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Project Statement

I am an avid cook and baker; food has fascinated me since a very young age. Since the first week of class when we were introduced to this project, I decided I wanted to do a cookbook-related unessay. As I thought about it more, I thought I would research the diets of eight professional athletes and create a meal guide to *Eat like a Pro*. When deciding what athletes I wanted to research, I wanted to choose the most well-known athletes from a variety of sports and both male and female. I chose by picking my favorite athletes and went from there. As a Patriots fan, I grew up hearing about Tom Brady's ridiculously strict diet and it got me interested in thinking about why professional athletes eat the way that they do and the differences in how athletes think their diets will help their recovery. Tom Brady eats a very lean, no sugar, very restrictive diet because in his opinion it will help his recovery and body best. Compared to Simone Biles and Michael Phelps who eat whatever they want and are obviously still amazing athletes. It is also interesting to see how different sports require different diets; swimmers are required to eat significantly more calories than other sports. Being friends with a lot of athletes at Notre Dame, I have been exposed to how important food and diet is for athletes. Nutrition coaches are available for them so that they eat properly to be able to recover and be healthy. I hope this meal guide shows that all food is good and that food fuels our body; even pro athletes eat desserts. Each athlete chooses to cut out different foods from one another but they are still extremely athletic and successful in their own sports. I think the media makes people scared of food so it is important to think about how the most fit of people still eat desserts and junk food.

When thinking about how I actually wanted to format my meal guide, I thought it would be fun to give extra tips on the specifics of their diets. For example, Alex Morgan thinks that eating a plant-based diet has helped her stay healthy and improved her recovery. Adding these tidbits to my guide, instead of just a sample breakfast/lunch/dinner, makes it more helpful and shows how these pros prioritize food and their diets. It is also important to note that I did my best to research with the information that is available online what these athletes eat and how they

structure their diets. Obviously, this is not what they eat every single day but it gives an overall picture of their diets and if they are restrictive with their food choices or not.

As we talked about briefly, the way weight is portrayed in the media and the amount of attention athletes receive in particular about the way their bodies look is not at all correlated with the way they eat. If you knew Michael Phelps was eating 10,000 calories a day (5 times the amount of calories a standard person should eat) you would think he was obese. Unlike the way the media portrays it, calories don't mean anything and it is unhealthy to be counting them. The media also portrays vegan diets as unsustainable for athletes because athletes require more protein than a normal person, and protein intake is harder in vegan diets. However, Alex Morgan shows that this stereotype is untrue as a World Cup and Olympic soccer player who happens to also be vegan. This also got me thinking about the flaws of the BMI. These professional athletes probably weigh way more than we think because muscle is so heavy and the BMI would not be able to distinguish between body fat and muscle.

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Self-Assessment

I think it was really interesting to see the reasoning behind athletes' diets and why they choose to cut certain foods out of their diet. Tom Brady cuts out nightshades (never heard of that word before) - tomatoes, mushrooms, peppers, eggplants - because he believes that they cause inflammation. Rafael Nadal believes that filtered seawater really aids in his muscle recovery. The extent to which these statements are true or not, i'm not sure. But like I mentioned in my project statement, I think the media makes people scared of food so it is important to think about how even the most fit people in the world eat desserts and junk food. Food is not something to be scared of, but unfortunately social media makes us. My biggest challenge was finding accurate research on diets of these athletes. I wanted to make sure I was getting information that

accurately represented their diets instead of articles reciting random meals. This took a lot of filtering through articles and making sure that multiple sources gave me similar information. For example, one article I read said Serena Williams ate meat, but then majority of others said she follows a plant based diet. I also struggled with choosing which athletes I wanted to cover. Instead of choosing random athletes that I liked, I wanted to research a male and female of the same sport, across 3 sports (soccer, tennis, swimming). I wanted to use Tom Brady because I've heard of his crazy diet, but there is no female counterpart in American Football to Brady, so I used Simone Biles because male gymnasts are less wellknown. I think I was really successful with my final product. It is short and sweet but provides a lot of information on pro athletes' diets. I think I could have been more thoughtful in the way I chose the athletes instead of picking athletes I liked.