

MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

TRAINING ROOM TIPS

By Michael G. Popson, A.T.,C.

The injury situation I'm about to present, you have probably seen and dealt with a million times. But, have you taken the right course of action? I would like you to relate this to your own sport. And to any type of injury: sprained joints, pulled muscles, strained tendons, bruises, spasms and chronic injuries that reoccur.

You're coaching baseball and during a game one of your athletes slides into second base and subsequently turns his ankle. The athlete has no prior history of ankle sprains or strains and has immediately a swollen ankle and cannot withstand any pressure. After getting him off the field and examining him closely, you rule out a fracture and have concluded he sprained the ligaments severely. Before we continue, let us fully understand the bodies response to this injury. It will help your decision and the athlete's course of treatment.

The real damage of a sprained ankle (or any injury) occurs is the underlying soft tissues by the stretching injury. The underlying tissues damaged are; blood vessels or capillaries, lymphatic vessels, nerves and cell tissue of muscles and ligaments. This results in swelling of blood, lymph, cellular fluids and waste products into the outer tissue acting as the body's splint for the affected area and protecting it from further injury.

Constriction of blood vessels in the injured area slows blood flow to that area and reduces the amount of oxygen coming in. This leads to secondary injury. The constricting blood vessels and the swelling are attempts to reduce hemorrhage. However, this decrease in blood flow and oxygen to the area causes the cells that survived the initial trauma now to die. Dead cells increases the amount of waste materials in the area and adds to the swelling.

Besides the obvious swelling there are two other signs to look for with an injury; amount of pain, temperature of the skin surrounding the site. As soon as swelling starts, it puts pressure on local nerve endings, thus producing pain. The body reacts with muscle spasm to again protect from further injury. The muscles contract causing more pain, and this pain produces more muscle spasms which gives you the pain-spasm-pain cycle. The increased temperature of the skin is from the increased metabolic activity occurring by the swelling phase of the injury. The "leakiness" of blood, lymph, cell fluids and waste materials creates heat,

along with the bleeding which adds to the trauma and swelling. Now that you have an overall understanding of the injury and the body's responses you need to choose the proper course of treatment.

The right decision is Ice. For all emergency treatment care of all sprains and strains—Ice is the answer! Ice helps lessen the damage done to tissue and nerves. Ice aids in the constriction of blood vessels and helps reduce the swelling of blood and other fluids. It is also quite effective in reducing the secondary injury by reducing the blood and oxygen to the injured area. The application of ice slows down the cell metabolism which reduces the need for oxygen and the heat sensation to the surrounding tissues. Ice acts as a local anesthetic and controls and reduces the pain-spasm-pain cycle. As ice decreases pain, muscle spasms relax. Ice acts on all the body's responses to injury and aids in quick recovery.

The initial application of Ice should come moments after trauma. Ice should be used 4-5 times daily during the first 48-72 hours following the injury. Each application should last 15-20 minutes. The first 48-72 hour period is when the body responds to the injury and is known as the "Bleeding Period". Regular ice is the best source of cold therapy and is available to everyone. Ice used in conjunction with compression (holding of ice securely and to contain swelling), elevation (reducing hemorrhage and encourage lymphatic drainage) and rest (minimizing the damage and preventing further damage) is the right choice for emergency treatment of athletic injuries. You will never make the wrong decision, if you choose—Ice!

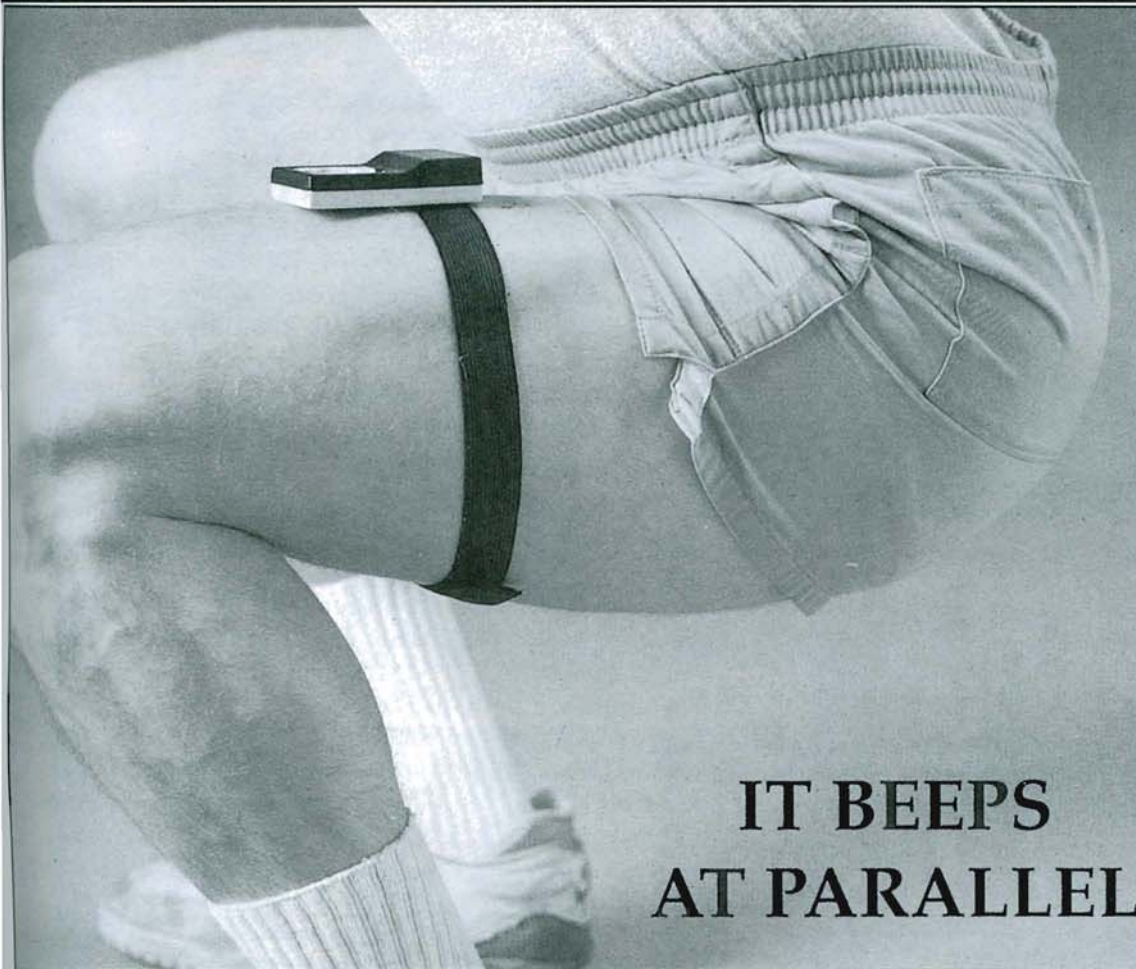
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