

## Welcome to the first edition of the Human Touch Therapies newsletter!

With this newsletter I want to keep you all informed of what's going on in HTT: any new services I offer and training courses I'm doing, updates of the website, competitions, etc. In addition I will publish an article on a different topic in each newsletter. This time I will talk about volleyball, injuries, & massage.

I hope you appreciate receiving this newsletter. **If not, please let me know and I will take you off the mailing list straight away!**

### **In focus: volleyball, injuries, & massage.**

Volleyball has been around for over 100 years now. It is not a very popular sport in the UK, but worldwide there are currently over 800 million volleyball players and the sport is now second only to football in number of people who participate in it.

There are a variety of muscles used to play volleyball; shoulder, leg, and abdominal muscles being seen as the most important ones. Different types of actions in volleyball use different muscles in different ways.

Serving and hitting/spiking and blocking should be using the core muscles (abdominals and back) to stabilise the body and provide momentum, however biceps, triceps, pectorals (chest muscles), shoulder muscles (mainly the rhomboids, between the shoulder blade and the spine, and the rotator cuff muscles that stabilise the shoulder joint). Also the wrist and finger flexors and extensors in the forearms are used. Setting/volleying also uses upper back and neck muscles. And defending/passing and moving around the court obviously uses the gluteals in the buttocks, the quadriceps (thighs), and calf muscles.

### **Chronic and acute Injuries**

The most common injuries in volleyball are Shoulder/Rotator Cuff Tendonitis, Shoulder Impingement Syndrome, Frozen Shoulder (Adhesive Capsulitis), Jumper's Knee (Patellar Tendonitis), Achilles Tendonitis, Sprained Ankle, Finger Sprains. To read more about volleyball injuries, see <http://www.p3chiro.com/volleyball.html> and [http://www.volleyball.com/sports\\_injuries.aspx](http://www.volleyball.com/sports_injuries.aspx) or <http://www.sportsinjuryclinic.net> for all sports injuries.

Especially when the core muscles are weak, which is often the case at amateur level, players are prone to chronic shoulder and back injuries over time, through the repetitive nature of particularly spiking and serving. This asymmetric action also causes an asymmetric build-up of muscles, if they are not otherwise strengthened: volleyball players usually have significantly more developed rhomboids and other shoulder muscles on the dominant side, as well as stronger and tighter pectorals. At the same time usually the lower part of the erector spinae group, the back muscles alongside the spine, on the opposite side will be stronger (and tighter) than on the right.

Volleyball and desk work, not an uncommon combination, do not tend to go very well together in terms of soft tissue problems. In my student volleyball club back in The Netherlands, where most students spend a lot of time at their PCs, often under a fair deal of stress and at poorly set-up workstations in their bedrooms or at uni, I noticed that in this group of young and otherwise healthy people, debilitating Repetitive Strain Injuries seemed to be more common than in other students.

I can confirm this from my own experience: in both activities, wrist & finger flexors and extensors, biceps, pectorals, and neck and shoulder muscles are put under a lot of strain, causing chronic tension, pain, and sometimes inflammation.

### **Massage**

Massage can be very beneficial for volleyball players, whether they are injured or not. Massage improves circulation, bringing more oxygen and nutrients to the muscles, while getting rid of waste products. It makes the muscles more supple and flexible, greatly improving agility and performance on court. With chronic injuries, for example the effect of a relaxing muscle can relieve the tension of the tendon, and hence reduce pain and inflammation of the attachments. Some stretching and strengthening exercises will be required to achieve improvement of the condition in the longer term.

Many volleyball players have suffered a sprained ankle in the past. There may be scar tissue and the ankle

ligaments as well as the muscles of the foot and lower leg are often chronically tight. This can cause problems locally but also elsewhere in the body, as sometimes this results in a slight limp or otherwise causes an unbalance in the usage of the muscles. Massaging these muscles regularly combined with ankle joint mobility work can help them to relax again, so the balance in the body can be restored.

### **Injury treatment and prevention**

Acute injuries require medical treatment and rest, followed by or combined with a rehabilitation program. Chronic injuries can benefit from exercises and stretches which can be done at home.

In general I would advise volleyball players to:

- Work on your core strength. Pilates is great. And don't forget to include the back muscles.
- Strengthen the rhomboids to relieve the other shoulder muscles and tendons: at home with an elastic band, or ask at your gym.
- If not inflamed, daily stretches and mobility of the tight muscles: stretch pectorals (esp. combined with strengthening rhomboids), regular neck rolls and bends, shoulder rolls, stretch of shoulder muscles, back stretches and mobility, and stretches of the arm muscles.
- After a volleyball session, be careful at the pc the next two days or so: don't overdo it, take more breaks than usual and do some (more) stretches.
- Get regular massage to increase effectiveness of your exercises and stretches, maintain suppleness of the muscles and maximise your game.

Please don't hesitate to ask me for some exercises, stretches, or any other advice.

### **Website**

The website is starting to look like a "real" website now. If you go to <http://www.humantouchtherapies.co.uk> you will now find more information about Holistic Massage, a service that I will start offering from June at my new location on Alma Vale Road.

The rates page has been updated accordingly as well, and includes an **attractive introductory offer** for Holistic Massage: **get 30 min free!** Check out the website for details.

I intend to improve the website continuously. Some things I would like to incorporate in the short term are a nice HTML newsletter, an online appointments booking form, an online subscribe & unsubscribe function for the newsletter, a page with the articles from this newsletter, competitions, other news, links, etc.

### **Other stuff**

Some other things I am working on at the moment:

- On-site chair massage at Airbus UK: I am setting up some regular sessions at the Filton site at the moment. So if you work for Airbus and would like to know more, please don't hesitate to get in touch.
- If you work somewhere else and you/they might be interested in setting something up in your workplace (again), as a one-off or on a more regular basis, please get in touch too and/or check out the website.
- I am also available for events, exhibitions, gigs, festivals, hen do's, birthdays, parties, etc.
- I am nearing the end of my professional training course in Holistic Massage. By mid May, the required number of hours of massage practised is 40. I have done 88 so far, and aim to get to the 100 mark!
- On May 7<sup>th</sup> I will be in The Netherlands for the introduction day of my next course: a practitioner's training course in Intercultural NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming). This course will run until November 2008.
- After having done an advanced workshop in Freeing the Lower Back & Hips recently, I am again looking into some more bodywork training courses and workshops. For example Indian Head Massage, Posture Assessment & Counterstrain, Trigger Point Massage, Sciatica Assessment & Muscle Energy Techniques, and many more. I'll let you know which one I'm doing first!