



CHIROPRACTIC (GENERAL)

Chiropractic Strong: 2014 Boston Marathon Winner Has a DC in His Corner

Editorial Staff

When [Meb Keflezighi](#) crossed the finish line at the 2014 Boston Marathon, becoming the first American man to win the prestigious event in 21 years, he exemplified more than just "Boston Strong" one year after the senseless terrorist bombings; he embodied "chiropractic strong," a testament to the work of his doctor of chiropractic, San Diego-based Devin Young, DC.

Speaking about Dr. Young following his victory, Meb said: "As an elite athlete, recovery and therapy is essential to staying healthy and competitive. I have seen Dr. Devin Young as my chiropractor for years and see him twice a week during training. His care has been especially helpful leading up to and including the Boston Marathon. I have been able to recover faster and easier after races. He is very knowledgeable and professional, and I am very thankful to have him locally to keep me healthy."

In this exclusive interview with Dr. Young, learn how he became involved with Meb, how he helps Meb prepare for elite competitive events such as the Boston Marathon, and his advice for how you can forge a similar affiliation with athletes in your area.

Dr. Young, when and under what circumstances did you become Meb Keflezighi's chiropractor? I had first been introduced to Meb when I was living in Mammoth Lakes, Calif., where [USATF](#) had an elite training group. At the time, I wasn't even a chiropractor. When I made the decision to go to chiropractic school, I obviously had to move. I went to Life West, which is still reasonably close to Mammoth, so I would go back to Mammoth and visit friends frequently. During one of my visits, I ran into Meb and we got to talking. He asked me if I wouldn't mind checking a couple things on him. That was in 2010 or 2011.



He seemed to respond really well, and from that point on, every time I went to Mammoth, I'd check on him. When he was anywhere remotely close to me, we'd find a way to get him checked. As luck would have it, we both ended up in San Diego, so he is able to get checked consistently now.

What chiropractic protocols do you employ between / before / after races (in-office) to help Meb perform his best and avoid injury? I don't necessarily use any different protocols before a race than I do after a race. I view the primary goal of any adjustment as being the reduction of interference in the body. In the build-up phase leading up to races, that allows for maximum performance on race day. In recovery phase, it allows for optimum healing. I do use different tools at times, but it's based on what he (or any other patient) needs at that moment, not based on before or after a race.

The biggest difference in what I do before vs. after races is exercising discipline. Athletes put their bodies through so much; it's important to know what is normal (and what is not normal) for them. Having a thorough understanding of physiology and relating it back to the body of an athlete is critical. That might be the biggest part of how I treat him before / after a race.

If you're running 110 miles a week, your body should be different than if you're running 25 miles a week. Knowing how the body is healing, understanding the stress it's being put under, and being disciplined when needed is a key component of treating him before / after races. A big part of the art of chiropractic is knowing when *not* to adjust somebody, and I think that is heightened with athletes.

Did you attend the Boston Marathon as Meb's DC? I did not attend the Boston Marathon. It would have been an amazing experience, to say the least! However, leading up to Boston, Meb had been training up in Mammoth. He had a red-eye flight from San Diego to Boston, and was driving back into town

that afternoon. He asked me if there was any way I could meet him at his house - he had left himself just enough time to kiss his girls, pack his bags, and get adjusted. He went right from being adjusted to the airport!

During the race, we were with patients in the office. We had [the race] streaming online, so we had been following it, and at some point, we couldn't *not* watch it. As the race developed, everything in the office stopped and we all enjoyed the moment.

I have been with him at other races, and it's always chaotic because of media requests, obligations, etc. We usually end up in a cramped hotel room. I was with him in Houston in 2012 for the Olympic Trials. I checked him the evening before the race, which he of course ended up winning to go to the London Olympics [where he finished fourth]. It's become a routine now to get adjusted as close as possible to the race.

What are the most common running-specific injury patterns you see, and how does chiropractic help minimize / prevent those injuries? The most common injury I see is unexplained knee / hip / foot pain. These are often pains that have no real explanation, and [are] often slow in onset - something that has been slowly building. No trauma, no known injury.

Chiropractic is amazingly effective with these situations, and can often resolve them quite well (depending on how long somebody has let it go).

Here's why: The hamstrings cross the back of the knee joint and work to bend the knee. The quadriceps cross the front of the knee joint and act to extend the knee. Both of these muscle groups work together to create a lever in the knee. If either one (or both) of these muscle groups is not working correctly, the forces are going to pull abnormally on the knee, creating pain.

I do a lot of muscle testing - it is something that Meb likes, and I think many of our patients like. It is very common to find muscles that are working at less than 100 percent in people with these symptoms. Once the function is restored, the muscles pull normally on the knee and pain often disappears.

Another interesting thing I see sometimes is diffuse pain in around the ankle joint - sometimes anterior, sometimes posterior - and it turns out that [the patient's] tibia has subluxated anterior. This wreaks havoc with both the extensor and flexor muscles of the feet, which is why the symptoms are so vague. Feet always need to be checked.

Do you work with any other athletes? If so, what sports are they involved in, and what protocols do you utilize that might be different from treating a runner? I work with a number of athletes from a variety of sports. I work with *jiu-jitsu* athletes, ballet dancers, triathletes, and cyclists. I really don't feel like I do anything different with them than I do with runners. I may have to pay special attention to a couple of areas, but it really comes down to removing the interference so their bodies can recover and be ready to compete at their highest level.

Jiu-jitsu involves a lot of grappling, so hands / wrists can be more involved. I also sometimes need to see [these athletes] more frequently because of the combative nature of the sport. [Ballet dancers](#) also have a lot of foot issues that are unique to them.

What advice do you have for chiropractors interested in treating athletes, particularly runners, in

terms of educational training, networking, etc.? First, I think it's important to realize that athletes are people, and certain things hold true for athletes and non-athletes. The first is communication; the second is confidence. You must be able to communicate effectively, and you must be confident in what you are doing and why. Just like any other person, an athlete needs to know they are in good hands with you.

Specific to athletes, however, being an expert in physiology is of the utmost importance. As I alluded to before, knowing what is normal and what is not normal, and how to handle those situations, is vital.

Also, it's really important to know the sport. Meb and I talk about his training and how he feels - it gives me insight into what's going on with his body, and what I may need to pay attention to.

I don't recommend any specific education for working with athletes. I always tell people to learn as much as you can about the things you want to learn about. There are plenty of sports chiropractic seminars, myofascial release seminars, stretching seminars, taping seminars; none of them is going to make anyone a "sports" chiropractor. However, if [the education / training] is something you enjoy, it will make you a better chiropractor, and it may even help you with athletes.

I also know that if you want to work with athletes, you have to expose yourself to athletes, and it really helps to be an athlete of some sort. Be involved with running clubs, triathlon clubs or any other group you are interested in. Link in with massage therapists or physical therapists who are "sports" minded.

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