

The Sports Doctor is in (The Sun)

For my first column, I thought I'd take the opportunity to introduce myself.

I've worked as a sports podiatrist in Naperville and Aurora for over 25 years and have hosted the popular Sports Doctor Radio Show on 90.9-FM (WDCB College of DuPage) for over 12 years. The show airs from 6:30 to 7:00 p.m. every Thursday.

I've joined The Naperville Sun "sports team" with the hopes of providing educational sports medicine information for athletes, their families and coaches and all readers.

Preventing injuries and enhancing performance are the keys - I hope the column will be both interesting and informative.

A little more about my background - I've treated and worked with many professional, Olympic, college, high school and youth athletes. Some "old-time" former clients include 1985 Bears

greats Jim McMahon, Gary Fencik and Richard Dent. I've also worked with tennis stars like John McEnroe, Tracy Austin and Illinois' own Andrea Yeager.

Of course, I've also worked with prominent Naperville athletes, including reigning U.S. Figure Skating champion Evan Lysacek and four-time IHSA state tennis champ and current UCLA player Liz Lumpkin, who "are two very special kids." Many of the top volleyball players at Sports Performance in Aurora have sought my services as well.

In addition to my own practice, I work one day each week with Bob Gajda, one of the country's leading sports therapists, at Health Plus in Palatine.

In all sports, the role of the foot and its effect on the rest of the body is underestimated. Many persistent ankle, shin, knee and back problems are related to foot function and mechanics. You know the

Dr. Robert Weil

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song: "the foot bone is connected to the ankle bone, the ankle bone is connected to the knee bones," etc...

It's true - it all starts with the feet. A good example is that flat feet or high arches are often involved with persistent shin splints and knee problems. Improving foot mechanics can include the use of orthotics, prescription inserts for shoes or skates. Orthotics are customized for each athlete and help provide proper support and work to position or align the foot, ankle and lower extremities for optimum efficiency, balance and stability.

Physical therapy and foot and ankle strengthening is also important.

Foot screenings and an analysis of how an athlete walks and runs, the shape of their legs and the strength and range of motion can be incredibly helpful. I regularly offer free screenings at my office as well as at Edward Health and Fitness centers, Naperville's Running Shoe Co. and Sports Performance Volleyball.

I hope to address a variety of topics in my monthly column for The Sun - many of which I discuss on the Sports Doctor Radio Show. Some of these might include the latest sports injuries to top athletes, common foot problems, orthotics, as well as the importance of sports psychology. I'll also offer tips on fitness and wellness, injury prevention and treatment.

Dr. Robert A. Weil is a sports podiatrist with an office in Aurora. Contact him with questions for the column or any other reason at drweilsportsdoctor@yahoo.com.