

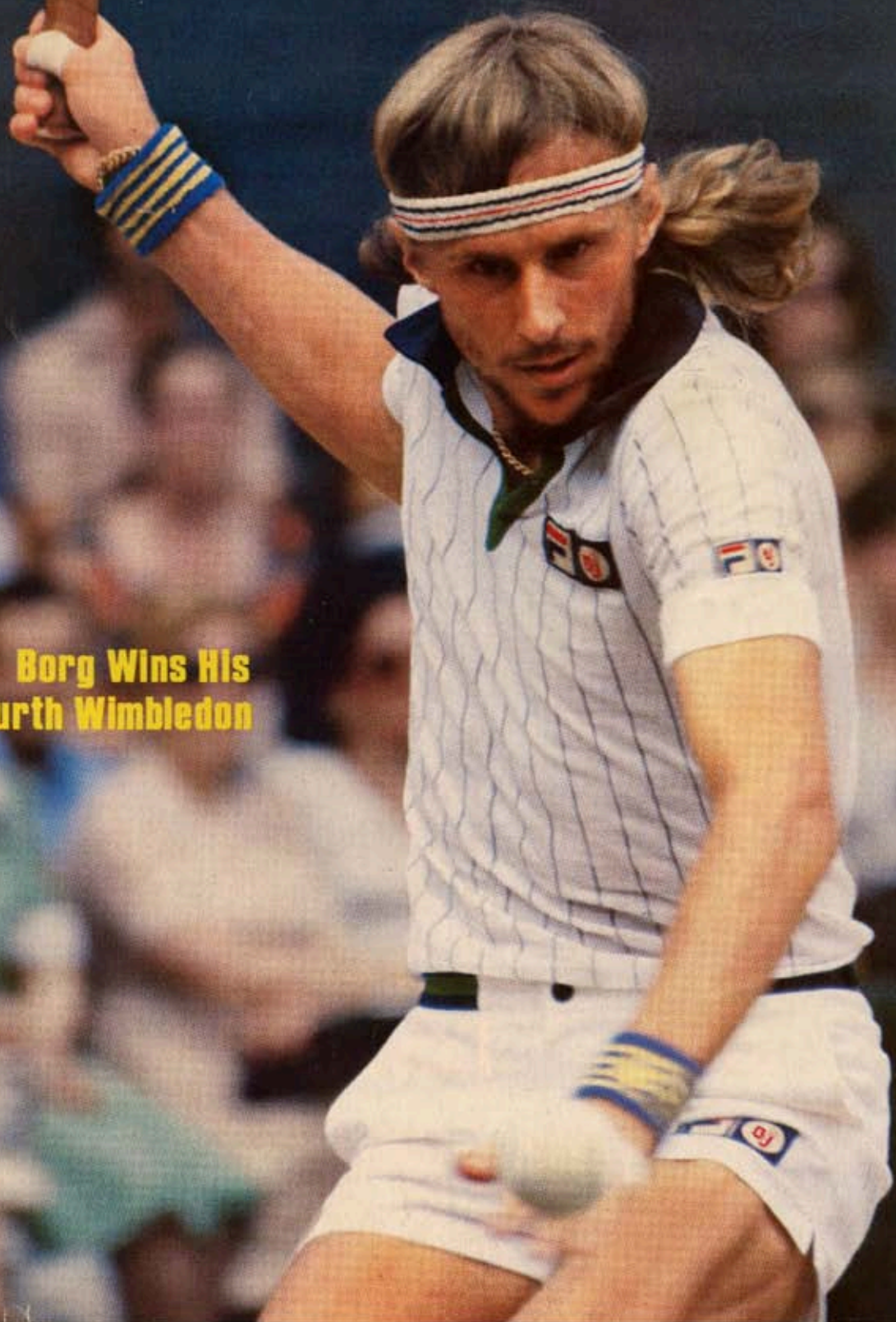
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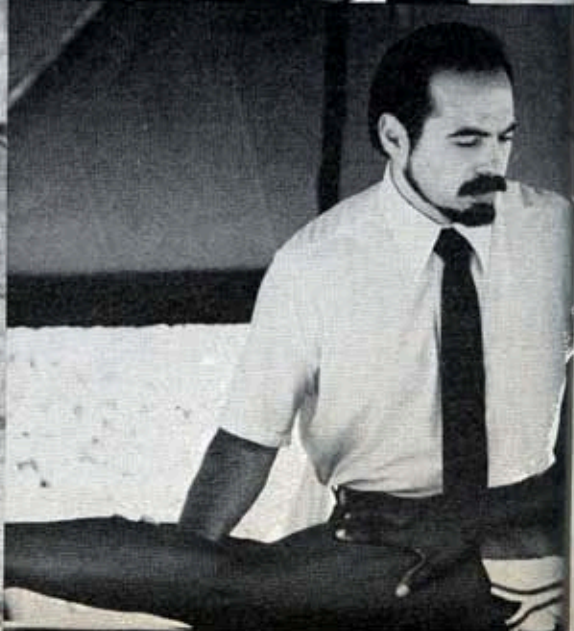


THE GOOD HANDS MAN

Chiropractor Leroy Perry has won ardent support among top athletes with methods that mystify and annoy M.D.s

by HERMAN WEISKOPF

Alberto Juantorena of Cuba, the Olympic gold-medal winner in the 400 and 800 meters at Montreal, was slowed to a painful lope this spring by aches that doctors could neither diagnose nor cure. On May 6, Juantorena, who had lost only one 400 since 1976, was third in that event at the UCLA-Pepsi Invitational, 1.94 off his personal best of 44.26. Several days later, on the eve of the Norman Manley Games in Kingston, Jamaica, Juantorena was in such agony that he was forced to withdraw.



A few hours before the meet was to start, Juantorena conferred with Dr. Leroy Perry of Pasadena, a chiropractor. After a brief examination, Dr. Perry offered a diagnosis: "Because of weak

gluteus maximus, the hamstrings became overdominant, resulting in compensation in the lower back. This created lower-back spasm, which produced nerve pressure." He also offered a treatment, a kinetic therapy technique to relax Juantorena's hamstrings and lower back. Then he readjusted the runner's posture to change weight distribution, and offered suggestions on a more relaxed running style.

When the session was over, Juantorena felt so good he entered the 400. Sweeping around the track with his powerful long stride fully restored, the 6' 3" Juantorena crossed the finish line first in a respectable 45.77.

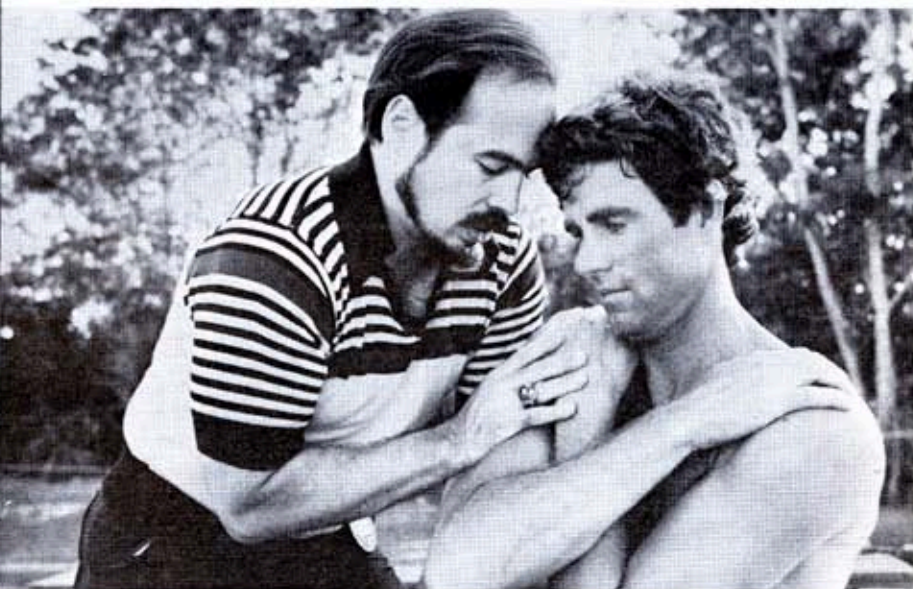
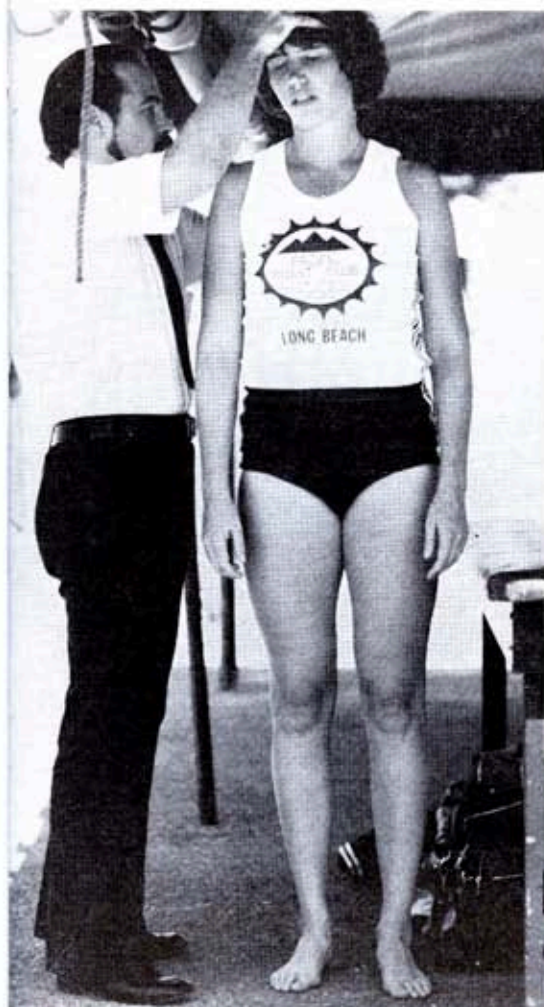
When the race was over, *El Caballo* jogged loosely along the track, searching for Perry in the crowd. And then, smiling hugely, he embraced the stocky American and hoisted him up for all to see.

Displays of this sort are rare where doctors are concerned, but Juantorena and Cuban sports authorities were so impressed with Perry's work in Jamaica that he was given an of-

ficial invitation to visit Cuba and work more wonders. He now has State Department clearance and soon will spend two weeks in Cuba teaching his sports-medicine concepts to athletes, trainers and officials. Similar offers have come from other nations, including Japan, Jamaica, Venezuela and Trinidad. One country whose athletic Establishment has not sought out Perry's expertise is the U.S. The reason is that the chiropractic profession is ill-regarded by organized American M.D.s. Consequently, Perry is not just avoided by sports-medicine commissions in this country but he is also shunned.

Nevertheless, Perry's list of satisfied patients is impressive. Among them are world-class runners Henry Rono, Francie Larrieu, Patti Van Wolvelaere and James Gilkes as well as Juantorena; high jumper Dwight Stones; National Football League past (Alex Karras) and present (Ricky Bell); track and field coaches Jumbo Elliot (Villanova), Vern Wolfe (USC) and Payton Jordan (Stanford); weightmen Mac Wilkins, Al Feuerbach, Jay Silvester, John Powell and George Woods; javelin thrower Sam Colson and discus thrower Jan Svendsen; as well as such luminaries as Arnie Robinson (long jump), Bruce Jenner (decathlon) and Harvey

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Applying manipulative techniques, Perry stretches runner Francie Larrieu into upper-back relaxation (far left). The wrestling hold on Dwight Stones (center) will aid the high jumper's flexibility. Sprinter Harvey Glance undergoes a strength test (left), while skull massage and fingertip acupressure ease tensions for runner Henry Rono and javelin thrower Kate Schmidt. The huggy move by Pitcher Jim Palmer (above) is designed to test his abdominal muscles.

Glance (sprints); skier Suzy Chaffee; tennis player Stan Smith; pentathlete Jane Frederick; and baseball players Rick Monday, Don Sutton and Jim Palmer; not to mention patients from the ranks of the obscure, like George Lynfield Throop III, pitcher for the Houston Astros.

Late last year, the U.S. Olympic Athletes' Advisory Council voted unanimously that the USOC include doctors of chiropractic on all international and Olympic teams and that they be included on the Sports Medicine Committee. A subsequent news release by these athletes reported that "On Feb. 10, the USOC Executive Board, under the advisement of Dr. Irving Dardik, chairman of the Sports Medicine Council, rejected the endorsement. In light of this decision, the athletes feel that the USOC is not being responsive to their needs."

To further display their regard for chiropractors in general, and Perry in particular, several athletes—Jim Wooley (judo), Kate Schmidt (javelin), sprinter Steve Williams and weightlifter Bruce Wilhelm—made one more effort. At their own expense, they set up press conferences in Manhattan and Houston to publicize their campaign on Perry's behalf.

Wooley said, "We want future generations of athletes to be able to get the chiropractic care they might need so they can achieve their goals. It was stymieing for us, psychologically and physically, to be told we couldn't get the chiropractic care we needed and we want to be sure others get it. The Juantorena episode proved what we've been saying for a long, long time."

Given its traditional stand on chiropractors, it is not surprising that the medical Establishment ignored this appeal. It is ironic, however, that one of the M.D.s' own, Dr. George A. Sheehan, the cardiologist-runner, wrote in his book, *Running and Being*: "Physicians who handle emergencies with éclat, who dive fearlessly into abdomens for bleeding aneurysms, who think nothing of managing cardiac arrest and heart failure, who miraculously reassemble accident victims, are helpless when confronted with an ailing athlete. They are even less able to counsel the athlete and [answer] his never-ending questions about health." The athlete, Sheehan concludes, is "medicine's most difficult patient."

If that is so, and if it is true that Perry has helped all those athletes, and that they want him, why is there such vehem-

ent opposition to him? The key, of course, is chiropractic, a word derived from the Greek for "effective hand." The American Chiropractic Association defines chiropractic as "that science and art which utilizes the inherent recuperative powers of the body, particularly the spinal column and the nervous system, in the restoration and maintenance of health." The theory is that if the spine and nerves are functioning properly, and if the vertebrae and bones of the body are kept aligned, then the body should be able to maintain its own health.

Chiropractors—there are 18,000 in the U.S., compared with 420,000 M.D.s—say they perform a "drugless, nonsurgical healing art." The American Medical Association has quite a different opinion. In 1963 the AMA established a Committee on Quackery, which drafted a resolution in that same year, stating, "It is the position of the medical profession that chiropractic is an unscientific cult whose practitioners lack the necessary training and background to diagnose and treat human disease."

Eight years later, the Committee on Quackery reported that since formulating its resolution it "has considered its prime mission to be, first, the containment of chiropractic, and, ultimately, the elimination of chiropractic." And while the AMA hasn't attained that goal, the two medical disciplines continue to eye each other warily. The feud has now reached the lawsuit stage in three states. That accounts in part for the mixed reception accorded Perry.

Perry's foray into sport began in 1973, after he had graduated from the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic and began practicing in Pasadena. Tracy Sundlun, former assistant track and field coach at USC, recalls the introduction. "I was coaching the La Jolla track club," he says. "One of our girls, Kathy Lawson, whose father is a chiropractor, was hurting and wanted to see a chiropractor. I had come to the conclusion that what an athlete wanted in health care, the athlete should be able to get. When we went to Perry, I told him, 'I don't trust chiropractors. I'll give you one chance.' Kathy said he helped her, but I felt some of the stuff he used was hokey. He talked about 'applied kinesiology' and it all seemed to make no sense. But soon I was bringing the whole team to him regularly.

"The first time I took runners to him was in the winter of '74. I took Patti Van Wolvelaere and Kathy when we were on our way to Pocatello for a meet. He muscle-balanced both girls. In Pocatello, Patti ran a world-record 13.2 for the indoor 100-meter hurdles and Kathy tied the American 100-yard-dash record."

Says Alex Karras, the defensive tackle turned actor, whose father was a neurosurgeon: "Ten years ago, while playing football, I got a neck injury. I also banged up my right knee. For 12 years I couldn't totally flex it. Doctors operated on my knee and told me, 'You've got arthritis. There's not much we can do.'"

"My neck problem became chronic. I can't say how many doctors I saw and how much money I spent trying to get rid of my dizziness and pain. Nobody helped. Doctors said I had been banged up so much that, in essence, I had become punchy. The neck got so bad that it hurt my work and my life. I had brain scans. I was going crazy. I was pathetic.

"Then I heard about Dr. Perry. So I saw the Little Rat, which is what I call him. First, he worked on my knee. After one adjustment the knee was fine and I've been able to flex it ever since. The Great Mystic, as I also call Leroy, X-rayed me and found a crushed vertebra was cutting off some blood to my brain. He's given me adjustments and now my neck feels better than it has in 10 years."

Among Perry's tools is kinetic therapy, which utilizes eight different muscle-balancing techniques, one of which is acupressure. Acupressure is similar to acupuncture but the fingertips are substituted for needles.

But undoubtedly his most unusual procedure is what he calls "Muscle Reactive Testing," which helps an athlete achieve his legitimate strength potential. He demonstrated it in the trainer's room at an indoor meet in Albuquerque last February. Lying on a rubbing table was a Swedish discus thrower. Perry had alleviated the athlete's pain, and then, at the request of a trainer, demonstrated Muscle Reactive Testing.

Perry asked the athlete, who was lying on his back, to raise one leg and then the other, and to "resist as much as you can" when Perry applied downward pressure. With more than a little effort, Perry forced each leg to the table. Then he lightly massaged his patient an inch above the navel, on the outer mid-thighs and on the inner mid-knees.

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The athlete again was asked to raise one leg at a time and resist. Up went the left leg. Perry, a former high school wrestler who weighs 170, could not lower the leg until he applied so much pressure that both his feet were off the ground. The same was true when Perry pressed on the right leg.

"Did you feel any difference?" he asked.

"Yes," said the discus man. "I had much more strength."

In the final phase of the process, Perry massaged the patient at the base of his spine and on the middle of his thighs. This time when the athlete's legs were raised and resistance applied, Perry forced one leg and then the other to the table with two fingers.

It was this Muscle Reactive Testing that Wilkins received from Perry in 1976 before he broke the discus world record three times at the San Jose Invitational. But even Perry admits that "Muscle Reactive Testing is almost too theatrical. No one can explain how it works or why a person gets added strength from it for a short time. I use it mainly to show how little we understand about the body. I teach this and other techniques to some of my patients and give them specific exercise programs to build up their weak areas so they can prevent further problems." Doctors of chiropractic believe that educating the patient is one of the most important aspects of health care. Proper posture, exercise and nutrition are stressed.

"From the point of view of the athletes, Dr. Perry has made fantastic progress in both healing and prevention," says Dr. David Martin, an exercise physiologist and an associate professor of allied health sciences at Georgia State University. "Traditionally, the view of medicine has been remedial rather than preventive, but Dr. Perry is placing great emphasis on the latter. There are physicians who say, 'I don't understand what he's doing.' Because they don't understand all that Perry does, they knock him. But the truth is that some of those same doctors don't understand what other medical doctors are doing."

The petition requesting that Perry be made a member of the Sports Medicine Committee for the U.S. Olympic team in Moscow was not the first of its kind. In 1976 a similar petition had been signed by several hundred athletes and coaches before the Montreal Games. Dr. Anthony

Daly of Inglewood, Calif., an orthopedist and one of the ranking members of the American medical squad for Montreal, had said shortly before the Games that "Perry's case is a dead issue. Our people were selected four or five months ago. It's mostly track and field athletes who are involved with Dr. Perry. If we were to add him, what about athletes in other sports with their own favorite doctors?"

Perry got to Montreal anyway—as the team doctor for the Antigua squad, an arrangement worked out by the team's coach, none other than Tracy Sundlun, who had been impressed by Perry back in '73 at La Jolla.

Hearing of Perry's presence and of the fact that he was treating other athletes, not just the tiny Antiguan squad, the U.S. medical staff ordered American athletes not to be treated by him.

"I'm a friend of Dr. Daly's," says Russ Hodge, a former decathlete who was in Montreal as a shoe company's rep. "His pride was deeply hurt when American athletes went to Dr. Perry instead of to him. It became extremely touchy. When athletes have a problem, they will go to *anyone* for relief. Perry would love to work with Daly and Dardik. He doesn't want to replace them. But the polarization of the AMA and the chiropractors has made it hard for everyone. Unfortunately, in the end, it's the athletes who suffer."

When Dardik was asked to explain the USOC's stand, he refused to comment. One of the many athletes who ignored the dictum was Robinson, who won the gold medal in the long jump. "I had pulled a groin muscle," Robinson recalls. "A friend mentioned Dr. Perry. I saw him two days before I jumped and had three or four treatments. I was leery. I had never been to a chiropractor. He took X rays and found I was out of line. He got rid of the pain and that gave me an extra lift. I don't think I would have won without him."

During the Olympic Trials, an M.D. said to decathlon champion-to-be Bruce Jenner, "All chiropractic does is psychological." Jenner, who had been under Perry's care, replied, "If *all* he does is psychological, then Dr. Perry is probably the most important man here."

Despite the endorsements, Perry not only is without official honor in his own country; he is having a tough time mak-

ing it in his own backyard. Perry has spent more time with the USC track and field team than with any other group of athletes and has been credited by some with being a vital factor in USC's winning the past four of five conference outdoor championships. Nevertheless, Perry is not permitted to attend Trojan practices, to use USC training facilities or to serve in any official medical capacity.

Dr. Chester Semel, team physician for the USC athletic department, says, "We have a panel of consultants here from all the medical fields. Dr. Perry was not included because we felt we had men with better backgrounds. Yes, his training as a chiropractor was a factor in our not including him."

It is an awkward situation that tends to disturb Coach Vern Wolfe, himself a Perry patient.

"Dr. Perry has helped so many on our team," Wolfe says. "He also practically brought me back from the dead after I had a terrible car crash in September of '77. I thought my shoulder was ruined, had very bad whiplash and didn't think I'd ever be right or be able to coach again. Well, Dr. Perry worked on me, and this year at age 55 I began pole vaulting. Got my first trophy recently when I cleared 10' 6" in an age-group meet. Medicare and numerous insurance and medical plans acknowledge chiropractic services, but our athletic department won't. They feel chiropractors are quacks. I can't even recommend Dr. Perry to anyone on my team. I was told point-blank by Dr. Richard H. Perry, our athletic director, not to do so."

Wolfe and his assistant Ken Matsuda have formally protested Perry's banishment; they feel it unjust and hypocritical, because Wolfe and many of his athletes see Perry on their own in any case.

M.D.s might disagree with what Perry does and may be mystified as to why it seems to work so often, but no one has accused him of avarice or self-promotion. He is loath to discuss the work he does with athletes, and he has asked the athletes to be similarly reticent—although clearly he is proud of his profession. But as hurdler Dedy Cooper says, "Everybody talks about Dr. Perry. *Everybody*. The first thing athletes ask at a meet is, 'Is Dr. Perry here?' If he's not, some won't compete. Other doctors tell you, 'Rest.' Dr. Perry fixes you up; he teaches you how to take care of yourself. We want him."

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