

The amazing athletic fitness and rehabilitation discoveries of Guy Voyer, D.O.

← New Directions in →

Sports Training and Rehabilitation

BY **KIM GOSS**

Every few years there emerges an individual whose work makes it imperative to reevaluate how we train and rehabilitate athletes. Among those who have contributed to such paradigm shifts are Dr. Yuri Verkhoshansky with plyometrics, Charlie Francis with speed develop-

ment, Dr. Michael Leahy with soft-tissue treatments, Ivan Abadjiev with weightlifting and Louie Simmons with powerlifting. Now add one more name to that list: Guy Voyer, D.O.

If you haven't heard of Voyer yet, it's probably that, because he is French, news of his work has only just begun to trickle into the United States through

translated medical journals and word-of-mouth testimonials. So exactly what has Guy Voyer done to rate inclusion among such a stellar group of sports training experts?

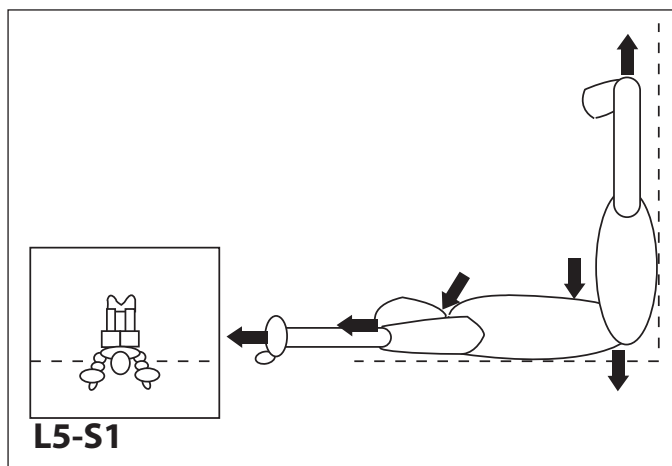
How about a method of treating chronic back injuries through powerful muscular contractions that enables you to create traction on each vertebra



Voyer is shown here performing *articular pumping*, a method of manual therapy performed on the joints that dramatically reduces swelling.



Gymnast Kylie Sharp demonstrating ELDOA, a form of stretching that decompresses the entire spine and helps normalize alignment of the vertebrae. The illustration below Kylie's photo shows a specific ELDOA stretch for the lumbosacral joint, the area where the lumbar spine meets the sacrum. The arrows show the directions of muscular tension that occur during this stretch.



actually show how in males the fascia connects the bone of the skull to the testicles! – many muscles have to be contracted to achieve the optimal effect. Thus, if you want to stretch the fascia of a specific portion of calves, you need to create tension on the adjacent muscles that are in the link, such as the hamstrings, glutes and even the muscles that lift the toes!

ELDOA is a form of stretching that decompresses the entire spine and helps normalize alignment of the vertebrae. Through extensive research involving sophisticated diagnostic equipment, Voyer has demonstrated that it's possible to segmentally increase the space between each vertebral column. ELDOA has been shown to be remarkably effective as a way to treat herniated disks and back pain caused by many other conditions. As a bonus, one effect of myofascial stretching and ELDOA is an increased ability to recover from exercise. This effect enables athletes to increase the intensity and length of not only their conditioning programs but also their sport training sessions.

Inside a Voyer Seminar

In December I had the opportunity to attend a seminar Voyer conducted in New York. The three-day course focused on the anatomy and biomechanics of the squat. As opposed to simply teaching correct performance of the squat, Voyer showed how to modify the exercises for those with special medical conditions, such as an ACL injury. To support his theories and methodologies, he provided X-rays, anatomical references and mathematical formulas. In fact, Voyer spent nearly two hours just showing how to properly breathe while squatting – it was an enlightening experience that resulted in the elite group of trainers who attended revising their current thinking on proper squatting form.

Voyer's New York seminar also gave fascinating glimpses of his many other discoveries. One he shared with me is *articular pumping*, a method of manual therapy performed on the joints that dramatically reduces swelling. He also shared with me his theories, which are supported with peer-reviewed studies, on why we must reevaluate our use of ice in the treatment of injuries. These insights into cutting-edge sports training only scratch the surface of Voyer's knowledge.

If there's a piece of general advice Voyer wants most to impart to his medical colleagues and to coaches, it's that no one should ever take what anyone says, including himself, at face value. As for proof, whether it's by means of Voyer's favorite tools of anatomical references and mathematical models or their own methods of discovery, he reminds them to seek to understand not just *how* something works or should work, but also *why*. **EF**

separately? And a stretching system that helps resolve postural problems and increase recovery from exercises by stretching not the muscle but the tissues that envelop and shape the muscle? Or a manual method of *articular pumping* that dramatically shortens recovery time from injuries by decreasing swelling? And yet there is more – much more.

Voyer's knowledge extends across many branches of sports training and rehabilitation. For example, during a seminar several years ago held at one of the most prestigious medical schools in Canada, Voyer explained to the staff and osteopathic students that their textbooks failed to include many important tissues. He was promptly presented with several anatomy textbooks, one of which in fact was written by a member of their university faculty, and he subsequently pointed out that the structures in question were not described in their reference material. "Give me a leg!" he asked, and was promptly escorted to the anatomy department, where he dissected a limb and showed the missing tissues and explained their important role in functional anatomy. The school then took immediate steps to correct their teaching philosophy.

The Pursuit of Fitness Knowledge

The first thing you should know about Voyer is that he has been a successful athlete. How successful? Not only did he compete at an elite level in soccer, skiing and gymnastics, but he was also an Olympian in judo. Voyer affirms that his sporting career has had tremendous influence on his work and that being an athlete himself is key in his ability to provide the best care for athletes.

Voyer has nearly 35 years' experience working with athletes, and for 25 weeks of the year he travels to various parts of the globe to give seminars to coaches and healthcare professionals. Voyer began as a physical education teacher; then, in his quest to learn the best ways to work with the human body, he became a physiotherapist and osteopath on his way to obtaining a medical degree. He continued his study with medical specialization in fields that include sports medicine, sport traumatology, sport biology, sports nutrition, physical medicine and manual therapy. Voyer also complet-



Guy Voyer is a hands-on instructor, and here he is shown teaching personal trainers at a recent seminar in New York the best way to protect the spine during squatting. His website is www.Guyvoyer.com.



Myofascial stretching is a specific type of stretching that uses tension to stretch the fascia tissue that is contained around and within the muscles. Shown is a stretch for the biceps femoris, a lateral hamstring muscle.

ed extensive studies in pedagogy, the methodology of teaching; and as a result, he designed the university curriculum for the most prestigious personal training program in France. In fact, approximately half of all certified personal trainers in his native country have completed his extensive course of study.

One of the most interesting aspects of Voyer's life work is his understanding of the *fascia*. His research into the properties of this tissue has enabled him to develop special exercises that will improve posture and sport biomechanics, prevent injuries and even improve athletes' ability to recover from workouts. What is fascia, you ask?

"Think of fascia as the inner skin of the body," explains Voyer. In other words, fascia is the tissue that connects and shapes every muscle, organ, blood vessel and nerve. Of particular importance to athletes is the fact that fascia envelopes and intertwines with the fibers of muscles and therefore plays an important role in determining the range of motion of each joint. In effect, if the fascia is abnormal or injured, an athlete will never achieve optimal levels of flexibility, strength and power, no matter how much

static, PNF or dynamic stretching he or she performs.

His knowledge of the fascia system has enabled Voyer to develop two revolutionary forms of sport fitness training: myofascial stretching and Longitudinal Osteoarticular Decoaptation Stretching, which translates from the French acronym ELDOA.

Myofascial stretching involves placing the body in specific postures and contracting muscles so that the specific myofascia (*myo* meaning "muscle") is elongated. Because the fascia forms connections throughout the body – Voyer can

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