

MIKE ALLEN:

By Liz Holzemer

Sunrise is still a few hours away, yet Highlands Ranch resident, Mike Allen, has already finished an intense cardiovascular and weight workout. Allen's lucky; his wife, Ellen, is also up keeping him company working out. It's a daily routine he's stuck to for most of his life. By the time their three children—Makenna, 7; Olivia, 4; and Ryan, 2—and Patch, their American bulldog, have awakened; Allen is headed out the door to begin another day of getting athletes back to their peak playing performance.

There's nothing this former Broncos and Colorado Rockies physical therapist enjoys more than working one-on-one with athletes or everyday folk. "Whether it's a new mom with post-partum back pain or a professional athlete, I enjoy the process," he says. And Allen is quick to point out that the learning curve is a two-way street. He says, "I glean something from each of them." Each of them being thousands of clients.

Allen's trademark empathy and contagious attitude eases the frustrating aspects of an often long recovery. In fact, it was several years ago when Allen made it possible for my husband, who was recovering from shoulder surgery at the time, to return to the major leagues and pitch again. And when I had brain surgery six years ago, Allen's positive easy-going attitude and encouragement helped me regain left-sided strength and balance.

Studying sports medicine was a natural choice for Allen, 37, who grew up surrounded by sports. He was an All-American football player at Fort Hays State University in Kansas and desired to stay involved with sports. "Pursuing my line of work was a natural fit for me," he says. "I understand both sides of the coin—being an athlete and treating them." Allen's impressive list of credentials includes a master's in physical therapy from Wichita State University as well as being a certified athletic trainer and

strength and conditioning specialist. His hard work and paying his dues at the Steadman Hawkins Denver clinic the past eleven years has paid off—later this fall, Allen will be at the helm of a new performance and enhancement center. Although he will still maintain his consultant role with the Broncos and Rockies on an as-needed basis, he's looking forward to a new challenge as director of physical therapy.

"I'm excited to oversee a one-stop training, nutritional and wellness center," he says. "It will include everything from physical therapy, chiropractic care and massage to conditioning and nutrition. A multi-disciplinary approach if you will."

Allen leads by example—he has yet to give up his pre-dawn workouts and healthy diet of mostly fruits, vegetables and limited sugars. However, he is human. "I'm not as lean as I used to be," admits Allen. "With kids, you can't avoid pizza and pigging out every now and then. I must admit I eat my fair share of sugars and junk food."

Even if he slips he is more concerned about those clients looking for fast results. Allen emphasizes there is a natural tendency for patients and athletes to come back too soon. "My mantra—there is no quick fix," he says. "That's the hardest part of my work—slowing people down and making them understand you have to pay attention to all aspects of health. You have to watch your nutrition, you need strengthening, flexibility and cardio. There is no quick fix to rehab, nutrition or weight loss. They all work together hand in hand."

And Allen knows all about that as he prepares for another pre-dawn workout to practice what he preaches.

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