

RUSSIAN (WITH AN AMERICAN ACCENT) SPORTS MASSAGE III: UNITED WE WILL STAND!

By Oleg Bouimer

My heart is racing. The level of my anxiety is rising. It is a familiar sensation, like the one I had experienced many times before, as a professional athlete, in anticipation of my turn to compete.

Oh, those sweet and sweaty memories of pushing myself to the edge, both physically and mentally...

But how come now, many years after I have stopped competing, I have that same feeling washing over me, making me nauseous and, essentially, telling me that the sympathetic part of my nervous system is out of control? Could it be that presenting my course of Russian Sports Massage in front of a big group of professionals at one of the top massage therapy conventions is an equivalent to the pressure of my past sports competitions? If so, should I look around for a sports massage therapist who would be able to apply the Pre-Event Sports Massage on me right away — to restore a balance within my nervous system?

That was the BIG question! Would I even find a sports massage therapist equipped with both knowledge and skills needed to help me at that very moment? Let's take it one step further: How about the millions of other people experiencing the same reaction — sports performance related or not — all across our beautiful land of opportunities? Would they be lucky enough to have that type of therapy available, when needed, which, in reality, means regularly?

Needless to say, my presentation of Russian Sports Massage was a great success! Now, looking back at that experience and after receiving so many inspiring and heartfelt testimonials, I would like to reflect on that; reflect on the progress made in the field of sports massage in the U.S. today.

In fact, is there a progress? Definitely yes, if we look at the increased numbers of sports massage practitioners in general and those working with professional sports teams, in particular. Thus, its popularity is up! Indeed, it is refreshing

to see massage practitioners filled with enthusiasm while setting up their stations at the numerous sport events across the country. However, the question remains Is there an adequate training in place, to equip massage practitioners with both knowledge and skills needed to help athletes, both professionals and amateurs, to perform better in their sports? My argument is it is not enough to show up at a sport event with a massage table, to be considered a sports massage therapist!

Therefore, getting back to answering the question about the progress made, we might choose "maybe," when it comes down to the quality of sports massage education here in the U.S., in general. (Naturally, we could make an assumption that some sports massage programs are better than others.)

In contrast, based on my personal experience as a student of sports massage in the former Soviet Union over two decades ago, there is a unique system of sports massage that has been scientifically developed and clinically proven. That fact in itself has made my job as an instructor of sports massage a very easy and rewarding one, because I present a **proven system**, the system that worked for **everyone, every time** it was applied! I only wish for that system to be both embraced and enjoyed by both massage schools and practitioners across the country, which would, in turn, lead to creating a highly recognized and respected community of sports massage experts united by that system!

So far, we still might see some articles, like the one published in the "American Journal of Sport Medicine" in September, 2004, stating that "Post-Event Sports Massage has no positive therapeutic impact on post-workout recovery in athletes." By the way, for one reason or another, *The New York Times* had re-printed that article too. No, really? I could just imagine how many people, including athletes, coaches and

sport teams managers have, possibly, changed their mind about utilizing or continuing with sports massage as a part of the training process, after reading that article. Unfortunately, there was no official response to that nonsense from an authority in the field of sports massage in the U.S., like a leading national massage therapy organization or association, or any individual, who is a recognized expert in this area. "How come?" you might ask. Well, because there is none strong enough to take a stand, not without being empowered by a scientifically developed system, like the system of Russian Sports Massage. So, with all due respect to those medical doctors in Sweden, they had just wasted their time and money on researching the subject that was, obviously, out of their league.

Now, for the purpose of this article, which is built up on the information presented in the previous two articles (July-August'08 and May-June'09), let me focus on two equally important points here: First, developing the right mind set of a sports massage therapist, based on the power of knowledge. Second, having the actual hands on tools of delivering that knowledge.

So, first things first:

It is empowering to learn, based on the historical facts and not someone's personal opinion, about the important role sports massage therapy had played in giving the edge, needed to dominate Olympic Games, to the teams representing the Eastern Block, lead by the former Soviet Union. It is especially important, if you are a student, looking forward to a long career in the field of sports massage. It is either this or accepting a statement I have heard from some established experts of sports massage in the U.S., when they were addressing both massage therapists and students considering sports massage as a

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direction to take their practice in. Are you ready? Here it is: "If you will get lucky to work with a professional sports team, remember – You are NOBODY! So, keep your mouth shut and keep your opinion and suggestions to yourself! As far as massage strokes, stick with effleurage, as a main technique." Wow! I can hardly wait! Where can I sign up to become a sports massage therapist, so that I could feel like nobody? What a future to look forward to! Now, let me ask you: Are you as shocked as I was or have you already been programmed enough to except this statement as "business as usual?" Needless to say, I was shocked even more when I had looked around that room, filled with over 100 professionals, and saw not a single blink at that statement! All of a sudden, I felt like an alien. Do you know the feeling? Clearly, something was really wrong with that picture. The bottom line is that for us, sports massage practitioners, to get respect we deserve, we need to start with respecting ourselves first, while **proudly offering our scientifically developed and historically proven services to ANY professional sports team, which should feel like a lucky winner when retaining our services!**

Second: Naturally, since the above mentioned article had refused validity of post-event sports massage, I have chosen it to be the topic for this part of my article and, hopefully, the first stepping stone on your journey through the world of **Science of Sports Massage!**

So, let's get straight to business.

The concept of the post-event sports massage and its practical application with the goal of speeding up athletes' recovery had been considered and researched by many Western European and American scientists working in the field of Sports Medicine. However, most of those scientists had concluded that massage does not have any significant impact on the process of recovery after vigorous exercise (Drews, et al., 1990; Carfarelli, et al., 1990; Rodenberg, et al., 1994; Tiidus, et al., 1995; Gupta, et al., 1996, and more). In order to understand how they had come to that conclusion, let's pretend we all buy lottery tickets. Now, would you say that lottery does not work if you did not have a winning ticket or would you go for another ticket, hoping for more luck next time? That is exactly what happened with those scientists, they had simply drawn their conclusion based on one "unlucky lottery ticket." Russian scientists, on the other hand, had spent many years of looking for the right combination, leading to a "lucky winner." Let us thank the Cold War for that!

Interestingly enough, even when that winning combination, presented within the special protocol of post-event sports massage, became available to the rest of the world, there were some scientists still trying to win that lottery while improvising and changing the formula offered by Russians. No wonder, they had a different outcome! Hello! Just follow the formula!!!

Here it is: There are four equally important components of post-event sports massage. Failure to follow even one of them would totally alter the outcome of the session.

1) TIME OF TREATMENT: Massage has to start around 2-2.5 hours after vigorous exercise (not earlier and not later).

2) DURATION OF TREATMENT: Massage has to last from 30-40 minutes to 1 hour; addressing whole body with special attention to the overloaded muscular groups.

3) MASSAGE TECHNIQUES: It is best to use a combination of effleurage, kneading, permanent vibration, compression, stretching and long range shaking. However, 40-50% of the treatment has to be spent on kneading.

4) PRESSURE: The applied pressure has to be significant but without the activation of the pain analyzing system.

I hope that you, my dear reader, will find both value and practical application for the information and tools presented in this article. It is my sincere belief that only by uniting our efforts in sharing the knowledge of the science of sports massage, we will become a prevalent force in the arena of sports training and rehabilitation in this country and around the world!

For more detailed information about the topics covered in this article, please e-mail Oleg Bouimer at Oleg@OwellnessGlobal.com.

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