

NFL Rushing Champion Credits Chiropractic

PARKER DESCENDANT KEEPS RUNNING BACK IN PEAK CONDITION

Editorial Staff

If you compare Emmitt Smith with the other great running backs in pro football history, he doesn't necessarily stand out from the rest. He doesn't have the speed of a Gale Sayers, the elusiveness of a Barry Sanders or the size of a Bo Jackson, and he's never been considered a "complete" running back, *a la* current stars Marshall Faulk or Edgerrin James.

One thing the five-foot-nine, 212-pound Smith does have is durability. Since he burst onto the scene as a rookie with the Dallas Cowboys in 1990, he's missed only seven regular season games, and only four on account of injury. Not bad for an occupation in which the average person's career lasts less than three seasons.

Emmitt's longevity, combined with his ability to stay injury-free, has enabled him to become the National Football League's all-time leader in rushing yards. On October 27, 2002, playing against the Seattle Seahawks, he rushed 24 times for 109 yards and a touchdown; in the process, he broke the career rushing record previously held by the Chicago Bears' Walter Payton.

There was a time earlier in Emmitt's career, however, when he was less concerned about setting records and taking care of his body. In 1993, he was criticized by the Cowboys' coaching staff for poor work habits, and in 1994, he suffered a nagging hamstring injury that limited his effectiveness.

After that season, "I decided to invest in me, to keep me going," Emmitt told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. "You can have a Ferrari body, but your wheels need balancing. ... I felt if I took care of my body, I could still function when I got older."

The main reason Emmitt still functions as well as he does is Rob Parker, DC, the grandson of chiropractic legend Dr. Jim Parker and son of Karl Parker, creator of the Karl Parker seminar series. Emmitt was introduced to Parker by former Cowboys fullback Daryl Johnston seven years ago, and the two began a routine of chiropractic treatments - sometimes up to two or three per week - that continues to this day.

"God gave him this talent," added Dr. Parker. "If we got to play a role in allowing him to maintain that level of talent, then great. ... We just helped him remove some problems so he could do what he was meant to do."

In a recent interview with the *Dallas Morning News*, Parker recalled the first time he treated Emmitt. The date: August 31, 1995, just days before the start of the regular season. The situation: recurrent hamstring problems that caused Emmitt so much pain that when he walked into Parker's office, he grimaced in pain just getting up on the adjusting table. Parker soon realized Emmitt's pelvic muscles were causing his hips to rotate out and put pressure on the hamstring muscles.

Four days later, after his initial session with Parker, Emmitt rushed for 163 yards, including a 60-yard touchdown run on his first carry. He went on to lead the NFL in rushing that year, and scored a record 25 touchdowns en route to leading the Cowboys to their third Super Bowl title in four

seasons.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Two years ago, at Smith's request, Dr. Parker moved his practice from Arlington to Valley Ranch, in an office that faces the Cowboys' practice field. The friendly geography allows Emmitt to make chiropractic a major part of his routine. During the season, he spends about two hours with Dr. Parker every Friday afternoon. Depending on how he feels, Emmitt may be treated by Dr. Parker two or three days a week; in some instances, Parker flies with the team to provide care up until the start of the game.

"Our job is to make sure everything is firing properly," Parker illustrated. "We work with the function of the muscles and their ability to respond to the pressure."

"The muscles have cells that hold the bones together," he continued. "When they get hit, they blow like a fuse. They won't contract or relax after trauma, which is what he [Emmitt] goes through on game day. We have a therapy that gets the pistons firing again, and everything balances out."

Emmitt is one of a growing number of Cowboys who turn to Dr. Parker for treatment. Currently, wide receiver Raghil "Rocket" Ismail; safety Darren Woodson; quarterback Quincy Carter; defensive end Greg Ellis; and offensive lineman Larry Allen all see Dr. Parker on a regular basis. Ismail is such a believer in chiropractic that before the start of the 2002 season, he sent the entire group of Cowboys wide receivers to Dr. Parker for adjustments, blood workups and nutritional analysis, and paid for the entire session out-of-pocket.

Despite the success he's had treating Emmitt and other players, Dr. Parker occasionally meets with resistance from the team's medical staff. A few years ago, at the request of Emmitt and others, Dr. Parker demonstrated his techniques to the team's trainers. Despite the urgings of Smith and Ismail to make him the team's official chiropractor, the Cowboys politely declined.

Dr. Parker sums up his relationship with the Cowboys' medical staff as "not good, but not bad, either." While team officials remain noncommittal about chiropractic, their views aren't going to deter Emmitt. As far as he's concerned, Rob Parker is the reason he can still perform at such a high level.

"Some of it may seem hokey to some people," Emmitt said, referring to chiropractic. "But if you traveled where I've traveled, done what I've done and seen the results that I've been getting, then you'd understand where I'm coming from."

References

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