search-leads-to-me-search>.

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## IV. Meets/Events

Here are a couple events that have been shared to me by members of the CasePerformance community.

### Strength Sport Competitions

#### **Texas State Powerlifting Championship**

What: This one day USSF event will include powerlifting only. Includes prize money up to \$250.

Where: Austin, TX, USA

When: Nov 2nd                      For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

#### **UPA Power Weekend**

What: This two day event will feature strongman competitions, full and bench only powerlifting events.

Where: Dubuque, IA, USA

When: Nov 16-17<sup>th</sup>                      For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

# CasePerformance

“For Sport, For Life”

[www.caseperformance.com](http://www.caseperformance.com)

## Kettlebell Certification Prep Course

What: This two day kettlebell level 1 certification prep course will include both hands on and formal course work discussion. Each participant will be provided 2 manuals and an exercise DVD that they can take with them following the event.

Where: Kolkata, India

When: Nov 23 – 24<sup>th</sup>

For more information [CLICK HERE](#)

\*\*\* **Note** – This event is being put on Arnav Sarkar who has contributed numerous [excellent articles and posts](#) here at CasePerformance.

## Endurance Events

There has been no specific event that has been brought to my attention. However, for a general listing of running events going on in your area, [CLICK HERE!](#)

\*\*\* Please know that CasePerformance does **NOT** receive any financial or other incentives if you choose to participate in any of the above events.

-----  
That wraps up Part I of this CasePerformance newsletter. Hope you enjoyed it. Stay tuned for Part II of the O where we share news of note at the CasePerformance Website and in the CP Performance Discussion, we look at the history of the most famous workout ever – the 3x10 (3 sets of 10 reps)!

Until then... Train smart, train hard and leave the excuses to someone else!

Respectfully,

[The CasePerformance Team](#)