

LEFT TO RIGHT: Sam Ramsden, Head of Player Health and Performance; Donald Rich, Head Athletic Trainer; Dr. Jim Kurtz - Chiropractor; Dr. Gerry Ramogida, Chiropractor

Dr. Gerry Ramogida: From Canadian Fan to NFL Team Chiropractor

Growing up in Canada, Dr. Ramogida was an avid fan of the National Football League, but never suspected that someday he would serve on staff for a superbowl-winning NFL team. When he joined the Seattle Seahawks in 2002, only 31% of NFL teams had a chiropractor on staff. Now, 13 years later, every one of the 32 NFL teams has added chiropractic care to help their athletes play better and longer.

Dr. Ramogida was originally hired temporarily to teach Seahawks' training staff how to perform Active Release Techniques (ART). The technique had been gaining a reputation for results among athletes, and the Seahawks players were looking outside of the organization for qualified ART practitioners. However, ART takes time to learn and requires a unique

skill-set to appropriately assess and treat sports injuries in a functional manner.

"In our chiropractic education, it becomes second nature to look away from the site of injury in search of the biomechanical fault or faults that lead to onset of injury or pain," said Dr. Ramogida. "Treatment at the site of pain has limited benefit and results in short-term gain."

Dr. Ramogida's introduction to the team was initially met with hesitation from the medical staff, who asked why the organization would hire a chiropractor from Canada (of all places) when there was very likely a local physiotherapist who would do just as well.

AN NFL CHIROPRACTIC "TRIAL BY FIRE"

Luckily, Dr. Ramogida had the opportunity to demonstrate the efficacy of his unique skill-set early on. During his second week with the team, a starting offensive player was badly injured while training in the weight room. He had been performing

step-ups while wearing a vest that was attached to a weight-resistance machine when he slipped and was pulled back against the machine. The pins holding the weights jabbed into his back, fracturing two of his lumbar transverse processes. The player needed to be able to play by the weekend, and Dr. Ramogida was called in to look at him as part of the team, to get the player back on the field.

Dr. Ramogida observed that the player was suffering severe guarding and spasm throughout his entire lumbar spine, and spent an hour slowly releasing the most distal areas of tension through the glutes and pelvis, (working into the lumbar spine). Every few minutes, Dr. Ramogida had the player stand and perform walking lateral shuffles and slow drop backs – the same movements he would typically perform on the field. The doctor worked on the player once more that week, just before the game, and he was able to play. It was an early success that clearly demonstrated the value of chiropractic care.

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However, the moment that may have truly cemented Dr. Ramogida's position within the organization came when he had the opportunity to treat a veteran player who had undergone surgery for a tibial plateau microfracture and had been suffering recurrent posterior knee pain and tightness for three months. Upon examination, the chiropractor found that the player had significant fibrotic tissue change creating tension between his proximal medial gastroc tendon and the distal semimembranosus tendon. Dr. Ramogida worked on the tissue for five minutes, and then asked the player to stand and report how he felt. This very vocal individual expressed initial disdain about the short duration of the treatment, followed by disbelief that the pain was suddenly and finally gone. Loudly and enthusiastically, he shared his surprise and delight with the training staff in the room and anyone he could find in the hallway.

Dr. Ramogida may have had a somewhat rocky start with the team's staff, but what started out as a temporary position turned into a long-term team-building relationship.

"Thanks to those experiences, a supportive training staff, an understanding of my role and respecting that I was a part of a team," he said, "the initial ambivalence of the medical staff slowly dissolved and trust was built."

In fact, by the end of that first season, the head of the Spine Department at



Dr. Gerry Ramogida

the University of Washington, Dr. Stan Herring, was routinely referring players with spine-related disorders to the Canadian chiropractor.

OBSERVE. TREAT. RE-OBSERVE. REPEAT.

Today, the Seattle Seahawks training staff utilizes a performance-based model to keep the players in peak condition. Dr. Ramogida calls it "Observe. Treat. Re-observe. Repeat." Training staff members observe the players during training in order to identify potential areas of restriction or limitation. Athletes are treated in those areas, then immediately taken through movement patterns. The approach is based on the notion that treatment not only affects the body, but also the brain. Motor patterning improves by allowing the brain to immediately integrate the new range of motion.

"As movement patterns and mechanical execution of skills improve with the

assistance of manual therapy inputs, injury frequency decreases and performance markers increase," he explained.

As with any team-based model, the success of the Seahawks cannot solely be attributed to any one individual, and every member of the club works toward the common goal of serving the players and the staff of the organization. This synchronization of efforts relies on the motto of Coach Peter Carroll: Always compete. Carroll believes that winning is not dictated by the scoreboard on Sunday, and that by competing with yourself every day, you become a better player.

"With passion, contagious enthusiasm, and an ear-to-ear smile, he said we were going to become the most successful franchise in the NFL," Dr. Ramogida recalled hearing Carroll say to the team and staff in his first address. "We were going to succeed. We were not going to win one championship; we were going to win multiple championships



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Dr. Gerry Ramogida with Marshawn Lynch

because the true mark of a quality franchise is sustained success.”

Before Carroll, Dr. Ramogida worked with Coach Mike Holmgren, whom he described as more hard-nosed, the epitome of the stereotypical football coach, with an approach that was antithetical to Carroll’s style.

“Part of the thrill of my thirteen seasons has been having a front row (and sideline) seat to watch two future Hall of Fame coaches work their craft,” he said. “Having the good fortune to observe and learn from great leaders has been a true education.”

A SUPER BOWL-WINNING TEAM

The Canadian chiropractor never dreamed that he would play a role in defeating the Denver Broncos to win the Seahawk’s first ever championship in 2013. Or that he would carry the Vince Lombardi trophy with a winning team and staff past a million people in a Super Bowl victory parade.

Since the Super Bowl, Dr. Ramogida echoes Coach Carroll’s sentiments in describing the team’s spirit: “Emotionally, winning is not defined by the score board on Sunday, but by our improvement and growth as an individual every day.”

As he moves into his 14th season as the Seattle Seahawk’s chiropractor on their multidisciplinary medical staff, Dr. Ramogida is proud and grateful for the opportunity to make a contribution to the success of that organization. He also has no doubt that the Seahawks will be in the mix at the end of this season.

The integrated approach to the health and performance of the Seattle Seahawks players has paid off. Four years ago, the team moved from a 2-4 record to the playoffs. Two years later, they won the Super Bowl and went on to become the first team in 10 years to play in back-to-back Super Bowls.

Dr. Ramogida wonders what the chiropractic profession could accomplish if it used the same winning approach. “If each of us, as part of this great profession, had personal clarity regarding what we wish to accomplish professionally,” he said, “Imagine the positive influence we would have on our communities, provinces and country.”

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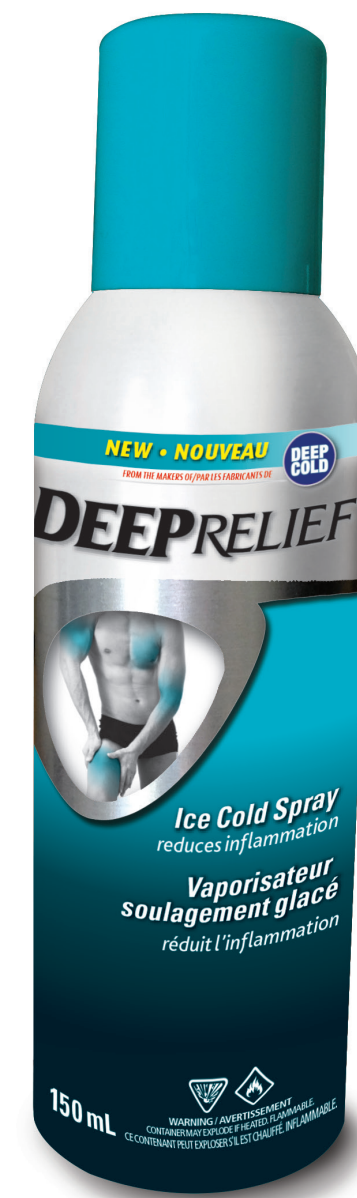
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