

Road to the World Series Championship

Alan Palmer, DC, CCST

What a ride! The Arizona Diamondbacks are the world champions. It still feels like a dream. As every chiropractor that works with a Major League Baseball team knows, it is a long season. Starting in February with spring training, and ending up this year in November, it has been an especially trying season. But after experiencing the taste of champagne and celebrating the team's world championship, the players and I can tell you it was all worth it.

I have had the pleasure of working with the Diamondbacks since mid-way through their first season. It really is an outstanding organization. I also have been the chiropractic consultant for the San Francisco Giants during spring training for the past eight years. As both teams are western division rivals, working with both teams presents some interesting scenarios. When the Giants are on the road and play the Diamondbacks, I work on the Giants players and then go across to the Diamondbacks' Clubhouse and take care of the home team.

I have strong feelings for players on both teams. Some of the Giants players feel like close friends after eight years, and I have developed a great and close relationship with many of the Diamondbacks players over the last four years. When they play one another, I simply do what's politically correct: cheer for both teams and let the team that plays the best win.

This season was especially sweet with the Diamondbacks team consisting of veteran players and young relatively unknowns. The race down the stretch was with the Giants and the Dodgers. It was nip and tuck at times. In the first round of the playoffs, the Diamondbacks faced the St. Louis Cardinals in a tough series. The next round was against the Atlanta Braves, another very worthy opponent.

Then came the match-up, and World Series that everyone is still talking about: the Diamondbacks and the Yankees. What a classic series! Games one and two were won in Arizona by the D-Backs 4-0 and 9-1. The ceremonies and patriotism showed by the fans was amazing. Baseball had galvanized the city, the state and the nation. When the dust had cleared it looked like the D-Backs had things well in hand.

Then I traveled to New York to care for the players for games three, four and five. I have to admit that it was magical being at venerable Yankee Stadium and President Bush throwing out the first pitch. The security was tight. There were 1,000 New York City police officers and many members of the Secret Service. Cellular phone transmissions were jammed to disrupt any potential terrorist communications. The display of patriotism and pre-game ceremonies were moving. It was history in the making.

Games three, four and five didn't exactly go as planned for the D-Backs. It seemed like the Yankees had cast a magic spell to come back from defeat in games four and five. Both dramatic comebacks were at the expense of relief pitcher Byung-Hyun Kim (B.K.). On both nights, the Yankees came back with home runs with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning. Even the Yankee fans were in disbelief. It will go down as two of the most dramatic conclusions to World Series games.

The New York media ate it up. The mood of the Diamondbacks was subdued, but the players hadn't lost heart. They realized that they had outplayed the Yankees, but had caught a couple of bad breaks. Everyone felt terrible for B.K. Here was a twenty-two-year-old Korean kid that had helped the team win big games over and over through the course of the year, shell-shocked and devastated. B.K. is a quiet person. He doesn't speak English well, but is one of the nicest guys in the clubhouse. He gets chiropractic frequently, but didn't come to see me when I was in New York. He had proven his ability to be a big-time "closer," but this time the Yankees' clutch homers had prevailed.

Games six and seven were in Arizona. The D-Backs were loose and upbeat in the clubhouse. Players were going about their normal routines. In fact, they were trying to follow the routines they followed for games one and two. Who says baseball players are superstitious? Game six was a 15-2 blowout for the Diamondbacks. The crowd was ecstatic and the energy was contagious.

The final and deciding game seven was a classic. The electricity was palpable in the clubhouse.

Bob Brenly, the Diamondbacks' manager, had been getting adjusted about once a week throughout the year, and had been adjusted for every home game during the series. At home, the Diamondbacks had dominated the Yankees 28-3 during the series. I really hadn't put two and two together when Bob walked in the trainer's office where we work on the players before the game.

"Bob, are you feeling O.K.?" I asked, somewhat surprised to see him two nights in a row.

"I'm feeling great; it's just a matter of routine at this point," he said.

He got on the table and I tuned him up.

Nah, baseball players aren't superstitious. Whatever it takes! The rest is history. The Diamondbacks stole a page out of the Yankees' playbook to steal game seven in the bottom of the ninth and win the World Series from Mariano Rivera, their star closer. Rivera had successfully closed out 23 postseason games in a row. It couldn't have been scripted better.

I have to honestly say that behind my wedding day and the birth of my four beautiful children, the experience and feelings of elation were some of the best of my life. I was able to bring my wife, Carol, and my two older children down on the field with me for the postgame ceremonies and trophy presentation in front of 50,000 screaming fans, and into the locker room for the team celebration: the hugs; the high-fives; the champagne dumped over my head; and many cherished moments I will never forget.

It is my sincere hope that every chiropractor that aspires to experience and be a part of the thrill of victory such as this, will some day have that opportunity. That is one of my goals and the reason I founded CEPA six years ago: to give chiropractors the opportunity to secure positions with sports teams and maintain their relationship with the team and players through the practice of specific standards and protocols congruent with team's multidiscipline concept. We at CEPA are taking a major step in that direction on the evening of December 8th at the ProSport Annual Convention to be held at Bally's Las Vegas. We will be setting up the structure for the first chiropractic professional sports societies represented by the chiropractors that work with the teams within each of the four major professional sports: the NBA, NFL, NHL and Major League baseball. Athletic trainers did the same thing several years ago, forming professional training societies for baseball, football and hockey.

Once we are organized and establish our standards and protocols, we will become much more accepted by the teams that don't yet see the value of having a chiropractor on board. I know this for a fact. I have personally spoken with over two dozen professional athletic trainers in the last couple of years. I know what their fears and apprehensions are. Once the head athletic trainers of the teams endorse us, we will be able to work on the minor league systems whose players also desperately need chiropractic care. If the head athletic trainer is the gatekeeper for the major league team, he is generally also the gatekeeper for the minor league system.

For information on attending the ProSport Convention December 7-9, and getting involved with our movement, contact Brenda at 253-435-1051. For more information on CEPA, contact Trish at 480-443-2584.

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