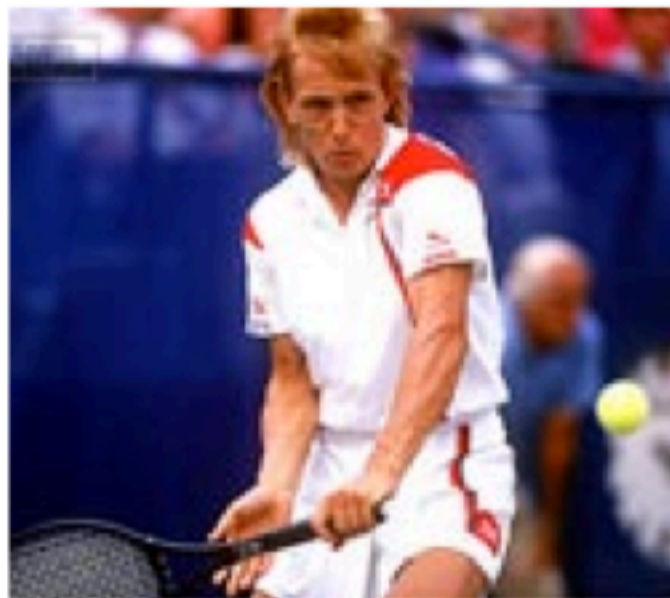


## Can Vegans Be Successful Athletes?

by Toni Faubion-Truesdell

Who says you have to eat meat to be a successful athlete? Many notable athletes have dispelled this myth and are now among medalled Olympians and renowned sports figures.

Today we have the testimonies as well as the stats to substantiate the benefits of a plant-based diet.



**Martina Navratilova**

**Dave Scott**, considered to be the world's greatest triathlete states, "It's a ridiculous fallacy to think that athletes need animal protein." Two other Olympians concur, **Edwin Moses**, the gold medallist who won 8 years in a row in the 400-meter hurdle competition and **Murray Rose**, who at 17 years of age won 3 gold medals in the Olympic Swim Competition.

Olympic champion, **Carl Lewis**, won 10 Olympic medals, 9 golds and 10 World Championship medals, of which 8 were gold. Lewis retired in 1996 from track and field competitions. He held world rankings in the 100 meter and 200 meter sprints as well as long jump events. Lewis was named "Sportsman of the Century" by the International Olympic Committee and "Olympian of the Century" by Sports Illustrated. He attributed his success to the plant-based diet

he adopted in 1990. Lewis stated that, "My best year of track competition was the first year I ate a vegan diet." ([http://www.wikipedia.org/carl\\_lewis](http://www.wikipedia.org/carl_lewis))

Not only Olympians but also numerous athletes have adopted a plant-based diet to improve their performance in their chosen sport. To follow are but a few:

- **Peter Burwash**, Davis Cup Winner and professional tennis star
- **Nicky Cole**, first woman to walk to the North Pole
- **Desmond Howard**, professional football star, Heisman trophy winner
- **Ruth Heidrich**, six-time Ironwoman, USA track and field Master's champion
- **Martina Navratilova**, champion tennis player
- **Bill Pearl**, four-time Mr. Universe
- **Stan Price**, world weightlifting record holder, bench press
- **Scott Jurek**, World Class Ultra Marathoner
- **Cheryl Marek and Estell Gray**, world record holders, cross-country tandem cycling

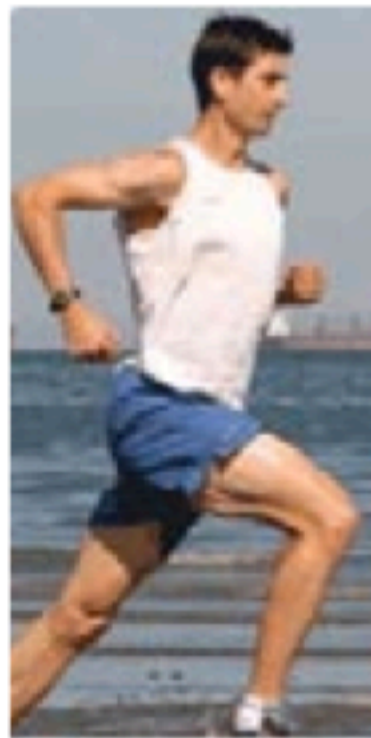
(To research a list of such athletes see [www.veganathletes.com](http://www.veganathletes.com).)

The greatest concern athletes voice is their need for protein to fuel their bodies and remain competitive. Old school thinking has taught that protein derived from *see **Vegan Athletes**, continued on page 6*

***Vegan Athletes***, continued from page 2:

animal sources was imperative for the serious athlete to achieve. How else could they grow strong, muscular bodies without meat?

One look at the animal kingdom can give us the answer. Some of our largest land mammals derive all of their protein from plants. Who can dispute the strength and endurance of a horse at full gallop? From elephants to hippos



**Brendan Brazier**

and camels to cows, it's obvious that a plant-based diet is sufficient for these creatures to thrive.

Ruth Heidrich, Ph.D. is a six-time Ironwoman triathlon finisher. She holds more than 900 gold medals from 100-meter dashes to 5K road races, to ultra marathons and triathlons. What sets her apart from other athletes is her incredible victory over breast cancer. At 47 she underwent

surgery to have a malignant lump removed. Further testing showed that the cancer had spread to her bones and lungs. Hendrich chose a most unconventional mode of treatment. Instead of the standard chemo or radiation, she instead adopted a plant-based diet. Heidrich is now 73 and still runs. She has never undergone any type of standard cancer treatment and has remained cancer free. "My body actually encapsulated the lesion in my lung," she said. "It's great what your body can do with the right type of nutrition." ([www.ruthheidrich.com](http://www.ruthheidrich.com))

Leading nutritionist Dr. Doug Graham, who has trained many Olympic caliber athletes, explains: "Every nutrient known to be essential for human health is available, in proper concentration, in plant foods. This is not so with

animal-based foods, as there are many nutrients totally absent in them."

The science of vegan nutrition has become mainstream. Athletes have seen with their own eyes other prominent sports figures attaining incredible success. The proof is in the records broken and the medals won. Whether or not one is an athlete, it still remains an imperative that we nourish and care for our bodies properly. This requires a commitment to being good to our body and in doing so, it will be good to us and increase our longevity.

### Recommended resources:

#### Books:

*The Vegetarian Sports Nutrition Guide*

by Lisa Dorfman

*Thrive: The Vegan Nutrition Guide to*

*Optimal Performance* by Brendan Brazier

*Senior Fitness* by Ruth E. Heidrich

*Becoming Vegan* (chapter 16 - The Vegan Athlete)

by Brenda Davis & Vesanto Melina

#### Online Magazines:

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

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

[www.organicathlete.org](http://www.organicathlete.org)

#### Magazines:

*VegNews*

*Get Fresh* (raw food diet)

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