

And now for something completely different:

HEEBONICS

Sports doctor helps pro hockey players function at a higher level

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Officially reported injuries may have contributed to the Calgary Flames' early exit from the NHL playoffs when they were beaten by the Chicago Blackhawks in the Western Conference quarter-finals, but according to sports doctor Aubrey Green, there was more to the Flames' defeat than met the eye.

"I think those guys are going to stand up for themselves and they're not going to use injuries as an excuse, but I can tell you that there's a lot of players who are playing injured who aren't reporting it and are battling through," Green said.

A 34-year-old Toronto chiropractor and acupuncturist, Green has built a practice and a reputation over the past several years treating professional hockey and football players in the NHL and the CFL. His patients include the Flames' all-star captain Jarome Iginla, defenceman Dion Phaneuf and forward Todd Bertuzzi.

"Hockey players are strong, tough athletes, and they battle through a lot of adversity and injuries and do the best job they can. But there are guys who wouldn't be competing in the regular season with how banged up they might be," he said.

Born in Vancouver and raised in Toronto, Green didn't always plan on becoming a sports doctor.

When he was 16, he injured his back playing basketball and as a result got his first close-up look at chiropractic medicine.

"It showed me a hands-on, drugless approach to health. And not to say that I don't believe in the drug approach, too - it's got its place - but for me, I went to see someone to help me out and it opened my eyes up to that profession," Green said.

After attending high school at Forest Hill Collegiate, Green got his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Western Ontario before putting in a year at law school. But when he got accepted to Toronto's Canadian Memorial Chiropractic College, he found what he really wanted to do.



Green prefers a "drugless approach to health."



Nashville Predators captain Jason Arnott, right, spread the word to his fellow NHLers that Dr. Aubrey Green's treatments worked.

"I just took a year-long leave of absence, but I never went back to law because I enjoyed chiropractic so much," he said.

After earning his chiropractic degree, he went on to take sports medicine and acupuncture courses at Hamilton's McMaster University.

Getting from the classroom to the locker room was no small feat, however.

"I think that it's a fair thing to say that it's everybody's goal and dream when they're sitting in class [to] want to work with world-class athletes, but whether that's realistic or not is the question," he said.

Green got his big break when he was referred to treat hockey player Jason Arnott, who is currently the captain of the Nashville Predators. After Green proved that his treatments worked, his reputation spread by word-of-mouth and he started getting calls from more pro athletes.

"Arnott referred guys to me and then over the years guys get traded, they go to different teams, and people hear about me. It's a relatively small world, the hockey world," Green said.

In addition to the training he got at school, Green has developed his own therapies and techniques that have earned him a reputation for effectiveness within the world of professional sports.

"You have to get into the room, but then the second thing is you have to show that what you're doing is result oriented. When [Arnott] was playing for Dallas, he had an injury and he was going to be out for three to four weeks, and through my treatment, he was back on the ice in two days," Green said.

It also doesn't hurt that Green has been able to hit it off on a personal level with the athletes that he treats. Having a closer relationship with

a player even makes him a better doctor, he says.

"When you travel with the guys, you develop a relationship. You're spending time with them and there is definitely a rapport, and that increases your working relationship. Part of what you're doing is positive reinforcement to help them get in the right frame of mind with respect to their bodies. The more confidence they have in what they're doing, the more they'll succeed," he said.

While Green is often called upon to treat injuries, a large part of his practice is just helping athletes stay healthy and avoid getting injured in the first place.

"In the perfect situation, I want the athletes I work with to be healthy and feeling good. And in that case it is performance based, where I'm doing treatment to get them functioning at 110 per cent of their capability, instead of dealing with an injury. So by working with the muscles, the nerves, the joints, you're making them function at a higher level - faster, stronger, more explosive on the ice or in the field," he said.

In addition to his celebrity clients, he works with what he calls "weekend warriors" at his Toronto office, and he's planning to launch a product line - "Dr. Greens" - which he hopes will alert people to sports-related injuries before they become major health concerns.

Ironically, Green's practice has made him give up his own sporting ambitions. Though he used to play basketball competitively, he found that his own injuries were interfering with the quality of care he was able to offer his patients.

Still, he works out and maintains a healthy lifestyle.

"I try to practise what I preach," he said.



The Calgary Flames' Mike Cammalleri has also benefited from Green's treatments.