



NEWS / PROFESSION

## Gold Medal Chiropractic

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEREK PORTER, DC

Stephane Babcock

Shortly after joining the Canadian National Rowing Team in 1990, Derek Porter began receiving regular chiropractic adjustments. Chiropractic care paid off, and in dramatic fashion: In 1992, he won Olympic gold at the Summer Games in Barcelona, Spain, as a member of the eight-man rowing team.



After the 1992 Olympics, he enrolled in Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College (CMCC), eventually becoming a chiropractor. But he didn't stop rowing. In 1993, he took up singles sculling,

becoming the first Canadian in three-quarters of a century to win the world singles title; in 1996, he won silver at the Olympic Games in Atlanta; and at the 2000 Games in Sydney, Australia, he finished fourth, just missing out on his third Olympic medal.

Then he retired from the sport - but only for a while. Dr. Porter hopes to win Olympic gold at the 2008 Games in Beijing. In this exclusive interview, he explains what motivated him to become a chiropractor and how chiropractic care has helped him - and many other competitive athletes - maintain their elite status for so many years.

*Dynamic Chiropractic (DC):* You were an Olympic rower, became a chiropractor, and now are in training for the 2008 Olympics. Did any particular experience as a competitive rower make you want to pursue chiropractic?



Derek Porter (DP): If it were not for rowing, I may never have discovered the amazing benefits of being under chiropractic care. I saw a chiropractor (Dr. Mike Murray) in Victoria [British Columbia], where the National Training Center is located, throughout my rowing career. At the time, I was finishing my undergraduate degree in Kinesiology at the University of Victoria. The more I found out about chiropractic the more I wanted to pursue it as a career. The degree provided a perfect stepping stone to chiropractic, and after the Olympics in 1992, I started my first year at Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College.

*DC:* What benefits does chiropractic offer to athletes?

DP: I rarely used chiropractic as a means of treating injuries (although that can be a great application of chiropractic); for me it was always about performance enhancement. If your nervous system is not functioning correctly, there is no way you are going to have a top performance. When you are asking your body to do extraordinary things physically and mentally, you must have it

tuned up to its potential. One of the real strengths of chiropractic is the ability to detect and correct problems before they become manifest. Is this not what health care should be? Where else can you go to get "tuned up" before a big race?

*DC:* Do you see a lot of sports-related injuries in your practice?

*DP:* Ironically, I don't really have a "sports-related" practice. I do see a lot of rowers, runners and other athletes, but my practice is very diverse and more family oriented. I love seeing kids, families, and pre- and postnatal women. I incorporate a lot of the techniques I learned as an athlete to get the general public functioning like high-performance athletes. I would consider my practice much more wellness oriented than injury treatment focused. When I think of sports chiropractic, I think about enhancing performance through the power of the adjustment and regular chiropractic care to prevent injuries and enhance training and racing performance. Of course, those same benefits can be realized for everyone, not just high-performance athletes.

*DC:* How does chiropractic fit into your training regimen?

*DP:* I have been adjusted regularly (every two to three weeks) since 1990, which was my second year on the national team. I do a lot of things to keep my body in top shape, but I have had only one injury in 12 years on the national team and I credit a lot of that to regular chiropractic care. We have a chiropractor who travels with us to major regattas like the World Championships and Olympic Games to keep the team in top shape.

*DC:* How does regular chiropractic care give you an advantage over other rowers?

*DP:* Rowing is an extremely demanding sport requiring great strength, endurance, power, lactic acid tolerance, balance, flexibility and mental fortitude. Which of these can't chiropractic improve? I firmly believe in the power of chiropractic to enhance nervous system function - period. Performance will be compromised if the nervous system is compromised.

*DC:* Do you have anything to add?

*DP:* I have chiropractic and chiropractors to thank for much of my success in rowing. I love being able to give back some of what I have received over the past 15 years. The tangible results from working with athletes is great and I urge any chiropractors to get involved with a local team or club to spread the principles of this profession. Too many people still have no idea what we do or misunderstand what we do. Simply offering chiropractic to athletes will help them in so many ways. We are all "sports" chiropractors; we don't need to be sports injury specialists to help people perform better.

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