

## Philadelphia 76ers Have Team Chiropractor

Steve Kelly, managing editor

Neil K. Liebman, D.C., a 1987 Palmer graduate, has just finished his second season with the Philadelphia 76ers' pro basketball team. No, Dr. Liebman is not a threat to replace Charles Barkley at starting forward. Dr. Liebman's contribution is behind the scenes, in the recesses of the locker room, away from the glamour and glitz of today's spectacle known as the National Basketball Association (NBA).

Dr. Liebman is making a significant impact and headway for chiropractic in the the NBA thanks to the marvelous support and foresight of 76ers' owner Harold Katz.

Back in 1990, Harold Katz was referred to Dr. Liebman's care by Dr. Liebman's mother-in-law (yes, such mother-in-laws do exist). Mr. Katz was suffering from a persistent shoulder problem. He'd been to an orthopedist and had physical therapy on the shoulder, but to little avail. When Mr. Katz first came to Dr. Liebman's office, his right shoulder was so bad that he had to shake Dr. Liebman's hand with his left hand.

Because of Mr. Katz's busy schedule, Dr. Liebman began taking his portable table over to the owner's house three times a week. Dr. Liebman found that Mr. Katz's problem was not only in the shoulder, but was being aggravated by a neck condition.

Mr. Katz was so pleased with the results he got from the chiropractic care, that soon Dr. Liebman was treating other members of the Katz family: wife Peggy; son David (vice president of the 76ers); and 18-year old daughter Jacqueline.

As a patient who experienced the benefits of chiropractic, Mr. Katz wondered why NBA teams weren't taking advantage of this wonderful therapy. He asked Dr. Liebman to become the 76ers' team chiropractor. The official conformation of that position came in a letter from then 76ers' general manager Gene Shue:

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November 1, 1990

*Dr. Neil Liebman  
Advance Chiropractics  
2123 Browning Rd.  
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Dear Dr. Liebman:

Harold Katz has informed me that you are now our team chiropractor. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you and we look forward to working with you. I have notified our team and medical staff that your services are available.

Look forward to meeting you.

Respectfully,

*Gene Shue*  
*General Manager*

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As there was no established protocol for a DC working with an NBA club, Harold Katz told Dr. Liebman that if any of the players had injuries, and the medical attention they received was not bringing results, that he'd refer the player for chiropractic treatment.

Two weeks later, Harold Katz referred his first player to Dr. Liebman, 76er forward Ron Anderson. Ron had low back pain and became a regular patient; Dr. Liebman notes that since his treatments began with Ron, the forward has not missed a game due to injury the past two seasons.

The next referral was guard Hersey Hawkins who had pulled a groin muscle. Harold Katz called Dr. Liebman and asked if chiropractic could benefit such a condition. Dr. Liebman began working with Hersey and was gratified by the results.

Dr. Liebman uses diversified techniques, with special emphasis on biophysics and teaching his patients the importance of proper posture.

After the first two referrals, Dr. Liebman began going down to practices. It wasn't long before head coach Jim Lynam started to receive chiropractic treatment. (Jim Lynam was recently promoted to general manager and Doug Moe was hired to take over as head coach for the 1992-93 season.) Soon, the shooting coach Buzz Braman, assistant coach Fred Carter, the equipment manager, and some of the staff from the promotions office became patients of the team chiropractor.

Before one game, Harold Katz asked Dr. Liebman to go to the locker room and check on Charles Barkley's sprained ankle. The 76ers' owner had previously seen the good results of Dr. Liebman's care for his son's sprained ankle, a revelation to Mr. Katz at that time, for he never knew that a chiropractor could 'work' on an ankle.

Dr. Liebman had not yet met Charles Barkley. A certain amount of apprehension would be natural on such an occasion, particularly considering the tough-guy on-court persona of the 76ers' star. Would he be receptive to a chiropractor working on him? As it turned out, Charles had previously been under chiropractic care, and was knowledgeable about chiropractic. Charles was very receptive to Dr. Liebman and said words to the effect, "It's about time the team got a chiropractor."

The cooperation and acceptance of a team chiropractor has even extended to members of the 76ers' medical staff. Dr. Liebman characterizes team orthopedist Dr. Jack McPhilemy as pro-chiropractic. During half-time of one game this season, Dr. McPhilemy asked Dr. Liebman to adjust his upper back.

Just in the last couple of weeks, John Gurevitch, the radio voice of the 76ers, became a patient after suffering an injury in a car accident. Also jumping aboard the chiropractic patient bandwagon was the 76ers' TV announcer Neil Hartman.

People often ask Dr. Liebman what his financial arrangement is with the 76ers. The players and 76ers' personnel that are patients of Dr. Liebman have insurance that covers chiropractic; thus he gets reimbursed as he would for any other patient with insurance. He does have the enviable perquisite of two tickets to every 76ers' home game, and a personal parking pass.

While Dr. Liebman's work with the 76ers has not yet gotten the attention of the media, it's certainly attention getting for chiropractic and is witness to the kind of involvement possible for the profession in mainstream sports.

Having read Dynamic Chiropractic over the years, you've witnessed the increasing role of chiropractic in sports health care. People like Dr. Liebman are clearing the path and smoothing out the bumps that will allow others to following their lead. It's not hard to envision team chiropractors for all 28 NBA teams: a day when a team chiropractor will not be newsworthy enough to warrant front-page coverage in "DC".

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