



# Seven Reasons Sports Chiropractic is Showing Such Positive Growth

by Vicki Nuber

**B**y all appearances there seems to be a growing acceptance of chiropractic sports care amongst athletes including weekend, high school, and college athletes, as well as those at the professional and Olympic levels. Many chiropractors have maximized this athlete-to-chiropractic opportunity and built highly successful practices providing sports chiropractic care.

For this article we talked to a number of chiropractors that in some way are offering sports chiropractic care. We wanted to delve into the dynamics behind this increasing

acceptance of chiropractic sports care and explore some of the opportunities available to chiropractors. We also were interested in knowing if these chiropractors would recommend sports chiropractic to others.

Let's begin with considering why the acceptance of sports chiropractic seems to be growing. While there were countless reasons given, we found seven commonly mentioned reasons.

## 1. Exposure

Whether it is the efforts of the Foundation for Chiropractic Progress and their use of Jerry Rice as a spokes-

person, the growing involvement of chiropractors in the Olympics, the positive exposure of professional athletes depending on chiropractors, or the increasing acceptance of chiropractors in college and high school training rooms, it is clear that chiropractic as a primary and logical treatment option for athletes is growing.

The Foundation for Chiropractic Progress reports that their advertising campaigns have generated over 30 million impressions over the last few years; many of those have focused on well-known athletes. While no one impression may attract a new patient to your practice, the collective power of these impressions does change the public's perception.

## 2. Athletic Experience

One chiropractic college admission representative confirmed the general opinion that many entering chiropractic colleges are attracted to the active, fit, healthy philosophies of chiropractic. And many have high school, college, and even Olympic participation experience. Most of these students remain active and physically fit during their chiropractic college years, and even after they start their practices.

Athletes tell us that the training and competitive experiences that high level athletes gain through their par-

## Advantages Of Previous Athletic Experience

One chiropractor suggested that previous athletic experience gave some chiropractors 4 significant advantages.

1. Speak the athletic language
2. Experience with sports-specific injuries
3. Ability to connect with "team" decision makers
4. Natural involvement with teams and events



ticipation gives them a unique perspective of their bodies, how they function, injuries, and healing from those injuries. They feel it is easier to empathize with their sports patients, and to be able to speak the appropriate athletic language.

### 3. Sports-Specific Education

While one chiropractor we talked with claimed that his “sports education” certification had not brought one additional sports patient into his practice, he did admit that the knowledge he gained in earning his certification has become a platform for the care he provides. The Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician Program (CCSP) and the Sports Diplomate offered by the American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians are two highly popular chiropractic certification programs.

Some chiropractors choose certification from organizations outside of chiropractic that may hold special interest to them such as weightlifting, personal training, yoga, or Pilates.

### 4. Techniques

Athletes understand soft tissue injuries and related care. The growth of chiropractic soft tissue techniques such as A.R.T., Graston Technique, and Airrosti, to name a

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few, are starting to become recognizable to consumers who search for doctors that provide these popular chiropractic techniques.

It is also obvious that some of these techniques have done a great job of building their brand. We talked to more than a few chiropractors who have benefited from the recognition some of these brands have built.

### 5. Technology

While many sports chiropractors

focus on soft tissue or manual techniques, there are those that have discovered technology can also play a large role in building a successful sports practice. Traditional chiropractic technology such as thermography and sEMG devices, computerized instrument adjusting, and



## American Chiropractic Board Of Sports Physicians

The ACBSP certifies chiropractors wanting to specialize in sports medicine and physical fitness. The two main programs the board offers chiropractors include:

- **Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician (CCSP):** A 120-hour postgraduate program, including a comprehensive written examination in order to receive certification.
- **Diplomate American Chiropractic Board of Sports Physicians (DACBSP):** After achieving CCSP certification, participants must attend a minimum of 200 hours, with additional requirements necessary to achieve the Sports Diplomate within three years of completing the coursework.

even range of motion devices are being used successfully with sports patients.

### 6. Nutrition

The rise of nutrition in chiropractic can either be attributed to the rise of athletes seeking chiropractic care, or the rise in sports chiropractic care can be attributed to the increase in

drug testing.

### 7. Marketing

Last but not least, as chiropractors perfect their marketing skills, the profession is truly able to reach and influence greater numbers. The marketing efforts of the Alliance for Chi-

ropractic Progress, the efforts of specialized techniques becoming well-known in sports circles, and the growing acceptance of strategic but understated marketing by many chiropractors may all be part of the reason for the growing acceptance of chiropractic care as a primary care choice by athletes, weekend warriors, and even those simply looking to lead a more active lifestyle.

Chiropractors have found that marketing a sports clinic can be fairly simple in that it is easy to identify the appropriate target audiences: college athletic teams, high schools, gyms and fitness centers, youth sports leagues and organizations, and even adult recreational sports leagues. And that is not counting the growing number of athletic tournaments, races, walks, and health fairs.

While finding the places “athletes gather” as mentioned above is easy — positioning and branding your practice properly is more difficult. Successful sports chiropractors have generally done a great job of positioning themselves for their target



## Soft Tissue Techniques

Those that understand marketing recognize that it is primarily about solving your target audience's problems. And soft tissue is a problem most athletes recognize. One athlete told us that unless it is a major injury, the first thing they notice is reduced range of motion, and soft tissue techniques seem to provide this athlete as well as others the solution they seek.

Doctors told us that many, if not most, sports injuries they see are related to soft tissue. And the results they get with soft tissue techniques lead to increased word-of-mouth and a greater number of referrals.

market. They understand their audiences. They admit their own level of sports chiropractic care.

### What you can do

Building a successful sports practice is no easy task. But according to doctors we talked to here are some suggestions to consider.

**1. Be patient.** Almost all of the feedback we received centered on the need to be patient while building a sports chiropractic practice. The higher the level of athlete you want to care for, the more time it will take to build credibility. One doctor told us that he began as a family practice

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treating weekend athletes, then word-of-mouth referrals brought him high school and more serious amateur athletes. Eventually those high school athletes became college athletes and as his brand and reputation grew, his niche as a sports chiropractor grew. But as he mentioned, his overnight success took quite a few years.

**2. Create a practice that fits your**

**athletic experience, education, and the needs of your community** A highly successful doctor admitted that when he graduated from college he had visions of treating professional and Division I athletes, only to find that his community only had one Division I athletic program. He shifted his vision to meet the opportunity in his community, and has built a highly successful, 100% sports practice taking care of amateur, high school, and college athletes.

Another told us the story of trying too quickly to push his way into the world of pro athletes and failing.

But as he cared for the family of one athlete with great results, eventually the athlete came in to visit also, and given very positive results, facilitated the doctor becoming a team chiropractor.

**3. Use your own experience wisely** While you may have been a hot-shot high school athlete, to a college or pro athlete, that experience does not mean a lot. So share your experience

carefully. Focus on the injuries you've suffered as an athlete or treated as a doctor rather than your sports heroics.

**4. Never quit learning** Some choose to invest time and money in formal educational or certification programs; others read books, journals or attend local educational program. But in the world of sports chiropractic, learning doesn't stop. Successful doctors told us that they've found it highly important to stay abreast of the latest research, trends, and regulations, and that education is a key to their success.

**5. Get involved in your sports community** The more you know those involved in your sports community, the more opportunities you will create. It starts with your own personal involvement in a gym, a team, or a sports organization within your community. It includes your support or sponsorship of sports groups you want to reach. You cannot do it hiding in your office.

**6. Support national efforts** You may be able to handle the local marketing but you will never be able to gain the credibility and exposure that are being done for you. But that exposure does not happen without your support. Drug companies realize that without national awareness or exposure, their marketing efforts would be much harder. Such is the case for chiropractic. You are benefiting from those efforts, so consider it a small price to pay for the acceptance they are creating for you.

The responses to our survey and the conversations we had with chiropractors seem to support that acceptance of chiropractic sports care is indeed growing successfully. While growing a chiropractic sports practice takes time and patience, those who have done so appear to think that the results are well worth that time and effort.

*About The Author — Vicki Nuber is the editor-in-chief of DC Products Review.*