

Who's Running For What This Fall?

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

In the next month many people will be running for different purposes. It may be they're running for public office or participating in an athletic event. In either case there are countless injuries associated with each.

I know this for a fact because in my former life I was involved in politics while, at the same time, I did plenty of running while playing softball and football.

So, let's take a look at the cause of all these injuries?

With no due respect to the politicians, I'll take the athletes first.

Fall sports at SUNY Geneseo began the first of September. Student athletes had their choice of such sports as men and women's soccer and cross country as well as women's volleyball, field hockey and tennis.

All of these programs are now off and running so to speak.

And with all that running much stress is placed upon the legs and feet of the athletes.

Such stress can and does result in injuries, even under the most perfect training and conditioning.

One common injury faced by athletes who run a lot is known as "plantar fasciitis". This is an overuse condition resulting in irritation and inflammation of the bottom, or plantar, portion of the foot.

Fascia is strong and pliable connective tissue that binds and connects soft tissue structures of the body. It is located in all parts of the body and is especially evident on the soles of our feet.

Its primary role there is to absorb the shock from all the weight of the body by maintaining the longitudinal arch of the foot. This fascia takes a beating when athletes over-use the foot by constantly plantar flexing when they run and jump. Plantar flexing is the act of pointing your feet and toes toward the ground and push off as you take steps. The opposite action is dorsiflexion, which is the act of pointing them up, away from the ground.

The fascia along the bottom of the foot tends to shorten, with constant plantar flexion, thus creating stress on its attachment sites.

Most often pain is felt at the calcaneal attachment point- close to the heel. If this condition becomes severe, it can result in bone spurs at that site.

This condition can be treated by applying specific orthopedic massage techniques that release the affected muscles and treat the injured fascia.

Excessive walking or running, especially downhill, can also result in an injury known as “anterior lateral shin splints”. This occurs at the front, outside parts of the lower legs and is caused by constantly plantar flexing the foot. This places strain on the muscles involved in the opposite motion- dorsiflexing. This condition can also be treated with orthopedic massage by addressing the muscles of the lower leg involved with dorsiflexing.

I recently treated a SUNY Geneseo track & field runner with a tight iliotibial (IT) band. The IT band is a thin sheet of fascia, approximately 3 fingers wide, located on the lateral side (outside) of the thigh. It originates on the fibers of the tensor fascia latae (TFL) muscle and the fascia of the glutes and insert on the tibial tubercle (outside of the knee).

The IT band is a strong stabilizing component of the hip and knee.

A tight IT band is caused by running on an uneven or sloped surface and can be addressed by releasing the glutes, and the TFL before working on the IT band itself.

Back to our favorite whipping boy (person)- the politician. Politicians face certain injuries this time of year as they head for the finish line. The incessant walking can result in the shin splints mentioned above.

As I said before, I was involved in politics when I lived in Jamestown, NY, the first 46 years of my life. I gave politics up after 18 years although it wasn't quite my choice at the time. It was a misunderstanding with the public.

I had been saying all during my tenth election that it would be my last one and the people evidently felt the need to oblige me. They voted for my opponent.

But, during my 10 campaigns I walked many miles up and down Jamestown's treacherous hills and experience shin splints as a result. And during the last campaign I developed a very delicate condition known as bruised ego.

Luckily, over time, I survived both conditions. I now know that orthopedic massage can treat the former condition and therapeutic massage can address the latter.

But there's one condition encountered by politicians that cannot be treated by massage. It can only be addressed by politicians by firmly grasping their foot and briskly yanking it out of their mouth- however they can.

That condition is known as "foot in mouth" disease and now you know the REST OF THE STORY.

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