



jogging

Dr. Charles R. Young

Painful muscle spasms cramp runners' styles

Muscle spasms and cramps are two of the most common ailments joggers suffer from.

The problem involves a sudden and painful contraction of an exercised muscle. A knot-like sensation immediately is experienced, with extreme pain and a virtual incapacity to function further. Spasmodic episodes seem to involve segments like the calf, arch, toes and hamstring (behind the thigh) areas. This lower limb pain suggests that weight bearing and body stress are possible causes.

Before discussing treatment for the muscle spasm, we must first consider the basic types of cramps and possible causes.

There are five essential types of muscle cramps or spasms. The first involves vascular impairment or poor circulation. With this type, an exercised muscle often used in normal walking receives inadequate blood to nourish its fibers.

THE MUSCLE CONTRACTS, resulting in extreme pain and disability. Although this particular affliction is not common, the clinical presentation can at times be similar.

A second type of muscle cramping, also infrequent, is of neurological origin. In these cases, nerve involvement or impairment results in involuntary spasm and muscular contraction.

Stroke patients and individuals afflicted with other neurological problems often will demonstrate cramping sensations of the lower limbs.

A third type of cramping is the spasmodic-like splinting response of an injured muscle or fibers around a fracture site or torn ligament. The diagnosis is not difficult, since a specific traumatic incident is necessary to set off the reaction. Often it's essential to re-

lieve the muscle spasm prior to extensive evaluation of the injury. The fourth group of lower extremity muscle spasms are night cramps. As the name suggests, they seem to come on in the middle of a restful sleep and cause excruciating pain.

A COMMON EXPLANATION is the abnormality or overstretching of an already fatigued muscle. The subsequent response is a reflexive spasm or contraction of the fibers. Runners frequently encounter this problem following a lengthy workout, race, or marathon.

A final category of cramping, characteristic of the athlete and yet the one we know the least about, is the spasm incurred during the activity itself. It's the sudden and apparently unprovoked muscle cramp to the lower leg while running a routine workout.

Available explanations include possible muscle injury, biochemical changes, overstretching and excessive fatigue. Additional investigation and data are necessary to fully understand the cause of these painful and debilitating athletic cramps.

THE TREATMENT OF muscle cramps is determined by the source of the problem.

Vascular and neurological consultation are necessary in the care and management of those patients. For the locally-involved type of spasm, rest, massage, and manipulation seem to be most effective. In those cases where muscle cramping recurs, a sports medicine podiatrist should be consulted.

Dr. Charles Young, a Livonia podiatrist, writes a jogging column for the Observer & Eccentric newspapers.

West Bloomfield race successful

Continued from Page 1D

The course included signs at each turn to help the runners, but Proulx said the sign on White Birch was torn down, causing the error.

"It was just one of those things where you think you have everything covered and a mistake still crops up," Proulx said. "The only good thing was that everyone took the shortcut."

There were 689 runners who regis-

tered for the race and another 100 participants who competed without registering. Only 35 people registered but didn't come. Last year's race drew 250 persons.

Proulx wasn't surprised by the large turnout, which included more than 100 volunteer workers.

"A lot of runners like to run in this kind of weather," he said. "It's a lot more preferable than having it 70 degrees where you get hot and sweaty."

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Area's coaches encouraged to report stats

Area spring sports coaches are encouraged to call their colleagues with weekly statistical information.

Stats for baseball, softball, girls' track and boys' track will be compiled by selected coaches. Listings and averages will appear weekly on Thursday's Observer & Eccentric statistics page.

Coaches in charge of compiling statistics include:

• Girls' track — Mark Timmins, University of Michigan head girls' track coach. Timmins will compile best times and distances. The former Farmington Harrison girls' track coach can be reached from 9 a.m. to noon (763-

2159) and 7-10 p.m. (437-4221) Monday-Friday.

• Boys' track — Bob Stark, Birmingham Brother Rice assistant boys' track coach. Stark can be reached evenings at 646-1019.

• Baseball — John Guerrieri, Rochester Adams head baseball coach.

Guerrieri can be reached 9-11 p.m. Sundays and Mondays at 373-7557.

• Softball — Statistician Harold Davenport can be reached 8-10 p.m. Mondays at 649-4202.

Baseball and softball statistics include: at bats, runs scored, hits, batting average and runs batted in (RBIs) for batters, and wins, losses, innings pitched, earned run average (ERA), strikeouts and base on balls for pitchers.

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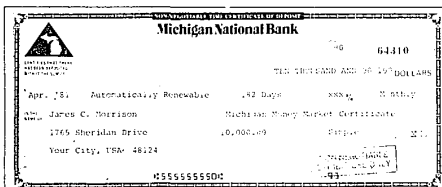
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