Remembering Angelo D'Agostino

Angelo (Left), orthotics athlete & cruise skating star Madeline Stammen (Center) and Dr. Weil (Right) at "Anatomy of a Figure Skating Injury" book signing 9/13.)

Angelo D'Agostino was the 1st young superstar figure skater that I prescribed custom orthotics for. - Ever! A young 13yr old kid "flying" around the ice on Lake Ellyn in Glen Ellyn, IL in the late 1970s.

Angelo went on to be a world class skater, competing at the US championships at novice, Junior & senior levels. Angelo skated in Ice Capades & Nutcracker on Ice. About a dozen yrs ago, He became very involved in the staging, choreography & putting together the casts of figure skating shows on Royal Caribbean Cruises with Willy Wietak Productions. He was coaching & working with some young skaters in Chicago the past few years & guested on "The Sports Doctor" last year.

He told me "Hey Dr.Bob- I wore your orthotics for my whole 30+ year skating career before I broke the heel off". I told
Everybody needs a little Edge Relief in their skating career so Doctor Bob and I have created this newsletter for you to share with your skating friends and family. Each month we will be bringing you important information that you won’t read anywhere else because it comes from over 75 years of combined experience right to your inbox.

Upon reading this you will learn from the experts on how to stay healthy while skating to the best of your ability. What’s better yet is that the information here has not been edited and comes straight from the horses mouth…..so to say……

Ever wondered why there are so many injuries in the skating community?
How about the secrets of skate sharpening that no one wants you to hear or see?
Is there really a difference between blades?
How do I know if a blade is right for me?

These are just a few of the questions that Mr. Edge will be answering in this monthly newsletter. How about we get started right now with a little history of why today’s figure skaters still experience the same injuries skaters did decades ago.

Why So Many Injuries!

In figure skating, there are certification and training programs at just about every level of the sport. Coaches belonging to national and internationally recognized coaching organizations have ongoing training and certification programs. Figure-skating judges must complete several hours of training and pass an exam for each level before they are allowed to judge a competition. Skaters have required exams in every discipline and level that they must pass before moving on to the next. Trainers and physicians must complete extensive college courses and internships and pass their required exams. Accordingly, one has to wonder why there have never been any industry standards developed for skate technicians: those who fit boots, and mount and sharpen blades.

Injuries are common in every sport; figure skating is no different. In the following newsletters we will address injuries in further detail, but for now, let us agree that the equipment used in figure skating—i.e., skates—is the single most important item essential to every skater’s success. So why is there no formal schooling or standardized certification program for skate technicians? Allow me share with you some of my personal thoughts on this.

Ice skates fall into the sporting-goods category of consumer retail products and, unlike the auto industry, for example, no regulations whatsoever are required. Almost any retail business can purchase and sell skates. Prior to 1980, it was very common to find figure and hockey skates at local hardware stores. As the sport increased in popularity, skate technology rapidly increased also, driving the sale of both figure and hockey skates into ice rink pro shops.

Unfortunately for figure skaters, hockey was the sport at the time, and very little attention was given to understanding the importance of properly fitting, mounting, and sharpening figure skates. This lack of attention eventually lead to the creation of an underground cottage industry for figure skaters: a home-based business made up of coaches, parents of skaters, or skaters themselves, who began servicing the competitive figure skating market. This was often done based on minimal knowledge combined with personal experience/opinion and the philosophy that what “works best for me” must be best for any skater.

As the number of participants in figure skating grew, so did the number of rinks around the world, increasing the number of untrained individuals trying to service figure skaters. As the call for higher jumps in programs steadily
increased, so did injuries. Boots were no longer supportive enough and quickly broke down, requiring boot manufactures to increase the amount of support in their boots, sometimes making them too stiff for skaters.

At that time, sports medicine was in its infancy, and very few medical professionals were aware of the roles of biomechanics and alignment in relation to injuries. Therefore, causes of injury were not addressed. The individuals who fitted boots were also unaware of the problems resulting from a poor fit and the incorrect amount of support. Though most boot manufacturers do offer in store fitting seminars to their retail accounts, skaters are still being sold overly supportive, improperly fitted boots. Added to this are two other potential causes of injury: unsatisfactory boot preparation and blade mounting procedures.

No matter where or who you buy your skates from, be sure that they have the experience and knowledge it takes to keep you skating healthy and to the best of your ability. If you have any questions you can email them to: askmredge@aol.com

And now a word from Dr. Bob…..”The Sports Doctor”

The "Sports Doctor" Is In!

Hey everyone, Doctor Bob the "Sports Doctor" here wishing you all the best in your skating career. Many thanks to Mr. Edge for having me here to share with you my 40 plus years of experience in working with figure skaters and other athletes too.

For decades, I've treated figure skaters and prescribed orthotics for many problems involving feet, ankle, shins, knees, and back-problems that are usually persistent and recurring. What is interesting and exciting, however, is that in prescribing orthotics for these injuries, the coaches and I would notice not only consistent improvement in injury concerns, but also a big improvement in all aspects of skating performance: speed, balance, edges, endurance, jumps, and landings.

Of course, this all makes sense, because the role of prescription orthotics in skating is to put the foot and lower extremities in their best, most efficient functional positions. This improved joint alignment allows skaters at all levels to achieve two important things: reduce the chance of injury and enhance performance.

Over time, these factors of injury prevention and improved performance have influenced my perspective and recommendations to be much more proactive in prescribing orthotics. I no longer feel we need problems and injuries to determine if orthotics are needed for serious figure skaters; better to talk about benefiting from them! Combining orthotics with custom-fit boots; a program of specific foot, ankle, lower extremity, and core strengthening; and boots that have been leveled to the blades—now that's a gold program.
In our next newsletter I will discuss the role of the orthotics in figure skating. Until then if you are having any problems feel free to contact me via email at: drweisportsdoctor@yahoo.com. If you are in the Chicago area you can call to set up an appointment at my Fox Valley office: 630-898-3505.

Till next time............Dr.Bob

Dr. Weil is a sports medicine podiatry specialist. His private practice office is located in Aurora, IL. Doctor Weil has been servicing figure skaters for nearly 40 years and has treated many of our best young talents. Dr. Weil also hosts "The Sports Doctor", a weekly radio program involving all aspects of sports medicine. You can hear him at www.healthylife.net every Wednesday at 3:00 CST. Previously aired "Sports Doctor" program broadcasts and newspaper articles are available at: sportsdoctorradio.com If you would like to make an appointment to see him in person, you can call his office at: 630-898-3505.
Information You Can Count On

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