



## Up Your Game

# Sports Chiropractic Enhances Care

By Kray Kibler and Spencer H. Baron, DC

**AS AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH** to achieving overall wellness and advancing preventive care, chiropractic has gained wide use among professional and amateur sports teams across the country.

Three trends point to sports chiropractic as an exceptional way to provide value and enhance care:

- ▶ Participation in high school and college sports is up, with experts predicting a 15-percent rise in employment of coaches and scouts by 2022.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ A growing number of professional and amateur athletes are seeking new strategies for gaining a competitive edge.
- ▶ As the baby boomer population ages, doctors of chiropractic (DCs) are treating more retirement age patients who want to maintain their athletic ability by eliminating acute and chronic pain, increasing flexibility, enhancing strength and balance and improving overall quality of life.

Experts estimate that 90 percent of all world-class athletes use chiropractic care to prevent injuries and increase their performance potential.<sup>2</sup> All National Football League (NFL) teams rely on DCs in varying capacities, and 77 percent of athletic trainers have referred players to a chiropractor for evaluation or treatment.<sup>3</sup>

### Treating Professional Athletes

Treating collegiate, Olympic and professional athletes has helped DCs gain wider recognition, creating a growing demand among younger athletes who benefit from chiropractic care in the areas of critical, acute and emergency care. This is important since the typical primary care physician lacks the education to deal with biomechanical and neuromusculoskeletal dysfunction.

Longevity on the playing field is critical: For every year a player remains competitive, millions of dollars may be earned. Professional athletes, coaches, athletic trainers and sports agents understand the consequences of disabling the pain mechanism and view chiropractic as essential for treating the cause of pain.

With professional sports highlighting its value, chiropractic is poised to become a mainstream option for improving sports performance and injury rehabilitation among athletes at every level.<sup>4</sup>

### Treating Young Athletes

More than 30 million children participate in organized sports in the United States, and approximately 775,000 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms for sports-related injuries.<sup>5</sup> According to the *Journal of Neurological Science*, more sports-related, non-fatal injuries are treated in hospital emergency departments than any other type of unintentional injury. While traditional medicine treats fractures, dislocations, lacerations and damaged tendons and ligaments, many athletes leave the hospital with as much spinal stress as they had prior to care.<sup>6</sup>

Younger athletes are more susceptible to injuries because they have slower reaction times than adults, are less coordinated, and are still growing and developing. Many injuries result from overuse, such as repetitive use syndrome, which comes from

placing stress on the musculoskeletal system. It is caused by not using proper techniques or equipment, such as athletic shoes, which makes greater demands on the body with less healing time.<sup>7</sup>

### Injury Prevention/Performance Enhancement

Any DC who specializes in treating athletes should be prepared to treat the whole person, and tailor a comprehensive program aimed at injury avoidance. Initial evaluations should include not only traditional orthopedic tests, neurological examinations, and consideration to supplement physical exam findings with any additional diagnostic evaluations, if appropriate or a referral if indicated. Numerous studies support the fact that chiropractic care helps athletes achieve an optimal level of performance. A Canadian research team included chiropractic care in the rehabilitation program of 16 injured female long-distance runners. The runners recovered quickly; seven of them actually scored "personal best" performances while under

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chiropractic care, although there may be other contributing factors.<sup>8</sup>

### Positive Impacts

Chiropractic is beneficial to professional, amateur and weekend athletes, maximizing athletic performance and preventing and managing injuries. The growing reliance on chiropractic care among American professional sports teams has both raised awareness about the many benefits of chiropractic and helped many DCs apply and improve knowledge of biomechanical injuries and their treatment.

With growing awareness of the role of chiropractic care, practitioners will find themselves in community leadership roles, imparting a positive impact on student sports and expanding their skills to further affect athletic performance. They may be called upon to provide nutritional expertise and other approaches for enhancing pre-competition preparation, competition endurance and all aspects of injury prevention and care coordination. ■

## Putting Sports Chiropractic into Practice

Besides having an interest in sports, becoming a successful sports DC requires:

**Tailoring nutritional requirements, equipment and techniques to the needs of today's athletes.** This means augmenting traditional chiropractic care with soft-tissue treatment methods including instrument-assisted soft-tissue mobilization.

**Obtaining credentials.** A doctor of chiropractic **does not need to add credentials** such as the Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician credential or the advanced diplomate in sports, or the International Federation of Sports Chiropractic's (FICS) international certified chiropractic sports physician (ICCSF) in order to be qualified to treat athletes.

**Marketing sports capabilities to build a solid referral stream.** The best approach is to forge solid working relationships with orthopedic surgeons, athletic trainers, physical therapists and other MDs who provide sports medicine services. Get involved in local, regional and national sports organizations and events, and issue press releases to local news outlets.

Source: [www.chiroeco.com/article/2007/Issue14/CS-Build-Your-Brand-Sports-DC.php](http://www.chiroeco.com/article/2007/Issue14/CS-Build-Your-Brand-Sports-DC.php)

### Endnotes

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6. PCNH.
7. Warner.
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