

Beach Volleyball and Chiropractic Strike Gold and Silver in Atlanta

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In the spirit of the 1996 Summer Olympic Games, I will put aside my column on nutrition this month to write about the chiropractic connection with beach volleyball. American teams won gold and silver in Atlanta in beach volleyball, one of the most popular new Olympic sports.

In 1990, the Association of Volleyball Professionals (AVP) were beginning their eighth season, taking a sport that began in Southern California in the 1930s and exporting it across the country. Cable television was greatly increasing the popularity of two-on-two volleyball played in the sand on a court with identical dimensions to indoor team volleyball (six players on a side). Prize money for the 24 events had climbed to almost \$1 million.

Covering so much ground on an uneven terrain under a hot summer sun puts a great deal of strain on even the most well-conditioned athletes. The AVP management and players realized that a formal health care program was needed for the competitors to perform their best each week, and to prolong careers in a sport where the future income possibilities looked bright.

The AVP made history by hiring Tim Brown, DC, of Newport Beach, as their first sports care director. It was one of the first times a professional sport organization had hired a chiropractor to direct a sports medicine program. Even though Dr. Brown received airfare, hotel accommodations, and remuneration, he realized he could not leave his practice every weekend for four months. He recommended to the AVP that I be retained to assist him. In 1992, Dr. Brown needed to spend more time on other projects, including designing a line of unique sports-specific functional athletic braces. We changed hats and I became the AVP's director of sports medicine, with Dr. Brown assuming the role of assistant.

In 1990 AVP sports medicine consisted of one chiropractor, myself or Dr. Brown, along with a portable table in the corner of the player's backstage tent. Six years later, AVP sports medicine now has the largest tent on the beach -- 900 square feet-- and is equipped with two Leander light flexion-distraction tables; a host of Mettler electrical modalities; first-aid supplies, braces, and three portable adjusting tables from Meyers Distributing; four massage tables from Earthlite; and athletic tape from Self-Grip. The equipment is transported by the production crew to every event across the country. In addition to sponsorship from companies serving the chiropractic profession, we also procured medical sponsorship from Daniel Freeman Hospital in Inglewood, California. They provide us with intravenous fluids, prescription medication, and diagnostic imaging.

The AVP tour has continued to grow, both in length (eight months) and prize money (over \$5 million). We felt the need to add more doctors to our staff. We have hired Gary Andersen, DC, CCSP, and Scott Blatt, DC, ATC, CCSP, to cover events as our tour continues to grow. There are also permanent medical doctors on our staff, including orthopedic surgeons Keith Feder, MD, Warren Kramer, MD, physiatrist Sten Kramer, MD, and internist Robert Reese, MD.

In each city, the DC who travels with the tour is assisted by local volunteers from every specialty. Our typical lineup includes two sports chiropractors, a physical therapist, an athletic trainer, four

or five massage therapists, orthopedic surgeons, podiatrists, and sports medicine family practice physicians. In many cities we will also have chiropractic, medical, and physical therapy students observing how we feel state-of-the-art interdisciplinary health care for athletes should be performed.

Drs. Brown, Blatt, Gary Anderson, and myself, along with our medical staff and all the sports chiropractors, physical therapists, athletic trainers, and massage therapists across the country, are very proud that our patients have won gold and silver medals in Atlanta. We are already looking forward to the Sydney Olympics in 2000 and hope to see the strong presence chiropractic has in beach volleyball expand to other sports as well.

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