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## THE OTHER SPORTS SUPERSTARS: THE SPECIALISTS IN SPORTS MEDICINE

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Photographed by Richard Grayson

### ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Sports superstars perform in public for all the world to see. Chi Chi Rodriguez drives the golf ball straight down the fairway to clinch another win on the pro circuit. Batata is the top scorer for the Chicago Sting in 26 consecutive contests. It's hard to miss Ron Rivera, the Chicago Bears' linebacker, all 75 inches and 240 pounds of him. Ozzie Guillen, 1985 American League Baseball rookie of the year, plays shortstop for the White Sox.

The sports pages don't headline the names of Barbara

Loscosso Bergin-Nader, Hugo Cuadros, Richard Dominguez, and Carlos Prietto. You may never see their faces on your television screen.

Yet they are involved in sports, too. They are typical members of an important specialty: doctors in sports medicine.

In fifty orthopedic surgeons founded the American Orthopedic for Sports Medicine. Another national organization, the American College of Sportsmedicine, unites all health

professionals, as well as physicians, who work in this field. Now there are many other national organizations dedicated to the advancement of sports medicine.

These health professionals have special training in medicine and exercise physiology, they have done research into health and physical rehabilitation, and they are dedicated to the welfare of those athletes and patients entrusted to their care.

They have developed scientific principles that apply not only to top athletes who seek to attain that "peak conditioning" that will lead to "peak performance" but will also apply to middleaged adults who want to avoid the onset of heart disease, diabetes, or other degenerative diseases.

Drs. Bergin, Dominguez, and Prietto are orthopedic surgeons.

Dr. Cuadros is a cardiologist. All four are active in

sports medicine as doctors for athletic teams. All four also have their own private medical practice. All four are Hispanic doctors

who know firsthand the problems that their Hispanic patients face in their daily lives.

"Generally speaking," Dr. Bergin says, "Hispanic patients resist medical treatment. We tend to bear the pain. I think it is part of our cultural heritage. Hispanics also may be uncomfortable about leaving the areas where they live and going to see people who don't speak Spanish."

"It always amazes me that doctors who have Hispanic patients don't learn to speak Spanish. I speak Spanish to all of my Hispanic patients. I think this puts them at ease. In fact, we won't hire

anyone to work in our office who does not speak Spanish."

"Hispanic children don't want to be taken out of the game," continues Dr. Bergin. "We know they get hurt. We even see them fall and grab that part of the body which is hurt. Yet they will jump right up and say - 'it's nothing' - because they want to

stay in the game. Their families feel the same way."

Dr. Dominguez knows first hand of the "macho stoicism" that keeps Hispanics from seeking needed medical care. "My Mexican father survived three heart attacks on sheer grit alone. Of course, that is not the way to do it. Some sportsmen I know will not seek medical help until they completely collapse. Hispanics may also fear hospitals, because they view a hospital as the place you go to die."

Dr. Cuadros thinks that Hispanics act just like other Americans as soon as the language problem is overcome. Until then, they find it hard to come right out and say - I have this kind of problem.

"Hispanics don't have any unique genetic problems," Dr. Cuadros says. "However, I wish that all doctors who serve Hispanics would check them for parasite infestation. South of Rio Bravo everyone has parasites without knowing it. Parasites make you feel weak and can cause gastro-intestinal problems. Yet they can be completely eradicated with the proper treatment."

Unless you are an athlete in a team sport, you may not know a sports doctor personally. You may have seen one run out on a playing field to examine an injured athlete before he is moved.

But most of a sports physician's work is done behind the scenes.

He or she may give emergency care at the scene of an accident and later provide medical or surgical treatment as indicated at a hospital and decide what rehabilitation therapy is needed in order to return the patient to full recovery.

But now in sports medicine, as well as in other medical specialties, the emphasis is on preventing injuries and illnesses before they start.

As Dr. Dominguez says, "It used to be that I would gauge how successful I was by how many patients I had in the hospital. Now when I have someone in the hospital I wonder what I am doing wrong."

Dr. Prietto states that the most frequent sports injury involves the knee. "The knee is asked to perform the most complex movements and is always exposed to injury. Our surgical techniques are much more effective than only a few years ago. Since most sports physicians are first trained as orthopedic surgeons, they will wish to continue their orthopedic practices so as to keep up their surgical skills rather than do sports medicine full time."

This explains why most Orthopedic surgeons are also

specialists in arthroscopic surgery. Ten years ago a joint injury may have led to a surgical operation, a ten day hospital stay, and a recovery period of several weeks.

Now with the medical instrument known as the arthroscope, joint surgery can be performed through an incision so small that it won't even need suturing. A local anesthetic can be used, and

the patient can go home the same day and return to work in two or three days.

The White Sox ball club has a team physician who is an orthopedist. They also have Dr. Cuadros in charge of medical problems and physical examinations. Dr. Cuadros is a specialist in internal medicine with a subspecialty in cardiology.

Dr. Cuadros says, "In cardiology we are very much aware of the importance of physical activity. One of the reasons that coronary heart disease is so prevalent in this country is that we don't get enough exercise. That also leads to obesity. Even our children don't always eat right or exercise enough."

"Parents should be very firm and not allow children to watch television when they should be playing. The television should never become a baby sitter. One or two hours a day of

television viewing is enough," says Dr. Cuadros.

"Americans are beginning to realize that they should continue regular physical exercise all of their lives. I want Hispanics to realize that, too. Especially the older Hispanic women who don't do anything but stay home," Dr. Cuadros says. "You don't need any special equipment to get up in the morning and go for a walk. And for people past forty, walking is the best exercise that there is. If you will walk fast for just 15-20 minutes a day at least three times a week, you will see a difference in your appearance in two months. And I guarantee you will feel better, too."

Dr. Bergin says, "I ask all of my patients to engage in

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regular physical exercise. I urge all of my women patients to take calcium supplements. I am a runner myself, and I am happy to say that I am seeing more Hispanics out running now than there used to be."

The United States is in the midst of a sports explosion that shows no signs of abating. Sports medicine is still an exciting and

expanding field. That is why sports physicians see new opportunities for people in sports careers.

"I would like to see more Hispanics consider a career in sports medicine," says Dr. Prietto. "Here in southern California Hispanics are well represented in sports in elementary and high schools. But we don't have enough Hispanics in college and professional sports. Perhaps these figures will improve as more Hispanics go to college. I would encourage anyone interested in sports to consider a career in sports medicine. You don't need to become a doctor to do this. You can become a trainer, a physical therapist, or an exercise physiologist, for example. You will be well rewarded."

To paraphrase a sentence from TOTAL BODY TRAINING written by Dr. Dominguez: "No matter what your age or sex, sports medicine can help you live up to your physical potential: help for the healthy, hope for the injured, and aid to those who want maximum performance."

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## SIDEBAR 1

### WHAT IS THE BEST SPORT FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN?

If you think that football is a dangerous sport, you are not the only one. So does the National Athletic Trainers' Association.

According to a study that group conducted in 1986, 37 percent of high school football players suffered at least one injury. Although 75% of the injuries were minor, sidelining the player for less than one week, almost 10% of them were severe enough to incapacitate a player for longer than three weeks.

Almost 15% of the injuries involved the knee and 10% of them were severe enough to require surgery.

The most common cause of injury was "direct contact" during practice sessions.

The most severe injuries occurred when a player returned too soon after a minor injury from which he had not completely recovered.

Here are the sports that athletes--experts and their families pursue.

Dr. Bergin is a runner who competes in 10 kilometer races. She plans to start her daughter, who is almost two, in swimming lessons this

summer. she says, "I think that it is especially

important for girls to become involved in team sports. I will always regret that my high schools did not offer team competition for girls. I am six feet tall and would have been good at basketball.

Even though there is a danger of too much parental pressure,

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statistics show that less injuries occur in organized sports than in street play."

Dr. Cuadros plays tennis five times a week between 6.00 am and 8.00 am at a court half way between his home and office. His son is "nuts" about sports and pitches for his college baseball team.

Dr. Dominguez is a runner and has competed in marathons in the past. He says, "It is never too early for people to take up sports. But parents shouldn't "push" their children. We want to avoid the "overuse syndrome", which can occur with too much pressure in organized sports. Soccer is the #1 sport for children, swimming is good- all of my nine children swim and play soccer, except the youngest child, who is not yet two years old. Basketball and volleyball are good team

sports. I would not prevent my children from playing any sport they wanted to, but I am not enthusiastic about football because of the injury rate. Ice hockey is good until the college and professional level - and then it gets brutal. Gymnastics, especially for girls, has the highest injury rate of all high school sports.

Dr. Prietto has run in triathlons as well as marathons. He no longer trains as much, but still exercises four times a week by swimming, biking, and golfing. He says, "I don't believe in pushing my children, but they all like sports and have been in soccer, football, baseball, basketball - whatever they choose, when they choose it. All except my youngest child who is not yet two."

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## MEET OUR EXPERTS

BARBARA LOSCOSSO BERGIN-NADER, M.D. is an orthopedic

surgeon with Westlake Orthopedics, Sports & Rehabilitation

##ssociates in Austin, Texas. Her mother is from Monterey, Mexico. She and her husband, also a physician, have one daughter.

She has participated in the care of many high school athletic teams.

HUGO F. CUADROS, M.D. is a specialist in Internal Medicine with a sub-specialty in cardiology. He attended medical school in Bolivia and is the only member of his family to move to the United States. He met his wife when he attended Northwestern University School of Medicine for his post-graduate training. Now he is chief of cardiology at a Chicago area hospital, an assistant professor at Rush Medical School, and a team physician for the Chicago White Sox, all in addition to his private medical practice.

RICHARD H. DOMINGUEZ, M.D. is an orthopedic surgeon with a private practice in sports medicine and arthroscopic surgery. His offices are at SPORTSMED in Carol Stream, a Chicago area suburb. He is also CO-Founder and Co-Medical Director of SportsMed Center for Fitness, adjoining his office. He serves as a team Physician for local high schools, he accompanied the U.S. Swim Team to the Goodwill Games in Moscow in 1986, and he is the orthopedic consultant to the Chicago STING professional soccer team. He has written the popular books, "The Complete Book of Sports Medicine" and

"Total Body Training".

CARLOS A. PRIETTO, M.D. is an orthopedic surgeon in Orange, California. He is an associate Professor in Orthopedic Surgery at the College of Medicine, University of California-Irvine. He is the team physician for several area high schools as well as for the 400 or more athletes at the University of California-Irvine. He has written extensively for many medical journals. He is now involved in research for the Orthopedic Research and Education Foundation - and in addition to his private practice in orthopedic surgery.

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