

# Raising the performance bar

Ever heard of the flying Finn? By bringing his personal massage therapist to the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, Paavo Nurmi from Finland claims that 30-minute massage sessions between each race was the recipe behind him walking away with five gold medals in his pocket.

In the same breath, athletes such as Joe Montana, Martina Navratilova and Michael Jordan have all reached the top of their sport with the help of sports massage.

Both the occasional athlete and the serious competitor can encounter soreness and injury, making sports massage beneficial no matter how athletic a person is.

The aim of sports massage is to help prevent muscle and tendon injuries, thereby reducing the strain and discomfort of training and chronic strain patterns. It allows the athlete to return to maximum training levels, enhancing a preventative approach to athletic training whereby soft tissues are free of trigger points and adhesions, contributing toward the improvement of peak neuromuscular functioning.

Sports massage has three separate aspects which share the same goals: injury prevention, maintenance programmes, onsite treatment before and after an event, and rehabilitation programmes for those who are injured. The first application of sports massage is to assist the training process.

## Pre-event massage

Pre-event sports massage is given within the four hours preceding an event. It is used as a supplement to warm-up, enhancing circulation and reducing excess muscle and mental tension prior to a game or competition. It is normally shorter (10-15 minutes) than a regular conditioning massage, and focuses on warming up the major muscles to be used.

## Post-event massage

Soreness and tight muscles after training or competition have a couple of different causes. The "burn" that is experienced during or immediately after a practice or workout is due to the buildup of lactic acid which is a byproduct of muscle activity. Massage can help flush this out of one's system by increasing circulation and lymphatic flow.

Muscle soreness the day after an event is normally caused by micro-trauma in the muscle.

Exercising a muscle creates microscopic tears in the muscle and surrounding fascia. The muscle may also be tight, constricting blood flow through the muscle. A combination of light massage techniques and lymph drainage will reduce soreness and fluid retention while increasing circulation. Remember: "Deep work and pain are not always your gain."

## Injury treatment

This is the third part of sports massage. In conjunction with a doctor's treatment, the massage therapist, who has an extensive knowledge of anatomy and physiology, will apply a variety of soft-tissue massage techniques that are effective in the management of both acute and chronic injuries. For example, adding lymphatic massage to the "standard care" procedure in the acute stage of injury will improve control of secondary, hypoxic injury, and enhance oedemous fluid removal throughout the healing cycle. Myofascial trigger point techniques reduce the spasms and

pain that occur both in the injured and "compensation" muscles. Cross-fibre friction techniques applied during the sub-acute and maturation phases of healing improve the formation of strong and flexible repair tissue, which is vital in maintaining a full, pain-free range of motion during rehabilitation.

It is vital that the athlete and massage therapist always work in collaboration with other appropriate medical care. The therapist should know that to encourage circulation around a bruise, but not directly on it, through the use of compression, cross-fibre techniques or even long, deep strokes is only used after appropriate medical referral and diagnostics indicate that there are no clots in the area that could embolise.

In closing, it is important to find a massage therapist that understands the mechanics of your sport and your personal goals to optimise your sporting ability. ♦

*Suzette Crafford is an internationally qualified massage therapist specialising in myofascial trigger point massage and deep-tissue sports massage.*

## Review

### Sports and Remedial Massage therapy by Mel Cash

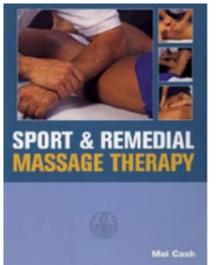
Covers all the practical and theoretical aspects of the massage, ranging from the basics through to the treatment of soft-tissue injury, this book will prove invaluable to all students and practitioners of physical therapies. Fundamental principles – such as a good working posture and the quality of 'feel' – are included to help the therapist achieve the best possible result with minimal effort and stress. A fully illustrated reference section examines individual muscles, explaining particular characteristics of injury and treatment. The book also includes soft-tissue manipulation techniques which can relax, stretch or strengthen muscles, as well as remedial exercises which can be done by the patient to further aid recovery or enhance sports performance.

Distributed by International Journals, 011 485 5650

### Hands On Sports Therapy by Keith Ward

For student, tutor or experienced practitioner, this book offers both practical and theoretical coverage, taking one through step-by-step pre- and post-event massage techniques, health and fitness testing, remedial exercise and prevention and treatment of injury. Although it was written specifically for sports therapy courses, it also covers the necessary material for courses in sports massage, remedial massage and other related courses in health and fitness. The book also provides extensive coverage on the underpinning knowledge required in anatomy, physiology and biomechanics, looks at factors such as health, safety and ethical issues, and covers injury treatment in all contexts including on the field and in changing rooms.

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## Advanced massage technology

Used extensively for training preparation, muscle recovery and the treatment of tissue injuries, LPG S6 EndermoSport is a proven, mechanical manipulation technique which, when applied to the skin, lifts the tissue by means of negative pressure and massages it between two motorised rollers. Prior to physical activity, the technique decreases muscular tension, improving the stretching properties of the muscle, which decreases the risk of muscular damage. Extra blood is also drawn to the

muscle, improving muscle control and thereby maximising training and improving performance.

During intense physical activity, 10% of muscular capacity is lost through muscle fibre damage. If the damage is left untreated, it can lead to delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). With the S6 EndermoSport technique, 98% of muscle strength is recovered with 48 hours, decreasing pain and stiffness. Recovery from fatigue is three times faster, therefore the athlete achieves a greater degree of recovery before the next game or competition, which is especially vital on tour.

In cases such as sprains, tendonopathies and muscular injuries, the technique helps reduce fibrosis and facilitate healing, as well as reduce scarring and re-injury, enabling the athlete to resume training far sooner.

The LPG S6 EndermoSport has been used by the South African national cricket team for the past five years. Says former team physiotherapist, Craig Smith, "Effective management and treatment of the fatiguing effects of intense exercise is the only option, as the professional sporting calendar does not look like its abating in years to come. In our cricket experience, the LPG suction massager has the ability – via its negative pressure technology – to improve the blood flow to and from the muscles at a much deeper level than ordinary recovery massage techniques."

Research tests, including muscle strength tests, on LPG-treated subjects versus untreated subjects, revealed that pain scores after exercise were lower, there was a better and quicker recovery response, and post-exercise tissue swelling (oedema) and thigh measurements were also far better.

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