

Osteopathy is cool

UK-trained osteopath **Ed Paget**, who had the privilege of working with the Canadian speed skating team at the Winter Olympics in Sochi earlier this year, shares his experiences



Ed Paget

1) How did the team get on at the Games?

The Long Track Speed Skating team had seven Olympic veterans, four of whom were previous medal holders. We won two medals.

2) How did you get involved with speed skating?

When I first moved to Canada, I was lucky enough to meet the head strength coach for a number of national teams. He

agreed to send me some athletes who were struggling with injuries, and among them were a couple of the top speed skaters. As a result, the Director of Speed Skating asked me to join the Integrated Support Team, which already consisted of a chiropractor, a physiotherapist and three massage therapists.

3) Which osteopathic techniques were you able to use?

As a therapy team we played to each other's strengths, and a combined approach was frequently most effective. For example, I would assess an athlete with some sports-specific movements tests, and treat their feet and diaphragm. They would then move to the physiotherapist for dry needling, or the chiropractor

for some spinal work, and then be reassessed. The system worked well.

4) What common injuries are there in speed skating?

Speed skaters spend much of their training time in a flexed position and they adapt to that position with shortened hip flexors and a rounded upper back. However, when they start a race, their hips need to extend explosively like track sprinters. Sometimes their anterior musculature struggles to control that movement and, as a result, we see a lot of lower back strains and flare-ups when skaters begin to practise their starts.

5) How is osteopathy generally regarded in Canadian elite sports?

It's very well regarded. At Sochi,

there were five osteopaths working with different Canadian sports, fewer than the physiotherapists but more than the chiropractors. Having said that, the profession still isn't widely known and is years behind other professions that offer specialist training for practitioners wanting to get involved with sport.

6) What could we, as a profession, be doing to raise our profile at the higher levels of performance healthcare?

For other disciplines in Canada, the route taken to be involved at the Olympics is well-understood. Therapists apply to their national associations, which then put their selections forward to the Canada Olympic Committee, who take them to the Olympics. That clarity doesn't exist for osteopathy, but the International Osteopathic Sports Care organisation is working on this. (www.inosc.org).

7) What was your best experience?

When I saw one of the younger skaters give his 1,000m race spot to a veteran who had tripped and fallen in the Olympic selections and therefore hadn't qualified, despite being a world champion at that distance. This allowed the veteran to skate the race, and he won silver. Great Olympic spirit.

i To find out more about Ed's experiences follow him on **Twitter @edwardpaget**



Ed Paget with physiotherapist Paul Hunter in Sochi

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