

The Olympic Athletes Speak Out
They Want Dr. Perry — He Wants Chiropractic
By James Wooley

Olympic Athlete, Judo 1972 and 1976

1980 — While training for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, I injured myself two weeks prior to my competition. I had gone to the U.S. Medical staff with a similar injury during the Pan American Games in Mexico City and had received no help. Some of my track friends knew of my injury and told me about Dr. Leroy Perry from Pasadena, California.

At the time, all U.S. athletes were barred from even seeing him because he was the Team chiropractor for Antigua. As a result of this ban, I had to literally sneak into his room to be treated. While I was there, I was amazed at the following of athletes that were his patients. He was not only treating the best U.S. athletes but athletes, officials and media persons from around the world. The athletes called him the “International Doctor” because political differences did not affect his care of the athlete, he was literally following the true spirit of the Olympics.

It was truly amazing to see this one man work night and day treating athletes on and off the field with little regard for his own health. His dedicated work was an inspiration to everyone that watched and even in the midst of constant pressure from the medical staff, he supported the athletes single handedly.

The actual battle for chiropractic inclusion on the Olympic Team began before the Montreal Olympics when over two hundred Olympic athletes signed a petition asking that Dr. Leroy Perry be admitted to the U.S. Olympic Medical Staff. The first attempt failed but the athletes remained united behind Dr. Perry. In 1978, a number of interested Olympians contacted me about rekindling the battle to have him appointed to the U.S. Medical Staff. He responded by asking us to fight for the inclusion of the chiropractic profession rather than himself personally.

It was because of this man’s dedication that we brought this issue to the attention of the U.S. Athletes Advisory Council. The Council is made of one Olympic Athlete representative per Olympic Sport. The council was created as a result of our poor showing in Montreal so that input from the competing athlete could be taken to the U.S.O.C. Executive Board. Previous to this time, it seemed the Olympics were held more for the officials than the athletes.

After the Advisory Council’s November meeting, the athletes made a formal resolution stating that chiropractic be part of the Olympic delegation for all international competition. The U.S. Medical Staff answered by stating that a chiropractor would never be on an Olympic Team. The Medical staff not only denied us our right for freedom of health care, but has gone as far as to appoint an athletic trainer to do manipulation. We feel this injustice is illegal as a trainer is not licensed to manipulate. The chiropractic profession should be aware of the immoral tactics used against the U.S. athletes and toward the chiropractic profession because of petty jealousy and medical prejudices.

We had taken our issue to every level of the Olympic Committee and had reached a deadlock. We then decided to direct the primary thrust of our efforts into holding two news conferences to enable us to voice our needs for chiropractic care. The conferences were in New York and Houston in mid March of last year, at our own expense. The athletes involved were Mac Wilkins, World Record holder and Gold Medalist in the discus; Steve Williams, Co-World Record Holder in the 100 meter dash; Kate Schmidt, Doublebronze medalist in 1972 and 1976 and former World record holder; Dwight Stones, former World record holder in the High Jump; Bruce Wilhelm, Olympian and CBS Strongman Champion; and myself, two time Olympian in Judo. The impact that these news conferences had is still being felt.

Since Dr. Perry’s involvement with the Olympics there have been literally hundreds of articles written about his work. In July of this year, Herman Weiskopf of Sports Illustrated carried the battle again to the news media as a feature article. The N.B.C. aired the issue on Tom Snyder “Prime Time” television show. The most recent article appeared on the front page of the Sports Section in the October 25, Los Angeles Times.

The common element that seems to be restated on every occasion is that the careers of many athletes are being compromised because the Sports Medicine Committee is not providing Chiropractic care during the Olympics. We train for years under chiropractic care only to be deprived of that essential element of our training at the most important competition of our life.

We feel this is being done because of the petty jealousy the medical doctor feels for the chiropractic profession. Dr. Perry believes that the medical doctors are an integral part of health care. He wants to work with all disciplines in improve the overall health care of the athlete. He believes that the athletes needs come first because without the athlete there would be no competition and no Olympics. We agree.

Write your Congressman and Senator and urge them to support us.

