

At 130 MPH, There's No Room for Error

Steve Kelly, managing editor

Debra Horton, D.C., CCSP, of Reno, Nevada, was asked by six-time world speed skiing champion, Franz Weber, to accompany him as his personal chiropractor to the 1992 Winter Olympic Games in Albertville, France.

A native of Innsbruck, Austria, Franz Weber had set speed skiing records in 1982, 83, and 84; he was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as "The fastest Human on Skis." He was the World Speed Skiing Champion six consecutive times, and three times overall World Cup Champion.

But in 1985, Franz retired from speed skiing. In 1987, he saw his world record 129.8 mph eclipsed by Michael Prufer of France at 135.288 mph; a year later, Prufer set an astounding new record of 139.055 mph at Les Arcs, France.

In 1990, speed skiing was announced as a demonstration sport for the 1992 Albertville games. This news brought Franz Weber out of retirement: He wanted to compete in the Olympics.

Leading up to the Olympics, Franz competed in three events: In his first race back, he beat his personal record and finished in fourth place (133.646 mph) at Les Arcs, France in April 1991; a third place in Silverton, Colorado; and in the third and final race before the Olympics, he came in first in a field of 125 at Stelvio, Italy.

As Franz had been a regular chiropractic patient of Dr. Horton's for five years, and was convinced of chiropractic's effectiveness, it was only natural for Franz to want Dr. Horton to accompany him to Albertville.

Dr. Horton points to several key areas that tax the speed skier: the neck in hyperextension; the hips in maximum flexion; and knee flexion at 90 degrees.

She adjusted Franz on a drop mechanism table. "His low back and legs take quite a beating in the racing tuck position, so I usually use ultrasound, and or microcurrent for symptomatic areas; then finish up with Russian sports massage for legs and back, particularly to the gastrocs, whose blood supply is restricted by the tightened ski boots."

Dr. Horton's chiropractic skills helped many of the Austrian olympians, including Franz Klammer, the 1976 Olympic gold medalist in the downhill, and current ski coach of Franz Weber. Dr. Horton also had the opportunity to promote chiropractic to Italian, French, Swiss, and American athletes.

Although Franz wasn't quite able to duplicate his finish in Stelvio, Italy, he had a good showing at Albertville: a sixth place finish.

Dr. Horton noted that it wasn't any mystery why the top finishers were the French skiers: they were the only skiers who were able to take practice runs on the Olympic course.

Oh well, c'est la guerre.

Steve Kelly
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