

Performance Training Center Magazine: Interview With #9

Here's an interview with Performance Training Center client "#9," a former Division I soccer player who is currently employed as a strength and conditioning coach at a Division I university.

PTCM: First off, thanks for taking the time to sit down and do this interview with us. Why don't you start off by giving us some information on your athletic background and what your collegiate soccer experience was like?

#9: I grew up playing any sport that was out there. I was on my first soccer team when I was 4 years old and my first basketball team when I was 10. I played both sports all through high school, doing AAU and ODP for basketball and soccer respectively. Going into college I had to pick one, and that one was soccer. Ever since I was 4 years old, it was my dream to be a professional athlete, and playing college soccer was one more step toward that dream. College soccer was an amazing experience. I learned a great deal about soccer and life, and I made many lifelong friends. It fulfilled my strong competitive desire, and it became a steppingstone to playing professionally overseas for a year, and now for trying out for the U.S. Women's Professional Soccer League.

PTCM: Where did you play professionally overseas? What was it like? Why did you stop?

#9: I played professionally in Sweden's Damallsvenskan for a team called QBIK. It was an amazing experience living and playing in a different country. It gave me a chance to learn about not only a different culture but a different, more direct style of play. As a team we did pretty well and advanced to the Swedish Cup semi-finals only to lose to the eventual champions. I would have loved to continue playing in Sweden, however it was difficult to get a contract as an American at that time. I learned a great deal and made some lifelong friends and I'm really thankful that I was fortunate enough to have the experience.

PTCM: Tell us about your current job, the teams you work with, and how you manage your job and family with regard to how it all relates to your dream of playing professional soccer.

#9: I am currently an assistant strength and conditioning coach in charge of program design and training of men's soccer, volleyball, men's tennis, men's rowing, and men's and women's golf. I also help with women's soccer and baseball throughout the year. I believe that balance between work, family, and my own training is the key to success. I am lucky to have an amazing husband

who is so supportive of my dream and is willing to do whatever it takes to help me get there. This support enables me to set a time each day to dedicate 100% to my training whether before or after work. Being able to have a scheduled time to devote to my own personal training is a priority and is necessary if I want to make the most of my soccer opportunities. Having a support system, both at home and at work, that understands how much this means to me makes a world of a difference.

PTCM: How did you get your job? Did you study exercise science in college? Why did you want to work in this field?

#9: I majored in exercise science after starting out as a pre-med major. I just fell in love with performance, anatomy, physiology, and all the components that go into being a top-level athlete. My passion for sports and my interest in the human body and how it works made exercise science the perfect choice. After playing in Sweden I was lucky enough to get in contact with my college strength and conditioning coach to try and pick his brain for job opportunities. The timing was perfect because the University I work at, which is also where I was a student-athlete, was in a transition period where they were looking to hire an additional strength and conditioning coach. The timing and opportunity ended up being perfect.

PTCM: How did you first learn about Performance Training Center?

#9: I first heard about PTC through a male soccer player I train. He spoke very highly of Mark McLaughlin and the training he does, and specifically his knowledge and experience in soccer performance. I was able to get contact information from the athlete for Mark and a relationship between Mark and I developed. I picked his brain about soccer performance, training techniques, and his training philosophy. Eventually I made a trip to PTC to see the facility, have the Omega Wave test done on myself and to talk with Mark and share my goals of reaching the next level as an athlete.

PTCM: It's a little out of the ordinary for a current S/C coach to look for someone else in order to actually *be* trained. Can you talk a little about the psychology of going to another coach for this purpose?

#9: Mark was gracious enough to share his knowledge with me and has a lot of experience and networking in European soccer, which as most know is among the best in the world, and he was willing to share information and spend time discussing this with me. We had multiple conversations, and as I said before, I took the opportunity to visit his gym while in Portland. I really respect his knowledge and expertise in the field and about soccer performance. This is one of the reasons I wanted to try his training techniques. Another reason is that

personally I feel that there is so much to be learned in the strength and conditioning field, and the more I can learn and experience, the better coach I will be. I feel like I have so much more to learn and Mark was so open to sharing his techniques and philosophy (which I find to be a sign of a great coach) without any hesitation and with so much passion I had no qualms about training with him. In any situation or experience there is something to learn, and in my time with Mark I have learned a lot, which I think can help me on my journey not only as a player but as a strength and conditioning coach as well.

PTCM: Tell us about the soccer combine you were getting ready for in early December, and the training process you went through at Performance Training Center.

#9: The combine was for the Women's Professional Soccer League that begins in April 2009. It was an invite-only combine with 72 invitees to the west coast combine and 72 invitees to the east coast combine. One of the seven coaches of the teams in the league suggested and wrote down people they wanted to see at the combine. Along with this, I submitted a resume of my soccer career and past coaches' contacts. With this, and the suggestion of a league coach, I got an invite. The combine was the league's way of evaluating players in order to best prepare themselves for the upcoming draft in January. The combine was at the Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista, California. It was 4 days long and we were split into 4 teams for the long weekend. We had one training session, fitness testing (body mass, height, linear speed, and vertical), and 3 games over the 4 days.

In order to get ready for the combine I was lucky enough to have a personal workout made by Mark that was based on the results of my Omega Wave test. It consisted of very specific training each day, with the exercises targeting specific goals for each 2-week period. I started PTC 7 weeks before the combine with a workout that focused on the demands of a midfielder and the areas where I needed personal improvement, which was mainly determined by the Omega Wave results due to my limited time at PTC and the fact that I live in a different state than the PTC. Parts of the workouts, like the technical soccer parts, were areas that I could work on the skills I felt I needed to work on the most.

PTCM: What are some of the differences between the type of training you did at Performance Training Center and what you'd done previously?

#9: As I look back on my training before I started training with PTC I realize that it was not very well structured. I did what I had always done to get ready to play, and what we had done in college training camp to get ready. That consisted of playing, cardio (which for me was usually biking or swimming), and

sprints. I really had no structure to my workouts and focused mostly on the technical aspects of the game for most of my workouts – ball skills and playing whenever possible. When I started with PTC, everything seemed to have a purpose, and I felt that everything I did was for a specific reason. I wasn't running just to run, or doing cardio just to do cardio. I was working at a specific heart rate to improve aerobically or anaerobically, for example. I had specific rest times in between sprints or plyometrics so that I could give a full out effort every time. I never felt overtrained, and I felt obvious physical improvements as the workouts progressed. This physical improvement and structure also gave me an edge mentally as I went into the combine.

PTCM: How did the combine go for you in terms of its technical/tactical aspects, as well as your physical preparedness and readiness?

#9: I feel like the combine went pretty well for me. It's tough to spend months getting ready for something knowing it could be your only chance at your lifelong dream. It was also tough not knowing what to expect at the combine, but this is where all the training I did to prepare came in. I knew I had done everything in my capability to be as ready for the combine as I could. It is tough to play 3 games in 3 days at any level, let alone with the best female players in the nation. The nerves and desire to impress got the best of everyone at the combine the first day, but as the weekend went on we all became more comfortable and were all able to really show why each of us was invited to this special event. I felt fit and my body seemed to recover very well, thanks to the training and advice of Mark and PTC. Technically I felt great, as attention to detail and comfortableness on the ball is something I have worked on throughout my career. My training helped me be able to play in 3 very fast paced games with high intensity and to leave the combine feeling good about the weekend.

PTCM: How closely did your training at PTC resemble what went on at the combine? Were the combine events a surprise? Or did you have a pretty good idea of how they were going to lay things out?

#9: My training at PTC was aimed at getting me ready and fit to play midfield at a high level. I didn't once play in an 11v11 full field game to get ready for the combine, however the training I did enabled me to be ready for all the demands of a game. The combine events were, for the most part, a surprise. I knew we would be playing games, however we weren't informed of our exact schedule until the first night in a meeting with all of the players, coaches, and administrators.

PTCM: Do you have any New Year's resolutions for 2009?

#9: I think one thing, among many, that I learned from training for the combine and the experience is to always leave everything on the field or in the gym. I think this concept can easily be applied to everything in life. Give it your all. Whether or not I get my opportunity to play in the league, I won't take no as an answer. I will continue to fight for my dreams, stay ready, and give it my all. I am going to challenge myself as the new year begins to always remember this commitment I have made and also to remember that when you give it your all there will be no regrets, no matter the outcome.

Performance Training center provides high-level sport performance training to both male and female athletes. Since January 2004, PTC's primary purpose has been the optimization of the physical and psychological potential of each individual athlete we train. Through a comprehensive utilization of concrete scientific data, PTC focuses on the long-term development of each athlete in order to prevent overtraining and injury, while simultaneously ensuring peak performance. PTC has trained over 400 athletes on every competitive level. Our clients include Olympic, professional, college, high school and grade school athletes. Additionally, PTC specializes in coordinating programs with high school and university sport coaches. For more information, visit our website at www.ptconline.net.

