

Sponsor dishes out meals

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For Neighbours

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When you're a high-performance athlete food is as important as your equipment. Like your equipment, it can't be junk.

But, like junk food, it's best if it's ready quick, so you can get back to business of training.

"I eat five or six meals a day. Who has time to make six meals in the morning?" asks bobsledder Kaillie Humphries.

Her sponsor does.

Humphries is among a group of Calgary-based winter sport athletes who are benefiting from a relationship with The Main Dish, an eatery in Bridgeland that offers healthy and gourmet food, both to eat in or take home.

"They make up my little meals for me -- a nice chicken breast or what have you -- and they're right there when I need them. I'm thrilled with the arrangement," says the national team slider.

Humphries, Mellisa Hollingsworth from skeleton, luger Regan Lauscher and speed skating star Jeremy Wotherspoon are all part of a unique sponsorship that targets both their limited budget and time. The Main Dish provides them with a certain amount of food each year.

"They get something from us but we also get something from them," says restaurant owner Jason Zaran. "Because of our work with one of their nutritionists, we've developed a whole section of our menu called Healthy Essentials and Gourmet Take Away that works for the athletes but is also available to our customers."

Zaran opened the restaurant in 2006 with the idea that he could provide fast food to Calgarians that was healthy. No cheeseburgers and french fries, though. Instead, chicken breast, rice and broccoli and the like.

"I'm there all the time," says Humphries. "It's a happening little place. (It seats 30). I look at it like it's a restaurant, only healthier."

The Main Dish was just last month named the official food sponsor of Bobsleigh Canada Skeleton. That means executive chef Kevin Pelisser will be travelling to BCS's main training camp in Whistler, B.C., on Oct. 17 to cook for the team as it prepares for the World Cup season. He did the same at their March camp, also at Whistler Blackcomb.

"It's quite a unique set-up, serving 30 people out of a condo," says Zaran. "He'll be doing lunch at the condo and dinner at the top of the hill."

Zaran's crew is also involved with the Calgary Stampeders. For the past two seasons they've handled all the meals for the Canadian Football League's training camp, filling the bellies of dozens of very large men. They also provide game day meals to the Calgary Roughnecks of the National Lacrosse League.

Jocks and a restaurant that serves only good food is a natural combination.

"We have a lot of athletes coming into our place," says Zaran. (Calgary Flames stars) Jarome Iginla and Craig Conroy and their wives come here for example. We get a lot of different athletes coming in.

"It adds to the credibility of our store."

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