

Brace yourself: Ankle braces hurt knees

BY DR. PHIL WAGNER
TO THE DAILY NEWS

Subtalar joint inversion — a fancy word for ankle sprain and the enemy of most basketball and volleyball players. Combine tall athletes with landing blindly after huge jumps, and rolled ankles are bound to happen. In response, athletes start bracing their ankles with various lace-up and semi-rigid braces to avoid rolling their ankles. What they don't know is that all of the "safe" landings they had while wearing the braces put them at risk for serious traumatic injuries, as well as chronic knee ailments.

Many studies have been done examining the athletic performance effects of wearing ankle braces. Research from the Division of Orthopedic Surgery at



the University of Utah showed that ankle braces decreased vertical jump height and broad jump distance, and slowed the time of a sprint.

While most research agrees that wearing braces helps prevent ankle sprains, not many studies have been done on the effects wearing braces can have on an athlete's knees. Recently, a few studies have come out specifically addressing the stress ankle braces can put on an athlete's knee joint.

Research by Kandy Venesky at Indiana University showed that wearing ankle braces increased the twisting forces about the knee by 10 percent, increasing the potential for knee ligament injuries. It is important to note that this

study was published in The Journal of Athletic Training, a population that is usually the most adamant about wearing ankle braces. In addition, research from The University of Kansas Medical Center concurred, showing that wearing ankle braces significantly increased torque at the knee joint during trunk rotation movement while standing on one leg (the same motion that happens during a one leg landing).

So why does an ankle brace put your knees at risk? You have to think of your legs as complex shock absorbers. When you land after a jump, your ankle, knee and hip joints all play a role in absorbing the shock of the landing. Ankle braces, while stabilizing the joint, also decrease your ankles range of motion, essentially taking out your first shock absorber. This places more stress on the joint next in line, the knee.

So what can you do to prevent sprains and keep your knees healthy? First, a training program that reinforces proper landing technique and strengthens necessary ligaments and muscles is essential. SPARTA athletes that compete in jumping sports complete exercises that specifically target the muscles and connective tissues needed to withstand the rigors of high impact landings. Second, try ankle taping instead of braces. The tape will provide some lateral support, without significantly hindering essential range of motion in the ankle joint, keeping the torque off your knees.

Dr. Wagner is the Director of SPARTA Performance Science in Menlo Park. For info on this, or to learn more about SPARTA visit their Web site at www.SpartaScience.com.

FOOTHILL

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"I think it took longer to build a chemistry with the team than it did with Jessica," Kioa said. "Me and her got along quickly."

"Both of them have great court sense," Foothill coach Jody Craig said. "It's kind of like they read each other really well. I think they kind of have that wavelength where they're always looking for one another."

Craig has never had a frontline like this one during her decade-long era at Foothill. The other co-captain, Tieara Jones, gives the Owls a trio of 6-footers that completely changed the identity from last season's guard-oriented squad.

The size advantage gave Foothill a chance to win games it would otherwise have lost during the preseason while the Owls adjusted to a roster that returned only one starter — Montgomery.

"It gave us an opportunity to grow and learn together that now has turned into a dominant force," Craig said.

Foothill (26-6) won the Coast Conference North and earned the third seed in the NorCal Regional playoffs. The Owls won their quarterfinal matchup 71-41 last weekend and return to the court Saturday at 7 p.m. against No. 6 Santa Rosa (21-12).

"There's always room for improvement, like any team, but we've come a long way," Kioa said. "I've learned to become more patient with my teammates and with what Coach Craig tells me to do. I'm still trying to learn how to not make a move while I'm being double teamed and triple teamed, when my best option is to kick it out."

It seems teams have learned Kioa is the center of attention.

"Once she gets in a groove she's



Joshua Melvin / Daily News

Jennifer Kioa, left, and Jessica Montgomery of the Foothill College women's basketball team play in the NorCal Regional playoffs on Saturday.

unstoppable," Montgomery said.

With a 6-foot-4 center in the post, Montgomery has flourished with her versatility. Able to step out on the perimeter and knock down jumpers, Montgomery will bang down low when need be and rotate into the post on defense when Kioa takes on a guard slashing into the lane.

"Jen is a phenomenal shot blocker, so we give her free range to leave her defensive assignment when she needs to clean it up for us, let's say," said Craig, who cherishes the luxury of Montgomery overseeing the paint. "If Jessica wasn't as good as she is in terms of her ability to rebound and defend the backside, we couldn't take as many chances as we do."

Kioa herself took a chance coming back to school.

Originally bound for a four-year school in the Los Angeles area out of

Sequoia, she graduated from a continuation school and instead went to College of Southern Idaho. But after Kioa became pregnant, she finished off the basketball season and decided to return home.

"I think when you see Jen and what it takes to be a mom and a student-athlete, you can't help but appreciate everything that she goes through," Craig said.

Kioa is not sure what brought her to the Foothill campus one day, but she had a relationship with Craig that dated back to the sixth grade and made the decision to join the Owls.

"When I first started here it was really frustrating because it was my first time back in school since she was born," said Kioa, who is focusing her studies on criminal justice. "But as time went by it's gotten a lot easier. Everything since I've started here has worked out great."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AAU GIRLS BASKETBALL
Paye's Club Basketball, entering its seventh year, is holding Basketball Skills Clinics every Saturday and Sunday from 1-4 p.m. throughout March. The clinics feature Paye's Basketball Club AAU coaches and feature individual skill development with a focus on ball handling, shooting, footwork, defense and conditioning skills for competitive play. To sign up online, visit www.payesplace.com/camps_clinics.html. Also, AAU Spring/Summer Basketball make-up tryouts are being held during the clinics this Saturday and Sunday. The AAU spring/summer season begins April 1 and is open to any girl or boy between first grade and high school. Practices and games will be held at locations in Atherton and San Carlos. To sign up online for the make-up tryouts, visit www.payesplace.com/aaui.html.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL CLINICS
The Palo Alto Volleyball Club will be holding additional developmental clinics for girls in fourth-sixth grades. The clinics will be held on Wednesday afternoons, from 3:30-5 p.m., at the Cubberley Community Center Gym B. The dates of the clinics will be March 11 & 18, Apr 1 & 8. The clinics will teach girls the fundamentals of volleyball and prepare them for middle school volleyball competition. The clinics will also incorporate court awareness, drills and games. The cost is \$75 for all four clinics. Visit PAVBC.com, e-mail makksb@yahoo.com, or call Kevin at 650-218-0714 for more info.

PALO ALTO SOFTBALL
Girls ages 5 to 15 are encouraged to sign up for the Palo Alto Girls Softball League, which caters to players from Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Los Altos Hills, East Palo Alto and Portola Valley. Everyone plays. There will be skills clinics for all ages and beginners are welcome. There will be postseason traveling teams and tournament and special events. The league is affiliated with the Amateur Softball Association. For more info, call 650-361-0743, visit www.paloaltogirlssoftball.org or send an e-mail to registration@paloaltogirlssoftball.org.

PREP COACHING OPENINGS
■ Pinewood School in Los Altos Hills is looking for a varsity high school boys and girls swim coach. Contact AD Matt Stimson at (650) 941-6044 or mstimson@pinewood.edu.
■ The King's Academy in Sunnyvale is looking for a head varsity swimming/diving coach. Contact Vicki Linn at (408) 481-9900, ext. 272 or send e-mail to vlinn@tka.org.
■ Los Altos needs a boys head swim coach. Contact Kim Cave at kim.cave@mvia.net or (650) 960-8857.
■ Sacred Heart Prep in Atherton is seeking assistant football coaches for next season. Contact AD Frank Rodriguez at 650-473-4031 or at frrodriguez@shschools.org.
■ St. Francis-Mountain View needs assistant coaches for field hockey, girls basketball, wrestling, softball and boys tennis. Contact AD Michael Pilawski at mpilawski@sfs.com or (650) 968-1213, ext. 255.
■ Menlo-Atherton needs a frosh/soph girls volleyball coach and a varsity girls volleyball coach. E-mail resume to Pam Wimberly at pwwimberly@seq.org or call (650) 322-5311 ext. 5706.

TODAY'S TV/RADIO

BASEBALL
■ Exhibition: Mariners at A's, 12:05 p.m., 860
■ WBC: China vs. TBA, 7:30 p.m., ESPN2
■ WBC: Japan vs. TBA, 2 a.m., ESPN2
BOXING
■ Rodriguez vs. Alvarez, welterweights, 5:30 p.m., ESPN2
GOLF
■ PGA: Honda Classic, noon, GOLF
■ Champs: Toshiba Classic, 3:30 p.m., GOLF
MOTOR SPORTS
■ American Commercial Lines 200, practice, 8:30 a.m., SPEED
■ Kobalt Tools 500, practice, noon, SPEED
■ Kobalt Tools 500, qualifying, 3:30 p.m., SPEED
NBA
■ Warriors at Pistons, 5 p.m., CSNBA, 1050
■ Cavaliers at Celtics, 5 p.m., ESPN
■ Nuggets at Jazz, 7:30 p.m., ESPN

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