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# HOW A FORMER NFL OFFENSIVE LINEMAN LOST 80 POUNDS IN ONE YEAR

As a former offensive lineman for the NFL and Virginia Tech, I have weighed over three hundred pounds for the last fifteen years. I broke my leg and dislocated my ankle during the 2015 season with The Chicago Bears. It was then that I realized my NFL career was over, and I no longer needed to carry the extra weight. I lost eighty pounds in about a year, going from 305 down to 225. The question I get most often is, “how did you do it?”

I was essentially on the “all you can eat” plan since my freshman year in high school when I weighed 165 pounds and my football coach told me to gain thirty pounds by the next year. The offensive lines at every level are a close group, and there’s no better way to bond than over food. Going out to eat as a group during my NFL career was always a production. When the waitress would ask if we wanted an appetizer, we would say, “yes, we’ll take three of everything,” keeping in mind there were fifteen appetizers on the menu. It was a sight to see every square inch of our tables covered by appetizers, and then we would order entrees and desserts afterwards. During the football season, us big guys would get tired of eating the same foods every day prepared by the team chefs, so we would order wings and pizza after practice to graze on while watching film. Our offensive line coach was normally fine with it, as long as he could participate in the gluttony. I have seen some of my teammates over the years, like Redskins’ Pro Bowl linebacker Ryan Kerrigan, eat super healthy while maintaining weight. He would tell me how much of a chore it was – saying his jaw is exhausted from eating mounds of vegetables and endless smoothies to consume the calories he needed while training at an elite level. I guess that’s also a reason he is a Pro Bowl franchise player.

Whenever I went on a health kick in my career, I simply couldn’t keep the weight on. Practicing every day while lifting weights, not to mention the fuel burned on game days, gave me an easy excuse to add some garbage to my diet. To sum up my nutrition during the last fifteen years, I like to think I ate somewhat healthy with a generous dose of wings, pizza and beer.

I am not a weight loss expert, and I realize there are many ways to lose weight. When doing my own research, I saw that the magician Penn Jillette lost one hundred pounds by eating just potatoes and not working out. There’s also a documentary called “Fat Sick and Nearly Dead” by Joe Cross, in which he went on an extreme diet of drinking only juice from fruits and veggies. Then I stumbled across another extreme example called “Fat Head,” by comedian and health writer Tom Naughton, where he loses weight on a fast-food diet. I didn’t want to go on a crash diet where I felt like I would just gain the weight back. I didn’t want to pay for a temporary food delivery service because at some point I would have to figure it out for myself. I also didn’t want to cut out meat or carbs like some diets preach. I was looking for a permanent lifestyle change, not a diet, so I started with portion control and monthly weight loss goals.

During the first six months on my quest, I really didn’t change the foods that I ate. I gave myself the goal to lose five pounds each month so it was attainable (many recommendations suggest losing a max of one to two pounds a week as ideal). Using portion control as a means of losing weight, all I did was not get a second portion at each meal. This method was working, and the weight was falling off in the beginning. There were times I hit my five-pound quota after a week or two, and then I would celebrate by indulging in some ice cream or sinking my teeth into a juicy bacon cheeseburger. I was health aware, but I didn’t consider myself one of the crazies in the health community who counted every calorie. I enjoyed alcohol socially, indulged in desserts on the weekends, and had my fair share of carbs and animal proteins at about every meal. I was eating three full meals a day, plus a snack between lunch and dinner. Portion control worked for a while, but then my progress started to slow down.

The more research I did, the more I came across this evil thing called “sugar” and “processed foods.” I didn’t realize it at the time, but I had plenty of sugar in my every day diet that I needed to cut out. For example – my morning toast with peanut butter, sandwich bread for lunch, afternoon granola bar, and the occasional pasta dinner. I subbed out the toast for steel-cut oatmeal with cinnamon, and the breads and pastas for potatoes and rice. This is in line with the gluten-free lifestyle, and it made a big difference getting over the hump with those last twenty pounds.

It’s been fun diving into the health and wellness world. This year I’ve discovered probiotics, Himalayan pink salt, apple cider vinegar, coconut oil, MCT oil, grass-fed butter, working out before breakfast, grass-fed meats, wild caught salmon, organic coffee and free range eggs. People accuse me of turning into one of those health freaks I always liked to make fun of, but you can’t deny how much better you feel when you eat clean. I still have a few beers with friends, and let myself enjoy birthdays and the holidays, but we avoid sugary processed foods when ever possible in our home. I don’t claim to have all the answers, but I am down eighty pounds since my last game with the Bears, and down one hundred pounds from my all-time high just after I left Virginia Tech to train for the 2006 NFL combine.

I still enjoy staying active, but I’m not training to move three hundred and fifty pound defensive lineman anymore. I’ve had injuries to my ankles, knees, wrists, and shoulders so my workouts consist of stretching, body weight exercises with bands, and dumbbells that go up to fifty pounds. I go on walks, bike rides and jump rope for my cardio.

My biggest supporter over the last year has been my wife, Ashley. She has gone through this journey with me being my biggest ally while also occasionally enabling me with chocolate, red wine and light beer. She is the strongest one in the family, making it through the premature birth of our son. Minutes after he was delivered while my hands were shaky attempting to take pictures, very matter-of-factly, she let me know I forgot to take the lens cap off the camera, not the least bit phased by the emergency c-section delivery that just took place.

My last year in the NFL with the Bears, the team nutritionist Jen Gibson always preached the 80/20 rule which I live by now; 80% of the time eat the right foods and allow yourself that 20% to indulge. She told me about this rule after the first mandatory 9pm snack she implemented at the team hotel the night before a preseason game. I took it upon myself to make a delicious ice cream sundae for this mandatory snack, and all she could do was smile. I’ve read plenty of material that discourages all cheat meals in fear of falling off the wagon completely and gaining all the weight back, but so far I have been able to maintain my new weight of two hundred and twenty-five pounds since January 2017 just fine. There’s a lot of misinformation out there, the health gurus I’ve benefited from during this journey include, Robb Wolfe, Able James, Gary Taubes, David Perlmutter and Drew Manning to name a few.

I’ve been inspired by seeing my former NFL teammates, Jordan Gross and Alan Faneca, lose weight. From afar I have also paid attention to fellow NFL centers Matt Birk, Jeff Saturday, and Nick Hardwick showing me it’s possible to trim up the playing days are over. To my FOOLS out there (Fraternity of Offensive Lineman Studs), at some point the lifetime wing-eating contest will come to an end. When you are ready to trade in your 4XL modified bed sheets you are currently wearing for clothes, it is possible to shed the pounds, feel good, and actually cross your legs while seated.

## About the author:

Will Montgomery played 10 seasons as an offensive lineman in the National Football League. Will played multiple positions across the offensive line for 5 teams throughout his successful career. Will and I were teammates at Virginia Tech and I have a great amount of respect for his work ethic, passion, and toughness.

Will is a husband, father of two, son, and friend to many. He is now exploring his options after retirement. Will’s passions include both football and performance coaching and working in television or radio. He considers himself a pro at making babies, changing dirty diapers, and ingesting healthy fats such as MCT oil.

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