

Editorial ► Vision Therapy for Athletes: Hit Your Own Homerun!

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In this issue of *Optometry & Visual Performance*, the readers are being treated to a theme issue on Sports Vision and Performance. The articles range from research collected over many years on hundreds of athletes to research performed in the lab on optometry students to a case report documenting success using vision therapy. I hope you enjoy the topic and it spurs you to expand your offerings, wherever you practice.

Optometry has been on the forefront of enhancing sports performance for decades. While the true impact of our work is difficult to collect due to patient confidentiality, optometrists have been involved with helping athletes on many levels. Did you know that vision therapy can actually be used for habilitation and rehabilitation? Did you know that visual dysfunction and poor sight can impede sports performance? Did you know that concussion can impact vision and impede performance on and off the field? Yes, I know I am preaching to the choir, and yes, these questions sound ridiculous to most readers of this journal, but they are not obvious to the general public and even to the academic communities in which we live and practice.

I would like to share with you the amazing opportunity in which Southern College of Optometry is currently involved. For the past six months, SCO has been the official eye care provider for the University of Memphis Athletic Department (UM). UM is a Division I school that has been ranked nationally in football and basketball in recent years. Of course, they field teams in tennis, soccer, volleyball, and a multitude of other sports with both male and female athletes as well.

We provide primary eye care, of course, but with an emphasis on sports performance. All athletes will be screened



on basic aspects of vision and visual performance, as well as higher components including balance. Those who fail any aspect of the screening are then evaluated by one of our Sports Vision Team members. This sports performance assessment includes an evaluation of visual acuity, stereopsis, binocularity including a full near point assessment with equilibrium findings, accommodation, spatial mapping including the Brock string, cheirosopic tracings, Van Orden stars and the space board, reading eye movements, eye health,

and refractive error. If the athlete is wearing contact lenses or needs to have a fitting performed, this is easily accomplished. Treatment already recommended on 34 of the 147 screened athletes who were brought back for comprehensive testing includes contact lens fittings and power/fit changes, plus at near, and vision therapy. Vision therapy will begin in earnest when the athletes return from summer break and start to head into their respective training camps or classes. Our team is confident that it can impact not only sports performance but academic performance as well.

As SCO is a private institution without a built-in sports program, we are thrilled to be leading the profession in the area of sports vision. Think of the direct and indirect impact of improved sports performance if institutions with Division I programs collectively took up the reins and started offering these services on a grand scale! Optometrists Change Lives is not just an OEP program meant to call attention to the amazing care we provide, it is a reality. SCO is going to change the lives of these student athletes; join us on the front lines and make a difference in your local communities.