

Chiropractic in Charge at Schwarzenegger Fitness Expo

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Editor's note: Dave Ryan, DC, a former professional soccer player, is a specialist in sports injuries. He has worked with the U.S. Boxing team, and several professional soccer and hockey teams.

COLUMBUS, Ohio - Nearly 60,000 spectators attended the 13th annual Arnold Schwarzenegger Classic Fitness Expo. The three-day event showcased the biggest bodybuilders and strongest bench pressers in the world. There were some 3,000 athletes participating in cheerleading, dance team, arm wrestling, martial arts and fitness, and gymnastics competitions.

With all this, you might be surprised to learn that the chairman of the Fitness Expo's medical committee was a doctor of chiropractic. Nearly 100 doctors and health care professionals, ranging from cardiac surgeons to emergency physicians, were needed to take care of this year's competitors, not to mention the more than 250 volunteers and the many VIPs in attendance. It was an honor to help Jim Lorimer and Arnold Schwarzenegger, co-producers of the event.

Reaching this responsibility with the Fitness Expo has been a long haul. Back in 1978, I was involved in transportation, security, and stage events. I then began working on several committees, the ICA's fitness convention/symposium (an honor), and working with the cardiac team that was overseeing the medical program. I took on more and more responsibility for treating the athletes. The injuries were generally musculoskeletal and required the input and assistance that only a chiropractor can provide.

Each year my adjusting table moved closer and closer to the stage. Now I have to keep it along the wall in the back so no one trips over it. But once it is out, the athletes line up and the flash bulbs start clicking. As an injury occurs, we triage the situation and forward care to the appropriate provider. The athletes are usually referred to me with the comment: "They're breathing - they're all yours." Not that chiropractic physicians can't take care of an unconscious patient, but we all respect each other's specialties and work together for the benefit of the athletes.

This year, Jim Lorimer (the Fitness Expo producer) tripled the martial arts competition and quadrupled the cheerleading/dance team; he also added a major women's gymnastic event and a 5K "pump and run." The health care team had more work than most emergency room doctors see in a month. Nearly 200 athletes were assessed for various injuries, and over 40 injuries were significant enough to forward the athletes to area hospitals via our on staff ambulances. The injuries ranged from broken bones to a ruptured spleen and, of course, lower back pain.

All those medical professionals went back to work on Monday, knowing that the event's "medical coverage" was a success with a "chiropractic physician" at the helm. This was a great moment for myself and the chiropractic profession. The Arnold Classic medical team doctors will have a different attitude the next time a patient asks about chiropractic.

Also in attendance was the highly recognized and regarded Tom Deeters,DC. He is the executive vice president and editorial director of *Muscle & Fitness*, *Flex*, *Men's Fitness* and *Muscle & Fitness - Hers*. Other DCs, like Dr. Zahir Sherazee, a Life graduate, were on hand to help assist and cover the event, since we had two locations about a mile apart. There were also many DCs in attendance associated with the ICA's 9th Annual Symposium on Natural Fitness, which is held each year in conjunction with Arnold's Fitness Expo.

Organizing for next year's event began while this year's Fitness Expo was still underway. We noted what needs to be changed for next year, ensuring that every detail is covered for every possible event that might arise. We will add emergency physicians, a dentist, an OB-GYN, and a massage therapist. Brian Griffin, MD,FACEP, said it best when he called it "disaster management." It is easy to do a great job with dedicated doctors like him on staff.

Directing something like this takes good organizational skills, a cool head, and keeping one's ego in check. It is tough to keep doctors from stepping on each other's toes; those with large egos don't last very long. All the volunteers are great people who love the sport and truly want to help. It takes several years to amass a staff of this caliber. I was blessed to have such a fine group.

There is no reason why more DCs can't be in similar positions: You have to be a leader; set meeting times and keep them; make yourself accessible (thanks to my wife); and oversee procedures like medical waivers and post-instructions, while getting input from other doctors. There is no doubt that the many years of working with professional sports teams and other athletes all came to a peak at this event.

The highlight of my weekend was standing backstage with Joe Donovan, an MD in internal medicine, and other cardiac staff, and having about five people run up to me saying, "Dr. Ryan...Ronnie Coleman (Mr. Olympia) is looking for you!" Then working on Ronnie and him saying, "This is the best I have ever felt." (Ronnie is not only the top bodybuilder in the world; he's also a policeman. Who's going to argue with him?) When he won the next night, I know that chiropractic won, too.

I really appreciated Mr. Lorimer giving chiropractic and our profession the chance to show what we can do. Jim is open to ideas and is very appreciative of hard work. The man is in his forties, but does more than most 30-year-olds, including working out.

Next year we will again double the gymnastic events, and increase the powerlifting competitions to include more high-school youths. Come join us next year for the world's largest fitness expo.

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