

Health Insights Today

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Working with Athletes: Where Service Meets Passion Interview with Thomas Hyde, DC, DACBSP

By Daniel Redwood, DC

Thomas Hyde, DC, DACBSP, is a sports chiropractic pioneer. Among the first members of his profession to work in an official capacity with a National Football League team (the Miami Dolphins) and in power lifting competitions, Dr. Hyde is a sought-after lecturer and teacher on a variety of sports topics. He wrote the landmark textbook in the field, *Conservative Management of Sports Injuries* (2nd edition, Jones and Bartlett, 2007) with Marianne Gengenbach and serves as a mentor and role model to countless younger colleagues.

In this interview with Dr. Daniel Redwood, Dr. Hyde describes a personal journey that started when he was the smallest child in his class but never let this stop him from actively participating in the many sports he grew to love. At age 21, he joined the Marines and soon became a competitive power lifter. Later, he pursued a career in chiropractic that has allowed him to engage his passion for sports for many years as a participant and as a doctor. Over time, he became a leading-edge practitioner and spokesperson for sports chiropractors as their specialty grew to be highly valued by elite athletes throughout the world.

Aside from his work with the Miami Dolphins, Dr. Hyde served a two-week Sports Medicine Internship at the United States Olympic Training Camp in 1986 and was chosen as the official chiropractor for the 1987 Pan Am Games. He worked at the Women's World Softball Championships, served as President of the United States Coaches Training Institute and as Co-Chef de Mission for the Central American and Caribbean Games. In the state of Florida where he practiced, Hyde served on the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the Miami Dade County Sports Commission Board of Directors, serving as the Medical Director of this group. In 2001, he was inducted into American Chiropractic Association Council on Sports Injuries and Physical Fitness Hall of Fame.

You've devoted much of your career to working with athletes. What first led you in that direction?

My career in sports really began as a child. I loved to run, play baseball and football and ride a bike. I guess that was just a part of growing up. You see, I was always the smallest kid in any game I played. I was the smallest kid in high school and as badly as I wanted to play football, my parents would not let me. When I graduated high school at 17, I weighed only 101 pounds. I joined the Marine Corps just before I turned 21, and I still only weighed 129. While stationed in Japan, I participated in flag football because I had always been fast and I also played catcher for the Marine Corps fast pitch softball team. Also while I was in Japan, I met a young sailor who aroused my interest in power lifting and he began to teach me the principles and biomechanics of lifting.

So you found a sports niche where your small size wouldn't be a hindrance, because power lifters compete with people in their own weight class, much like wrestling or boxing.

Yes. For 18 years, I competed in power lifting in the 68-kilo (148-pound) class. I generally weighed 145 pounds at competitions but even at that weight, I found I could still be somewhat competitive. After I became a chiropractor, I would also serve as the chiropractor for the meets in which I competed. I would treat the lifters and then compete between treatments. I had the honor of taking care of junior lifters, men's and women's regional, national and international championship events and senior events, as well.

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Aside from working with your fellow power lifters, how did your sports chiropractic career develop?

I began my career in practice working with a high school football team along with power lifters, weightlifters, body builders and every day folks who worked out to stay in shape or get into shape. Later, I had the opportunity to work with players from the University of Miami in Florida. Subsequently, when one of the trainers from the university became the head athletic trainer for the Miami Dolphins, he called and asked if I would be interested in working with him at the Dolphins training facility in Davie, Florida. I worked with the team as the official Chiropractic Consultant for seven years, from 1990-1997. In 1996, I sustained a career ending injury playing beach volleyball on a cruise in the Bahamas. I subsequently underwent 3 surgical procedures. I have been unable to adjust using my left hand since that devastating injury.

So have you been primarily teaching since that time?

There's more to the story. After two years of feeling sorry for myself, my wife introduced me to an instrument-assisted soft tissue technique that would allow me to administer treatment for soft tissue injuries using only one hand and no manipulation.

It's an important aspect of chiropractic that the profession incorporates numerous techniques, some of which can be performed with minimal exertion on the part of the chiropractor. In this case, with only one hand.

Soon after I learned the technique, I was called into the training room at the University of Miami to treat a young running back who had been thrown out of a convertible on Interstate 95, sustaining low back injuries. After he had received a series of treatments including manipulation, heat, ice, medications, exercises and more, I was asked to perform this soft tissue technique with him.

For a year, he had been unable to run or bend forward more than 30 degrees. I treated him using the IASTM [Graston Instrument-Assisted Soft Tissue Mobilization] technique and within 20 minutes, he was able to touch the floor and had no pain. It took three treatments for him to be able to practice in pads and run. After the sixth treatment, he was playing in the games again, all without surgery. *He was voted the MVP [Most Valuable Player] in the Orange Bowl game that year, drafted by an NFL team and played in the European League that year where again he was named the MVP.* I did nothing more than treat him such that he could train and do the things he does best. Knowing that I might have played any part in his recovery was an incredible experience. I now teach Graston Technique, an advanced soft tissue technique referred to as Functional and Kinetic Treatment with Rehabilitation, Provocation and Motion (FAKTR-PM). I also teach the Knee section in several CCSP [Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician] programs.

Can you recall another highlight from your sports chiropractic career?

During the Orange Bowl National Championship Game between the University of Miami and Nebraska in the mid-1980's, I was summoned from the stands to come look at a defensive back who had been injured during warm-ups. He had hurt his back and was unable to run. I was paged while sitting in the stands over the loud speaker. Several people heard my name but I did not. When I arrived on the field to assess him, I was given *30 seconds* by the orthopedic surgeon. I simply placed him on the bench and provided manipulation of his low back and sacroiliac joints bilaterally. Following the adjustment, he was able to get up and run, all without pain. He blocked a punt during the game, had a terrific game and was drafted by an NFL team. Playing any part in helping an athlete achieve his or her goals and achieve their potential at any level is an incredible feeling.

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Any closing thoughts?

If you want to make a difference in the lives of boys and girls, men and women of all ages who participate in sports, as well as in your own life, become a chiropractor. You will have all the tools and knowledge you need to make their dreams and yours a reality.

Daniel Redwood, DC, the interviewer, is Editor-in-Chief of *Health Insights Today*.