

## Professional Athletics and Chiropractic: a Winning Combination

Editorial Staff

Professional athletes are increasingly turning to chiropractic care to help them relieve pain and stay fit. You may recall when ex-San Francisco 49er quarterback Joe Montana was treated by a chiropractor before a live audience during the 1989 Super Bowl; or you may recall our reports on athletes like heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield; NBA all-star Charles Barkley; Olympian decathlon gold medalist Dan O'Brien; Olympic beach volleyball gold medalists Karch Kiraly and Kent Steffes, and many others.

While many athletes seek chiropractic on their own initiative, chiropractic care is gaining official sanction by many professional teams: according to records from the American Chiropractic Association's Sports Council, this includes professional football, baseball and basketball teams, and of course Olympic teams of many countries.

"I'm the Torch-Bearer"

Chiropractic relieved Wade Boggs' decade long battle with back pain.

The stories of professional baseball players Barry Bonds and Wade Boggs being helped by chiropractic care recently made news: "Chiropractic Saves Third Baseman's Career," flashed the New York Daily News headline.

"I don't feel that stiffness in the entire midsection anymore. I haven't winced since I started this." These words could be spoken by any one of the thousands of people who receive chiropractic treatment each year, but in this case, they come from the mouth of third baseman Wade Boggs, the five time American League batting champion who now stars for the New York Yankees.

Boggs, who turns 39 this June, received treatment from Craig Newman, DC, a chiropractor in Tampa, Florida. Before turning to Dr. Newman, Boggs had suffered through severe back pain for nearly a decade. Years of rough play on the baseball diamond resulted in compression of a disc, causing nerve pain that sent Boggs into spasmodic fits of pain so intense that at times it was hard to even breathe.

After a season of painkillers, relaxants and acupuncture failed to alleviate the problem, and after a series of tests revealed no herniated or ruptured disc, Boggs was near the breaking point. "The muscle relaxants weren't working, the prednisone (a steroid-based drug) wasn't working, nothing was working anymore," the third baseman recalled. "My legs were like jelly."

Enter Dr. Newman, whom the Yankees asked to examine Boggs in January 1997. Dr. Newman's task was clear: to restore the future hall-of-famer's back to normal function. "I gave Craig an ultimatum," said Boggs. "Either get me to the point where I can be pain-free and play to the expectations I have for myself and do the things I did in the past, or that's it ..."

But after twice-a-week chiropractic care, Boggs no longer is heading for the whirlpool after the

game, nor strapping the ice packs to his back. He is able to run, make the long throw to first, or slam out base hits without even a hint of pain. The revitalized Boggs, wishing to keep his form, convinced Dr. Newman to set up a chiropractic network so that he can receive adjustments in every city on the Yankees schedule.

Wade has become something of a spokesman for chiropractic. "I'm the torch-bearer here," he said. "Chiropractic is a sensitive subject with orthopedic doctors and trainers, because if it ain't torn or broken then there's nothing wrong. But when you invest millions and millions of dollars in players, you owe it to yourself to at least look at it."

"100 Percent Better"

Giants outfielder Barry Bonds: "I think it should be mandatory for athletes to see a chiropractor."

A three-time winner of the National League's Most Valuable Player award, Barry Bonds plays in the outfield for the San Francisco Giants and brings home a significant paycheck: a little more than \$11 million per season.

While in Arizona for spring training, the gifted athlete, in un-Bond-like clumsiness, tripped and fell down a flight of stairs in his rented home, landing on a marble floor and narrowly avoiding a grand piano. "I hit the floor with my hip and went straight down," he recalls.

When Giants head trainer Mark Letendre heard about the accident he called upon Dr. Alan Palmer of Scottsdale, Arizona, the team's consulting chiropractor during spring training. After Dr. Palmer's treatment, Bonds said that he felt better immediately, remarking, "The chiropractor helped out a lot. I feel 100 percent better ... I'm fine. I'm real fine." He underwent an MRI test later that day and has felt no ill side-effects since that time.

Like Wade Boggs, Bonds sees a benefit to receiving regular chiropractic care. "Your body is being treated like it is supposed to be treated (when you receive chiropractic care)," remarked the outfielder, who has received routine chiropractic treatments since joining the Giants in 1993. "I think it should be mandatory for athletes to see a chiropractor."

### Professional Opinions

Dr. Nick Athens, the chiropractor who treated Joe Montana during the Super Bowl, is also the San Francisco Giants' team chiropractor during the regular season. He regularly sees players five or six times a month. Together with Giants trainer Mark Letendre, the two use chiropractic to help keep Giant players healthy and recover from injuries more quickly. Explains Letendre: "If the players are not properly aligned, they're not going to function properly. When their bodies do function properly, they're more productive, and the team wins."

Dr. Alan Palmer, who works on numerous professional and world-class athletes in addition to his duties with the Giants, has seen chiropractic adjustments make a significant improvement in athletic performance. He agrees with Letendre's observation. "Next to talent, keeping the body in balance is the edge athletes need to take them to the next level."

Wade Boggs and Barry Bonds are just two of the thousands of athletes, professional and otherwise, that make chiropractic treatment a part of their routines. From the all-pro quarterback who throws the winning touchdown in the Super Bowl to the armchair quarterback who critiques his team in the luxury of his recliner, the work done by chiropractors around the world helps them perform at their best.

## *References*

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