

# Innovator built for Hall of Fame

**O**n Sunday, Bob Gajda, my sports medicine colleague of 30 years, was inducted into the National Fitness Hall of Fame. He joins other exercise, fitness, medical and wellness experts.

The National Fitness Hall is three years old and has an interesting traveling museum with its array of history, artifacts and memorabilia that travels to schools and other interested groups.

The museum's main location is in Sycamore. For information, visit [nationalfitnessmuseum.com](http://nationalfitnessmuseum.com).

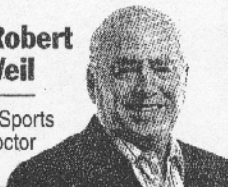
I met Gajda in 1977 at the Sports Fitness Institute in Glen Ellyn. The facility was way ahead of its time, specializing in rehabilitation, sports training and performance. Gajda was a Mr. America bodybuilding champion from the '60s who since had become one of the country's leading sports therapists.

Athletes from around the world who participate in baseball, football, basketball, tennis, volleyball, figure skating and hockey came for injury rehabilitation and performance enhancement.

Performance enhancement and becoming a better athlete regardless of the sport were new concepts. For example, pro baseball players would go to spring training to "get into shape" for the season. Can you imagine? Today you probably wouldn't make the local high school team, let alone the major leagues, without almost year-round training.

## Dr. Robert Weil

The Sports Doctor



But whereas 30 years ago many pros had jobs during the offseason, today's million-dollar salaries of pro athletes allow year-round conditioning and training.

It was Gajda's regard for "the role of the foot in sports" that got us together in many philosophies in training the foot and ankle - working balance, and the use of orthotics. He worked with many of Chicago's sports

stars - Jim McMahon, Gary Fencik, Walter Payton, Eric Soderholm, Bill Buckner and others.

Gajda was instrumental in the use of rubber band resistance for strength and exercise. When the Sports Fitness Institute became the Sports Performance and Rehabilitation Institute in the early 1980s, SPRI Products, one of the leading suppliers of resistance bands and tubing, was launched. Today, rubber band resistance is an integral part of rehab and sports training.

Gajda's book "Total Body Training" was a great discussion of the importance of the body's core (midsection, abdominals, lower back) for back health as well as all sports. Gajda designated the "dangerous dozen" exercises. This was revolutionary

because some of these, like straight leg toe touching, the hurdles stretch and others, were harmful.

Simple range of motion exercises, easy and inexpensive equipment such as rubber bands and balance boards were demonstrated. Gajda has invented an array of exercise machines and innovative products. There are hundreds of top therapy and performance people around the country who have studied and applied many of his methods and treatments.

His soft tissue and body work techniques have helped massage become well-accepted in therapy. He's presently at Health Plus Network in Palatine doing his thing. Congratulations, Bob!

## Free screenings

Free athletic foot screenings are always available at my Aurora office. If you or your active kids are dealing with foot, ankle, leg and knee problems, especially if they are persistent or recurring, pay attention to foot mechanics.

Regardless of the sports activity, especially if it involves running and high arches, bowed legs, knock knees or leg length differences, all are examples of what we're looking for. It's what got Gajda and I together 30 years ago, and we're still at it.

*Dr. Robert Weil is a sports podiatrist with an office in Aurora. You can hear him on his weekly radio show at 6:30 p.m. Thursdays on 90.9-FM. Contact him at [drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com](mailto:drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com).*



Gajda