

Sports Massage and the Marathon



Most people balk at the idea of training for a full marathon. Imagine attempting the 42km stretch with just your upper body.

Ade Adepitan, an ex- representative of the Great Britain Wheelchair Basketball team has been set the challenge of completing this years' London Marathon.

As a child Ade contracted Polio when he was 6 months old affecting the muscles from this mid torso downwards; hugely reducing the strength of his lower limbs. He is unable to stand and walk unaided, therefore, uses a wheelchair to maximize his capabilities. Ade played a significant part in his teams' performance at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens and their achievement of a bronze medal.

The racing wheelchair design is completely different from a day-chair.

It allows Ade to lean forward to become more aerodynamic and make better use of his upper back muscles. His legs are tucked beneath him; he uses a double handed pushing technique using his palms around the rim of the wheels and constantly has to extend his neck to look up.

Ade has to complete his first marathon within a 3½ hour timeframe so the intensity of his training sessions is enormous. With the considerable amount of strain on the muscles and joints involved with the training for this event Ade feels that receiving regular weekly massage treatment will maintain good muscle health and prevent injuries.

This is hugely important for Ade as he relies on being able to use his upper body strength for everyday activities and transferring himself from his wheelchair. Massage will also aid his



adaption from sprinting and agility to endurance based training which is required for the marathon.

Benefits of Sports & Therapeutic Massage

- It helps to decrease the recovery time between training sessions especially after longer runs.
- Helps to identify areas of tightness caused by compensations when training.
- It decreases the likelihood of injuries due to the repetitive nature of running and constant impact.
- Helps to maintain flexibility and pliability of muscles allowing them to function effectively.
- Maintains the condition of the actual muscle tissue as it encourages the re-organisation of muscle architecture by returning the muscle to its normal length.
- Decreases the amount of stiffness experienced after an increase in mileage.
- Think of it as a reward for your legs!

When Should You Have Massage?

Most people find scheduling appointments on the lighter training days (usually Thurs or Fri) more beneficial. This is mainly because it enables the therapist to treat any specific muscular tightness allowing a couple of day's recovery before the long training run on Sundays.

Alternatively some runners enjoy having the massage following their longer run to allow them to maximize their training performances throughout the week.

It is suggested that whilst people are training for a half or full marathon they receive weekly massages. It is especially important to have massage towards the build up to the longer training weeks, usually programmed about 4-6 weeks prior to the marathon.

Post Marathon Massage

It is more valuable to receive massage as soon as possible following the event. As this helps to improve the recovery rate and reduces the intensity of delayed muscle soreness (DOMS) experienced 1-3 days post marathon.

The style of massage is different from those received before the event or in other treatment sessions as it is geared at aiding the lymphatic system in its attempt at waste removal and recovery. Therefore, the massage techniques are applied more gently and fluently. As micro damage to the muscle tissue occurs during longer runs and the marathon the massage will be lighter also.