Now armed with what Highland Athletics are, let’s take a look at who does this crazy stuff.

US Highland athletes represent many cultures including Norwegian, Polish, Italian, Cherokee Indian, Mexican, African American and German, in addition to Scots and Irish. They also represent many professions off the field: Eric is a state investigator, Harrison is a high school principal, Kearney owns a wellness center and Allison is a violinist and stay-at-home mom. There are also teachers, nurses, aestheticians, IT professionals and personal trainers, as well as law enforcement and members of every military branch.

Where did they get their Highland Athletics start? It depends. Eric literally grew up at the Games, throwing his first implement at just 14. Harrison’s college track and field coach, Paul Ferency, was an athlete and agreed to train him after college. Kearney was a spectator who enjoyed watching so much he decided to give it a try. Allison started because her doctor recommended losing weight or facing diabetes.

Some Highland athletes are world-class, particularly among the pros. Training includes substantial strength and plyometric training as well as event technique practice: workouts that lend themselves to explosive movements needed for releasing the throw. Eric spends up to four hours a week conditioning and three hours practicing technique. Some athletes work with trainers.

There are several skill classes in Highland Athletics and everyone starts as an amateur. Many work their way up to A or Super A. There is also a Master’s amateur class for 40+ athletes. Top amateurs can turn pro if they work with event organizers to build up their schedules. Professionals travel around the country and even the world, competing for cash prizes, trophies and championships. Women’s classes are very similar to Men’s. As the sport grows so do the delineations, such as the recently added Elite Women’s class.

Wait. There are female Highland athletes?!

You bet! Women have all the same events as Men, using slightly smaller weights. There are also female pros. They are mothers, daughters, wives and girlfriends when the Games are over, but these women are tough on the field. Allison is a perfect example.

“I am stronger than all of my friends – except the ones that compete! You definitely don’t fit the typical ‘soccer mom’ mold. Some may believe that a