

## Paralympics: A First Hand View (Part 2)

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--telling me where I am in my conversation with you all. Super. All right, so let's look at a case study. Again, this might be a little biased. But it is from personal experience. We have a T11 athlete. Hopefully, we all remember what category that is, since I haven't thrown too many at you, I hope.

So this athlete actually happens to be a world record holder in the 3000 meters for totally blind women, as well as the American holder for totally blind women in the 1500 meters. A stress fracture diagnosis comes about in about June of 2016. And three weeks later, from that diagnosis at the National Track & Field final event that's going to result in naming of the Paralympic team, the stress fracture is actually a full break. And that happens about 90 meters away from the finish of the 1500.

I've got to say-- I'll throw in a plug-- it actually didn't hurt when it first broke. It didn't hurt till afterwards. So we'll look at the forms of treatment then, and why complementary and integrative medicine is going to be so key, because as a blind athlete, I tend to use a cane. Many times you'll see other blind individuals or visually impaired individuals use a cane, or they may use a dog.


For those who use a cane, it's typically in the right hand. And you can imagine now, we've got a broken foot or limb. And you've got to be up on crutches. So how do you use crutches that are here under each arm, and you've now lost the function of this arm to handle your cane? Makes navigating very [INAUDIBLE].

That's also going to impact, if you can imagine, you've got a boot on one foot, maybe not a boot on the other, maybe a boot on the other. But that's obviously going to throw off your hips, throw off your pelvis, your sacrum, you name it, all the way up the body.

It's going to impact sleep. So another big place where a number of modalities are going to be able to help with getting some better sleep. And then we're going to have to also think about, how do we cross-train? Because the Paralympic Games were basically 11 weeks out from when that full break of the second metatarsal happened.

So there was a lot of things to still stimulate, right? So we needed to work the glutes, the hamstrings, the quads. I don't have it in here, but the shoulders, the abs, right? We can imagine, as we're running, we need this kind of motion. And we're tethered with our guided hands. So we still need to keep this upper body strength somehow.

We still need to work on stability and maintaining muscle tone and muscle strength. We still need to maintain that endurance, because the 1500 meters is a mix, right? It's this middle distance that's a mix of some sprint ability, and yet endurance.



So all these things, we need to work on. And we threw in swimming. We threw in cycling. There was a good amount of use of the funny kind of [INAUDIBLE] machine, where you could actually-- it's almost like on a spring. And you can stand on it. And with the power from your legs, you'd bounce up like this, up and down, right? So great activation for the glutes and the quads.

And thankfully, there was the use of the Ultera-G, which is one of these treadmills that kind of looks spacy, like very-- you zip yourself into this huge bag that inflates. And what it does is it's going to take your body weight and reduce it so that you're running almost as if it were on air. So you can run anywhere from 2% to 50% off of your body weight. So that obviously, as we get into getting cleared to run, it's going to be a huge asset to the athlete's recovery process.

So after all these treatments, I got tons of chiropractic. I can't tell you, I was probably [INAUDIBLE] from treatments twice a week, massage therapy, acupuncture, you name it. I was swimming. I was doing everything I could possibly do just to stay in shape and to recover.

There were some changes to nutrition. I beefed up on supplements in that process of healing. Caution about nutrition, though, as you delve into your practice and work with supplements and athletes, athletes who are competing at this level are subject to randomized drug testing. That can be urine or blood testing.


So everything these athletes take has to really undergo a rigorous inspection so that they don't get caught, basically, for harmful doping, because they weren't sure of what exactly was in a supplement. So caution on that.

As we wrap up the case study, though, we'll note that the athlete was cleared to run on this Ultera-G three weeks out from race day. They were cleared to run on the grass two weeks out from race day. And the first time back on the track was actually for semifinals at the 2016 Paralympic Games. And then, finally, two days later after that, the athlete competed in the final rounds of the 1500 meters for totally blind women.

So that happens to be me. That means I became officially a Paralympian, a dream long in the making. I thought, back in the '80s, that I wanted to be a gymnast. But that didn't come to fruition back then. And I knew, though, back then that I wanted to be in the Olympic Games. I just hadn't found my passion. I had no idea that my passion would involve the track, the road.

And so let's think about now a few things to be aware of and a few considerations for all of you to think about as we move forward. Whether it's para-athletics, whether it's differently abled individuals, whether it's the elderly, all of these forms of medicine are applicable across the board, a huge gamut of application for individuals.

And if you are interested in working with athletes with disabilities or Paralympic athletes, I would say that one of the best things you can ever do is, whenever you come across an athlete



that has different needs, simply ask. They/we are our best advocates. And we know exactly what our needs are. We've been problem solving with our disability since the moment we had it, since the moment we realized we had it.

And each one of us is very different. So just because there are two blind people, it doesn't mean that we do things the same. Just like anyone else who is able-bodied, you read differently. You use different tablets. You drive differently, no different than with athletes with disabilities. So ask. Make sure you ask.

Give the athlete or your client the best and most information that you can. I always think about empowerment and education. And when you put those two things together, you're going to find that clients are very open to exploring integrative medicine options. And they're going to be much more receptive to what you have to offer and what you have to share.

And then finally, I would say, trust your intuition. Always trust your intuition. Refer out if you don't feel that your services are the best for this client or this athlete at this point in time. I think, so far, that I'm finding in my practice of massage therapy, that when I can do that, and when I can eloquently discuss other alternative options for individuals, I end up getting individuals who then refer other clients back to me. Other practitioners will refer back to me.

So I think it's a collaborative road that we're on. I think we have incredible power, that when we combine all of our modalities together, we can really transform the options of health care that are out there not just for Paralympic athletes, but for anyone. And I think this is where we are today. We're in this health crisis that I think we really have an opportunity to impact positively.

And in the process, I think that we'll find-- that we ourselves will be driven. And we'll yearn for more information and more options and more evidence-based research. And we'll push our associations to do that with us. We'll encourage them. We'll play a role in that process so that overall and across the board, expansion of services, modalities, benefits, opportunities is here for each and every one of us. So that's what I have for us this morning--